GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

POLICY: STUDYING POLITICAL ACTORS' DECISION-MAKING

by

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ABSTRACT

This study asks how government accountability reports are used to influence public education policy. Government accountability reports, called "audits" in Utah, prove to be useful tools for examining education policy. Using a collective case study design examining Utah's Class Size Reduction (CSR) policy, government accountability reports demonstrate that a systematic review of request, report, and result is an effective means for identifying policy narratives. These government accountability reports showed that over 10 years Utah's State Office of Education and local school districts repeatedly failed to comply with Utah Statutes requiring accounting for CSR appropriations. Repeated findings of data integrity and poor accounting did not lead to political action by state legislators. Despite repeated negative findings about CSR expenditures legislative appropriations were maintained even during two economic downturns. Evidence in this study suggests that these reports result from a breakdown in communication between agency officials and the Legislature. Government accountability reports do not appear to have any more influence on policy decision-making than other sources of policy information. However, these sources of information are financed with public dollars, and political actors' dissatisfaction with agency responses does not justify the cost of unused reports.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public education has a prominent role in the United States' political and economic narrative. To an increasing degree since the 1950s, political actors have made public education a major focus of their policy agendas (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Mitchell & Mitchell, 2011; Shipps, 2011; Vinovskis, 1999). As a result, public education's narrative is compared to a pathogen creating symptoms of economic decline, moral decay, and indolence within society. Since education is analogous to a pathogen, its cure is cast as a panacea to solve these same national crises (Dale, 1994; Vinovskis, 1999). Edelman (2001) argues that it is not public education's failure, it is misallocation of other resources within the United States (such as military spending and tax subsidies of corporations) that have created the symptoms of economic and moral deficiency. Ball (1997b) supports Edelman's thesis that education is not the underlying pathology for the symptoms of national decline. Regardless of critiques of public education's metanarrative, education is squarely in the crosshairs of neoconservative and neoliberal political forces (see Apple, 2001b, 2007a, 2011; Berends, 2009; Wells, 2009; Welner, 2008). Market ideology is prominent in public education policy debates even among advocacy groups that have traditionally been opponents of neoliberal ideology in

education (Apple & Pedroni, 2005; Debray-Pelot, 2007b; DeBray-Pelot, Lubienski, & Scott, 2007; Nechyba, 2009; Viteritti, 2009; Welner, 2008). To create this metanarrative, education is framed as ineffective and unaccountable for outcomes (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hanushek, 1981; Mitchell & Mitchell, 2011; Shipps, 2011). To address this deficiency in public education, a number of accountability approaches have been proposed and implemented, including local education agency (LEA) accountability (Apple, 2007a; Cohn, 2005; DeBray, 2001, 2005b) and teacher accountability (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1998; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Loeb & Strunk, 2003, 2007; Podgursky & Springer, 2007a, 2007b; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Springer, 2009). This narrative consists of an indictment of educational professionals at all levels for their secular humanism and socialistic agendas (Apple, 2007b, 2008; Roberts, 2007). This attitude and perspective exist within the political debate about public education. How normative assumptions (Ball, 1997) and assumptive worlds (Catherine Marshall, 1985; Catherine Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1986; Wirt, Mitchell, & Marshall, 1988) influence political actors when making policy decisions is difficult to decipher.

Topic

This research study focuses on how political actors use information relative to normative assumptions and public education's assumptive worlds. Specifically, this study examines how government accountability reports inform public education policy. Political actors can refer to any person along a continuum from state legislatures to grassroots activists. In this study I focus on Utah legislators, generically labeling them political actors. While I specifically examine how Utah legislators use government

accountability reports, I recognize that other political actors also use these reports, such as agencies and policy entrepreneurs. How other groups use government accountability reports is beyond the scope of this study.

"Government accountability reports" is a generic term for compliance, performance, efficiency, and effectiveness reviews conducted by a legislatively commissioned investigative body. The most prominent group is the Government Accountability Office (GAO) at the federal level (Basu, Dirsmith, & Gupta, 1999; Dodaro, 2011). GAO style review is not exclusive to the federal level, and all state legislatures have a review body that produces program evaluation reports. These reports are often called audits within this community, but these reports are not financial audits that apply generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). Rather they are program, efficiency and effectiveness reports that comply with GAO yellow book standards (GAO, 2011). In Utah, the Office of the Legislative Auditor General (OLAG, 2008) is the legislative review body. Government accountability reports produced by this office are called Legislative Audit Reports, comply with GAO yellow book standards on performance evaluations, and do not use GAAP financial audit principles. Performance evaluations often address financial management or other financial matters, but also address compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness reviews of program, or agencies', use of resources to accomplish policy goals (Basu et al., 1999).

<div align="center">Purpose</div>

This study examines how government accountability reports influence political actors' public education policy decisions. In this study, Kingdon's (1995) agenda setting

theory, Edelman's (1964) political spectacle theory, and Yanow's (1996) mythmaking theory are used as the theoretical framework for evaluating the role of government accountability reports in policy formation.

<u>Research Questions</u>

Using a qualitative case study design the following questions are addressed:

- Do government accountability reports influence public education policy?

- How do political actors' use information that is, or is not, consistent with normative assumptions when constructing public education policy?

- How do political actors' use of government accountability reports of public education programs fit theories of agenda setting, political spectacle, and mythmaking?

- Why have audits been used to gather information when other sources of information (think tanks, coalitions, agencies, lobbyists) are present?

These questions are investigated using the government accountability report process in Utah. The Utah Legislative audit process portrays a linear and rational process and provides multiple data points. The process alludes to a problem identification stage, problem review stage, and decision-making stage. Excluding media artifacts related to the audit process, all information is publicly available government records, available to the public through electronic searches on the Utah Legislature's website.

While the audit process portrays a rational-comprehensive approach to decision-making, political scientists have challenged this model of policy decision-making (see Allison, 1971; Anderson, 2010; Edelman, 1964; Kingdon, 1995; Lindblom, 1959; Stone,

2004). This myth of rational-comprehensive decision-making is outlined in greater detail in Chapter 2. If the rational-comprehensive decision-making model is a myth, then how government accountability reports are used in policy formation needs further explanation.

Potential Significance

This study can shed light on how political actors at the state level use information to influence public education policy. Marshall, Kirst, Wirt and others have provided theories about intergovernmental assumptive worlds (Catherine Marshall, 1985; Catherine Marshall et al., 1986) and influence of positional power brokers' (Wirt et al., 1988) influence on public education policy at the state level. These theories are illuminating but recent scholarship has focused more on the federal role in education reform (DeBray, 2001, 2006; DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). State level analysis typically examines issues of implementation (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001; Elmore & Furhman, 1990; Fuhrman, 1993; Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Spillane, 2004). The decentralized nature of public education places different responsibilities on state political actors in the formation of policy compared to political actors at the federal level. This methodology for studying state public education policy provides education advocates perspective about state political actors' information use in policy formation.

There is limited understanding about what government accountability reports are and what they represent. This study can be used to inform the education community about government accountability reports, their influence on policy, and their role in the public narrative about public education. Regardless of knowledge about government accountability reports, agencies are subject to the scrutiny and potential embarrassment

that comes with report findings and recommendations. Koyama and Varenne (2012) outline how a report can transcend its original position as a passive artifact and become "an object or a 'thing,' if not a 'fact,' that requires future actors to respond to it 'as if' it were an agent requiring particular responses" (p. 157). Legislative audits do take on an object status beyond an evaluative report. "Practically this means that, when confronted by an object, whether natural, mechanical, or regulatory, actors must take it into account in terms of its overt properties, as well as unspecified latent properties that may emerge through their response to the object" (Koyama & Varenne, 2012, p. 157). Legislative audits are widely assumed to be unbiased sources of information. Because audit reports come from legislative staff they are assumed to be free of political affiliations and are portrayed as authoritative program reviews. This study challenges the bias free assumption of government accountability reports through analysis of the audit request process. Knowledge of this process can assist public education administrators in managing this process effectively.

Finally, this study has the potential to make political actors at the state level accountable for their expenditures. Public education is heavily criticized for its inefficient use of public money (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hanushek, 1981) with claims that no accountability for outcomes and expenditures has created an inefficient system. This study shows that a government accountability reports in Utah cost between $150,000 and $200,000 per report. Yet public education policy is not impacted, statutorily or administratively, through these reports. Legislators decry lack of accountability and ineffectiveness of public education while they pour public money into ignored audits.

State policy makers use of this process should be scrutinized when audit report recommendations are not acted upon.

<u>Limitations</u>

The examination of the Utah context makes this study unique. Utah does have a stable political environment that is historically dominated by the Republican Party. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, this trait is a methodological positive, for data analysis, but a limitation for applying this methodological approach to other settings. This methodological approach to studying state level political actor decision-making through government accountability reports will require replication in other states to see if the methodology provides similar results.

This study relies on examination of government accountability reports that are based on a legislative model using GAO yellowbook standards. While all states have a performance evaluation model based on GAO yellowbook standards, each state's process may have unique elements, such as a different request process. The government accountability report process is an important aspect of the analytical power of the methodology as conceptualized. Until replicated in other settings, this methodological approach for studying political actors' use of information is limited to the Utah context. However, the potential of this methodology is significant, given all 50 states' use of government accountability reports.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 examines the rational-comprehensive decision-making model and reviews critiques of this decision-making myth. Political actors' motivation to perpetuate a myth of rationality is based on modern scientific management culture. A challenge to a modern conception of rational decision-making is addressed by examining policy analysis in comparison to orthodox social science research methodologies. Policy analysis is a distinct research methodology that uses a narrative approach to examine contextual factors, normative assumptions, and assumptive worlds to detail political processes. Contextual factors, normative assumptions, and assumptive worlds are embedded in education interest groups and coalitions. Think tanks, member associations, media and political actors all seek to influence public policy. Use of myth, crisis, and metaphor by these groups to influence public education is examined. A rational approach to policy would identify problems first and solutions second, but more often policy entrepreneurs present a solution looking for a problem (Kingdon, 1995), rendering the rational-comprehensive model a myth.

<u>Rational-Comprehensive Myth</u>

Political actors have cultivated an image of a rational-comprehensive approach to decision-making (Anderson, 2010; Lowi, 1964; Theodoulou, 1995). Anderson (2010) describes rational-comprehensive theory as "the best known theory of decision-making…" (p. 127). Rational-comprehensive theory projects a linear decision making model that identifies a problem, seeks information, evaluates all possible alternatives and outcomes before constructing a solution (Anderson, 2010). The rational-comprehensive model portrays complete and accurate information in decision-making (see Allison, 1971, Lindblom, 1959 for a critique of this assumption).

However, political decision-making is not a simple linear process and a number of variables must be considered when looking at how political actors receive and use information (see Kingdon, 1995; Stone, 2004; Yanow, 1996). Conceptualization of rational-comprehensive decision-making is inconsistent with scholarship on how political actors make decisions (see Allison, 1971; Anderson, 2010; Edelman, 1964; Kingdon, 1995; Lindblom, 1959; Stone, 2004). Kingdon (1995) describes the policy process as "solutions looking for problems," Allison (1971) addresses the reality of information availability, and Lindblom (1959) names the incremental nature of decision-making "Muddling Through." In spite of critiques against the rational-comprehensive decision-making model, this theory persists. One explanation for the persistent assumption of rationality is that modernity projects rational, efficient systems as optimal.

> In the early 20th century, the ultimate in educational policy making was rationalism, broadly believed to be the antidote to political corruption and graft. The governing approach relied on inductive reasoning that painstakingly detailed ideal processes, measured effort, set improvement goals, and rewarded conforming contributions. It owed much to the view of industrial efficiency practice promoted by Frederick Winslow Taylor. (Shipps, 2011, p. 261)

Optimal or not, the rational-comprehensive theory of decision-making is shown to lack validity or reliability in predicting political action (Anderson, 2010, Lowi, 1964; Edelman, 1964; Kingdon, 1995; Yanow, 1996). "Public policy making is a political process, not a matter of intellectual problem-solving, research information is usually only a small part of the knowledge used, practical experience and skilled judgment being much more important." (Hammersley, 1994, p. 146). Hammersley's position that policy is not an intellectual matter is consistent with Edelman's (1964) discussion of the symbolic nature of policy. Raab (1994) provides further perspective to the objective and subjective divide,

> Although methods and subjects vary, policy sociologists examine the relationship between process and product, and between motive and action. In each case, however, knowledge of the former is to be gained empirically and not on the basis of inference from the latter or by deduction from grand theory. Hence the importance of going beyond the public pronouncements of 'policy makers' and actually talking to them, for meanings and 'assumptive worlds' are essential parts of the policy process and require to be understood if action itself is to be understood. (pp. 23-24)

According to Raab (1994) reason alone is insufficient and reliance on a rational deductive grand theory to understand decision-making is similarly insufficient. Understanding contextual factors is necessary. Factors like subject matter,[1] institutional context,[2]

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[1] See Pillow's (2004) discussion of teenage pregnancy and how a significant decline in teenage pregnancy did not change attitudes about benefits for pregnant teenagers.

[2] See Kingdon's (1995) discussion of how executive agencies manipulate data to showcase themselves in the best light possible.

social context,[3] politics,[4] philosophy,[5] history[6] and others play a role in political actors' decision-making. Kingdon (1995) describes how political actors are influenced by a blend of contextual factors. Kingdon concludes that blended information is not technically detailed information bred of intense studies or actual experience; it is a blend of general information and politics. Ball agrees with Kingdon, saying "policies are both systems of values and symbolic systems; ways of representing, accounting for and legitimating political decisions. Policies are articulated both to achieve material effects and to manufacture support for those effects" (Ball, 1998, p. 124).

The rational-comprehensive model myth leads to a perception of a correct answer or 'Truth'. This results in social science research, including education, seeking to emulate the 'hard' sciences' methodology and discovery of 'Truth'. Proponents of social science research have tried to establish their discipline as a valid scientific field, equivalent to physics and mathematics. Seeking equivalency to 'hard' science has resulted in a premium on the objective conception of 'knowledge' and 'truth' (Edelman, 2001, p. 105). Marshall (1961), in discussing economics, makes the vision of social science clear: "[t]he striving for exactness in economics helps to define laws of nature" (Marshall, 1961, p.

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[3] See Stein's (2004) review of the Title I legislative debates. Societal context impacts resource allocation decisions; choosing between funding a remedial program for low SES students or a remedial program for all students, regardless of SES status.

[4] See Vinovskis's (1999) historical analysis of Head Start and Even Start programs. Political support must be considered, even when evaluations do not present an image of program success.

[5] See Chubb and Moe (1990) for a philosophical argument about markets and government role in public education delivery of services based on market reform.

[6] See Shipps' (2011) description of historical nostalgia for an education system managed at the local level.

30). The goal of social science, like economics, is to find and define laws of nature that have predictive power (Marshall, 1961). The goal is to move beyond discussion of what has happened and find universal truths in human behavior. Charles Fourier stated that "a principle akin to Newton's physical principle underlies social relations" (Rima, 2000, p. 222). Carl Menger lauds the usefulness of deduction over induction as the preferred method for studying economic outcomes (Rima, 2000).

Edelman (2001) is critical of social science's approach to emulating research methodologies.

> Scholars who think social science analysis should imitate physics and mathematics to achieve similar successes assume that scientific methodology is more logically rigorous and more pervasively quantified regardless of the issues with which it deals. But any careful examination of the history of the "hard sciences" makes it clear that the premise is largely false. It is not the content of these sciences or the range and depth of the opportunities or quantification that social scientists should most admire but rather their willingness to embrace ambiguities, uncertainties, contradictions, counterintuitive hypothesis, and thought experiments…Strangely, social scientists often see these practices as incompatible with science and to be avoided. (p. 104)

Efforts to emulate the 'hard' sciences has led to an orthodoxy of acceptable research methods (Bredo, 2009; Confrey, 2006; Howe, 2009; R. B. Johnson, 2009; Seltzer-Kelly, 2008; Tillman, 2009). Establishment and use of methodologically sound educational research standards has not influenced policy or decision-makers. In fact the opposite is true, as educational research has been labeled 'soft' or unscientific and, as a result, ostracized (Troyna, 1994). Successful implementation is not related with technical difficulty but with "'socio-technical controversies' (Callon, Lascoumes, & Barthe, 2001) in which multiple actors are playing not only with their roles but also with each other, their policy contexts, and policy itself" (Koyama & Varenne, 2012, p. 161). Within social science research, policy analysis has developed as an alternative approach to standard

orthodox social science research methodologies. Policy analysis as a field within social science research is discussed in the next section.

Policy Analysis versus Mainline Research

Policy analysis has supporters and detractors within social science research. Traditional scholars do support policy analysis but only go so far in defending policy analysis as a theoretical approach to knowledge. Conversely, policy analysis detractors do admit there is a place for this approach to seeking knowledge.

> Case studies of the *policy-making* process constitute *one of the more important methods of political science analysis*. Beginning … in the 1930's, case-studies have been conducted on a great variety of decisions. They have varied in subject-matter and format, in scope and rigor, but they form a distinguishable body of literature which continues to grow year by year. (Lowi, 1964, p. 677 *emphasis added*)

This same attitude toward policy analysis is not shared by all social scientists.

> Much of what passes as *policy research* – particularly by substantive area specialists – shares all the *defects of traditional case studies* in public administration: descriptive analyses of specific institutions or decisions relying upon very subjective methods of data acquisition and analysis. Virtually no attention to the theoretical assumptions underlying the research or the theoretical implications of the findings, and very little concern with the potential generalizability of those findings. (Sabatier, 1991, p. 145 *emphasis added*)

This statement from Sabatier is clearly not a ringing endorsement for policy analysis. And Lowi (1964), after calling policy analysis "*one of the more important methods of political science analysis*" (p. 677), follows up with this critique.

> Case-study in the politics of foreign trade, suffers the one debilitating handicap of all case-studies, the problem of uniqueness. The case casts serious doubts on the perspectives employed in most case-studies because of the *rare comprehensiveness and exhaustiveness of its analysis*, which goes far beyond the storybook and paste-pot relations among participants usually contained in case-studies. (Lowi, 1964, p. 686 *emphasis added*)

Despite these criticisms, policy analysis still does have a place in social science. "None of these sources of strain should pose serious obstacles to close collaboration between 'mainline' political scientists and the subfield of policy scholars" (Sabatier, 1991, p. 146).

These statements by Lowi and Sabatier identify a number of important distinctions between research and policy analysis. First, policy analysis, in the form of case studies, is a "*distinguishable body of literature.*" This statement makes it clear that Lowi differentiates case-studies of the "*policy-making process*" as an endeavor separate from political science research. Second, according to Sabatier, policy scholarship is a "*subfield*" within political science. Policy research is different from the research of "*mainline*" political science. According to Lowi and Sabatier, there is a difference between political scientists and the "*subfield*" of policy scholars. Both Lowi and Sabatier refer to case studies as distinct from the type of research they, as "*mainline*" political scientists engage in. Lowi says case-studies have a problem of "*uniqueness,*" typically have a "*storybook*" quality, and are predictable, "*paste-pot,*" in their analysis and connections. Sabatier echo's Lowi saying case studies' unique focus means they cannot "*generalize findings.*" Additionally, criticisms include "*subjective methods*" in "*data collection"* and "*analysis"* and lack of "*theoretical*" deductive framing.

Applying Fraser's (1994) model of rhetorical analysis reveals that Lowi and Sabatier cast "*mainline*" research as: theoretically based, grounded in a deductive approach to verifying knowledge, utilizing objective criteria to collect and analyze data, generalizable, and not written in a colloquial narrative. I agree with the last part about the difference in writing style. In spite of the criticism of every aspect of case-study policy

analysis, it is "*one of the more important methods*" and allows for "*close collaborations*" between scholars.

Research Projects an Objective Conception of Knowledge

The Lowi and Sabatier critique of case study policy analysis illustrates the conceptualization of social science as a deductive, generalizable, and theoretically grounded discipline similar to the 'hard' sciences, such as physics and mathematics. Research methods seek a verifiable grand theory of human behavior that is universal and eternal. This is demonstrated by the replication of quantitative metrics that accurately predict outcomes. The grand theory will exist in nature and is not subject to the foibles of human bias and proclivities. As a result, regardless of paradigm or bias, no debate will exist over social interactions or aspects of social experience, such as education. No ideology will control the grand theory of human behavior.

Research Is Looking Internal

The grounding of research in theoretical models focuses attention on discrete aspects of social interaction. Examples of these discrete aspects include motivation, relationships, decision-making models, role of government and class. Vinovskis' (1999) historical analysis of federal programs, Head Start and Even Start, is illustrative. This historical analysis of program evaluation reports showed no clear statement of program success. While some results showed benefits, others showed no meaningful impact on students' education. The evaluation results showed these programs are, at best, not a "*negative*" for participating students.

For the most part, researchers looking at the success or failure of an intervention or program only see how an approach works inside the existing framework of education. Continuing Vinovskis' example, Head Start and Even Start are locked within a convoluted system of Federal and State cooperation, funding, and reporting requirements. The lack of overall guidance and structure for thousands of Head Start programs created a hodgepodge of programs with no consistency of implementation or evaluation. The simple statistical principle of regression to the mean could have predicted that the average result would be millions of dollars spent on a glorified day care program. In spite of the obstacles, some Head Start programs showed success is attainable (Vinovskis, 1999, p. 75; Perry School Program in Ypsilanti Michigan). But on average the lack of standards and coordination was difficult to overcome. Regardless, Head Start and Even Start's research findings did not negatively impact political actors' support for these programs.

> They listened to the moving personal tribute paid by Christopher Atchison, an Evan Start Parent; they also followed sympathetically the testimony of Mary Brown, an Even Start Supervisor, who provided a testimonial on behalf of the program based on her own experiences. (Vinovskis, 1999, p. 137)

Vinovskis goes on to detail how committee members simply ignored the dismal reports and increased program funding anyway. These findings foreshadow politicians' information utilization identified in this study.

Policy Analysis Is Looking External

From the Vinovskis example, it is clear that the decision of the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunity was influenced by something other than rational and orthodox program evaluation research. Vinovskis' (1999) historical analysis shows

that policy, including education policy, is a political process that is negotiated and filtered through the typical political machinations.

Ball's (1997b) critique of "mainline" program evaluation is that programs cannot be isolated and evaluated in exclusion of the entire context of the education enterprise. "The result is typically a reiteration of the 'policy-practice gap', with an implicit or explicit assumption that the gap represents an implementation failure on the part of teachers or schools" (Ball, 1997b, p. 265). The singular focus obscures the broader context of the bricolage of policy.

> A great deal of education research dislocates schools and classrooms from their physical and cultural environment. They all begin to 'look' and 'sound' the same. The second aspect of localities relates to this latter point: that is, the failure of policy research to convey a sense of region, or community setting. (Ball, 1997b, p. 267)

Policy analysis conversely seeks to frame the contextual factors and place the decision-making process in context of various subjective criteria.

Normative Solutions and Assumptive Worlds Examination

Policy analysis, and the use of case studies, is a rigorous approach to seeking knowledge (Murphy, 1980; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) cautions that there is a perception that case studies are just for exploratory research (Yin, 2003). Policy analysis employs the case study design as one way to trace the various sources of information that shape a policy's story. Policy analysis considers contextual factors, including subject matter, technical nature, institutional context, social context, politics, philosophy, and history. It should come as no surprise that policy analysis takes into account the same factors that have been shown to influence policy actor decision-making (see Allison,

1971; Anderson, 2010; Kingdon, 1995; Lindblom, 1954; Stone, 2004; Yanow, 1996).
Policy analysis uses as many factors as necessary to inform the narrative and is not tied to
one specific theoretical tradition.

The effect of policy analysis on education policy reveals that interest groups,
coalitions, and partisan think tanks influence education policy discussions and decisions.
Additionally, the media is used by interest groups, coalitions, think tanks and politicians
to influence public perception of education issues. Each party plays a role in the
construction of the meta-narrative that surrounds public education (Roe, 1994).

<div align="center">Normative Assumptions</div>

Normative assumptions influence policy formation, including education policy.
However, within policies themselves, assumptions are not explicitly communicated (Ball,
1997b; 1998; Mitchell & Mitchell, 2011). For example, White middle class standards are
assumed for the operation of public education. Additionally, Western economic thought
established itself as the most rational, efficient, and effective approach to education
(Apple, 2001b; Berends, 2009; Wells, 2009). In discussing the 'sense-making' model,
Spillane (2004) argues that people defer back to their paradigm, or ideology, when trying
to make sense of a novel situation. In Spillane's example, school administrators mediate
new policy against their existing paradigm. The conflict between a new policy and
existing ideology influences an administrator's implementation. An example of this is
illustrated by school administrators' resistance to the *Brown v. Board of Education*
(1954) Supreme Court ruling. Edelman (2001) supports Spillane's conclusion that a
person's paradigm influences their reaction to a novel situation. "Ideologies, then, evoke

stereotyped, often false, assumptions and beliefs, and the assumptions and beliefs are proclaimed as fact. When counterevidence is presented, those who hold these beliefs are likely to express anger" (Edelman, 2001, p. 87). In the case of Brown v. Board (1954) integration requirements departed significantly from the existing ideology of some school administrators and resulted in anger (Shipps, 2011).

<div align="center">Identifying Normative Assumptions</div>

Critical research seeks to identify normative assumptions in society. Edelman claims, "if a person's ideology is known, a great many of his or her linguistic pronouncements are also known because they do not involve independent thought" (Edelman, 2001, p. 87). This perspective details a constructivist framework where reality is constructed from normative assumptions. Information and evidence does not necessarily shape decisions, information and evidence are reinterpreted to match individuals' normative assumptions (Spillane, 2004). Understanding that individuals' normative assumptions reinterprets information is part of policy analysis.

Edelman's (1964) perspective on the symbolism of politics can be applied when looking for assumptions within policy language. According to Stone (2004) ambiguity in policy language is purposeful but "the text surrounding a term is one of a number of crucial determinants of meaning" (Edelman, 2001, p. 99). Beyond the ambiguity of policy construction, the ambiguity of language adds yet another layer of complexity. Roe (1994) provides a framework for analysis of complex social environment by looking at the meta-narrative, stories, and critiques that exist around a policy issue. Through narrative policy analysis normative assumptions, values, and bias are identified. As

normative assumptions are identified, critiques of society's existing framework that produce, reproduce, and sustain inequalities can be made. Critiques of the hegemony are not without challenges, and barriers exist that suppress critical work.

<u>Shaping the Education Discussion</u>

A variety of information sources influence political actors' decision-making. Self-interested parties, like interest groups (Apple, 2001b, 2008), coalitions and think tanks (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Scott, Lubienski, & DeBray-Pelot, 2009), are examples. Political actors also get information from the media (Edelman, 1964; Kingdon, 1995) and agencies (Kingdon, 1995). These information sources are assumed to be less biased than interest groups and think tanks. Theodoulou (1995) presents theories about interest groups, external to government, influencing policy. Apple and Pedroni (2005) refer to these external groups that engage in tactical action to perpetuate hegemony 'subaltern groups'.

Diverse Education Interest Groups

The permeability of ideological party lines is a compelling reason to examine public education's place in the policy environment. Historically, educators have been aligned through venues such as unions with the Democratic Party (Shipps, 2011). Recently, the teacher union/Democratic Party coalition has been strained as the focus on education increased and national displeasure with the state of public education is vocalized (E. Johnson, 2005; Scott et al., 2009). Historically aligned education interest groups have moved away from strict party lines because of the lack of success with 1970s

and 1980s education reform (Mitchell, 2011; Shipps, 2011). An example of alignment between disparate groups is the support for NCLB, and the Bush Administration, by the NAACP in 2001 (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). As education becomes a policy topic at the national level, differences between parties have decreased. This centrist trend has resulted in decreasing difference between Democrat and Republican approaches to education policy at the federal level. Ideological lines that once existed are no longer well defined.

<div align="center">Solutions Looking for Problems</div>

Kingdon (1995) debunks the rational-comprehensive myth of decision-making by detailing how interest groups, or policy entrepreneurs, have solutions seeking problems. The solution looking for a problem approach is the reverse of the conceptualized linear system. Kingdon details how policy entrepreneurs, and their accompanying interest group, pursue a policy goal. Welner's (2008) policy analysis of neovouchers provides a good example of a solution seeking a problem. Voucher programs are not a new policy recommendation: Milton Friedman suggested them in 1962. Vouchers have been discussed off and on by conservative administrations since Reagan (DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007; Viteritti, 2009). But the public is reluctant to take money out of the public education system to fund private, often religious, schools (Viteritti, 2009). Additionally, there have been Establishment Clause challenges at the Federal level (Zelman v. Simon-Harris, 2002), and Blain amendment challenges at the state level (Bush v. Holmes, 2006), to the constitutionality of state funds going to religious schools (Bolick, 2009; Kemerer,

2009). Welner's (2008) analysis shows how neovouchers are just the latest repackaging

of an old solution to address current Blain amendment challenges.

<div align="center">Coalitions</div>

Apple (2011) provides a framework for how interest groups form coalitions that

expand and move beyond group borders and begin to influence the politics and agendas

of other localities. Coalitions form around diverse issues where mutual support is

beneficial for otherwise divergent groups (Anderson, 2010; Apple, 2001; Lowi, 1964).

Assumptions about party lines for coalition membership need to be evaluated becasue

evidence continually shows how political issues can make strange bedfellows (see Apple,

2001; Edelman, 1965; Fraser, 1994; Kingdon, 1995; Welner, 2008; Yanow, 1996). Two

examples demonstrate unique coalition compositions: neoliberal conservatives and urban

minority groups joining around school choice options (Apple, 2001a; Apple & Pedroni,

2005; Scott, 2011) and the NAACP with the conservative Bush administration in 2001 as

mentioned earlier (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009).

Educational choice has resulted in unexpected coalitions. The support of school

choice options is not exclusive to the suburban middle class. Students who are identified

in low SES and racial minority groups are taking advantage of school choice options,

such as charter schools (Ladd & Fiske, 2001) and voucher programs (Nechyba, 2009).

> Yet if the formation of groups of African American voucher advocates is a
> response to the failure of the post-*Brown* era to sufficiently deliver upon Brown's
> promise of democratic educational access and control, the question still remains
> as to whether it is an effective response. (Apple & Pedroni, 2005, p. 2074)

Whether or not the coalition around vouchers is in the long-term best interest of the

African American community is debatable, but an unexpected coalition around school

choice has formed nevertheless. It is necessary to evaluate the connections that exist

between otherwise divergent groups. Regardless of issue and composition of a coalition,

according to Lowi (1964), no two coalitions are ever the same even where issues seem to

have similar objectives.

Think Tanks

To advance ideological agendas, think tanks have proliferated since the

conservative intrusion in to education policy during the late 1980s (DeBray, McDermott,

& Wohlstetter, 2005; DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007; DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Scott

et al., 2009). The new Republican government's lack of political familiarity with

education policy in early 2000 was a factor in the perception of traditional advocacy

groups being a part of the problem (Scott et al., 2009).

> In this political context, many Republican education staff considered traditional
> education interest groups to be the "status quo" establishment. Republican staff
> associated these groups with the failure of compensatory education programs, and
> the traditional education lobby groups were displaced by newer, more
> conservative think tanks and coalitions. (Scott et al., 2009, p. 5)

This argument is supported by Lincoln and Cannela (2004) when they address

conservative organizational push-back against liberal intellectual traditions.

Think tanks are in the business of producing findings that fit the model of

orthodox research and are publicly acceptable to policy makers. Think tanks use

methodological approaches that meet the criteria of a group like WWC or EES (Confrey,

2006), which justify Confrey's fear of standardized methodologies discussed earlier.

Think tanks present their research as methodologically sound and their conclusions as

absolute and definitive. The subtlety and nuance that is inherent in pure research

endeavors does not exist in think tank reports; only clear unambiguous conclusions as statements of fact. Think tanks and policy centers produce reports supporting their ideology (Hess & McGuinn, 2002; Lowi, 1964; Scott et al., 2009).

> Yet, no matter how radical some of these proposed reforms are and no matter how weak the empirical basis of their support, they have now redefined the terrain of debate of all things educational. After years of conservative attacks and mobilizations, it is clear that "ideas that were once deemed fanciful, unworkable—or just plain extreme" are now increasingly being seen as common sense. (Apple, 2004, p. 17)

Edelman (1998) details how political actors use information, such as a think tank report, to justify their policy solution. Kingdon (1995) and Stone (2004) both support Edelman's position about the use of information to influence the polis. Think tanks aligned with political agenda items are a ready source of information supporting political actors' solutions.

Media Is Used to Control Message

Political actors actively shape policy messages through information in the media (Edelman, 1964; Edelman, 1988; Edelman, 2001). Message shaping happens through language use (Falmer, 1994; Johnson, 2005), connection to public awareness (like through crisis) (Edelman, 1964; Kingdon, 1995; Stone, 2004; Yanow, 1996), and social concern (Johnson, 2005; Pillow, 2004; Welner, 2008).

Stone (2004) outlines the use of ambiguous language in policy as a purposeful tactic to advance agenda items. "Ambiguity…is an innate characteristic of language and is especially conspicuous in political language because by definition politics concerns conflicts of interest" (Edelman, 2001, p. 80). Ambiguity in language allows disparate groups to seek their own interests through an otherwise mutually exclusive agenda item.

Edelman supports Stone's (2004) policy paradox discussion about necessity of ambiguity in language.

> In some forms of writing and speaking ambiguity must be recognized as the major purpose of the language rather than as an obstacle…Political language is typically ambiguous because the ambiguity serves a purpose for interest groups and public officials. (Edelman, 2001, p. 81)

Language construction, such as metaphors, is used to create images that are interpreted according to tacitly understood normative assumptions.

Metaphor

Johnson (2004) provides a clear example of how language is used to shape public perception through the use of metaphors. "Striking metaphors as well as conventional and common beliefs and stereotypes comprise part of the large body of sources from which memorable images can be forged" (Edelman, 2001, p. 11). Use of metaphors provides the public with a concrete association for otherwise abstract concepts. In the case of Arizona Prop 203 (prohibition of dual language in Arizona elementary schools) metaphors of the American Dream and Opportunity were used. Fraser (1994) and Pillow (2004) both highlight the "welfare queen" metaphor as a dominant image when trying to discuss issues of welfare in the United States. "Diversity in meaning is even more evident in different people's response to the same language, most often because of a failure to take into account the disparities in connotations even when the denotations are mutually understood" (Edelman, 2001, p. 80). Metaphors use tacit knowledge of target groups existing normative assumptions to establish connections to political agendas.

Crisis

Stone (2004) believes that "[n]ew statutes and regulations generally get their impetus from some kind of crisis" (p. 296). Kingdon (1995) reaffirms Stone's analysis when he stated "[p]roblems are not self-evident by the indicators. They need a little push to get the attention of people in and around government. That push is sometimes provided by a focusing event like a crisis" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 94). Kingdon goes on to explain how political actors exploit a crisis to advance their policy solution. "[The Public] ignores these things until political actions and speeches make them symbolically threatening or reassuring; and [the public] then responds to the cues furnished by the actions and the speeches, not the direct knowledge of the facts" (Edelman, 1964, p. 172). A crisis can be a major calamity, like a hurricane, but it does not have to be. A crisis can be constructed and, according to Edelman and Kingdon, often the public needs to be made aware of a crisis. But construction of a crisis, such as 'welfare queens', takes more than speeches by political actors.

Tacit knowledge and understanding of constituents (Yanow, 1996), interests groups, and coalitions is an import part of controlling the media message, through crisis or otherwise. In outlining the etymology of 'dependent', Fraser (1994) discusses the pervasive neoliberal attitude of self-sufficiency and connotations of welfare recipient pathology. Political actors' understandings of social norms and mores allow for message construction that resonates with target groups. Welner (2008) provides an example of this in marketing neovouchers to Arizona's electorate.

> In fact, one of the primary promoters for Arizona's tax credit policy has acknowledged the strategic use of low-income families, first admitting that the present system probably helps the middle class and wealthy more than the poor

and then characterizing advocates' attempts to sell the program as helping poor children as "only an angle." (Welner, 2008, p. 32)

Political actors knew a policy that benefited the wealthy would not get broad support, so they framed the neovoucher program as benefitting low SES families. Political actors use the media to construct messages consumed by target groups.

Myth

Using metaphors and ambiguity of language, political actors create myth around policies and political agendas. "A very high proportion of the beliefs that guide political conduct and political rhetoric accordingly are myths" (Edelman, 2001, p. 4). Myth creation is part of the construction of socially acceptable agenda items. Kingdon (1995) does provide for a process whereby the 'facts' win out, but those situation are rare. Yanow (1996) details how tacit knowledge is used to construct and reinforce political actors' agendas. This perspective details a constructivist framework where reality is constructed from an operating paradigm. Information and evidence does not necessarily shape conclusions. Messages are reinterpreted to match an individual's paradigm, consistent with Spillane's (2004) sense-making. Controlling the media message is a politically savvy way for political actors to address a number of self-serving processes. "The leaders dramaturgical jousts with public problems make the world understandable and convey the promise of collective accomplishment to masses who are bewildered, uncertain, and alone" (Edelman, 1964, p. 91). Political actors control messages through language (Johnson, 1996), crisis (Kingdon, 1995), and tacit knowledge (Yanow, 1996) to create an image that solicits a response by the target group. "In that sense images are a fundamental element in determining the political strength or weakness of the various

groups in society" (Edelman, 2001, p. 13). So what is public education's constructed image? The image created around public education, teachers, and administrators is examined using narrative policy analysis.

Image of Education

Education has been given panacea status for social and economic problems (Dale, 1994; Vinovskis, 1999). Edelman argues education is placed in this position because education is not under the control of political actors at the federal level. Other issues, such as military spending and foreign policy, which are controlled at the federal level, are the real source of national problems (Edelman, 2001). The media is used to create an impression that social deficiencies are education's failure, as well as education's role to solve.

By examining and highlighting limited programs with enormous social objectives, the entire edifice looks as if it is a corrupt system that is not in line with social goals (Ball, 1997a, 1998). A narrative is created of public education being a black hole, with no accountability (Chubb & Moe, 1990). This image is created in response to an existing solution. Normally, before an issue attains a solid position on a decision agenda, a viable alternative is available for decision-makers to consider. It is not enough that there is a problem, even if it is a pressing one. There also is generally a solution ready to go, already softened up, already worked out (Kingdon, 1995). Again, a neoliberal solution to a crisis in education is available.

> Faced with this sort of dilemma, vouchers and tax credits offer an attractive
> alternative. Instead of trying to fit all schools to all children, they facilitate each
> family's ability to choose an appropriate school. This is particularly salient in the
> area of religious teaching, since the establishment clause prohibits public schools

> from providing the religious education that many parents want for their children. Tax credits and vouchers offer a loophole, allowing the government to assist all parents in funding in their children's education, even if those parents' educational decisions are driven by religious beliefs. (Welner, 2008, p. 37)

An image of a dysfunctional education system has been crafted. Teachers, administrators and researchers have been vilified (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004), called soft (Troyna, 1994), and excluded from policy discussions (Vinovskis, 1999; Pillow, 2004). Political actors would perpetuate the myth that this is a rational response to facts that have been presented. However, it is clear that political actors do not engage in rational-comprehensive decision-making. Decisions are influenced by contextual factors such as subject matter, institutional context, social issues, politics, philosophy, and history.

Having examined public education's metanarrative in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 lays out this study's approach to examining political actors' decision-making. Using government accountability reports in Utah shows how rational-comprehensive information's influence on educational policy is a myth. I use a case study design to construct policy analysis using Utah's Legislative Audit Report process to examine how political actors' talk about accountability, but are not accountable themselves.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The Utah State Legislature provides an opportunity to examine how policy-makers use information, in the context of normative assumptions and assumptive world. Establishing policy-makers' normative assumptions, in connection with information used for decision-making, is difficult according to Anderson (2010). First, normative assumptions should be interpreted using multiple data points (Day, Sammons, & Gu, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Yin, 2003). Second, establishing what information is available to a policy-maker when making a decision is difficult (Allison, 1971; Bridges & Watts, 2008; Lindblom, 1959). Through the use of Utah's legislative audit process, policy-makers' normative assumptions are interpreted and sponsored legislation may be analyzed in comparison. Koyama and Varenne (2012) detail how political artifacts, like audit reports, take on added significance and acquire an object status that political actors must have a response for (p. 157). This response must conform to the "object-like" nature of the report in spite of a high degree of "play" in actual implementation. Cross-case analysis revealed decision-making patterns through comparison to established normative assumptions, audit findings, and sponsored legislation.

This methodology is organized around three general areas. Part I addresses the elements of the research Questions. Part II outlines the study design and how case study methodology is consistent with my research epistemology. Part III details data analysis, including document analysis, of multiple sources of information.

<div style="text-align: center;">Part I State Level Focus</div>

A state-level focus provides a breadth of educational issues not seen at the federal or local level, together with a depth of data sources for analysis. State-level policy-makers are the appropriate level of analysis, rather than federal policy-makers, because public education is primarily a state issue (Shelly, 2007; USDE, 2003; Watson & Reigeluth, 2008). State-level analysis was chosen over local-level because state-level policy-decisions have a broad impact (Young & Miller-Smith, 2006) relative to narrowly-focused community matters (Nowakowski & First, 1989).

State sources of information provide a depth of available data sources. Cultural artifacts, compiled through the legislative audit process, provide multiple sources of information on a single issue. The multiple sources include official legislator questions, independent audit findings, subcommittee debate, and media reports. It is this combination of data sources around state education policy that allows for this study design. The Utah political environment is considered next.

<div style="text-align: center;">Utah's Political Context</div>

DeBray (2005a) establishes that a critical factor of analysis is the political history and positioning of the legislative actors relative to the administration. Scholars of

educational politics have shown that political position is not as simple as 'Right' or 'Left' (Apple, 2001b; DeBray, 2005a; Kirst, 2007); grey areas of overlap have been identified in educational politics. As a result of this overlap, position relative to the administration at the time of study is a factor to be noted (DeBray, 2005a). It is with this perspective that I address the political context of Utah.

Utah is a politically conservative state and the Republican Party controls the House, Senate, and Governor's office.[7] Utah is geographically diverse and isolated from neighboring states' major population centers. Utah's relatively small population translates into only five Electoral College votes and five representatives in Congress.[8] Minor influence on federal politics, and predictable general election outcomes, resulted in little national attention to Utah over the past 25 years. However, attention to Utah nationally is increasing. Utah gained a fourth seat in the House of Representatives, together with an increase in Electoral College votes, in the 2012 general election, as a result of Utah's population growth.

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[7] The Governor of Utah has been a Republican since 1985 when Norman Bangerter defeated Scott Matheson. Both the House and Senate of Utah have a majority of Republicans historically and specifically over the time frame of this study, since 1976. There are pockets of Democrat influence that mostly exist around the state capitol of Salt Lake City.

[8] Utah has had three representatives in the House of Representatives since 1983. Like all States, Utah has two Senators for a total of five representatives. The Number of representatives, both Senate and Congress, is the total number of Electoral College votes a state receives.

Utah's Religious Context

Utah politics are influenced by religious doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon). The history of the Mormon Church preaches a self-sufficient independence and obedience to church leaders. Oppression of Mormons, in the church's early history, cause the Mormon majority to defend their state rights and see encroachment as a direct attack on their way of life. This history leads to an attitude of self-determination and defense of state rights in Utah politics.

Utah's stable political environment is beneficial in this analysis. The lack of large political swings in Utah provide a constant backdrop for my construction of normative assumptions. This simplifies the analysis of policy actors against the dominant administration (DeBray, 2005a). Utah's political consistency is a benefit to this study. Normative assumptions as a social construct are addressed in the next section.

Normative Assumptions

Normative assumptions are socially constructed viewpoints of reality (Grondin, 1994; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Schwandt, 2003). These assumptions convey messages about what are normal and appropriate standards, behavior, and expectations. Construction of reality is dependent upon sociocultural factors and can be interpreted through an analysis of cultural artifacts (Grondin, 1994; Schwandt, 2003). As noted above, the construction of Utah policy maker normative assumptions takes into account Utah's political context.

Rationale for Study

An analysis of sponsored legislation, in the context of direct answers to specific questions, can provide insight into how direct information, or conversely assumptive worlds, influence policy-makers. If Utah legislators sponsor legislation after requesting a legislative audit, then the policy should reflect the audit findings in a rational-comprehensive world. If analyses of audit request questions and resulting sponsored legislation are not consistent with audit findings, then the audit findings, as objective information, are not driving sponsored legislation. Conversely, if sponsored legislation reflects the audit findings, then patterns in policy-maker use of information can be identified. Ultimately, if a practical application for state and local education officials is identified, then the ability to more effectively communicate with state legislators is possible.

Policy Matters

Public education is directly and indirectly impacted by decisions of policy-makers. Bridges and Watts (2008) call for a systematic inquiry to consider "what sort of knowledge in what form policy-makers do in fact commonly take into account" (p. 41). The study of policy-maker decision-making patterns at the state level is important because education is a state function at its core.[9] State policy also plays a role in influencing the national education debate (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Scott et al., 2009). Both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush used their states' education history as

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[9] Public education has experienced significant creep by the Federal government. However, education still is the responsibility of state governments. State governments are responsible for the execution, oversight, and funding of public education.

platforms in their election campaigns (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). Current federal education policy, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (DeBray, 2005b; DeBray-Pelot, 2007a), is an extension of state education policy. Yet there has been little attention to state-level political actors' educational decision-making (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2010).

Utah Exists in a Larger Policy Context

The study of Utah policy-makers is interesting given the dominance of the Republican Party and conservative tradition. In addition to the state political climate, this analysis takes place in context of the national public education debates. Examples include the school choice movement, including vouchers (Apple & Pedroni, 2005), charter schools (Wells, 2009), and tax subsidies (Schencker, 2011). Broader national education discussion, such as school accountability, student accountability, merit pay, and education standards, are also prevalent.

Methodology Not Unique to Utah

Utah is not alone in the use of a government accountability report process to provide independent information to legislators. All states have legislative audit functions, at the federal level the Government Accountability Office (GAO) exists in this same role (Dodaro, 2011). This analysis is limited to the state level to address the breadth of education policy and takes into account Utah's political context situated within the national public education debate. This study uses Utah's legislative audit process to analyze political actors' decision-making against preexisting normative assumptions. This study's methodological approach shows that patterns exist in the Utah context and

need to be validated in other states. The second section of this paper outlines the study design and the constructivist holism epistemology.

<div align="center">Part II Understanding Is Constructed</div>

I am working from a constructivist holism epistemological framework for this study (Howe, 2009; R. B. Johnson, 2009; Schwandt, 2003). Explicit in my approach to this study is the concept that knowledge is constructed and an outside observer can create understanding that approximates the original spirit (Grondin, 1994). I also assume that understanding is not independent of the sociocultural conditions (Caelli, 2000). Howe (2009) argues that social science is not independent of bias and interpretation. Bredo (2009), Johnson (2009), and Tillman (2009), all critical of Howe, agree that there is a construction of meaning based on position, perspective and other aspects. Schwandt (2003) argues that "there is an inevitable historical and sociocultural dimension to the construction" of knowledge (p. 305). "Like money on the international markets, truth can be treated as a commodity which is worked up, can fluctuate, and can be strengthened or weakened by various procedures of representation" (Potter, 1996, p. 5). With the variability of truth in mind, holism provides a bounding and context beyond individual artifacts. It is with a variety of sociocultural artifacts that a logical framework for interpretation is created.

<div align="center">Multiple Data Sources</div>

The value of using the Utah legislative audit process is the availability of multiple sources of information surrounding a single policy question. Through examination of the

multiple data sources that comprise the legislative audit process a narrative is
constructed. Individual pieces tell a story, but independent of the whole, they present an
incomplete narrative. Through the use of multiple sources, triangulation of data
constructs a complete narrative (Day et al., 2008; Merriam, 1998; Murphy, 1980; Yin,
2003). As more and more elements are added, a more nuanced image emerges.
Richardson (2003) conceptualizes the interpretation of these social artifacts as a crystal
that is organic and growing (pp. 517-520). The interpretation grows and gains more
facets as the layers of complexity are examined and placed in context of each other.
Multiple data sources are necessary to construct valid interpretations of present normative
assumptions. This approach constructs policy-makers' normative assumptions within the
sociocultural environment. The study design integrates multiple sources of information to
achieve its objectives.

<div align="center">The Study Design</div>

This is a collective case study as defined by Stake (2003). This approach is used
to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general conditions. This study looked at the
phenomena of how information is used by political actors in decision-making. Case
studies provide a methodological framework for analyzing multiple sources of data. Yin
(2003) states that case studies are appropriate when "questions deal with operational links
needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidences" (p. 6). Case
studies are defined by Yin as investigating contemporary phenomena within real-life
contexts. They are well suited for investigating the boundaries between phenomena and
sociocultural environment. Case studies use multiple sources of information, "no single

source has a complete advantage, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible" (p. 85). Murphy (1980) supports Yin in the use of multiple data sources when doing evaluations.

Common Approach

Case studies are the typical approach used to study policy-makers and the decision-making process (Merriam, 1988; Murphy, 1980; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003). A classic example of policy-maker decision-making is Allison's (1971) case study of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Different uses of information in decision-making were the focus of Allison's study. Numerous other examples of case studies used to investigate decision-making are available (Yin, 2003). As described in Chapter 2, political scientists are critical of the case study approach to understanding social phenomenon. The critiques outlined by Lowi and Theodoulou also come with a recognition that case studies contribute to the study of politics.

Construction of Meaning

Narrative policy analysis is used to construct meaning from the multiple sources of information within this multiple case study design. According to Roe (1994), there are four steps to narrative policy analysis: identification of stories and arguments, identification of nonstories or counterstories, comparison of the information from steps one and two to create a metanarrative, and reconceptualization of the metanarrative so typical analytic tools can be applied. Narrative policy analysis takes a holistic view of highly uncertain issues that have no clear boundaries or sharp ideological divisions. This

methodological approach to data analysis provides a mechanism for all data to be analyzed in a holistic manner. All data contribute to the constructed metanarrative describing a complex political environment. Narrative policy analysis frames stories as sociocultural artifacts that attach meaning and order to otherwise complex and irreconcilable facts. Construction of meaning happens within socially constructed narratives that represent norms and mores of constituents. Narratives represent ideology, agendas, and coalitions formed around complex issues. Since narrative policy analysis constructs meaning from stories, nonstories, and arguments this approach is consistent with my research epistemology. The construction of a policy metanarrative comes from knitting together existing narratives around a policy issue. Through the application of interpretive techniques to culturally constructed narratives, policy-maker normative assumptions are identified. This interpretation uses multiple data sources constructed by the legislative audit process.

Rationale for Chosen Methodological Approach

Case studies provide a methodological approach that manages multiple sources of information within a tightly conceptualized bounded system. The legislative audit report process is a tightly conceptualized system that involves multiple sources of information. This study depends on the ability to construct policy-maker normative assumptions, from cultural artifacts, constructed by the legislative audit process.

Individual Case Studies

This study constructs individual cases, using multiple sources of information, using legislative audit reports. The case study methodology organizes multiple data sources for analysis within this bounded system (Stake, 2003). I have conceptualized the legislative audit process as a discretely bounded system to analyze the amorphous issue of political decision-making. Each legislative audit process represents a unique and discretely bounded system as described by Merriam (1988) and Yin (2003). Each case study is bounded by information related to specific legislative audit reports. The scope of each case is limited to the direct questions of the audit request. Each bounded collection of historical artifacts is augmented by an interview with the audit requesting legislators. Audit requesting legislators' sponsored and cosponsored public education legislative bills are identified and reviewed. Legislators' bill histories are examined from 1997 with attention given to time from audit prioritized until audit completion.[10]

The legislative audit process focuses attention on a single public-education question and provides multiple sources of information about that question. This analysis makes use of official information commissioned by the legislature. I assumed that if a specific legislator commissions an audit then they cannot disavow knowledge of the information, when sponsoring legislation. It is theorized that if subsequent sponsored legislation does not reflect officially commissioned sources of information then external forces, such as assumptive worlds or normative assumptions, influence political actors' decision-making. If subsequent sponsored legislation is adapted to address audit report

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[10] An audit can take up to 1 year to complete and take over a year before being prioritized high enough to be staffed. The time between being approved by the legislative audit subcommittee and completion can be almost 3 years.

findings, then analysis of audit report conclusions can be used to show how legislators are influenced by information sources.

Collection of Case Studies

The individual case study profiles were used to identify patterns. Patterns were looked for within case studies (horizontally) and across case studies (vertically). Critical education moments, both in Utah and nationally, were placed in context around legislative audit report topics. General techniques for case study analysis such as pattern matching, time-series analysis, and logic models were applied (Yin, 2003). Merriam (1988) says that

> [a]nalyzing data in a qualitative multi-case study is identical to analyzing data in a single qualitative case study. The difference is in the management of the data; the researcher probably has considerably more raw information and must find ways to handle it without becoming overwhelmed. (p. 155)

From this perspective the management of the data is important and the analysis applied to the individual case studies was conceived carefully and applied consistently.

Case Study Sampling

To provide a holistic picture, a historic review of public education legislative audits was undertaken. Phase I of the data review looked at all public education related legislative audits since 1979. A legislative audit of public education was determined by the response agency (e.g., the State Office of Education, local school districts, or other education groups). A loose definition was applied when including audits. The intent was to include as many audits related to public education as possible. Phase I of the analysis looked at historical trends and general contextual factors. Phase II drew from this

information selecting a small subset of legislative audits around the common education policy issue of Class Size Reduction (CSR). Phase II constructed case studies that examined multiple data sources inherent in the legislative audit process.

Case Study Data Source

Data sources used to examine policy-makers use of information included government documents, committee-meeting minutes, media artifacts, and sponsored bills. Legislator interviews were used as a member checking process to evaluate the validity of this methodological approach for examining political actors' use of information in policy formation. Other sources were also used, such as Utah's Legislative Fiscal Analysts (LFA) annual budget reports.

The Utah Office of the Legislative Auditor General (OLAG) is one of four offices within the Utah Legislative branch of government and independently produces audit reports at the direction of the Legislative Audit Subcommittee. OLAG is an independent office that conducts efficiency and effectiveness evaluations of compliance with legislative intent (OLAG, 2008). The office was formed in 1976 and was modeled after the GAO, an agent of Congress (Dodaro, 2011). The OLAG audit reports are used to scope these case studies.

The Legislative Audit Process

OLAG's process begins with a legislator's formal audit request letter. This letter defines the nature of the audit and scopes specific questions to be answered. Audit requests are then prioritized, during Legislative Audit Subcommittee meetings. This

subcommittee is a bipartisan, four-person committee composed of President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Senate minority leader and House minority leader. OLAG, independent of any oversight, conducts an audit based on questions asked and issues their findings in an official audit report. Audit reports are publicly released during Legislative Audit Subcommittee meetings and sent to other standing committees, e.g., the House Education Standing Committee (OLAG, 2009) for debate. The legislative audit process presents itself as a bias free review of government agencies that is objective and complete. The current process for audit requests began in 1990. Prior to 1990, audit requests were committee generated and did not come from individual requestors.

Government Documents

The majority of the data used for this analysis is from government records. Government records are freely available and Utah has made the majority of information accessible for free through websites. For example all legislative audits, from 1991 to present, are available on the Utah Legislature website (http://le.utah.gov/). Also available on Utah's Legislative website are transcripts of subcommittee minutes and audio files of meeting debates. Documents and audio records that are not available through Internet source are available in state archives. All of this information is available to the public for no cost. Accessing these data required basic archival searching and retrieval.

Committee Minutes

The Utah Open and Public Meetings Act (UCA 52-4-101 et. Seq.) requires audio recordings of all government meetings. Transcription of the audio recordings is necessary because the official minutes of meetings are not verbatim transcripts of the proceedings.

The relevant portions of meetings were transcribed. Time marks for audio clips were included in transcripts. Only the portions of debates pertinent to audit prioritization were transcribed. For subcommittee meetings that do not have Internet accessible digital audio files, the analog cassette tape recordings were accessed through State archives.

Media Artifacts

Media artifacts were collected through a search of Utah's major media outlets: Salt Lake Tribune, Deseret News, KSL, and Standard Examiner. The media attention given to legislative audits varied. Media attention received has multiple factors, including inflammatory nature of audit report findings and interest in audit reports released at the same time. For example, a recent legislative audit report on the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control has received significant print and television media coverage. Other reports released at the same time have not been given the same level of attention.[11] Archival searches of the major Utah newspaper and media outlets were conducted focusing on the week around an audit report's release.

Sponsored Legislation

From a rational perspective, sponsored legislation subsequent to a legislator's commissioning of a legislative audit could predict sponsored legislation. A rational-comprehensive policy model could predict sponsored legislation more closely resembling

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[11] During the Oct 18, 2011, Legislative Audit Subcommittee meeting there were two audits released. "A Performance Audit of Mandatory Student Fees at the University of Utah" Report #2011-12 and "A Review of Allegations Regarding the Management of the DABC" Report #2011-13. Only one article was written in the Salt Lake Tribune about the use of student fees while five articles were written about the DABC report.

audit findings than final legislation would. Every year numerous bills are sponsored or cosponsored by legislators. Few are considered during the larger legislative process. However, sponsored bills are not immaterial and Kingdon (1995) proposes that policy only advances when the right conditions, or windows, exist. Audit requestors' sponsored legislation was identified and patterns in legislator's public education related sponsored legislations were considered.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Rationale</u></p>

Case studies provide a framework for evaluating processes with a large number of contextual factors. The Utah legislative audit process provides a large number of data sources around a single issue. Unique to this method is the availability of an office record that clearly states the purpose and political actors' policy issue concerns. This type of information is elusive in policy evaluation (Anderson, 2010) and allows for an analysis that examines a political actor's normative assumptions against subsequent decision-making using official documents. Once an audit report is received the report's findings and recommendations are reflected in subsequent sponsored legislation. Figure 1 outlines a rational-comprehensive model; political-actors' have a question, requests a legislative audit, and sponsor legislation that reflects audit report findings.

Each stage of this model utilizes government records such as audit request letters, meeting minutes, and legislative bills. The only major departure from the use of government records is the use of media reports. However, political actors' statements to the media in regard to the audit process are official statements and of public concern. The audit process provides a unique tool into evaluating how political actors use information

to make policy decisions, because this methodology begins with an official statement about a policy problem. An audit request letter is an official document that clearly spells out a requesting legislators' reason for an audit, including areas of concern and specific questions to be addressed in an audit report.

The audit report stage provides clear unambiguous response to legislators questions asked in an audit request. The report represents a source of information that is official and, one would hope, influences policy. Availability of information for political actors at times of decision making is well documented as being questionable (Allison, 1971). If and when information is available (Allison, 1971), who supplied information (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Scott et al., 2009), and accuracy of information presented (Apple, 2001b, 2007a, 2008) are all challenges to policy analysis. The audit report process overcomes all of these challenges. First, the release of the audit report is a matter of public record. This overcomes the question of when information (like top secret intelligence) became known to political actors. Second, the source of the audit report is the legislative staff. This information is purchased and prepared using legislative appropriations funding an office that is supposed to be unbiased. The source of the information is not an ideologically driven think tank or other affiliated information monger. Finally, the audit report is supposed to directly address the specific questions of requesting legislators. Information is targeted to areas of concern at location of concern. Like the audit request stage, this stage of the audit process is augmented with official statements about the audit report, findings, and recommendations made in committee meetings and in the media.

Sponsored legislation is the final stage of the audit process. In a rational-comprehensive decision-making model this stage should follow the statement of problem and seeking of information (Anderson, 2010). A requesting legislator, in a rational-comprehensive model, should sponsor legislation that is in line with the information discovered in response to their questions (Anderson, 2010; Theodoulou, 1995). As addressed in Chapter 2 the rational-comprehensive model of decision-making is not consistent with identified decision-making practices (see Edelman, 1964, 1988, 2001; Kingdon, 1995; Lowi, 1964; Yanow, 1996). Sponsored legislation related to issues of concern should be in the proper time order (i.e., after the audit report) and should reflect audit report findings and recommendations. Of particular interest is sponsored legislation language in comparison to a requestor's normative assumptions established during the audit request stage. Given the volume of political theory addressing the lack of rational-comprehensive decision-making by political actors (see Allison, 1971; Edelman, 1964; Kingdon, 1995; Lindblom, 1959; Welner, 2008) it would have been a major finding if Utah political actors followed a rational-comprehensive approach to decision-making in connection with the legislative audit process. It was anticipated that political actors' sponsored legislation reflects their prior normative assumptions and not audit report findings or recommendations as modeled in Figure 2.

Government accountability reports provide unique data for the analysis of political actors' decision-making. This methodological approach overcomes typical barriers to the analysis of decision-making such as clear statements of problem by political actors at the beginning of a decision making cycle, official source of information that address a specific questions, and a final decision that can be compared to established

normative assumptions against complete objective information. For these reasons government accountability reports are a good resource for studying political actors' decision-making. Since the audit process is a complex environment with a variety of data sources, a case study approach is ideally suited to examine the interplay of these information sources.

Data Gathering

As mentioned previously the data for this study comes from government records and archives along with media reports. Data collection consisted of two phases, and Phase II had three stages. I will first discuss Phase I data collection.

Phase I: Data Collection

I.   All public education related legislative audits from 1979 to 2012 were identified through a data request to OLAG or procured from OLAG's website.

II. All audit requests from 2000 were requested from OLAG.

a.   Audit requests are not posted and available for access on Utah's legislative website. OLAG provided internal working documents for all audits requested from 2000-2011. These audit request sheets only went back to 2000 and no record was available before this time.

Phase II: Data Collection

The study's second phase conceptualized three stages to the audit process, as modeled in Figure 1. Focusing on a general public education policy issue legislative

audits investigated, three audits were selected for case studies. Three audits looking at CSR over 10 years were selected; audit report 2000-08 *A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education* (Schaff, Roos, Byrne, Herring, & Wright, 2000)*,* audit report 2007-14 *A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds* (Underwood, Marshall, Marks, & Bowen, 2007), and audit report 2009-04 *A Performance Audit of Elementary School Class Size* (Coleman, Stahla, Lehman, & Bereece, 2009)*.* The collective case study design examining this group of CSR audits modeled this policy analysis methodology.

As shown in Figure 1, there are three stages to the audit process analysis: audit request, audit report, and sponsored legislation. Each audit process stage provided multiple data sources and information for triangulation of data. Excluding the use of media information that is publically available, all sources of data are official government records.

Stage 1: Audit Request Data Collection

I.   Audit Request Letters are an official letter of request by a sitting member of Utah's House or Senate. These letters are not posted and available on the publicly accessible legislative website. However, this is a public document and a matter of public concern and obtained through a simple request for the document to the Utah Legislative Auditor General's office.

II.   An audit request's next step is prioritization during a legislative Audit Subcommittee meeting. An audit request does not guarantee that an audit report is produced. Normal business of the Audit Subcommittee is to hear requests for

audits and approve and prioritize requests. During this stage audit requests were reviewed and discussion among the committee, requesting legislator, and agency was analyzed. Audio records of these meetings is available to the public through the Utah Legislature's website or verbatim transcripts were obtained.

Stage 2: Audit Report Data Collection

I.   Audit Report: Legislative audit reports that have been completed since 1991 are available as electronic documents through the Utah Legislative Website. Audits that were completed prior to 1991 are available through request to OLAG. The three CSR audits used for this collective case study were completed after 2000 and electronically available. Audit reports provide data used for analysis primarily audit findings, audit recommendations, and agency response letters.

II. Completed audit reports are publically released during legislative Audit Subcommittee meetings. During these meetings OLAG staff provides detailed description and analysis of audit reports. Following OLAG testimony, committee members engage in a question and answer session with OLAG staff and agency officials. Audio archives are available for these meeting, and most since 1998 are publicly accessible audio files on Utah's Legislative Website.

III. There is regular media coverage of audit reports but the depth of media attention is variable. The media coverage is dependent upon a number of external factors, including aspects like major media events, other audits released at the same meeting, nature of audit findings (scandalous or banal), and time of year. A search of news print media was done looking at major media outlets along the Wasatch

front: Salt Lake Tribune, Deseret News, Standard Examiner and KSL. These are public sources of information and available through the news media website or news archive databases.

Stage 3: Sponsored Legislation

I. The Legislative audit subcommittee takes action that releases audit reports to interim and standing committees depending upon the time of year. Audit report related information was collected through these interim and standing committees. Transcripts of relevant committee discussions were made from audio files.

II. Requesting legislators' sponsored legislation was identified by doing a search of all sponsored legislation from 1997 through 2012 general session. All sponsored legislation is publicly available.

Phase III: Audit Review

The audit review stage examined administrative aspects of the audit process, such as the time between audit prioritization and release of audit reports. Other aspects considered in this audit review is cost associated with production of audit reports. The audit process also has consequences. For example, following audit reports it is not uncommon for personnel at an agency to be fired or reassigned. These types of responses were looked for but not investigated.

I. Two elements were examined when looking at the length of time for a legislative audit to be produced. First, the average length of time from audit request to completed full audit report was 492 days. Second the average length of time from

audit prioritization, when a request is placed as a priority for completion by the Legislative audit subcommittee, to complete full audit, 364 days. For the three CSR audits reviewed here the average from request was 303 days, and average time from prioritization was 243 days (See Appendix B).

II. Cost of producing legislative audits looked at two elements, total OLAG appropriations and number of reports produced. Total appropriations for OLAG from 2003 to 2012 were identified using LFA annual appropriation reports. OLAG produced reports were identified for this same time span. OLAG produces three types of reports: full audit reports, informal letter reports, and an annual report. The average cost of production for full audit reports was $196,300, and the average cost of all OLAG produced reports, informal letter reports and annual report was $145,700. The true cost of a full audit report is somewhere between these two numbers (See Appendix C).

III. Audit report impact looked for overt actions in response to audit report findings and recommendations. There were obvious actions taken, as reported by USOE in response to audit reports.

<u>Part III Data Analysis</u>

Data analysis was an ongoing process that began during the first stages of data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Richards & Morse, 2007). Field notes were used to document my experiences. I also memoed during the document review process. This consisted of documenting what I saw emerge from the data as I engaged it. Case profile synopsis sheets were generated looking at the elements

from the individual case studies (Yin, 2003). I applied an iterative process of examining the information (Stake, 2003) to look for multiple realties in the data (Tierney, 2003). Data analysis looked for patterns in multiple ways. Patterns across cases in audit questions, audit findings and sponsored legislation were identified. Analysis also looked at relationships between common elements. General techniques for case study analysis, such as pattern matching, time-series analysis, and logic models were applied (Yin, 2003) and identified common elements in audit requests and audit reports.

Narrative Policy Analysis

Narrative policy analysis (Roe, 1994) is used for examining the over 100 data sources collected. Each data source contributes to Utah's CSR metanarrative(s). Roe (1994) categorizes four contributors to the metanarrative: narratives (stories), nonstories, arguments, and critiques. Narratives or stories for Roe have a beginning, middle, and conclusion or solution. Nonstories are missing one of the necessary elements of a story and do not create a narrative but contribute to the overall metanarrative through contributing elements to narrative components. Arguments are straightforward with their premise and conclusion. Critiques are a challenge to the argument's premise and lack a conclusion. Regardless of the categorization of the narrative elements, each contributes to constructing a metanarrative surrounding policy. Documents, as artifacts of the past, are not objective indicators of 'Truth'; but rather biased representations of the author and intended audience. The narratives themselves constructed from government records and media sources do not represent 'Truth'; but a story that is 'true' for constituencies.

Government documents, as historical artifacts, are not value free and objective indicators of the culture, time, or conditions. Law is a source of bias used to perpetuate the status quo, maintain elites and marginalize groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Therefore legislative audits, requested by society's elites, maintain the status quo within the public education system. The very questions being asked by the legislators perpetuate bias. The audit request questions are designed to make inquiries that reinforce the legislator's normative assumptions and will be discusses in Chapters 4 and 5. Challenges to assumptions of schooling as neutral and apolitical, the myth of the meritocracy, equal opportunity, and "people" and "others," are made through this approach (Love, 2004, pp. 229-232)

Consistent with the constructivist holism epistemology, individual cases do not show patterns of behavior, but the collection of cases does show the types of questions asked by policy-makers and how they respond. Patterns of decision-making are identified by analysis across the collection of case studies.

<u>Data Analysis Summary</u>

The preceding section details data collection phases focusing on data sources and the steps for gathering information about political actors' decision-making. Data analysis had two phases. While this is outlined as a very linear and rational approach, the data collection process in practice had various sources of information available earlier than others. The benefit of this approach to studying political actors' decision-making is reliance on government records that are readily accessible to the public. At no point was it necessary to request data under Utah GRAMA laws (UCA 63G-2-204). As data were

collected all information was logged using a standardized format based on the Phase of data collection and activity. Following Catherine Marshall and Rossman (2011) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) memoing took place as I worked through the data to make initial connections and considered what the data communicated.

Phase I: Data Analysis Summary

All public education related legislative audits from 1979 to 2011 were identified with help from the Utah Legislative Auditor General's Office. Audit reports were logged chronologically and placed in a time line that represents major educational pivots since 1980. There was no connection between audit report themes and the following national education epochs: 1983 Nation at Risk Report (Vinovskis, 1999), late 1980s early 1990s Governor Education Reform Movement (DeBray, 2006; Mitchell & Mitchell, 2011; Shipps, 2011; Vinovskis, 1999), Goals 2000 (DeBray, 2006); NCLB (DeBray, 2006) and school choice proliferation (Chubb & Moe, 1990; DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007; Friedman, 1962).

Locally, patterns in transitions with governors and state superintendents were examined. A large spike in audit reports was identified that coincided with Superintendent Pattie Harrington's tenure (See Appendix D). Transitions in governors did not coincide with audit reports. Economic down turns in 1990, 2002, and 2008 did not reveal any differences in the number or types of audit reports produced.

<u>Audit Requests Analyzed from 2000-2010</u>

Audit requests provided contextual information about the legislative audit process and Utah political actors (See Appendix B). The Republican political party is dominant in prioritization of public education audit requests. From 2000-2010 there were 42 audit requests and 37 different audit requestors. Democrats requested four of 42 audit requests. Of those four Democrat requested audits, only one (Schaff, 2006) was actually completed as a full audit report. Over this time period 23 full audit reports were produced. It is also interesting to note that no public education related audit requests have been made by a Democrat since 2005.

Political position of audit requestors was also examined. Of the 43 different requestors identified there was a nearly even breakdown between Utah State Senators, 21, and Utah State Representatives, 22. Since there are 29 senators and 75 representatives in Utah's Legislature this balance may suggest that the Legislative audit process is more accessible to Senators or that Senators are more aware of this information tool because of their longevity in public service.

Gender differences of audit requestors were also examined. There appears to be gender bias in the legislative audit process. Seven of 42 audit requests had a female requestor. Four of seven audit requests had the same female requestor, Representative Dayton. Of those seven audit requests, five were completed as full audit reports. There have been no female public education audit requestors since 2005.

Through purposeful selection (Murphy, 1980; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003) three audits were selected for case study analysis. CSR audits were selected based on the recent clustering of these three audits. Public education funding addressed by these audits was

also a motiving factor for choosing these audits. Ability to see how USOE and public education had responded to legislative audit report conclusions over time was also desirable. Senator Bramble requesting both the 2007-14 and 2009-08 audits was also seen as potentially enlightening when an audit report does not provide information as anticipated.

<div align="center">Phase II: Data Analysis</div>

The second phase of the study conceptualized three stages to the audit process. Through purposeful sampling three CSR audits were selected for longitudinal analysis around a major education finance policy initiative. Each selected audit went through three stages of data collection and data analysis. After each case study was constructed and complete the cross case study analysis was used (Creswell, 2007; Catherine Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003). The collective case study design looked at a group of audits on a similar issue and showed that the audit process does fit decision-making as outlined in Chapter 2.

As shown in Figure 1 there are three stages to the analysis of the audit process: audit request, audit report, and sponsored legislation. Each stage of the audit process provided multiple data sources that provide a variety of data for triangulation of data.

<u>Stage 1: Audit Request Data Analysis</u>

Analysis of audit request letters used the contextual matters identified in Phase I data analysis. This includes the requesting legislators' political party and the national and local context that existed around the audit request. Further information about the

requester was identified, such as political agenda and ideological platform, e.g., education is not a typical issue for requestors. Text of audit request letters was analyzed and identified normative assumptions built into audit requests (Apple, 2001b; Ball, 1997b, 1998; Edelman, 1964).

Legislative Audit Subcommittee prioritization meetings were transcribed and provided data on various political actors that shape the audit process. Transcripts were coded and identified three perspectives represented in these meetings. First, requesting legislators' intent behind their audit request, including normative assumptions. Second, subcommittee member questions provided direction about how policy issues fit into educators' assumptive world. Finally, OLAG staff shaped audit scope through discussion with committee members.

Stage 2: Audit Report Data Analysis

Legislative Audit reports were analyzed to look for three main areas: audit report findings relative to request questions, audit report recommendations, and agency response letters. Audit reports were analyzed to determine whether and to what extent audit report findings addressed legislative request questions. There was a one-to-one relationship between audit findings and audit request questions. One exception was in the 2007-14 audit report, Senator Bramble's audit request letter specifically asked for a review of legislative board approved leeway, which the audit report did not address.

The three CSR audit report findings verified requesting legislators' normative assumptions present in their request letter. Audit report findings provided an answer to

assumed aspects of the audit request. However, 2007-14 audit report conclusions did provide a different perspective than legislators anticipated.

Legislative Audit Subcommittee Release Meeting

Transcriptions of legislative audit subcommittee meetings were coded. Auditor testimony was examined for message narrative. All audit reports were damning indictments of noncompliance with statute and general program oversight. Legislator questions and comments were analyzed and showed that committee members sought clarification from audit staff about findings. Committee members were very critical of USOE's noncompliance with statute in the 2000-08 and 2009-04 audit reports while for the 2007-14 audit report committee members redirected discussion toward charter schools as public schools and charter schools ability to achieve small class sizes using less money.

Agency responses to audit reports and corresponding committee questions were analyzed. USOE's committee responses mirrored their response letters. But USOE provided different responses to media outlets than their response letters and oral testimony to legislators. For the 2000-08 and 2009-04 audit reports, the state superintendent did not provide the agency response. For the 2007-14 audit report, the state superintended did provide the agency response to this committee. The 2007-14 audit report showed money was spent appropriately and CSR reduction was an ongoing maintenance program. USOE's responses assured legislators concerns are being addressed with no further action required.

Media coverage of audit reports was examined. All CSR audits received some media attention, but attention was limited to the day an audit report was publicly released. Media coverage generally sided with USOE and public education, even when the 2000-08 and 2009-04 audit reports found egregious accounting and compliance errors. Legislator media comments were coded and analyzed. Legislators' dedication to CSR efforts and questions about district willingness to support state CSR efforts were identified. USOE's responses in the media were analyzed and identified inconsistencies in USOE's message to the media versus what they told committee members. Overall the media's message appears to be biased in favor of USOE and public education.

Stage 3: Sponsored Legislation Data Analysis

Transcripts of interim and standing committees' CSR audit reports debates were coded and analyzed. Audit reports' relative position on the committee's agenda showed that legislative audit reports were a prominent issue on the committee's agenda and given plenty of time for full discussion. Questions from the House Education Standing Committee and Joint Public Education Appropriations Committee were very critical of USOE in 2000 and 2009. In 2008, USOE was not part of the agenda and not permitted to respond to the 2007-14 audit report in front of the Joint Public Education Appropriations Committee. In place of the typical agency response, charter school administrators provided testimony about their use of CSR funds and how they keep cost down (Public Education Appropriation Subcommittee, January 16, 2008).

USOE's response was analyzed and consistency was identified with earlier testimony before legislative committees. USOE did spin audit conclusions to pursue their

own agenda. It is important to note that USOE's response in this familiar forum did not differ from the response that was given previously in Legislative Audit Subcommittee meetings. USOE did downplay audit report findings. Auditor concerns were portrayed as a result of circumstances beyond USOE's control, someone else's fault. Interestingly, USOE in 2009, a year of looming budget cuts, focused their agency response on benefits of additional staff and financial resources. USOE used audit findings and recommendations to seek their own agenda: first by pushing for clarification in legal code, second by seeking increased funding for programs and staff, and finally by claiming they would work again with school districts.

Education committees' responses to audit reports showed audit report findings and recommendations were accepted and rejected by committees. As anticipated, audit report committees, USOE, and policy entrepreneurs reframed messages. However, requesting legislators surprisingly did not participate in committee discussions about CSR issues.

Sponsored Legislation

Requesting legislators' sponsored public education legislation was examined and provided the greatest surprises of this research study. None of the audit requesting legislators' sponsored any bills in any way related to CSR prior to or after the audit reports. Audit findings and recommendations were consistent with requesting legislators' normative assumptions as identified in their audit request letter. However, requestors do not appear to have a public education policy agenda prior to, or after, requesting the CSR

audit. Implications of these findings are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

The second phase of the data analysis utilized a number of data points and information sources. Public record analysis provided a rich source of information. Some elements of the analysis were as expected and others were a surprise. By looking across case studies, patterns were identified that suggest Legislative audits are a rich source of data for examining how policy is influenced. The next section will look at phase III data analysis.

Phase III: Audit Review Data Analysis

The audit review phase examined administrative aspects of the audit process, such as time between audit prioritization and release of audit report. Costs associated with production of audit reports were also considered. An average cost of a full audit report and average cost of all OLAG activities was calculated (See Appendix C). All legislative appropriations for OLAG from 2003-2012 were identified using LFA appropriation reports. Each year's appropriations were divided by the number of full audit reports produced and all OLAG produced reports, including informal letter reports and the annual report. This provided a range for each year. To address highs, $241,454 in 2008, and lows, $152,357 in 2005, an average cost over the 10 years was used, $196,284 for full audit reports and $145,712 for all activities.

An average length of time for a full audit to be produced was also calculated. Two different averages were determined based length of time from audit request to completion and length of time from audit prioritization until completion (See Appendix B). The

average length of time from an audit request until audit completion is 492 days. The average time from audit prioritization[12] until completion is 364 days. For this study's CSR audits, the average length of time from request was 303 days, and 246 days from time of prioritization.

Legislative audit reports are commissioned and paid for with taxpayer dollars. Perhaps the costs for good information to inform decision-making is worth the expenditure of public resources, but the information is ultimately not used to inform decision-making or influencing policy in any way. Is unused information worth the cost of acquisition? This is particularly galling given the public position taken against the fraud, waste, and abuse projected on public education's allocation and use of resources. Is it justified that between $150,000 and $200,000, and a year's worth of work, is invested into efficiency and effectiveness reviews that have zero impact?

<div align="center">Legislator Interviews</div>

Interviews with legislators were part of each case study to provide a validity check (Yin, 2003, p. 159). According to Yin, interviews with key informants to evaluate data analysis is an important step for construct validity of the data. Since my data analysis is document intensive, the perspective of the political actor provided a check on my analysis and gave me insight about my construction of meaning.

Utah's legislature is part-time with limited staff. The Legislative Office of Research and General Council (OLRGC) and Legislative Fiscal Analysts (LFA) Office

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[12] Prioritization is when an audit request is formally recognized by the Legislative Audit Subcommittee and given a priority rank among audit requests.

represent Utah's permanent staff. Utah's permanent legislative staff is assigned by topic area and not to specific legislators. The permanent staff include one education related staff member from the Office of Research and General Council and two education staff members from the Fiscal Analyst's Office. Because of Utah's part-time structure, the interview was with the audit requesting legislator and not legislative staffers, an approach that has been used in studies of policy-makers (DeBray, 2001)

Interviewing of Elites

The interviewing of Elites was an exciting aspect of this process. Senator Bramble, Senator Mansell, and Senator Beattie were interviewed for this study. Each senator provided unique and interesting challenges for this process. Flexibility with my time and location was important. Senator Bramble was contacted late in October to try and set an appointment in early December. Senator Bramble indicated he was busy and would not have time to schedule an interview, but then offered to have the interview over the phone right then. I took the invitation and spoke with Senator Bramble about his audit requests and why he used the legislative audit process. He claimed that the main purpose of these audits was to establish facts about CSR efforts. He went on to say people are entitled to their own opinions but they are not entitled to their own facts. He clearly placed the audit information in the fact category.

Senator Mansell presented different challenges to this process. He is no longer in the public sphere and was more difficult to contact. I happened to see Senator Mansell in the Salt Lake Airport and introduced myself and invited him to discuss his audit request. Senator Mansell asked questions about what I was looking at and provided me some time

to ask questions right then. We made arrangements to set up a time later to speak again as we went to catch our flights. I followed up and had a phone interview with Senator Mansell in December 2012. Senator Mansell indicated that he did not remember the specific audit request and felt that he was included on the request by Senator Beattie because Senator Beattie was the president of the Senate at the time and co-chair of the Legislative Audit Subcommittee. Similarly Senator Mansell indicated that this was so long ago he did not remember much about this issue. In 2001 Senator Mansell was named president of the Senate. As co-chair of the Legislative Audit Subcommittee he provided insight about audit reports but little in terms of information about CSR audit issues.

A similar narrative took place with Senator Beattie. Senator Beattie is now the President of the Salt Lake County Chamber of Commerce. I was able to sit down with President Beattie at his office for an hour to discuss the 2000-08 CSR audit report. Senator Beattie did not remember requesting the CSR audit but remembered the textbook funding audit that he combined with CSR during the April 2000 Legislative Audit Subcommittee Meeting he co-chaired. Because of his lack of memory about the CSR audit we spoke mostly about the legislative audit process. Senator Beattie discussed how an audit is really a last resort after attempts to discuss issues with agencies comes up lacking. He said typically if a request is made to agency staff, that is the end of the concern, because they usually provide the information you need quickly. Another element Senator Beattie addressed was the quality of legislative audits. His concern was that occasionally audits go in a direction that the committee did not expect or want. When this happened there is nothing that could be done and there is no way to respond to an audit. As a result these audit reports are ignored.

<u>Preparation is Paramount</u>

Because of how my interactions with Senator Bramble and Senator Mansell unfolded it is clear that preparation is critical when approaching these figures. Having a thorough knowledge of the events in question, political background, and history as recommended by Dr. DeBray (personal communication, October 4, 2011) was important when provided an opportunity to speak with these audit requestors.

Study Analysis Member Checking

A portfolio was prepared for each requesting senator, but because of how the process unfolded only Senator Beattie was presented with this member check device. This approach to transparency did not seem to provide a member check as envisioned. I feel the portfolio did however provide for a certain comfort level with the senators as I explained the process. As it happened the interviews did not provide any challenges to the analysis but did challenge a few assumptions about how politicians view public education.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This methodology establishes a systematic approach to evaluate political actors decision-making. The Utah legislative audit process is used as a bounded system for case study collection and analysis. Utah's political context and policy-makers' sociocultural paradigms are addressed. A constructivist holism paradigm is combined with case study methodology to manage and interpret multiple sources of data. With the researchers as instrument, sociocultural context is addressed including trustworthiness, ethical, and

political aspects of this research design. The methodology of this research study has three phases. First, the historical context is established through the identification of audit topics and their requesting legislators' information. From this contextual analysis a subset of audits that address the common policy issue of CSR was identified and used to construct case studies. The second phase of the study was case study data collection and analysis. The audit process is conceptualized in three stages for data collection and data analysis; audit request, audit report, and sponsored legislation. In each stage of the audit process multiple voices were examined, including the requesting legislator's, auditor's, and the agency's. By looking for themes within the audit process stages and across audit process stages, how political actors use the audit process was identified. The final phase of the study investigated the audit process itself. This looked at the financial cost for the audit report and the relative impact of the audit. Chapter 4 provides answers to the research questions outlined in the first chapter. Each research question is discussed again, with assumed outcomes, prior to detailing this study's findings.

Figure 1: Rational-Comprehensive Model
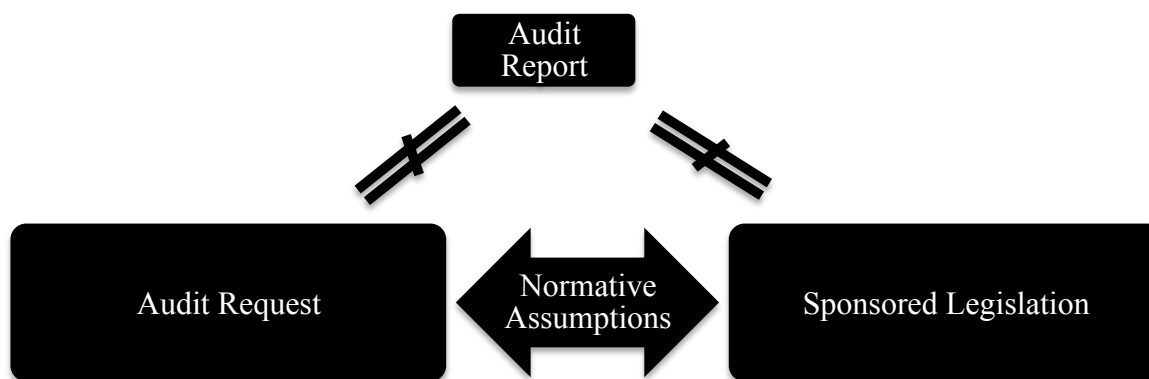
Figure 2: Expected Relationship of Audit Report to Decision-Making

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Do Government Accountability Reports Influence

Public Education Policy?

To answer this question I used a collective case study design examining three
legislative audits of CSR funds over a 10-year period. An examination of audit report
findings were compared to statutory changes following audit report recommendations.
The following section outlines the result of this analysis and highlights how examining
these audit reports reveal minimal effect from audit reports. I will briefly review
government accountability reports and their anticipated use. The remainder of this section
outlines how audit report findings repeat themselves, across these three case studies, yet
no change to statute occurs in a way that is consistent with audit report recommendations.

What Is a Government Accountability Report?

Government accountability reports represent a mechanism for collecting
information about a program or agency through an independent review. Independent
performance analysts examine efficiency and effectiveness of programs or agencies. At
the federal level the Government Accountability Office (GAO) performs these reviews at

the request of Congress (Dodaro, 2011). This type of independent review exists at nearly every level of government. In Utah, the site for this study, government accountability reports are called legislative audits and are performed by OLAG. OLAG is a member of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society (NLPES) a national organization representing state program evaluators under the umbrella of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

<div align="center">Anticipated Use of Government Accountability Reports</div>

Rational-comprehensive decision-making theory is used to evaluate the government accountability report process because these reports project rational-comprehensive decision-making. Specifically, the rational-comprehensive decision making model hypothesizes that as all information is collected, decisions will reflect that information. Since government accountability reports represent specific questions about public policy issues and receive comprehensive independent review, it is assumed that policy will be changed to reflect reported information. To examine this question, case studies are constructed that examine the audit question, report findings, and policy response (See Figure 1). While an investigation is initiated in different ways, the process in Utah allows for a specific legislator, or multiple legislators, to request an audit through filing an audit request letter with OLAG. This analysis assumed that audit requestors receive audit reports and respond with policy solutions related to audit report findings or recommendations. It is with this basic assumption that case studies have been examined.

Government Accountability Reports Do not Influence Public

Education Policy at the Statutory Level

An examination of audit report findings and recommendations over 10 years does not identify a corresponding impact on Utah Code. Audit report findings in 2000-08, *A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction in Public Education* (Schaff et al., 2000), repeat and are found in both the 2007-14, *A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds* (Underwood et al., 2007), and 2009-04 *A Performance Audit of Elementary School Class Size* (Coleman et al., 2009), audit reports. An examination of legislative histories for the three audit requestors showed no proposed legislation related to either the Appropriation for Class-size Reduction (2012) or the Board-Approved Leeway (2012). As discussed in the following section, each audit report recommends increased accountability for appropriations. And after each report, legislators expressed frustration over public education's inability to document how money has been spent. Regardless of legislators' expressed frustration, funding for each of these programs was maintained and "[s]ince 2006, annual increases in CSR funds have been more than double the annual student enrollment growth." (Coleman et al., 2009, p. 3). The lack of any proposed legislation by the audit requestor following audit findings and recommendations casts doubt on the façade of legislative audits contributing to a rational-comprehensive approach to decision-making. This supports existing literature that other elements influence public education policy decisions.

> Much problem-solving "is and ought to be accomplished through various forms of social interaction that substitute action for thought, understanding and analysis." Public policy making is a political process, not a matter of intellectual problem-solving, research information is usually only a small part of the knowledge used, practical experience and skilled judgment being much more important. (Hammersley, 1994, p. 146)

Understanding that policy making is not an intellectual exercise, it is not unexpected that statute would not bear a 100% correspondence to audit findings. This is the reason the last stage of the audit process focused on sponsored legislation and not enrolled legislation. However, what is a surprise is the lack of sponsored legislation that bears any resemblance at all to audit findings, or even topically related to CSR. This finding points to other factors influencing political actors.

Class Size Reduction Appropriations

Beginning in 1990, the Utah Legislature passed the Board-Approved Leeway (1990), followed in 1993 by Appropriation for Class-size Reduction (1993). These statutes provided additional revenue dedicated to reducing class sizes in Utah through district taxation (Board-Approved Leeway, 1990) and direct legislative appropriations (Appropriation for Class-size Reduction, 1993). Funding for class size reduction was targeted for grades K-8, with 50% of the funding directed to reducing class sizes in the lower grades K-2, "with an emphasis on improving student reading skills" (UCA 53A-17a-124.5(3)(b)(i)). In districts where class sizes were sufficiently small, school districts could certify through the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) that their class sizes were not a problem and allocate CSR money elsewhere (UCA §53A-17a-134(1)(a-b)). In 2009 OLAG reported that direct legislative Appropriations for CSR had reached $875 million since fiscal year 1993 (Coleman et al., 2009). Consistent with education spending, expenditures of class size money was tied to teacher salary and benefits (Coleman et al., 2009; Schaff et al., 2000; Underwood et al., 2007) and according to Underwood et al. (2007) CSR appropriation serves as a maintenance of effort program

and does not represent new money available for reducing class size if not funded for growth. In 2009 Coleman et al. (2009) estimated that the class size reduction appropriation annually funds approximately 1240 teachers across the state and had a potential of reducing class sizes by approximately three students. However, as a result of district accounting practices, OLAG was never able to identify how the money was actually used by districts (Coleman et al., 2009; Schaff et al., 2000; Underwood et al., 2007).

<div align="center">Three Audits: Nothing Changes</div>

In 2000 OLAG identified two major deficiencies with USOE accounting of class size appropriations: first, school district commingling of CSR appropriations with Minimum School Program (MSP) funds; second, inaccurate reporting of statutorily required data related to school class sizes. OLAG made recommendations in 2000 related to these areas of concern and emphasized USOE's responsibility in monitoring and administering education programs outlined by the Legislature. In response to the audit findings and recommendations, Associate Superintendent Pat O'Hara stated during the December 28, 2000 Legislative Audit Subcommittee meeting,

> …we've appreciated what we've discovered in the audit. We wanted to let you know that we've already began our work on this. We're convening a committee starting on the 9th of January with an effort to rebuild the annual financial report to capture the kinds of things that we need to. So, we wanted you to know that we've heard you and that we've understood the audit. And that we've already started to work on it. (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000)

USOE's inability to report on funds with specific line items was a frustration for legislative committee members. USOE committed to address this matter, in cooperation

with local school districts: "[m]any of the accountants who run these systems around the state are going to be meeting with us on the 9th in a series of conferences, that we're going to engage in, to rebuild the accounting system" (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). It is clearly stated in the agency written and oral response that USOE has committed to addressing the concerns over public education's accounting of legislative appropriations. However, USOE's narrative in 2000 did not yield agency or district changes that allowed for tracking of allocated funds in future audits. Specifics about the lack of accountability for appropriated funds and data quality will be detailed in the following sections.

Commingling of Funds

Auditors identified that school districts commingle CSR funds with MSP funds, resulting in an inability to identify how CSR funds have been used to accomplish statutory objectives.[13] OLAG attributed the failure of districts to account for CSR funds to mismanagement by USOE (Schaff et al., 2000). In 2000 commingling of funds was a significant finding based on the UCA §53A-17a-124.5 statutory requirement for an accounting of CSR funds §-124.5(8)(a) and detailed reports on how CSR funds are used to reduce class sizes §-124.5(8)(b)(i-ii). Audit recommendations from the 2000-08 audit report specifically outline the need to account for the CSR funds:

> 1. We recommend the State Office of Education develop appropriate class-size reduction reporting guidelines for Utah's school districts to report all future class-size reduction monies.

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[13] Statutory objectives of (UCA §53A-17a-124.5(3)(b)(i)) is the reduction of class size in K-8, with 50% focused on K-2.

2. We recommend school districts maintain separate accounting of class-size reduction funds showing how the funds are used to reduce class size. (Schaff et al., 2000, p. 10)

OLAG is clear in their recommendations to USOE and local school districts. Regardless of the clear directive for school districts to "maintain separate accounting of class-size reduction funds" in 2007, OLAG's review of how school districts have used legislatively appropriated CSR funds identified that only 18 of 40 local school districts maintained separate accounting for CSR funds. The 45% of districts maintaining separate CSR funding is higher than the 38% of districts identified in the 2000-08 audit report sample. However, this same issue is again identified after seven years and USOE's agency response in 2000 -- that they would "capture the kinds of things that we need" and "USOE again commits to working with districts to improve reporting mechanisms that will allow the accounting of expenditures by revenue source" (Schaff et al., 2000, p. 27) -- has not been followed through.

The lack of "accounting of expenditure by revenue source" is again a prominent element of the 2007-14 audit report, *A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds* (Underwood et al., 2007). One major difference between 2000-08 and 2007-14 audit report findings was a change to Utah Code §53A-17a-124.5 in 2003. In spite of OLAG recommending increased accountability for USOE and tracking of CSR funds, legislation was introduced that actually reduced school district reporting requirements for CSR funds. Reduction of statutory requirements for CSR reporting resulted in school districts' continued commingling of funds according to OLAG. OLAG also identified that public education in Utah is not subject to the Budgetary Practice Act (BPA).

Legislative staff in the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst (LFA) and the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel (LRGC) told us that

Budgetary Procedures Act (BPA) restrictions on transfers of budgeted funds between programs do not apply to the MSP. In fact, it has been accepted practice for revenues appropriated to different MSP programs (for example, kindergarten, grades 1-12, or CSR) to be combined or commingled in the districts' general funds.

Furthermore, LRGC staff indicated that education budget line items in the School Finance Act are treated differently from line items in the BPA. Each education line item—including CSR funds—is governed by its respective statutory language more than by the provisions of the BPA. As previously noted, statutory language currently does not require the specific tracking of CSR revenues to expenditures. Taken together, these current conditions in education budgeting do not promote CSR program accountability. (Underwood et al., 2007, p. 15)

No explanation was provided by OLAG as to why the budgetary standards all other agencies in Utah must comply with do not apply to pubic education and specifically the MSP. Had this been any other agency the lack of line item accounting would have been a violation of Utah's BPA. Dale (1994) cautions against assumptions that public education policy is unique relative to other social policies. It would be easy to simply point to this example as a demonstration of public education's unique position, but the reality is that exceptions to rules are made all the time. Without a more complete picture about Utah's agency budgetary practices it is unknown if public education is unique in this situation. However, this reality of Utah's public education budgeting seems to encourage legislators to engage in micromanagement when unable to get the level of detail they would like for decision-making. This issue will be addressed later in this chapter when I examine the question of why political actors use the audit process.

Poor Reporting and Inaccurate Data

The 2000-08 audit report finding showed a lack of data integrity in reports that were statutorily required (UCA §53A-17a-124.5(8)(a-b)). At this time, before 2003,

required reports included how CSR money was spent and how districts used CSR money in connection with local revenues to reduce class sizes. OLAG identified that "most districts…have not reported on how these funds were used" (Schaff et al., 2000, p. 7) and "USOE has not provided either the Legislature or the Governor with an annual report that details spending for any of the school districts" (Schaff et al., 2000, p. 8). OLAG reported in oral testimony that in their review they "could not justify 59% of class size reduction expenditures despite Utah Code requirements" (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). In defense of public education Patrick Ogden stated, "districts have good accounting systems. What we don't have are good reporting mechanisms" (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). This was followed by the speaker of the House stating "I don't know how you could be more clear than the statutory requirements that there has to be a report every year" (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). Frustration is evident from the speaker's statement about the clarity of legislative expectation. This same frustration is evident among legislators when the same issue of reporting requirements and inaccurate data is again highlighted 10 years later in the 2009-04 *A Performance Audit of Elementary Class Size* (Coleman et al., 2009).

Following the release of the 2009-04 audit report, Representative Newbold, co-chair of the Joint Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee, stated at the conclusion of USOE's response to the audit report:

> I gather that you sense some of the frustration from some of the members of this committee about discrepancies between reporting and what our data is actually telling us. Because if it is not collected, and calculated, accurately it really isn't worth the paper it is written on. (Legislative audits: Class size reduction, 2009)

OLAG's 2009-04 audit report identifies a number of reporting and data collection issues as they specifically looked to "determine if data integrity exists between school districts as to what districts report" (Senator Bramble, February 5, 2008 Audit Request Letter). What OLAG identified was severe miscalculations in the teacher-student and adult-student ratios, and to a lesser degree the classroom-student ratio. Each of these ratios are statutorily mandated measures USOE must report every year (UCA 53A-17a-301). For some school districts OLAG identified "problems so extensive that an average class size cannot be provided" (Coleman et al., 2009, p. 22). Impact of these problems on Utah's national perception is one area of frustration expressed by committee members.

The impact of USOE's data integrity issues affect the Federal Department of Education's (DOE) report on Utah's average student-teacher ratio. DOE reports a student-teacher ratio of 31.5:1 for Utah's primary grades (K-8), contrasted with OLAG's calculated student-teacher ratio of 24.4:1. OLAG identified that USOE had not included all eligible certified teachers in their numbers and had not provided teacher grade level data to DOE resulting in a mismatch of data used by DOE to calculate this ratio (Coleman et al., 2009). OLAG points out that USOE's teacher database "lack grade-level detail" (Coleman et al., 2009, p. 41). "Although statute requires the ratios to be reported by grade, USOE does not have the capability to report all teachers and adults by grade. Instead they reported each ratio, by district, in the Superintendent's report." (Coleman et al., 2009, p. 42). For each ratio Utah Code is clear about required reporting, including grade level data requirements.

Legislator responses to these audit findings include questions of purposeful

manipulation of numbers to benefit USOE (Report# 2009-04: A performance audit of

elementary school class size, 2009; Schencker, 2009a) and incompetence,

> I appreciate the challenge of trying to report to a federal agency and to a state agency and trying to do those databases but quite frankly I think a fifth grader could have figured that out and it is a little disappointing that it took the audit to try and get a true measure. (Speaker Clark, Legislative Audit Subcommittee, January 30, 2009)

The same data integrity and reporting concerns identified by OLAG in 2000-08 still

persisted in 2009-04. However, despite frustration over the lack of accountability related

to reporting requirements, the only substantive change to UCA 53A-17a-124.5 regulating

class size reduction allocations was in 2003 and actually reduced accountability. A brief

history of this process will be provided in the next section.

<center>Rhetoric of Accountability</center>

Following the 2000-08 audit report USOE's accountability was questioned and

prompted Representative Throckmorton to introduce House Bill 0267, Enhancement of

Public Education Taskforce, during the 2001 Utah General Session. This bill established

a task force that evaluated the role and responsibilities of USOE. This task force

reviewed issues of district and USOE accountability, the role of USOE as a regulator, and

public education's burden from compliance with legislative reporting requirements. The

result of this task force was House Bill 0039 that was introduced by Representative

Dayton during the 2003 Utah General Session. House Bill 0039 stripped UCA 53A-17a-

124.5 of many of the reporting requirements that were areas of concern outlined by

OLAG in 2000-08 audit report, specifically -124.5(8)(a) and -124.5(b)(i)(ii) discussed

earlier. It is the removal of these reporting requirements that led OLAG to conclude in its 2007-14 audit report that this has resulted in school districts commingling funds. "In our opinion, as the statute currently does not contain CSR reporting requirements the practice of commingling funds will likely continue" (Underwood et al., 2007, p. 15). The task force that was implemented, in part because of the lack of USOE accountability identified in the 2000-08 audit report, resulted in Legislation (Appropriation for Class-Size Reduction ,2003) that stripped accountability requirements from USOE and local school districts. This is directly contrary to OLAG's recommendations.

Program Reshaping

Following the 2007-14 audit report there was a large amount of rhetoric about reshaping the CSR program. A common narrative was to increase accountability through placement of incentive mechanisms. Senator Stephenson proposed that the incentives be placed in appropriation language: "I think it is time that we start to put criteria in place for them to continue to receive the money" (Proposed Bill/Intent Language, 2008). Representative Last, Senator Stephenson's Co-Chair on the Public Education Appropriation Subcommittee, stated, "I'm not really motivated as a legislator to keep sending them the money if it is not maintaining a certain threshold that they can't exceed" (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). Co-chairs of the Public Education Appropriation Subcommittee, Senator Stephenson and Representative Last, wanted requirements to accomplish something with CSR appropriations. Representative Morgan outlined a different approach for providing accountability to CSR. Her plan was to maintain current funding of the CSR program but appropriate more funds, $26 million,

through a grant based program where districts would apply for money that would have to be used to reduce class sizes (H.B. 0194, 2008).

> The reason we didn't just want to add this appropriation to the class size reduction line item that is already in place was because we wanted to put in the measure of accountability. The accountability is basically that this would be grant money. (HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through Grade Three, 2008)

Representative Morgan's bill passed in the house but died in the Senate before going to vote. Despite rhetoric about adding accountability measures to CSR funding the result was no change to CSR appropriation language.

The process for funding CSR has remained virtually unchanged since 1993, despite three legislative audits that have identified significant issues about the impact of this program. From FY1993 to FY2013 the CSR appropriations have increased every year (See Appendix A). Legislative commitment was maintained, even during the recent fiscal crisis with other programs experiencing cuts, CSR appropriations increased an average of 5.4% from FY2009-FY2013.

<div align="center">Requestors Never Sponsored CSR Legislation</div>

This study argues that government accountability reports portray a rational-comprehensive approach to identifying information to shape education policy. After examining the 10-year history of three Utah legislative audits, there is no indication that the audit reports' findings and recommendations have influenced education policy related to CSR appropriations. Over the time frame of the audits in question only one substantive change was made to the governing statute (UCA §53A-17a-124.5, 2003). This change occurred during the 55th Legislature and removed statutory accountability requirements contrary to the 2000-08 audit report recommendations. At no point did any of the three

audit requestors ever sponsor legislation, enrolled or otherwise, that was related to class size reduction, before or after the audit reports were released. Finally, similar findings related to public education's ability to account for the financial appropriations or statutorily required reports were repeated in the 2007-14 and the 2009-04 audit reports.

A lack of rational-comprehensive decision-making is not surprising given the volume of critique of this decision-making model (Allison, 1971; Lindblom, 1959) as discussed in Chapter 2. But this expectation for research-based decision-making is different when source of evidence is considered. Bridges and Watts (2008) challenge what is research and what is acceptable information for the policy arena. I argue Bridges and Watts' challenges are overcome when an entire legislative office is funded to produce information for policy makers.

What is surprising is the lack of adjustment by USOE to the critique of their general oversight and control when it comes to providing school districts accounting standards for line item program appropriations. Ball's (1997b) critique of program evaluations being ahistorical and myopic in relation to the education environment appears to be supported by these findings. Legislative audits are so narrowly focused in their examination of a policy issue that noncompliance with CSR is not placed in the broader social construction of Utah's public education system. This point is clearly addressed in the 2007-14 audit report that identified public education is not subject to Utah's budgetary practice act. Without recognizing how public education's budget is managed, simply looking at one line item does not provide a complete picture. More to the point, CSR in Utah is a complex matter with a number of variables such as population demographics, population distribution, capital resource allocation, and human capital.

Keeping class sizes small is one of many competing interests public education is balancing.

Additionally the inability of USOE to understand reporting requirements that are clearly outlined in statute is curious. I tend to agree with Speaker Stephens when he expressed to USOE "I don't know how you could be more clear than the statutory requirements" (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). Utah Code is not ambiguous about USOE's reporting requirements. Ball (1997a) challenges this rational perspective about school accountability. It needs to be remembered that public education has a large number of competing interests and school districts prioritize "issues perceived to be more urgent" (Nowakowski and First, 1989, p. 399). Statute may be clear on CSR but the relatively nominal annually CSR appropriation may place CSR reporting at a lower priority than minimum school program (MSP) reporting requirements.

It must be acknowledged that there may be a number of externalities that are affected by CSR audit reports. However these externalities are beyond the defined scope of this study. The information contained in these reports focuses on state law, administrative rules, agency, and district reporting practices. For this narrowly scoped area no significant changes were observed over 10 years. Undoubtedly the 2007-14 audit report that showed favorable use of CSR appropriations led to significant increases in CSR appropriations. This is documented following the 2008 general session. How state education administrators used this information to leverage increased appropriations is a separate area of inquiry.

Results from this study do not show audit reports resulting in sponsored legislation as anticipated. This does not mean that audits reports did not communicate other policy or political messages to USOE and school districts. One clear message that was communicated to public education officials by the 2000-08 audit report was the desire for USOE and local school districts to track expenditures by program and revenue source. Audit reports indicated the level of detail policy makers desire when asking questions about programs. It does not appear USOE, or the majority of school districts, took this message serious.

Anderson (2010) makes a clear distinction between policy outcomes and policy outputs. Policy outputs can be thought of in terms of "bean counting" and in context to CSR the potential number of teachers hired with the CSR appropriations or the student:teacher ratio. These outputs are only proxies for desired outcomes, better instructional environments and educational attainment by students in smaller classes. When considering the outcomes of class size reduction a number of verboten goals (Yanow, 1996) are communicated through various interest groups. For example the head of Utah's Education Association and Utah's State Superintendent refer to the impact on working conditions for teachers as a critical aspect of CSR policy (Schencker, 2007; Underwood et al., 2007). While this policy outcome is sought by some interest groups others groups have different goals for CSR. Examples include state representatives who express dissatisfaction with Utah's national position in key indicators of state commitment to public education. Teachers' working conditions or increasing Utah's position on national public education indicators could have been accomplished through these audit reports. However, these policy outcomes were not measured through the tools

used to construct these case studies. Policy outputs and outcomes may be purposeful or accidental. These accidental outcomes may be positive or negative externalities.

One externality that was identified is the symbolic nature of these CSR audit reports. For a brief time Utah Legislators advertise their commitment to CSR in Utah. They are able to indicate in clear and direct terms how much money they have committed to this policy goal combating a continuous onslaught of negative messages about Utah's support for public education. This is consistent with Edelman's political spectacle.

The results of this audit report and legislative history point to other mechanisms working within the political process that influence decision-making. Elements of those political processes will be explored as we address other research questions.

How Do State Political Actors Use Information that Is, or Is not,

Consistent with Normative Assumptions when Constructing

State Public Education Policy?

It was envisioned that the Legislative audit process in Utah would provide an answer to this question. The ability to track a political process from beginning to end has been shown to be a difficult thing (Anderson, 2010) and even discouraged by Kingdon (1984) who concludes that tracking down the origin of ideas is a waste of time. Since the legislative audit process begins with a letter from a senator or representative, this process seemed to offer a starting point from which to evaluate all future political action around a specific public education policy, in this case class size reduction. The audit request process was found to clearly outline assumptions of requestors and in some cases provides suggestions to audit staff how the requestor would do the investigation. These

three case studies followed a specific public education policy issue, CSR, across 10 years and identified audit conclusions and recommendations consistent and inconsistent with the audit requestor's assumptions. This section details the findings of this analysis by beginning with expected policy outcomes when audit reports confirmed, or conflicted with, the requestor's assumptions. I conclude with a discussion about how audit requests are generated and used by policy entrepreneurs.

Rational-Comprehensive Decision-Making Model Expectations

It was expected that constructing in depth case studies around a single public education policy would reveal policy entrepreneurs' use of government accountability reports to engage in agenda setting (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). It was anticipated that policy entrepreneurs with a policy solution would create a policy window (Kingdon, 1984) through initiating government accountability reports. It was assumed that political actors, as policy entrepreneurs, would use audit reports to draw attention to a policy issue and seek related legislation through selective interpretation of audit report findings or recommendations. Regardless of ultimate use, it was assumed that audit requestors would be involved in subsequent legislation related to public education policy. This was not the case. At no point did the audit requestors of the three CSR audits, sponsor or co-sponsor any public education related bills that in any way were related to class size reduction.

This result was not expected. However, these case studies did reveal some interesting elements that will be discussed in the following sections. First, there appears to be a broader use of the legislative audit process than to inform future legislation. Second, the legislative audit process, at least related to public education related audit

request, appears to be controlled by leadership. Finally, some evidence suggests that audit reports are used to advance agendas of other political actors.

Audits Requests Do Not Represent Requestors' Agenda

There were three requestors of the three CSR audits. President Beattie and Senator Mansell were listed as the audit requestors for the 2000-08 audit, while Senator Bramble requested both the 2007-14 and 2009-04 audits. As noted at no point before or after the request of these audits did the requestors sponsor or co-sponsor legislation related to CSR statutes. President Beattie, from 1997 general session through 2000 general session, sponsored or co-sponsored 46 bills. Only two bills during that time were related to public education.[14] Following the 2000 General Session Senator Beattie, President of the Senate at the time, resigned from the Utah Senate. Senator Mansell, from 1997 through 2006 general session, sponsored or co-sponsored 116 bills. Senator Mansell co-sponsored one public education related bill, House Bill 0040 "Funding for Textbooks," 2001 general session. Senator Mansell, who was President of the Senate during 2001 general session, served as the Senate Co-Sponsor with Speaker of the House Stephens. Senator Bramble (Senate Majority Leader from 2004-2012), since 2001 general session through the 2012 general session, has sponsored or co-sponsored over 800 bills with 24 (sponsored 7 and co sponsored 17) related to public education. In each case, audit requestors do not have an extensive history of sponsoring education legislation when

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[14] SB0161 2000 general session "Restrictions on Weapons – Elementary and Secondary Schools" and SJR0091, 2000 general session "Resolution on Funding the Arts in Public Schools."

compared to their bill history.[15] Senator Bramble's public education bills have a history of co-sponsoring the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship[16] and School district boundary legislation with nine co-sponsored bills related to these issues.

Leadership Agenda

Audit requestors were in Senate leadership positions when requesting these public education audits. During the initial stage of analysis, a breakdown of public education audit requests showed that senators proportionally request audits more than representatives in Utah (See Appendix B). Also party control of legislative audits is identified indicating that individual states' public education politics do not necessarily reflect national debates. Politics of public education nationally have changed from traditional party structures at the federal level since 1965 (Debray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). Both Democrats and Republicans have a public education agenda and "viewing the national politics of school reform through a narrowly partisan, ideological, or group prism is no longer sufficient" (p. 39). Acknowledging this federal level education policy dynamic recognizes that Utah's party experience shows how taking a state view is important for understanding the complexity of public education's politics nationally.

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[15] 2012GS (HB0156, SB0289); 2011GS (HB0087, HB0301, HB0302, SB0217, SB0278); 2010GS (SB0150); 2009GS (HB0425, SB0199); 2008GS (HB0363S01); 2007GS (SB0030S01, SB0194); 2006GS (HB0077, HB0230, HB0351); 2005GS (HB0007, HB0063S01, HB0231, HB0249, HB0326S01); 2004GS (HB0115S03); 2003GS (HB0149, HB0169)

[16] The Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship is a voucher program for students who have special education needs.

The issue of public schools class size as a significant public policy is evident in transcripts of the committee meetings addressing proposed class size reduction legislation. One specific example is an exchange between Representative Morgan and the House Education Standing Committee Chair, Representative Hughes. Representative Hughes asked, "I would like to know from the Representative how you got 900 people to email me on this issue over the weekend. That was quite impressive. Maybe not 900 but it felt like that" (HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through Grade Three, 2008). Representative Morgan, Sponsor of HB0194, responded, "The PTA told me this is their #1 priority. That's probably where it came from" (HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through Grade Three, 2008). While this exchange probably exaggerated the response by constituents and the PTA, it does indicate the attention class size in Utah receives. This interest and attention creates a need for response by leadership that is criticized by the media (Stewart, 2009) for their lack of attention to Utah's overflowing classrooms. Legislative audit staff addressed criticism of Utah's large class size when they presented the 2009-04 audit report findings to the Joint Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

> We calculated a 24.4 student-teacher ratio for elementary grades compared to the 31.5 ratio reported by the Department of Education. This is a concern because various people make comparisons using the Department of Education's data. For example, the Utah foundation reported the Department of Education's numbers in their May 2008 report and make comparisons between Utah and other states. The Utah foundation reported that Utah's elementary pupil-teacher ratio was more than 50% larger than the national average. (Legislative audits: Class size reduction, 2009)

Legislators' questions about the accuracy of Utah's large class size numbers are what motived the audit request: "I would like to determine the pupil-teacher ratio and the adult-pupil ratio as defined by Utah Code" (Bramble, C., Audit Request Letter, February

5, 2008) and the 2009-04 audit report validates those concerns about the accuracy of these numbers. When presented with this information, Representative Last stated "that data is being used to compare us to other states and it makes us look unfavorable, then we ought to be able to fix it" (Legislative audits: Class size reduction, 2009). Clearly concerns about criticism of Utah's class size is present.

Representing Membership Concerns

Legislative leadership's role in the prioritization of audits can been seen in prioritization discussions (Audits in Process and New Audit Requests, 2000; Audit Request, 2007; New Audit Request, 2008) and audit report hearings (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). Audit prioritization provides examples of legislative leadership influence in the audit process. For example, in July 2008 the Legislative Audit Subcommittee prioritized five audits. Legislative Management Audit Subcommittee members had been informed that there was enough Legislative Audit staff coming available to staff three new audits. Originally, the five prioritized audits did not include Senator Bramble's requested class size reduction audit. After a conversation between the House Speaker (Representative Curtis) and Senate President (Senator Valentine) the request by Senator Bramble (Senate Majority Leader) was prioritized third.[17]

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[17] Original five prioritized by President Valentine: #1 Medicaid payment system, #2 URS administrative functions, #3 impact fees, #4 cost of tech education in state colleges and ATC's, #5 state funding for business assistance. Final prioritization after consulting with Speaker Curtis: #1 Medicaid payments, #2 URS, #3 Class size, #4 Impact fees, and #5 cost of Tech education.

Another example of leadership's role in audit prioritization took place during the April 11, 2000 Legislative Audit Subcommittee Meeting. President Beattie, who is on record as requesting the 2000 CSR audit, combined the CSR audit and Textbook audit, "Is there any chance of combining Textbooks and Supplies into class size is the same question?" an issue president Beattie knew legislative membership supported: "I am sensing pretty broad support for some kind of action in that area" (Audits in Process and New Audit Requests, 2000). When asked about the audit prioritization process, President Beattie said audits are prioritized based on the critical nature and how timely an issue is. "It is obviously critical to the requestor" but the critical nature of the issue has to do with other factors like percent of state budget as an example (Beattie, 2012).

This concern is present in Senator Bramble's requests in both the 2007-14 and the 2009-04 legislative audits. There are a number of sources, including the audit itself, -- "during the 2007 Legislative Session, legislators questioned the use of CSR funding. This audit is a result of those concerns" (Underwood et al., 2007, p. 1) -- that indicate the concerns examined in the 2007-14 audit were a result of Legislator questions about how school districts were using CSR appropriations. Similarly, the 2009-04 audit seems to be the result of lingering questions not addressed by the 2007-14 audit: "I was a little bit disappointed in the audit because it did not review class sizes" (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). Representative Last's disappointment is addressed in the 2009-04 audit request that directly addresses class sizes: "I am requesting an audit to review class sizes in Utah's public education elementary schools" (Bramble, C. Audit Request Letter, February 25, 2008). Senator Bramble's request seems to embody this concern.

Another question left unanswered by the 2007-14 audit report was how data are calculated. Representative Cosgrove stated, "I can walk into the classroom and I can count 30 kids in that classroom. Yet this is telling me that there's 24. So what's the distinction and how they come up with the number?" (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). Again, Senator Bramble's Audit Request letter addresses this concern: "As part of this audit, I would like to determine the pupil-teacher ratio and the adult-pupil ratio as defined by **Utah Code**" (Bramble, C. Audit Request Letter, February 25, 2008, emphasis in original). Finally, Representative Last recognizes that the questions left unanswered by the 2007-14 audit report are the result of the process in place, but challenges the audit staff to prognosticate: "I recognize that your audit was guided by the questions that were asked. But I don't think that limits you from answering also questions that should have been asked" (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). Clearly in Representative Last's mind, other questions should have been asked and addressed in the 2007-14 audit report. Extending this line of reasoning, if we look again to Senator Bramble's February 25, 2008 audit request letter, a question seemingly left unanswered in 2007-14 audit report is an impact on class sizes from legislative commitment to CSR. "I recommend the auditors identify the impact that the existing legislative appropriations have had on class-size reductions" (Bramble, C. Audit Request Letter, February 25, 2008). Having looked at examples from the 2000-08, 2007-14, and 2009-04 audit request processes, they appear to indicate that the audit requestors are in positions of leadership and actually reflect questions held by other legislators.

These examples point to legislative leadership using the audit process to reflect values that are present across the legislature. This action is consistent with the Wirt et al.

(1988) discussion about values of political actors and Stone's (2004) contention that policy addresses a group's interests. However, broad representation across party lines may not exist. As noted in Chapter 3, there were 42 public education related audit request representing 37 different audit requestors. Of those 37 audit requestors, only five were Democrat and only one Democrat's request (Representative Patricia Jones[18]) was prioritized and completed.[19] This information, in connection with other indicators, suggests Republican leadership control over legislative audits. This finding is consistent with Basu et al. (1999) which identified stronger ties between the GAO and the dominant party, Democrat, at the federal level in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Control of political process by dominant groups is consistent with political theory (Anderson, 2010; Stone, 2004).

<p style="text-align:center">Policy Entrepreneurs, Audit Reports, and Individual Agendas</p>

This research question assumed audit requestors would use audit reports to directly pursue their agenda. While no evidence of audit requestors engaging in this behavior was identified, evidence of individual political actors using audit reports to support their individual agenda in an oblique way was identified. One example discussed earlier was the introduction of HB0267 during the 2001 general session by Representative Throckmorton. Using the 2000-08 "*Class size Reduction in Public Education*" and 2000-07 "*School Textbook Funding*" audit report findings,

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[18] Patricia Jones served as a State Representative from 2001-2006 (when this audit was requested) and currently serves as a State Senator, 2007-current.

[19] Report# 2006-10, *A Review of the Use of Vending Machines in Public Schools*; See Appendix B.

Representative Throckmorton pursued an education taskforce that was designed to look at the costs required to operate the State Office of Education; its current ability to track and monitor state and federal monies distributed to school districts through the state office and to verify or validate how those monies are being used at the district and school level; the nature and magnitude of administrative costs at the school district level and whether those costs are duplicative of administrative costs incurred at the State Office of Education. (H.B. 0267, 2001)

Utah's State Office of Education is established in the Utah Constitution (Utah Constitution, 1896, Article X), so any intent to eliminate the USOE, as Republican leaders have advocated for at the federal level (DeBray, 2005a), would be futile outside of a constitutional amendment. While it is unknown if this was the intent of this legislation, the result of this task force was a report that led to HB0039 during the 2003 general session that, as discussed earlier, removed a number of accountability requirements in the CSR appropriations statute and other public education related reports.

Interpretation of Audit Reports Differ

The 2007-14 audit report identified that, where it could be determined, school districts have spent 100% of the CSR allocations appropriately (Underwood et al., 2007). Despite this vindication of how public education use CSR appropriations, representatives still sought accountability measures. Representative Morgan introduced HB0194 and Senator Stephenson introduced statutory language to change Utah Code §53A-17a-124.5, *Appropriation for class size reduction*, during the 2008 general session. Neither of these attempts to introduce accountability survived once they left committee. In contrast to

legislators' call for increased accountability, USOE used the 2007-14 audit report to pursue agency goals. In her agency response, included with the 2007-14 audit report, Superintendent Harrington stated,

> Utah has one of the largest average class sizes in the nation. The national average is 15.8 students per teacher while Utah is at 22.6 students per teacher. It will take strong determination and a large, sustained infusion of funding tied to enrollment growth to reach the national class size average. (Underwood et al., 2007, Agency Response)

Superintendent Harrington follows up this written response by emphasizing a need to increase funding to also address large class sizes in secondary grades as well.

> …would like to see that of course increased [CSR funding] by the growth factor that's in our schools and then to take a further look about how class size might be reduced with a special focus on middle school and high schools. (Report# 2007-14: A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds, 2007)

From these statements it appears Superintendent Harrington is using the 2007-14 audit report finding about the appropriate use of CSR funds, to pursue increased funding from the legislature. This approach appears to be successful when examining CSR funding growth in fiscal year 2008, a 10.7% increase over the previous fiscal year and the largest increase since 2000 (see Appendix A).

It was expected that the audit reports would be used by political actors to pursue individual agendas. This finding is consistent with theories of agenda setting (Kingdon, 1984) and political spectacle (Edelman, 1964, 1988, 2001) and provides an example of how differing groups will read and interpret elements in a way that advances their own self-interest. It is clear that audit report findings and recommendations are not beyond interpretation. Assumptive world's (Marshall, 1985; Marshall et al., 1986; Raab, 1994; Wirt et al., 1988) influence is demonstrated through interpretation of audit reports' positivist conclusions. According to Spillane (2004), political actors engage in sense

making process where internal and external factors, such as previous experiences, normative assumptions, and existing political climate, mediate understanding. It is with this in mind that I address the third research question. The next section will look at what this collection of case studies shows about how theories of agenda setting, political spectacle, and mythmaking fit with political actors' use of government accountability reports.

How Does State Political Actors' Use of Government Accountability Reports on Public Education Programs Fit Theories of Agenda Setting, Political Spectacle, and Mythmaking?

This section addresses the theoretical frameworks of agenda setting, political spectacle, and mythmaking that are employed throughout this analysis. Each framework is individually addressed and begins with anticipated findings. Following an explanation of anticipated findings, how data from this collective case study analysis conforms to expected results is outlined. How political actors use legislative audits to shape agendas is addressed first.

Agenda Setting

Agenda setting hypothesizes that there are three political streams and when convergence of these three streams takes place a window of opportunity is present that allows for policy action to transpire. Policy seems to have inertia, and like a body at rest staying at rest, it is difficult for political actors to create movement. Crisis is one method that has been recognized to overcome inertia of policy (Edelman, 1964; Kingdon, 1995;

Stone, 2004; Yanow, 1996). However; the timing of a crisis is unpredictable. I

hypothesized that policy entrepreneurs utilize government accountability reports, like

Utah's legislative audits, to manufacture crisis through a public and visible process

(Mintrom & Norman, 2009). Findings from this collection of case studies, examining

CSR funding policy in Utah, do not support the hypothesis of lone policy entrepreneurs

manufacturing political crisis to advance their policy agenda. A lack of connection

between audit requestors' record on public education policy was discussed at length in

the last section of this study. While there does not appear to be a link between individuals

and audit requests, there are indications that audits are used to focus policy conversations

by bringing attention to specific areas of concern. Focusing of policy conversations is one

stream of the Kingdon (1984) agenda setting model. Mintrom and Norman (2009) detail

how policy entrepreneurs have a role to play in creating interest in a policy issue even

when the political environment is stable. The remainder of this section will examine how

audits have been used to focus policy conversations.

<u>Audits Used to Focus Conversations</u>

Senator Bramble's audit request letters paint an interesting picture. The 2007

audit request letter starts by declaring how much money has been appropriated by the

legislature to reduce class size: "$440 million directed to class size reduction. I believe

the Legislature is dedicated to reducing class size in our public schools" (Bramble, C.

Audit Request Letter, February 5, 2007). This statement of the legislature's commitment

is followed by skepticism on how money has been spent when he requests that auditors

"follow the flow of funds into the specific school, and account for new classrooms and

the increased number of teachers" (Bramble, C. Audit Request Letter, February 5, 2007). The narrative created by Senator Bramble in this audit request letter establishes the commitment of the legislature and wants an accounting of new classrooms and teachers purchased with this money to expose districts' relative level of commitment. Senator Bramble's challenge to local school districts implies that local school districts have not been using this money as intended by the legislature.

A similar narrative is created in Senator Bramble's February 25, 2008 audit request: "I would like to determine the pupil-teacher ratio and the adult-pupil ratio as defined by Utah Code" followed by the request to "determine if data integrity exists between school districts as to what districts report" (Bramble, C. Audit Request Letter, February 25, 2008). The message of skepticism toward student data and lack of compliance with Utah code is inherent in the letter. Senator Bramble, when asked why he requested both audits, stated this was about establishing facts not opinions. "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, they are not entitled to their own facts" (Bramble, C., 2012). According to Senator Bramble, his audits requests were intended to provide clear facts around this perennial issue. This approach seemingly creates a common knowledge to be used when discussing this contentious issue. The next section will address how political actors use legislative audits to create narratives related to policy issues.

Political Spectacle

Edelman paints a skeptical picture of how political actors use high profile policy issues with little impact to distract constituents from substantive issues. I have hypothesized that legislative audits are being used to justify agendas and shape the media

message around a policy. There is support for this theory within this collection of case studies. Legislative audits appear to be a tool political actors can use to focus the conversation (as discussed in the previous section), bring attention to themselves, and create doubt about an institution. The next section will address political actors seeking recognition for their efforts, and in doing so, challenging public education to provide evidence of a similar commitment.

<u>Legislators Want Results for Their Efforts</u>

Testimony related to CSR funding revealed that politicians want credit for their efforts to lower class sizes in Utah schools. This may be because of the significant level of interest on this policy issue as expressed by Representative Gibson: "it seems to me I hear a lot about class sizes. And this little thing that's attached to my hip that is all I have heard about…" (Legislative audits: Class size reduction, 2009). Alternatively, legislators express concern that Utah looks bad in national and local reports, as lamented by Representative Last: "that data is being used to compare us to other states and it makes us look unfavorable…" (Legislative audits: Class size reduction, 2009). The precise motivation may not be known, but a desire for credit is apparent. Occurrences of this type of narrative are common and exist across the case studies. For Example, President Hillyard stated during a Legislative Audit Subcommittee,

> I think that is really a frustration of the legislators is that we hear a need, we attempt to fund it in a way that it will have to happen, and then we get through the session and we continue to get word back from the teachers on the other end that there's been no change. In fact their situation is worse. So, it's a real challenge for the legislators. (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000)

This frustration expressed by President Hillyard in 2000 persists as the same findings are identified in later audit reports. Representative Last draws attention to legislative CSR commitment from 2000 to 2008: "I would like to point out to the committee and you [Legislative Audit Staff] that we maintained the funding" (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). As highlighted earlier, Representative Last was dissatisfied with issues not addressed in the 2007-14 audit report. In this case, he was particularly dissatisfied with the lack of credit the legislature has received for maintaining funding even during the post-9/11 economic downturn.

Representative Cosgrove provides an example of a practical frustration over the lack of accounting of CSR funds, namely how to justify impact of CSR funds to constituents.

> Because when I get a call from a constituent who is upset about the $74 million that was spent in class size reduction…I can show that would be a reduction of 1175 teachers within the entire state. So that does help show some support. (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008)

Representative Cosgrove is not alone in wanting to understand how CSR money was spent. Money and its impact is a common narrative, and the amount of money that has been appropriated to this program is emphasized by President Valentine: "how many additional teachers were hired by this effort of putting **three-quarters of a billion dollars** into our public schools…?", "You [Legislative Audit Staff] said that there has been **three-quarters of a billion dollars** that has been put in to the CSR funds over the last decade. What did we get for the **three-quarters of a billion dollars**?" (Report# 2007-14: A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds, 2007, emphasis added). When asked about the audit report following the Legislative Audit Subcommittee, his reply to the media was, "I thought **three-quarters of a billion dollars** would not get lost

in the shuffle" (Schencker, 2007, emphasis added). President Valentine's focus on total CSR funding is clearly a message that the legislature has expended a large amount of money to reduce class sizes in Utah. We will revisit this point when discussing mythmaking.

Senator Bramble reiterates the legislature's desire to see an impact from CSR funding in his February 28, 2008 audit request letter. There, he expressly states, "I recommend the auditors identify the impact that the existing legislative appropriations have had on class-size reductions." (Bramble, C. Audit Request Letter, February 25, 2008). But once again, OLAG is unable to determine an actual impact of CSR funds because of fund commingling by school districts. OLAG estimates that annual CSR funds are enough to hire 1,240 teachers in Utah and a potential to reduce Utah class sizes by approximately three students (Coleman et al., 2009). But this potential impact depends upon school districts actually using the CSR funds to hire core teachers. School districts' commitment to reduce class size is the other side of this narrative as expressed by Representative Cosgrove in response to the 2009-04 audit report findings: "we [The legislature] have worked so hard to fund or appropriate some funds for class size reduction to ensure we are getting it to the areas that need those lower class sizes first" (Legislative audits: Class size reduction, 2009). Legislators desire to see CSR funds impact the classroom level, and they allege that their commitment is not being equaled by local school districts.

Legislators' Challenge School Districts' CSR Commitment

Legislators juxtapose their narrative of commitment to CSR against the narrative

that school districts are unmotivated to reduce class size. This narrative is most clearly

seen in Senator Stephenson's statement to the Salt Lake Tribune following the

Legislative Audit Subcommittee meeting release of the 2009-04 audit report,

> lawmakers shouldn't be surprised to see sketchy numbers from the state office.
> "In the court of public opinion, the education bureaucracy has a vested interest in
> showing that our classes are overcrowded," Stephenson said. "That helps to sell
> the story there's a crisis and needs are not being met." (Schencker, 2009a)

Senator Stephenson is unambiguous in this statement about public education's motivation

to inflate numbers. Others are not as definitive in their critique of USOE, but still convey

the same message. Speaker Clarke says in response to USOE's rebuttal to the 2009-04

audit report findings, "I am trying to figure out whether this is hide the ball or if this is

not understanding what should be measured all the way to the level of incompetence"

(Report# 2009-04: A performance audit of elementary school class size, 2009). This

question of purposeful manipulation of enrollment numbers by public education is not

new. This same question about public education's commitment to use appropriated funds

to reduce class size arises during the December 28, 2000 Legislative Audit Subcommittee

when discussing the 2000-08 audit report with legislative audit staff. "What we are

finding is a large number of districts did exactly what you are talking about. They chose

not to put the money into class size reduction" (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit

of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). The audit manager is responding to

questions related to how districts were using Board Leeway taxation revenue designated

in Utah Code for reducing class sizes in local school districts (UCA §53A-17a-134). This

discussion continued and Mr. Schaff detailed to the Legislative Audit Subcommittee how

numerous school districts were using this money for things other than class size reduction, with only two districts identified as seeking the appropriate waiver as allowed in Utah Code. Audit report 2000-08 provides an example of one school district, with a student-to-teacher class size ratio of 29.98, spending money dedicated to class size reduction on "other district expenditures" (Schaff et al., 2000, p. 18). This analysis led to an auditor conclusion that "This gives the appearance that they are unwilling to use their own locally generated funds to decrease class size but are willing to use state funds" (Schaff et al., 2000, p. 18). District unwillingness to use local funds to address CSR is in contrast to the legislature's beneficence narrative.

School districts' willingness to use local funds to reduce class size is still questioned. This issue of local versus state revenue is a critique of the 2007-14 audit report by Senator Stephenson: "The auditors assumed it's the state's responsibility to fund all class-size-reduction efforts. That was never the intent," he said. "We're looking at the idea of this being an incentive (for school districts) for meeting standards" (Toomer-Cook, 2008). In his response to the Deseret News, Senator Stephenson makes it clear that local school districts have a role in solving this policy issue. In spite of the 2007-14 audit report's identification that some school districts were spending CSR funds appropriately, Representative Last still questioned local school districts' commitment to lowering class sizes.

> I understand why they did it. Because class size is the biggest budget balancer you've got. And if you're facing hard times because of economic downturn that is where they chose to balance their budgets. But the troubling thing to me is that with the turnaround in the economy and increased budgets since that point, it seems that the average class size is still hovering in elementary schools around 25 or 26. And I'm troubled by that when we funded them for years at maintaining the level of just over 21 students per class. I've got a problem with this. (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008)

Prior to this comment, Representative Last pointed out that CSR funds were maintained even during the economic down turn following 9/11. The message is clear that it is local school districts and public education that have made strategic choices that have not translated to the desired CSR results. The story told is that local school districts have not matched the legislative commitment to reduce class sizes in Utah.

Purposeful or not, the message that is communicated by Utah legislators during this time frame was a strong commitment to reduce class sizes in Utah that has not been matched by public education. This narrative is told through policy-makers' focus on appropriations while highlighting school districts' lack of commitment to use local funds for CSR. This narrative clearly lays out the legislators' value of small class sizes while challenging public education's values (Marshall et al., 1986; Wirt et al., 1988). This also reinforces Hammersly's (1994) critique of policy not being an intellectual exercise. Because CSR is a high profile issue, demonstration of values is one contextual factor that has to be considered. No public figure wants to be seen as working against small class sizes. The next section will address mythmaking identified around CSR efforts through this collective case study.

<u>Mythmaking</u>

Yanow outlines mythmaking as a narrative that diverts attention from reality (Yanow, 1996, p. 191). Myth narratives exist "in the face of…conflicting values, we construct a myth which allows us to believe, however temporarily, that the conflict has been resolved." (p. 192). The examination of CSR funding in Utah demonstrates these elements outlined by Yanow. Utah's large student population is referenced throughout

various debates about class sizes (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008; HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through Grade Three, 2008) and CSR funds are held up as a means to solve this policy issue. Representative Last's statement, "we maintained that funding" (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008) -- along with Senator Stephenson's "proposing to continue current class size reduction money at a minimum" with intent language that if the districts want to continue to receive funds they will "require districts over the next few years to meet targets" (Proposed Bill/Intent Language, 2008) -- produces a narrative that current CSR funding is sufficient to achieve an unstated class size target.

Again, President Valentine's emphasis on the total amount of CSR funding through the life of the program indicates mythmaking about current CSR funding being sufficient to accomplish policy goals: "how many additional teachers were hired by this effort of putting **three-quarters of a billion dollars** into our public schools…?", "You [Legislative Audit Staff] said that there has been **three-quarters of a billion dollars** that has been put in to the CSR funds over the last decade. What did we get for the **three-quarters of a billion dollars**?" (Report# 2007-14: A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds, 2007, emphasis added). Following the Legislative Audit Subcommittee meeting, his reply to the media was, "I thought **three-quarters of a billion dollars** would not get lost in the shuffle" (Schencker, 2007, emphasis added). Focusing on the total amount of CSR funding over 15 years highlights legislative attention to CSR. As addressed earlier, this constructs a narrative that the legislature is committed to this effort but local school districts are not. President Valentine's repetitive use of "three-quarters of a billion dollars" fits the description of a tightly packaged media sound bite (Lugg, 2000).

Focusing on the financial commitment of Utah's legislature reinforces narratives of state commitment and local public education's misuse of public resources. By focusing on Utah's legislative commitment to small class sizes, Senator Valentine suggests a concerted effort to solve public education failings. Addressing educational excellence challenges through a recognized panacea. Consistent with Lugg's (2000) analysis, this approach is "raceless, classless and neutered for public consumption" (p. 519). Focusing attention on CSR funding ignores this issue's position within the broader public education context (Ball, 1997a). This focus implies that smaller class sizes will address achievement gap issues and challenges for English language learners. These issues would be solved if only local school districts matched Utah's legislators' commitment to this policy.

Challenges to this myth narrative of CSR funding being sufficient were identified. In their agency response to the 2000-08 audit report, USOE stated "USOE believes that the reference to a total amount that was appropriated for class size reduction could be misleading...the funding had to be used to *maintain* class sizes as reduced previously rather than reduce them further" (Schaff et al., 2000, p. 28, emphasis in original). Nor is USOE alone in challenging the myth of CSR funds as sufficient. Representative Urquhart challenges Representative Morgan during her presentation of H.B. 0194 (2008) to the House Education Standing Committee.

> I will be voting against the motion and I am not against smaller class sizes, I know it is apple pie we are all of course for smaller class sizes. The money all comes from the same source this is kind of just a feel good thing. We take it out of one pocket and put it into another. If the local school districts want to reduce class sizes than they can do that through WPU. (HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through Grade Three, 2008)

Representative Urquhart deconstructs the myth that the key to reducing class size in Utah is through line item appropriations. Representative Lockhart supports this position in the same committee meeting: "I just think $26 million that's a percentage in the WPU and I think the districts are already making these kinds of decisions. They need to make the decisions about the size of their classrooms" (HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through Grade Three, 2008). Representative Morgan's bill (H.B. 0194, 2008) passed out of committee with a favorable recommendation. Legislative appropriations for CSR -- termed "apple pie" by Representative Urquhart -- do not address underlying issue of Utah's large classes.

Utah's conservative political climate abhors taxation. But the desire for small class sizes creates a conflict of values with the desire not to increase taxes to pay for this public expenditure. "In the face of such conflicting values, we construct a myth which allows us to believe, however temporarily, that the conflict has been reconciled" (Yanow, 1996, p. 192). By ignoring MSP funding, the main source of funding for Utah schools, and focusing attention on CSR funds, for example as President Valentine does, legislators have provided this as "[o]ne way of holding irreconcilable contradictions in a tension…provide a solution that "blocks further inquiry" deflecting continued attention away from the incompatible, yet equally valued principles" (Yanow, 1996, pp. 192-193). At the conclusion of Audit staff's testimony, Speaker Curtis highlights charter schools and their ability to resolve these irreconcilable tensions "How are they [charter schools] able to do that? I mean less money, small class sizes, I think that is what we are trying to achieve" (Report# 2007-14: A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds, 2007). This statement, lauding the ability of charter schools to achieve this goal of "less money,

small class sizes," appears indicative of a broader mythmaking around public education. This would be consistent with national concerns about public education policy creating dissatisfaction with the current system to pave they way for neoliberal public education solutions like vouchers (DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007).

This argument is further supported by the fact that Speaker Clark's statement about charter schools was not the only reference to school choice alternatives identified within this collective case study. Representative Last, following OLAG's 2007-14 audit report, only allowed charter school representatives to respond (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). Typically, USOE is featured on the agenda following public education audit reports. However, one 2007-14 audit report recommendation was that automatic allocations to charter schools with small class sizes be reviewed (Underwood et al., 2007). This OLAG recommendation seems to be outside of the public education's assumptive world and elicited an atypical response. In response to this recommendation, several charter school directors provided information about how they are able to keep class sizes small with their existing allocations. These charter school directors were specifically asked about teacher hiring and compensation packages. Following this Q&A, Representative Last concludes, "This certainly dispels the myth that charter schools have lower compensation." (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). This declaratory statement by the committee chair concluded all debate about this issue, and the committee moved on to the next agenda item. This appeared to be a clear statement to not challenge charter schools in this education committee. These interactions demonstrate the values of neoliberal approaches to addressing CSR. It bears repeating that the sacrosanct nature of neoliberal school choice alternatives is not unique to Utah or

Republicans (Apple & Pedroni, 2005; DeBray et al., 2007; DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Scott, 2011; Viteritti, 2009; Wells, 2009; Welner, 2008).

In many ways the absence of USOE representation, and inclusion of charter schools for the Public Education Appropriation Subcommittee resembles a public relations reaction to the 2007-14 audit report. Lugg (2000) detailed how the Reagan administration, following the "A Nation at Risk" report, began a tour that focused national attention on excellence, diverting attention from failings of current policy. Report recommendations not consistent with charter school policy is met with grandstanding about how charter schools are able to accomplish smaller classes with less money than public education. The audit report challenges current policy as ineffective and policy makers response is consistent with Koyama and Varenne's (2012) predictions.

When interviewing Senator Bramble, school vouchers were discussed as a tool in CSR efforts.[20] Bramble explained that vouchers would remove students from the public education system without reducing funds to public education. Because general funds would be used for vouchers, not public education funds, this approach would lower class sizes. Public education would have fewer students but retain the same amount of money. This market approach was a way to increase spending on education through the use of general funds that are inaccessible to public education, and as a result reduce class sizes (Bramble, C., 2012). Market based approaches for reducing class sizes, such as charter schools and vouchers, seem to be favored by some within the legislature. This narrative

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[20] In the 2007 Utah Legislative General Session, a universal school voucher program (HB0148 and HB0174) was passed. These voucher bills were signed by Governor Huntsman. But before implementation of the universal voucher program, a citizen referendum repealed these voucher bills and no universal voucher program began.

about public education is consistent with Ball's (1998) discussion of public education being commoditized and made part of a corporate enterprise. Marketization of public education separates government from public education outcomes.

While a myth narrative may have been created around CSR funding, that narrative did not result in a change to CSR funding statutory requirements. As mentioned earlier, CSR funds continued to increase even during down economic years with no increased accountability for CSR funds. Similarly, proposed statutory language that would have required public schools to achieve class size standards did not pass. However, the lack of impact during these legislative sessions may be constructing a broader narrative about how public education fits into a balanced state budget. Ball (1998) states that "[p]olicies are articulated both to achieve material effects and to manufacture support for those effects" (p. 124). CSR policy may not change during these policy debates, but repeated demonstration of poor accounting for public money does "manufacture support" for alternative public education funding. At the national level, NCLB policy is a mechanism to create dissatisfaction with public education and thus create a hospitable political environment for vouchers (Debray-Pelot et al., 2007). Within the CSR policy debates, charter schools are presented as a neoliberal solution that has accomplished the desired outcomes of "less money, small class size." A repeated demonstration of public education's failure to address this issue fosters an environment for neoliberal public education alternatives.

Some Theoretical Framework Elements Supported

From examining this collection of case studies, narratives have been constructed related to issues of agenda setting, political spectacle, and mythmaking. Anticipated findings in terms of agenda setting were not identified, but indicators that policy entrepreneurs use the audit reports to advance their agenda were. From this perspective, audit reports still may serve as a crisis-creating event that can be utilized by political actors with policy agendas. Conversely, anticipated narratives of political spectacle and mythmaking were present within the data. Legislative leadership emphasized their commitment to the CSR annual policy issue while simultaneously challenging local school districts' commitment. The irreconcilable and conflicting priorities of low taxes and small class sizes were also masked through this narrative, consistent with Yanow's definition of mythmaking. The constructed political spectacle and myth of legislative CSR effort is of questionable impact. No increase in accountability followed the rhetoric of accountability, and CSR appropriations have increased annually.

Marshall et al. (1986) address how assumptive world insiders control public education, and insiders' positions are entrenched. OLAG's position in public educations' assumptive world is important for this model. It is questionable how OLAG fits into the assumptive world model. Does legislative staff as outlined by Marshall et al. encompass this function or do legislative auditors comprise a different sphere of influence? In Utah, OLAG does not appear to fit in the legislative staffs' sphere. Utah's legislative audit staff may have a different place in different policy assumptive worlds. Or since OLAG stands outside policy actors' assumptive worlds they may have limited or no role in the policy-making process altogether. These relationships may differ in other states. If information

does not reflect the position of assumptive world's key insiders it struggles to impact policy. Accordingly, OLAG's relationship with legislators plays a role in how audit reports are ultimately used. I now turn my attention to the final research question as to why political actors have chosen to use legislative audits to collect information when other sources of information are readily available.

<p align="center">Why Have Audits Been Used to Gather Information When</p>
<p align="center">Other Sources of Information Are Present?</p>

The previous research questions provide a certain amount of clarity in addressing this question. An assumption present in forming this question was purposeful intent by audit requestors to advance existing policy agendas. This assumption was based on Kingon's (1984; 1995) and Mintorm and Norman's (2009) discussions about policy entrepreneurs. Specifically, Mintorm and Norman's (2009) argument that "the task for the policy entrepreneur is to bring the policy issues out into the public domain and attempt to invoke a swell of interest intended to induce major change" (p. 656). It was hypothesized that audit requestors used the legislative audit process to create a political spectacle and establish myths to advance their agenda. But the lack of a clear connection between audit requestors and a public education policy agenda negates this hypothesis. As discussed in the previous section, the audit process can be used to support political spectacle and mythmaking. However, these processes are not exclusive to the government accountability process. Nothing identified suggests legislative narratives -- legislative commitment to CSR and local school district recalcitrance toward CSR -- do not exist independent of the legislative audit process. Policy is a narrative process (Roe,

1994) that expresses values (Lugg, 2000; Wirt et al., 1988) and exists independent of government accountability reports. Essentially, audit requestors do not need legislative audits to create a narrative about CSR, or any policy issue for that matter (Edelman, 1988; 2001). Because policy narratives are not exclusive to audit reports, why political actors utilize this process still demands an explanation. Stories uncovered in this audit report analysis suggest a much simpler explanation than purposeful manipulation by a policy entrepreneur: a breakdown in communication.

<div align="center">A Breakdown in Communication</div>

After examining committee transcripts, audit request letters and media reports, the common theme of communication became clear. This is consistent with Canfield-Davis and Sachin (2010) who discusses the importance of trust in the legislative process. While their study findings address trust between legislators as a critical factor in advancement of legislative bills, the principles they establish suggest that lack of trust for other political actors, like an agency, would have similar deleterious consequences. It appears that legislators do not trust what they are told by USOE. A clear example of this lack of trust in information USOE provides is articulated during the audit request process.

During a Legislative Audit Subcommittee meeting, Speaker Stephens provides a reason why two public education audits were being prioritized.[21] "Our fiscal analyst is having a very difficult time getting comparative information from the district," pointing to an inability to get the information from USOE. Speaker Stephens follows this concern

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[21] During this Legislative Audit Subcommittee meeting, two public education audits, *School Textbook Funding* 2000-07 and *Class-Size Reduction in Public Education* 2000-08, were prioritized.

about inability to get information with direction to OLAG to conduct counts "on a day that districts did not know we were coming" (Audits in Process and New Audit Requests, 2000). This points to a concern beyond just getting access to information. This demonstrates a lack of trust in the information and also a lack of trust in the people providing the information reported. Speaker Stephens provided a further example of frustration related to getting access to information several months later when the 2000-08 audit report was released.

> April or May of this year, I sent a letter to Jill Kennedy and ISS Steve Lainge and made a list or talked about complaints that we were having from our staff when not being able to get uniform information from district to district. And I received a kind letter back and I think it was authored by you, wasn't it, Patrick? Indicating that, that was not the case. We had the uniform information statewide and we could get any kind of information like that and we had adequate information. I still have the letter upstairs. Well, I subsequently talked to the staff again and they said, 'no, we can't get this information, it's not uniform district wide'. And so, I sent another letter to Jill and Steve with a list of specifically requested information. I didn't get a reply to that and I sent another letter some time after that, probably a month later indicating I still hadn't heard anything. (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000)

Speaker Stephens's description of the lack of communication between USOE and legislative staff is an indicator of how lack of communication leads to audit requests. The inability of legislative staff to access data from USOE escalated from staff request, to formal letters of request from Speaker Stephens, to two audits of legislative programs that identified a lack of district accounting as required by statute. This led Speaker Stephens to warn USOE "I'm not sure exactly what to do. Maybe we need to audit the State Office" (Report# 2000-08: A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education, 2000). This escalation from staff request, to legislator request and finally an audit is consistent with President Beattie's responses about how he sought information.

President Beattie indicated that his first action when he had a question was to use staff to seek answers from an agency. Typically, that is sufficient for getting information you need. (Beattie, L., 2012). This suggests that an audit is needed when there is breakdown of communication between an agency and the legislature.

Utah's legislative session takes place for 45 days from the 3rd week of January through the 1st week of March. During this time, agency directors and staff are constantly at the capitol complex, available to respond to legislators' questions. During this time, agencies are most accessible for information requests. That is what makes the timing of Senator Bramble's audit request letters interesting, February 5, 2007 and February 25, 2008. Both letters are submitted during the legislative session when, in theory, information is most accessible from agencies. Various sources indicate the 2007-14 audit report was requested because of questions USOE was not able to answer satisfactorily. One sources was the 2007-14 audit report: "during the 2007 Legislative session, legislators questioned the use of CSR funding" (Underwood et al., 2007, p. i). The media also reported that this audit was a result of legislative questions: "The audit came after lawmakers last winter questioned districts' use of class size reduction money" (Toomer-Cook, 2007). Since the audit was requested, it is assumed USOE responses at the time were not satisfactory.

Trust plays a role in communication. Some examples demonstrate lack of trust between USOE and the Legislature. As mentioned earlier, Speaker Stephens advocated for the Legislative audit staff to go in and count when the "districts did not know we are coming" (Audits in Process and New Audit Requests, 2000). A similar statement of distrust in USOE and district data is present in Senator Bramble's February 25, 2008

audit request letter that requested "The auditors should conduct physical counts of students and teachers…" followed by a question of "data integrity." I believe this demonstrates a lack of trust in school districts to a degree that Senator Bramble did not want auditors to even use district provided database information.

Canfield-Davis and Sachin (2010) characterize trust as "a corner stone in legislative process" (p. 611). Credibility, honesty, reliability, and objectivity are characteristics identified by Canfield-Davis and Sachin as influencing political actors' decision-making. These traits are also assigned to other groups involved in the policy making process, such as lobbyists. As a result, reputation in these areas affected perception of sponsored bills. "Although many bills originated with legislative sponsors, some bills were initiated by individuals, state agencies, or special interest groups outside the legislature. Sometimes the source of a bill's origination was a factor of influence upon voting decisions" (p. 612). It appears that an agency that loses trust places itself in a position where inquiry like an audit results.

<div align="center">Audit Request Patterns</div>

During the first phase of data analysis, public education audit requests and reports were identified and analyzed. Audit reports were examined for patterns related to historical events, nationally and locally. While no patterns in audit topics were identified, relative to national public education debates (Nation at Risk, Governors reform movement, NCLB), a local trend in legislative audits and Utah State Superintendents was identified. When looking at the number of audits and placing the tenure of state superintendents alongside, one outlier is identified. Table 1 shows that during

Superintendent Patty Harrington's 5 years of service, public education averaged nearly three legislative audits per year. Three other superintendents averaged more than one audit and none averaged two legislative audits per year (See Appendix D). Since state superintendents act as the voice of the USOE to the legislature, if legislative audits indicate a breakdown in communication between the legislature and an agency, then this could be potentially be used as one indicator of leadership effectiveness.

While this question was asked with an assumption about how political actors are engaging in a strategic purposeful action when requesting legislative audits, the answer appears to be much more basic, a breakdown in communication. Often the simplest answer is the correct one. This finding supports the importance of relationships in policy-making. This agrees with other findings that legislative bodies comprise a social environment where social interactions are the impetus behind policy-making (Canfield-Davis & Sachin, 2010; Marshall, 1985; Marshall et al., 1986; Wirt, 1988). Public education administrators can learn from this, as it reinforces the need to understand these social interactions and manage relationships accordingly. Influencing policy is not a rational process (Hammersley, 1994) but a process of relationships.

Table 1: Utah State Superintendents and Legislative Audits during Tenure

Utah State Superintendents	Years in Office	Legislative Audits During Tenure	Average Legislative Audits Per Year
Shumway	2009-2012	5	1.6
Harrington	2004-2009	17	2.8
Laige	1999-2004	5	0.8
Bean	1992-1999	5	0.6
Taggart	1990-1992	2	1
Moss	1986-1992	9	1.6
Furst	1985-1986	1	1
Burningham	1982-1985	5	1.5

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This dissertation has utilized Utah's government accountability report process to examine public education policy. Through analysis of official government records and media artifacts, in depth case studies were constructed around CSR in Utah. CSR was addressed in three different legislative audits over a 10 year period from 2000-2009. Each legislative audit report was examined in three stages: the audit request, audit report, and sponsored legislation. These three case studies were used to identify themes in how audits were used when first reported and what elements were similar or different over time. It is the collection of findings across these three case studies that are used to answer the four research questions framing this study. Having addressed these four research questions in Chapter 4, the implications of these finding will now be addressed.

In Chapter 3, Figure 1 was presented as a rational model of Utah's legislative audit process. As anticipated, this model is not consistent with phenomena observed by following the legislative audit process from beginning to end. Specifically, the outcome of this process, sponsored legislation, is not a result of audit report findings or recommendations. As discussed earlier, there was no legislation sponsored by audit requestors related to CSR funding. A connection between audit requestors and sponsored legislation was an assumption of this study. However, there is some evidence that other

political actors did pursue sponsored legislation following audit report findings. These political actors' sponsored legislation does not necessarily conform to audit report findings and recommendations, and this lack of conformity with audit report findings and recommendations supports the argument that the rational conceptual model does not fit this legislative accountability tool. Findings from this collection of case studies supports the expected relationship of audit report and decision making model, Figure 2.

Figure 2 explicitly demonstrates an assumption of sponsored legislation consistent with normative assumptions and not audit reports. This model removes audit reports as a stage in developing sponsored legislation. Instead normative assumptions appear to influence policy decisions regardless of "facts" or information that is contrary to desired outcomes. These findings are consistent with research by Vinovskis (1999), Stein (1990), and Pillow (2007), who provide other examples where information provided to policy makers does not result in legislation consistent with research findings. In the case of CSR funds in Utah, appropriations for CSR continue to increase despite evidence of limited success and evidence of school districts' dubious use of funds to accomplish policy objectives.

This section examines the three stages of the expected relationship of audit report decision-making model as outlined in Figure 2. First, the model's input, audit request stage, will be discussed and implications of who controls this stage will be explored. Second, the model's output, sponsored legislation, will be addressed including the implications of a costly audit report and policy impact. Finally, the mediation process between audit report conclusions and normative assumptions will be discussed,

particularly the implication that reports may only reflect normative assumptions of requestors who control the request process.

Audit Requests: A Breakdown of Trust in Communication

As discussed in Chapter 4 it appears that Legislative audits are the result of a breakdown of trust between legislators and the USOE. A lack of trust in agency information is not unique to CSR in Utah. Kingdon (1984) discusses how agencies seek to present information that portrays them in the most favorable light. Vinovskis (1999) also discusses how program directors and staff become dependent upon a program for their careers and therefore have a vested interest in presenting themselves as successful. This is consistent with Apple's professional managerialism within his conservative modernization theory (Apple, 2001b). Based on this established research, it is not a surprise that legislators lack trust toward agencies. Historically, conflict exists between professional administrators and elected officials. Audit requests appear to follow an escalation of data requests accompanied by frustration over lack of detailed information. Speaker Stephens's example, discussed in Chapter 4, outlined how this process escalates and results in an audit. But this lack of trust in an agency may only reflect a breakdown of trust in communication with a party, party leadership, or individual.

Party Control of the Request Process

Looking again at public education audit requestors, it appears that audits represent a breakdown in communication between USOE and the dominant party (See Appendix B). This supports the Basu et al. (1999) conclusions that GAO reports at the federal level

are dominated by the majority party. It is unknown if there was a shift in GAO utilization when Republicans took a majority of House seats in the mid-1990s. While Basu et al. (1999) identified this trend at the national level, it has not been investigated at the state level. Additionally, this analysis focused on public education requests only. As a result, this study lacks context for evaluating Republican versus Democrat requests of public education audits. Without examining patterns in audit requests of other policy areas, such as health and safety, a trend of Republican versus Democrat in public education may represent a party issue and not a result of legislative majority.

Lugg (2000) details a similar control by the Reagan administration. "Bell succeeded in establishing the commission and was politically astute enough to steer it clear of ideological impure issues such as funding and access" (Lugg, 2000, p. 514). As a result, the Nation at Risk Report focused on "standards, rigor and excellence" (p. 514). This approach did control the scope of the message produced. The damning indictment of the administration's educational policies was contained within a narrow scope defined by the dominant political party.

An implication of Republican control of the legislative audit process in Utah, in terms of public education audit reports, is a loss of credibility in the audit report process. Government accountability reports function on the premise that they are objective and thorough investigations. While auditor independence may remain in tact, an important element of the audit process is audit scope outlined in the audit request letter. An exchange between Representative Last and 2007-14 audit report manager, Darin Underwood, highlights an example of audit questions directing the scope and purpose of an audit. In this exchange, Representative Last is disappointed that the 2007-14 audit

report did not address class size. He states, "I recognize that your audit was guided by the questions asked. But I don't think that limits you from answering also the questions that should have been asked" (Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee, January 16, 2008). Underwood responds, "We will get our crystal ball" (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). This humorous interaction points to a much more complex issue. If one party is in control of audit requests, and legislative audit staff firmly adheres to questions asked, then audits will only address questions that reflect the majority party's perspective. For example, Speaker Hughes points to inaccurate numbers outlined in the 2009-04 audit report and questions if USOE is purposeful or incompetent in reporting information. Others looked at this same audit report and focused on 92% of the data being correct (Stewart, 2009) and auditor classroom-student ratio increasing by one student (Report# 2009-04: A performance audit of elementary school class size, 2009). Legislative audits must address questions asked by the requestor and avoid prognosticating what legislators should have asked, but if audit reports are an extension of the dominant political party through the request process, their utility is dubious.

There is support for report independence. Even when the dominant party scopes questions, audit reports do not always conform to the legislative narrative. The 2007-14 audit report identified appropriate spending by school districts and reframed CSR funding as a "maintenance of effort." Lugg's (2000) detailing of the 1983 A Nations at Risk report shows similar characteristics. The National Commission on Excellence in Education report was scoped by Reagan staffers but did not conform to the administration's message of school prayer, vouchers and private school tax breaks.

Individual Versus Party Use of Audit Process

This analysis verifies a lack of connection, assumed to be present, between an audit requestor and sponsored legislation. When focusing on an individual this model breaks down. However examining this process holistically suggests something else. This paper was not going to extend beyond a requestor's sponsored legislation. Had analysis ended there, as originally proposed, indicators of a broader message would not have been identified. As suggested in Chapter 4, the audit requestor may simply be in a leadership position and be acting as a party voice in crafting their letter. While the audit requestor did not sponsor legislation, others legislators sponsored legislation related to CSR funds. After the 2000-08 audit report, Representative Throckmorton sponsored H.B. 0267 (2001) looking at the role of USOE. After the 2007-14 audit report, Senator Valentine proposed intent language that would have increased accountability for districts' expenditures of CSR funds. While there was no individual follow through by requestors, other political actors' actions may indicate a coalitions agenda. Figure 3 provides a summary of audit request issues.

While a breakdown of trust in communication may initiate legislative audits this may also reflect a lack of trust between certain groups in control of the audit request process such as the dominant political party or party leadership. This control of audit request by a select group can result in skepticism about the independent nature of the audit process. This again points to the necessity of understanding assumptive worlds and managing relationships. From an agency perspective, this process can provide information about supporters and who controls the process. This knowledge can help direct information to persons where relationships of trust need to be fostered. Having

looked at the audit request process, I will turn to the audit process outcome, sponsored
legislation, as conceptualized in the model.

<p align="center"><u>One of Many Interpretations of Policy</u></p>

Legislative decision-making mediates diverse stakeholders' interests that compete
for finite resources. This competition for scare resources, results in a number of factors
influencing how a democratic legislative body arrives at policy (Wirt et al., 1988). What
may seem like a straightforward policy solution to one observer ignores other
stakeholders' interests, particularly interests of minority groups and political culture
(Anderson, 2010; Stone, 2004; Wirt et al., 1988). Rural constituents are one example of a
minority interest in Utah having sway over CSR funds. During discussion of needs-based
allocations to increase impact of CSR efforts, as recommended by audit report 2007-14,
one legislator pointed out that current enrollment-based allocation was the result of
compromise with rural representatives. In another example, a needs-based approach was
said to punish those who have accomplished the program's low classroom size objective.
Representative Lockhart stated that a needs-based approach that takes away CSR funds
because they have achieved small classes would tell schools and districts that "No good
deed shall go unpunished" (HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through
Grade Three, 2008). Representative Lockhart may agree that accountability is needed, but
disagrees with Representative Morgan's needs-based approach.

It is not a surprise that legislative audit report findings and recommendations do
not result in changes at the statutory level. As stated earlier, a result that showed audit
report findings result in changes at the statutory level would have been inconsistent with

current understanding about the policy world's use of information (Anderson, 2010; Stone, 2004). Legislative audits in Utah do follow a rational process as outlined in Chapter 3, but their policy recommendations are still mediated the same as all other policy decisions (Ball, 1998; Hammersley, 1994; Vinovsksi, 1999).

Cost of Information

While it is simple to point out that legislative audits are still subject to the same legislative decision-making process as any other source of policy suggestions, it is important to remember they are not the same as other policy suggestions. Legislative audits in Utah are funded through direct appropriations to OLAG. These reports are not policy options provided by independent research groups, partisan think tanks, or other information mongers. Audit reports are bought and paid for by the Utah State Legislature to provide relevant and complete data to complex and difficult issues. From 2003 to 2012, OLAG's average report cost is just under $200,000. When all OLAG activities are included, informal reports and annual report, the average cost per activity drops to just under $150,000 (See Appendix C). The true cost of a full legislative audit is probably somewhere in between, $150,000 and $200,000. Figure 4 provides a summary of issues surrounding sponsored legislation.

Audit recommendations certainly need to be vetted through typical discussions, but the lack of impact of these reports conflicts with espoused values of fiscal responsibility. Perhaps it can be argued that audit reports should not always result in change at the statutory level. Changes at the administrative or agency level that results in program compliance with legislative intent is potentially a satisfactory outcome.

However, as pointed out in Chapter 4, repeated findings in three audits over 10 years showed no change at the administrative or agency level. It should be questioned why the Utah Legislature would spend over $150,000 on an information report with recommendations on improving efficiency and effectiveness of programs if they are going to ignore recommendations. It is questionable how the legislature would react to an agency that paid a similar price for an evaluation and then rejected recommendations that would increase efficiency and effectiveness of programs. Finally, use of information is inconsistent with recent messages directed toward public education. Through NCLB, public education is told to use evidence-based interventions (Apple, 2007a; Bredo, 2009; Day et al., 2008; Howe, 2009; Seltzer-Kelly, 2008; Tillman, 2009). Clear guidelines are established about what research standards are necessary to meet these goals. This message, which is critical of public education's lack of reliance on evidence-based decisions, is hypocritical when policy makers ignore evidence for their decision-making produced by Utah's legislative research body.

<div align="center">Normative Assumptions or Assumptive Worlds</div>

In this model it was assumed that normative assumptions would trump the rational audit process. As discussed earlier, the individual actor hypothesis is not supported by the data from this collection of case studies and casts doubt on the normative assumption hypothesis. Perpetuation of CSR policy despite of audit report findings, and attempts by policy entrepreneurs, suggest that assumptive worlds prevail. Persistence and increases of CSR appropriations are evidence that existing policy assumptive worlds remain intact despite contrary evidence.

In 2000, the *Class-size Reduction in Public Education* audit report (Schaff et al., 2000) and *A Performance Audit of State Textbook Funding* audit report (Schaff, Coleman, Darrow, Herring, Byrne, & Wright, 2000) both identified a lack of public education's ability to track expenditures. OLAG identified egregious noncompliance with statutory requirements and uncovered what they called deliberate gaming of the Board Leeway revenue by school districts and even attributed this gaming to advice provided by USOE. Despite these findings, and despite frustration of political leaders, no impact was identified at the system level. As detailed in Chapter 4, subsequent audits looking as CSR funding in 2007-14 and 2009-04 identified identical issues. These findings were consistent with assumptions that prompted these audits. Yet the prevailing policy has been maintained, relatively unchanged, for 20 years. Consistency of laws in the face of conflicting evidence is consistent with Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt's (1986) discussion of assumptive worlds in state policy. Against this backdrop I will look at how a lack of change to CSR funding policy shows a conflict between audit requestors' normative assumptions about CSR policy goals and Utah's public education assumptive worlds.

<center>Audits Reinforce Requestors' Normative Assumptions</center>

Building upon the dominant party's control of the audit request process, I examine how audits reinforce requestors' questions. Data from this collection of case studies suggest that requestors' questions represent one perspective of an issue. In each case, requestors' questions were justified with corresponding findings that reinforced program quality concerns. Specifically, each audit report recommends increased USOE and local school district accountability. But as pointed out earlier, in the exchange

between Representative Last and Audit Manager Darin Underwood, audits are guided by questions asked. Since an audit stays within the confines of audit questions, the question is a pivotal step of this process. If the question is pivotal, then who asks the question is an important factor. This study identified that the majority party controls access to this legislative tool. The more tightly controlled access to this process is, the more likely that audits represent answers that reinforce the hegemony's normative assumptions. It appears from this analysis that audit requestors' normative assumptions are not in line with the assumptive worlds of Utah's public education policy environment.

This pattern of control over government accountability reports in Utah needs to be examined to more broadly consider audit requests unrelated to public education. There is a chance that other issues, such as health and human services, utilities, or higher education receive more accountability-focused attention from Democrats than is identified for public education. Republican accountability focus on public education is not a surprise, but Democrats with only five requests, and only one of those requests making it through to a completed full audit report, raises questions about access to this process. Ultimately, audits address questions asked. If audit questions about USOE and public education in Utah demonstrate skepticism, such as Bramble's request for "physical counts" of students, then reports will continue to reflect deficiencies within this complex system. Ball (1997a, 1998) cautions against this limited review of education programs independent of the entire systems context.

Utah's Macro and Micro Political Dynamic

Public education narratives identified through this analysis place the burden of funding public education on the state legislature. This was a point of contention for Representative Stephenson when challenging the 2007-14 audit report conclusions placing the burden for CSR on the state, "The auditors assumed it's the state's responsibility to fund all class-size-reduction efforts. That was never the intent." Representative Stephenson also says that, "Its time for school districts to pay up." (Toomer-Cook, 2008). Regardless of CSR intent or local school districts' role in CSR, the legislature is seen as responsible for funding public education. This perception needs to acknowledge constitutional constraints in funding public education through general education fund revenues. The Utah constitution prohibits taking money from other revenue sources, like roads, to fund public education expenditures. Without new revenue sources, or increasing tax rates, Utah's general education fund is dependent upon economic growth. Without creating new revenue sources or raising taxes, CSR policies only restrict school districts' flexibility to manage budgets. Therefore drawing attention to CSR is consistent with Edelman's political spectacle as an area of little impact given great fan fare.

As advocates pursue increased CSR appropriations they are essentially saying they do not trust school districts to allocate sufficient portions of general education budgets to hire new teachers. CSR advocates are requesting the legislature make those decisions for districts prior to giving them any money. What CSR advocates are really asking of the Utah state legislature is to direct school districts' budgets to a sufficient degree that forces them to hire core teachers to achieve an ill defined smaller

student:teacher ratio. As advocates for CSR are increasingly successful a larger portion of general education budgets becomes reserved for hiring and maintaining teachers salaries in the name of CSR. What needs to be considered is that as more and more money is directed to the CSR line item districts ultimately have proportionately less discretionary money to manage diverse obligations. Potentially there is a ratio where money dedicated to teachers, in the name of CSR, results in districts' inability to meet other obligations associated with the education enterprise.

Inherent in Utah's CSR debate is a larger overarching political environment of mistrust of public education. In relation to CSR, the mistrust has been described when identified in audit request letters and committee testimony. Looking beyond CSR mistrust of public education is seen in other audit reports addressing continual questions about public educations' use of resources and budgeting practices. When placed in context of Apple's (2001) conservative modernization it is shown that Utah is a good fit for each area: neoliberal ideology, neoconservative thought, authoritarian populism, and a managerial middle class for examining macro political factors.

Neoliberal ideology has been discussed throughout this dissertation, most notably Speaker Curtis's pronouncement that charter schools are getting it right with "less money, small class sizes, I think that is what we are trying to achieve" and Representative Last's inclusion of charter school administrators in the response to the 2007-14 audit reports during the Public Education Appropriation Subcommittee (Legislative Audit on Class Size Reduction, 2008). To address a failing education system, market solutions are advocated. Along with support for charter schools, Utah's legislature has demonstrated their support for a universal voucher program. Utah's public education debates have

narratives similar to others identified likening public education to "'black holes' into which money is poured…but which do not provide anywhere near adequate results" (Apple, 2011, p. 38). Debary and Scott (2009) discuss how public education failures are highlighted by current public education policies such as NCLB. Policies like NCLB or CSR, through AYP scores or other rationalized metric for success, bring attention to public education failures. Constant repetition of public education's failing narrative encourages acceptance of market approaches like vouchers as a solution.

Neoconservative elements identified through this study include the 2007-14 audit report emphasis on core classroom teachers indicating that these are the only teachers that would impact the desired metric. This narrative directs school districts to use this money in a very specific way, by only hiring core classroom teachers. Hiring of instructors in music or art that can be utilized in creative ways to decrease the burden on teachers' instruction time -- as advocated by Superintendent Patty Harrington following the 2007-14 audit report -- are not acceptable. Another example is Speaker Stephens' questions about public educations' spending on extracurricular activities and if this money is diverting attention away from the real focus which should be English and Math.

Authoritarian populism or "schooling as god wanted it" (Apple, 2001, p. 53) certainly plays a role in Utah's education debates. Apple provides a framework for looking at these issues when he addresses concerns of morality, gender, obedience, self-censorship, and moral decay. Deviation from community ideals in these areas is a result of a public education system controlled by liberals. Inherent is a mistrust of sectarian humanism projected onto public education.

Ironically, teachers and school administrators mistrusted by the conservative modernization coalitions are those that have been empowered by neoliberal forces currently in place. This class of technocrats also has the most to lose by seeing any radical departure from the status quo. Market forces demand metrics for measuring outcomes. The managerial middle class produces these metrics. Principals and district administrators are important gatekeepers to the very information that is needed to establish importance for market alternatives to public education. Prominence of school administrators is enhanced as new accountability standards become pronounced. Because neoliberal decision-making is based on rational choices constructed on available information those that control information are empowered even as they disagree with the politics of the system. This mistrust of the establishment is clearly stated following the 2009-04 audit report by Senator Stephenson "the education bureaucracy has a vested interest in showing that our classes are overcrowded" (Schencker, 2009a). While Apple's (2001) conservative modernization provides a model for examining Utah's public education macro political environment, mistrust between public education and state political actors is one macro element that permeates each area.

<div align="center">Assumptive World of Public Education</div>

Legislative audits are used to construct displays of political spectacle and construct myth as discussed in Chapter 4. It was noted during that discussion that while audits are used to construct political spectacle and myth they are not necessarily effective at changing assumptive worlds around a policy issue. Perpetuation of CSR funds with increased appropriations, even during recent tight budget years, indicates constructed

narratives are not as powerful as the assumptive policy world around Utah's class size. Two Salt Lake Tribune newspaper articles reinforce this conclusion. Lisa Schencker, the Salt Lake Tribune's public education reporter, writes both articles. The first article, released on January 30, 2009 (Schencker, 2009a) the same day of the Legislative Audit Subcommittee hearing, reflects the issues identified in the 2009-04 audit report -- poor accounting and lack of accountability. The very next day, January 31, 2009, Lisa Schencker releases an article (Schencker, 2009b) detailing potential budget cuts' effect on class size. The January 31, 2009 article makes no mention of the 2009-04 audit report or the challenges in calculating class size in Utah. Instead, this article references the 2007-14 audit report and discusses the need to fund enrollment growth to maintain CSR efforts. An emphasis on enrollment growth and need for increased funding absent questions about accuracy of numbers ignores the legislative narrative discussed in Chapter 4. Representative Urquhart sums up assumptions about class sizes: "I know it is 'apple pie' we are all of course for smaller class sizes" (HB0194: Class Size Reduction in Kindergarten Through Grade Three, 2008), when challenging Representative Morgan's H.B. 0194 (2008). Small class size is just part of American culture, like 'apple pie', and it is assumed this is important in public education. A similar statement is made by the 2009-04 audit report Manager, Rick Coleman, in responding to Representative Cosgrove during the Joint Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee: "I do not know that there is any formula. I think we all believe that the lower the better" (Legislative audits: Class size reduction, 2009). This shows that OLAG, in examining class size in Utah, did not apply a standard. Figure 5 models the dilemma between audit reports and political actors' assumptions.

Methodology Works

My systematic approach to analyzing government accountability reports began

with a review of legislative audits in Utah from 1979-2012. Once identified, audit report

themes were compared to national education movements, beginning with the 1983 Nation

at Risk Report. This analysis identified that Utah's legislative audits are not tied to

national issues prevalent over that time. As a result, Utah's legislative audits appear to

represent uniquely state public education concerns. Identifying that Utah's legislative

audits represent state public education concerns provides a local history of how

legislators viewed public education over this time period.

The second step to this analysis gave perspective on Utah's legislative audits as

indicators of Utah's public education history. Looking at audit requestor patterns showed

that these historical artifacts are biased. As noted, Republican members of Utah's

legislature control Utah's public education legislative audit process. Further gender bias

was also identified. Audit themes, local focus, and gender bias in the request process

provide context for evaluating audits' policy impact. From this context, case studies

systematically examined document artifacts generated in response to the legislative audit

process. This method for studying policy provided a volume of document artifacts at

every stage. Audit reports provide a common knowledge that is present across policy

debates. Even when findings and recommendations are ignored; audit reports are

acknowledged and must be addressed. This is consistent with Koyama and Varenne's

(2012) conclusions regarding documents taking on properties beyond themselves.

A key aspect of this approach to studying policy decision-making was to identify

a method of policy analysis that did not require insider access to political processes. Raab

(1994) advocates for "going beyond public pronouncements…and actually talk[] to them" (p. 23). The reason for this is to understand assumptive worlds, because these worlds are "essential parts of policy" (p. 24). This systematic process accomplished the goal of gaining insight into assumptive worlds without the challenging step of interviewing political actors (Crestwell, 2007; Murphy, 1980). By systemic analysis of state government accountability reports, an outline of a state's public education assumptive world can be constructed (Marshall et al., 1986). This tool has the potential to be used for creating a type of public education assumptive world "topographical map." The maps will help develop "social acuity" an important factor for policy entrepreneurs to affect change according to Mintorm and Norman (2009). This could be a tool for public education administrators who can use these maps to identify who is constructing narratives about public education (Roe, 1994).

Through analysis of the three conceptualized audit process stages, a complete picture of policy is constructed. This policy analysis methodology provides a complete life cycle of the policy process: policy origins, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. Having a methodological tool that provides a snapshot of the policy life cycle overcomes obstacles encountered by other approaches. For example, Spillane (2004) discusses how policy implementation is evaluated, but policy outcomes are not addressed. Both of these elements are addressed by legislative audit reports. This methodological tool provides a ready source of information across these three policy analysis traditions.

While this process does not explain the origins of a policy, it does establish an origin to policy questions or concerns. Normative assumptions are identifiable through

the cluster of information sources identified. Audit request letters, coupled with oral testimony during audit prioritization debates, developed a foundation of expectations for comparison throughout the audit report process.

It is questionable if this process, as operationalized, would work while the audit process is under way. Audit requestors are kept confidential until audit reports are formally released to the public. Additionally, prioritization testimony does not always illuminate the questions being asked. While the audit requestor may provide some additional detail, it does not appear from these case studies that who requests the audit is an important concern. A robust analysis of who controls the audit process can establish trends. I would recommend that consistent monitoring of the audit prioritization process by a state agency would be prudent because audit prioritization testimony can be informative about nature, scope, and objective of future inquiry. Given the lag between audit prioritization and audit completion, there may be time for an agency to address audit elements before legislative staff begins this process.

Audit reports provide information about how legislators view policy implementation. Evaluating policy implementation is traditionally a difficult step in policy analysis. Audit reports provide clear statements of compliance and provide recommendations to improve programs to achieve intended results. Legislative staff has a number of advantages in collection of data in determining implementation. First, as discussed earlier, full audit reports are very well funded. This analysis showed that full public education audit reports average more than a year to complete from their prioritization date. Legislative staff also has subpoena power and access to all agency records and archives. This unfiltered access is atypical for outside groups trying to

determine program implementation. The result of this process is a report that thoroughly examines audit requestors' questions. While audit reports are a rich source of information by themselves, they are not isolated. The audit report process provides for a written agency response detailing the agency's position. Agency response letters are valuable for examining how challenges to constructed narratives were managed. USOE's typical response format accepts the audit report, acknowledges deficiencies identified, expresses concern, assures the committee that issues were already being addressed, challenges the scope or severity of issues identified, and finally passes the problems off as beyond their control.

Oral testimony also followed a typical pattern. OLAG presented and explained audit reports, legislators engaged in a question and answer session with OLAG staff for clarification, USOE responded to the audit report, and finally legislators engaged in a question and answer session with USOE staff. This exchange between OLAG staff, USOE officials, and legislators provides rich information about how a single data source is read and interpreted multiple ways by different interest groups. For example, the 2009-04 audit report was interpreted differently by Legislative Audit Subcommittee members. One said Utah's classrooms are overflowing; another said that Utah's classrooms are not as crowded as public education claims. This combination of legislative questions, OLAG staff and USOE responses provides multiple perspectives to a single policy issue. Examining these interactions revealed legislator and USOE values (Ball, 1997a, 1998).

Sponsored legislation stage revealed a rhetoric of change. Following the audit report process from initial question to sponsored legislation showed that audit reports inform policy discussions but do not hold any privileged place in policy formation. This

result is an important finding for agencies or program directors that are subject to these accountability reviews. The same political processes that mediate policy at the state level are maintained in the face of audit reports (Hammersley, 1994; Vinovskis, 1999). Limited impact on policy does not mean this process does not have political value. According to Kingdon (1984, 1995), policy solutions are floated to test the interest level of political bodies. While no action is taken at the time, these tests can determine if political mood is changing.

Of important consideration is the potential of the critical discussion around this policy analysis method. This methodological tool uses a system created by the legislative branch of the government to address what Dale (1994) calls "problem-solving." Government accountability reports exist within fixed limits with clearly established parameters. These reports represent rationality and present clear answers for how to increase efficiency within established boundaries. Because audit reports satisfy that "problem-solving" element they provide a springboard for critical discussion. Of particular concern is a framework that provides information that is not used. There is irony in putting accountability in their name because the group that pays to get the information is not accountable to do anything with the information. This system wants to portray unbiased evaluations, but questions asked control outcomes and questions are controlled. A group that calls for evidence-based decision-making, better stewards of public resources, and outcome focused public education, yet does not use evidence in their decisions after utilizing an expensive process that does not yield rational outcomes simply begs critique.

This method's ability to identify how a policy process is influenced by external information, like an audit report, also has value. Policy resistant to change despite damning report findings indicates that external influences, such as assumptive world elements, are entrenched and have a greater role than rationalized report conclusions. For policy entrepreneurs, this can indicate strategies or approaches that are best suited to effect change. Where rationalized report conclusions have shown no impact, strategies less dependent upon rationality of report findings can be utilized. This would suggest that where policy is unaffected by accountability reports, research on best practices would also lack influence. This methodological approach could be a barometer of political climate for a policy issue. An audit report with damning conclusions that has no impact could indicate a highly pressured political environment around a particular policy issue. Awareness of this gauge would help a political actor navigate this environment. Less attention on research as justification and more attention on assumptive policy world influences – like values, personalities, or political structures -- would have an increased likelihood of success.

This analysis's results could have been very different if audit's chosen had different outcomes. Anecdotally an example of an audit that lead to statutory changes identified through this process was the 2000-07 Textbook audit report coupled with the 2000-08 Class-size reduction audit report by President Beattie. While this audit report did lead to changes in statute a review of Utah's Legislative Fiscal Analyst 2011 In-Depth Budget Review: Minimum School Program & the Utah State Office of Education (Leishman and Young, 2011) shows similar concerns identified by OLAG in their series of CSR audits. LFA in their 2011 In-Depth Budget Review state the exact same

recommendations to USOE as OLAG made during their three CSR audit reports. LFA's second recommendation to USOE is "Implement a statewide financial management database for school districts and charter schools to report financial data" (Leishman & Young, 2011, p. I). This recommendation validates OLAG's criticism of USOE practices in the 2000-08 audit report. Back in 2000 USOE's response to this recommendation during oral testimony was putting this type of system in place is their top priority. Subsequent and OLAG audits and the LFA have provided evidence that USOE has not followed through with their promise. LFA's report further provided three specific areas to be address in construction of the statewide financial management database;

> a. Include review and support procedures by the State Board of Education to improve data accuracy, consistency, and to improve general ease of use.
> b. Require the state Board of Education to develop a mechanism to report LEA expenditures by appropriated program.
> c. Include in the statewide financial management system a mechanism to report school-level financial data. (Leishman & Young, 2011, p. I)

These recommendations validate OLAG's recommendations to USOE 12 years prior. This may indicate that audit findings in one area are symptomatic of larger agency issues. This provides increased power to this methodological approach to studying decision-making. CSR is a difficult issue to tackle and understand. The costs associated with CSR can be staggering and funding such an endeavor requires significant political will. However, noncompliance elements identified by OLAG are not related to the complexity of reducing classroom sizes. Areas of noncompliance identified and recommendations address basic data accuracy issues of procedural counts and line item budgeting practices. Taking this into consideration takes relevance away from CSR difficulties and emphasizes what USOE and school districts can accomplish, proper data and financial reporting. This suggests that using this approach to studying policy questions provides

perspective on systemic problems that reach beyond the narrow scope of study examined during the audit report process.

Assumptive Worlds Trump Research Based Information

At no point during any legislative committee discussions, audit reports, or media articles was there any mention of research-based evidence for class size standards. This finding is consistent with other recent policy studies that showed minimal use of research in policy debates (DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007). Policy makers simply have an assumption that smaller class sizes are better, but have no goal or standard to achieve. Assumptive policy structures prevail in policy discussion and ignore evidence. While research is prevalent related to optimum class size, including research that fits the gold standard (Finn & Achilles, 1999), this information is not acknowledged during policy debates. This may be expected for legislative actors, but the lack of references to research based criteria by industry advocates is also important to recognize. This lack of reliance on existing evidence reinforces the findings of this study that relevant information is not utilized in the decision-making process. Critically, "complaints from the policy arena about researchers' failure to provide the research that they think they need" (Bridges & Watts, 2008, p. 42) are difficult to alleviate when reports that are commissioned and paid for by legislators do not seem to provide insight about what type of information policy makers actually use. So this study does not provide insight into how research can have more impact.

Practice

This study provides insight into what these accountability tools accomplish. While audits are capable in theory of providing a dramatic shift to assumptive worlds it appears this is not a default. They appear to be more a show piece than actual substance. While there are examples of people, including top administrators, losing their jobs over audit report findings in Utah, this study shows they do not accomplish much else in terms of actually changing systemic practices. In practice, agencies appear to comply with the audit team in data collection and analysis, respond appropriately to pursue their agenda, and then simply continue doing what they were already doing.

An important mitigating factor may be policy actors involved and programs under review. Consistent with Wirt et al. (1988), a dominant legislator or widely supported program may be able to withstand attention brought from a negative audit report. This would indicate that attention needs to be paid to key political actors imbedded in assumptive worlds rather than audit report conclusions.

From a policy entrepreneur perspective, utilizing the legislative audit process seems like a slow process that yields little in terms of policy impact. In these reports, egregious noncompliance was met with no policy impact and agency apathy toward enforcement of promised changes. While it appears audit reports result from a breakdown of trust in communication, this could also indicate policy movers in public educations' assumptive world do not include audit requestors who are unhappy about information they receive. Tapping into key political figures or changing the dynamics of assumptive worlds seems to be a better approach relative to waiting almost a year to hear what you know because you crafted the question, and then have everything you know ignored as

the process goes on the exact same way as it has in spite of your protest about the status quo. Education practitioners can use this method to gain an understanding about public education's assumptive worlds. An effective strategy would identify who to talk to and what to talk about, what elements need emphasis, and whether bringing in piles of empirical research is worth the effort.

Identify Narratives of Concern

Legislative audits as a methodological tool can identify narratives of concern a dominant party has about policy or programs. As identified in this study, audit reports may be controlled by the dominant political party and reflect their priorities. Even when taking into consideration bias in questions asked, this approach reveals narratives related to policy issues. From an agency perspective these narratives challenging the status quo are an indicator of a constructed political spectacle. Understanding narratives being constructed by a vocal opposition (Roe, 1994), even if initially unsuccessful (Kingdon, 1984, 1995), is valuable in constructing defensive ramparts.

Lessons for Public Administrators

ISLLC standards number 4 and number 6 emphasis principals' political responsibilities for the allocation of scare public resources to achieve socially constructed goals and objectives. These standards emphasize how a principal's role as a political actor is important for their educational environment. This research provides a systematic approach that can assist principals to analyze their political environment. Through

examination of political actors' questions constructed narratives can identify information utilization.

ISLLC standard number 4 focus attention on school administrators' community engagement as a collaborator mobilizing community resources to benefit the education setting. A principal's awareness of community dynamics is an important aspect of this responsibility. Political activity in communities requires identification of formal and informal power foci. Knowing the school's location within community dynamics is critical for collaboration. This study's research method can be utilized for identifying community dynamics by analyzing information sources that have been requested by local community representatives. Examples of documents could be audit reports related to school or other community matters, request for proposals (RFP), or freedom of information act requests. Each of these documents provides narratives that can be quarried for information related to school or community activities. Utilizing this systematic approach gives structure for managing analysis that does not require integration into iron triangles of policy environments.

ISLLC standard number 6 addresses principals' involvement in political processes. Principals' "engage in activities ensuring that public policy is shaped to provided quality education for students." (ISLLC Standard #6). Principals are uniquely situated to mobilize communities, where they are imbedded, to influence policy. Typically directed in a top down manner that imposes processes and procedures upon schools and administrators, policy cannot be influenced without having an understanding of key players and how they communicate. To shape public policy principals need to know who to talk to, what questions are asked, why they are being asked, and who is

asking them. A certain level of political awareness can be achieved through an examination of key policy issues, questions politicians are asking, or legislation they support. Utilizing official reports provides an unsanitized picture of policy positions. In the case of CSR, lessons learned from constructed narratives show concern about local implementation of CSR. Politically aware school principals can provide local representatives counter narratives that combat this story. For example, a school administrator can specifically designate classroom teachers hired with CSR money. This gives CSR money a face and name. Additionally, impacts of not having this teacher in the school can be quantified at the classroom level, not the aggregate state level. For example, in a school with 120 second graders, four second-grade classrooms results in 30 students per teachers. The impact of not having one CSR teacher would have been 40 students per second-grade teacher, a tangible difference compared to the state average of 3.1 students reduced through CSR appropriations (Underwood et al., 2007). Introduction of CSR teachers and classrooms to local senators and representatives shows CSR policy's impact and reinforces legislative policy efforts. Going a step further, a politically astute principal could demonstrate the impact of having one more CSR teacher. Dividing 120 second graders among five teachers would result in 24 students in a classroom, not 30, demonstrating the impact of increased support for this program.

A second CSR narrative discovered through this analysis is district unwillingness to use local resources to fund CSR and district use of available state revenues to supplant local funds. School principals can play a role in watching district budgeting practices. Following the flow of money from state appropriations to schools is in a principal's best interest. Schools are not all treated equally by districts and principals play a role in how

these disparities are managed. Principals have a responsibility to advocate for their school but face the professional reality of needing to balance career opportunities, school interests, community and school districts political dynamics. This research provides perspective on what narratives exist around political flashpoints, like CSR. Given that these reports are packaged and prepared little more effort is needed to gain useful insight.

It is politically savvy for school administrators to identify political flash point programs and pay attention to their implementation. This would be a good tool to use for identifying what areas state policy makers are targeting. Making note of political areas to provide internal tracking or success stories can provide political cache with local senators and representatives. Another approach could be to follow programs supported by local senators and representatives, taking note of these programs and providing updates on implementation successes or failures can provide critical information to policy makers when addressing annual issues.

Finally, a critical element of this research is the result of communication breakdowns. School administrators should know that lack of communications could result in escalations and an uncomfortable and embarrassing audit of programs. While the impact of audits may be dubious as outlined in this research there is the potential for those responsible for lapses in implementation to suffer for systemic matters over which they have no control. Being responsive to political actors is a prudent decision.

An important lesson that can be learned is to read, understand, and comply with policy directives in a way that can be documented. One major critique exposed was the need to track money that has been appropriated by line item. School administrators who are responsible for budgets and program implementation may not have the same leeway

OLAG provided to USOE exempting them from line item accounting. Building principals need to be able to document allocations by program. Ability to identify impact of funds and resources based on financial appropriations is a critical task in the current accountability driven public education environment.

Indicator of Executive's Role as a Communicator with
State Policy Actors

Another element of this analysis is the use of legislative audits as an indicator of communication between an agency head, state superintendent, and political leaders at the state level. A major role for an agency head is to be a politician and interact with state level political actors within the state legislature. Effectiveness in this role can be measured in a number of ways. Examining how many audit requests are made could be used as an indicator of how well an agency director is communicating with state political actors. A relative spike in audits conducted may indicate a breakdown in communication with key legislators. While nothing may come from the audits in terms of real impact on statute or agencies activities, avoidable scrutiny is important to consider. This indicator could be very useful for those who oversee a state superintendent (State Board of Education, Governor, Electorate, etc.). While more research is required in this area, having a tool that indicates how well agency directors communicate information to key state actors would be useful.

Policy

Policy implications of this study are that a great deal of money is going toward studies of little utility. Other elements could be at play, but the utility of having this expensive process in place to send messages about dissatisfaction or lack of trust is a nuisance to agencies who are not going to change their practices without statutory requirement to do so. Agencies do what they do, and while the audit may show that there is a problem, they will not change their practices unless compelled and the audit process has no compulsive effect. What would compel change is not answered by this collection of case studies. Even where statute clearly required USEO to do something there is evidence that nothing changed. A serious policy question is why does the legislature have a separate investigative arm under their control if the result of their research does not impact policy. I suggest that if the research is just there to provide information, then no recommendations should be provided. If these are going to be informational reports only, then remove the implication of how audit findings can be remedied.

To be consistent with Utah's fiscal conservatism and privatization principles, similar reports could be solicited through a standard RFP process at a much lower cost and a quicker time frame. Since these reports would come from outside vendors with no connection to the state legislature, they would have no pretense for having to accept or reject conclusions. Credibility of audit reports as an unbiased source of information that presents facts about complex policy issues is a source of criticism when these factually unbiased report conclusions are not incorporated into policy solutions.

<u>Adding to the Literature</u>

These data add to existing theories about policy decision-making at the local level. Wirt et al. (1988) focus on "different cultures in making value-laden policy choices" (p. 272). Evidence exists of policy makers pursuing different values, outlined by Wirt et al., choice, efficiency, equity, and quality, but "not with an even hand" (p. 274). Assumptive policy world models (Marshall et al., 1986) that predict the dominance of political environments are reinforced by this study. For outsiders to influence policy worlds' dramatic action is required according to Marshall et al., such as court decisions. Audit reports exist as an outsider/insider position. In one sense they are legislative staff, but they do not work directly with legislators the way other legislative staffers do. Additionally, who requests an audit report may influence their ultimate utilization. In these cases the audit requestor had no historical public education agenda. Marshall et al. found that in some states individual political actors, such as specific legislators, are the major policy force in discussions. Therefore the fact that requestors had no policy cachet in this particular policy arena may mean minimal interest or at least minimal impact to the assumptive policy world of public education. This raises another question about the requestor. If the requestor has a specific interest or cachet in this area then will a report they request be utilized differently?

This study is another example of policy unaffected by evidence. This reinforces Hammersley (1994) and the myth of rationality. Policy-making is not an intellectual exercise born of evidence and reason. It also reinforces Ball's (1998) discussion of policy representing values of political actors. Finally, this study questions Kingdon's (1984) and Mintrom and Norman's (2011) perspective on policy entrepreneurs' effect on policy.

Future Research

This research has addressed several questions about how government accountability reports are used by political actors. This research has shown that when looking at government accountability reports there are a number of questions that need to be investigated. Control of requests by the dominant party needs to be investigated further. This may or may not be a public education related research question. For example, in Utah there have only been five public education audit requests by a Democrat requestor. Does this pattern hold for other policy topics in Utah? If yes, then public education is not atypical in Utah and how the legislative audit process in Utah is controlled should be investigated. If no, and Democrat requestors are represented equally on other policy issues in Utah, then a question can be asked why public education has been controlled by Republican requestors. This same question about dominant party control of this accountability mechanism needs to be asked in other states. As discussed in Chapter 3, Utah's political stability was a factor in this selection as a research site. Going forward, looking for trends in use of government accountability reports by political parties in control of legislative bodies could be informative for agencies and other groups subject to this form of accountability.

Ideally this research will lead to tools and indicators state and local superintendents can use to communicate more effectively with state policy decision-makers. While it was originally conceptualized that this research would identify indicators of individual policy entrepreneurs seeking to advance their policy agenda, it appears that a breakdown in communication initiates this process. Further examination is

needed for elements that indicate a lack of trust in communication. Skepticism of agencies, like USOE, will always be present to some degree. What questions are being asked and if these questions have a pattern needs to be investigated in the future.

Audit Request
- Break down of Communication
- Lack of Trust
- Controlled by Majority Party

Figure 3: Audit Request

Sponsored Legislation
- Audit conclusions are rational
- Policy decisions reflect other priorities
- Audit reports are an expensive source of information

Figure 4: Sponsored Legislation

Audit Report
- Conclusions

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Normative Assumptions
- Tacit Knowledge
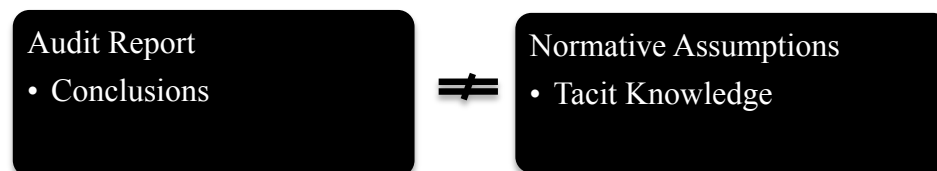
Figure 5: Conflict Between Audit Reports and Normative Assumptions

APPENDIX A

CLASS-SIZE APPROPRIATIONS: 1993-2012

Year	WPU Value (A)	Total CSR WPUs (B)	CSR Funding (A*B)	Yearly Funding Growth
1993	$1,490	2,946	$4,389,540	-
1994	1,539	7,182	11,053,098	151.8%
1995	1,608	9,609	15,451,272	39.8
1996	1,672	11,144	18,632,768	20.6
1997	1,739	25,858	44,967,062	141.3
1998	1,791	25,858	46,311,678	3
1999	1,854	25,804	47,840,616	3.3
2000	1,901	29,577	56,225,877	17.5
2001	2,006	29,577	59,331,462	5.5
2002	2,116	29,577	62,584,932	5.5
2003	2,132	29,757	63,441,924	1.4
2004	2,150	29,757	63,977,550	0.8
2005	2,182	30,203	65,902,946	3
2006	2,280	30,773	70,162,440	6.5
2007	2,417	30,773	74,378,341	6
2008	2514	32749	82,330,986	10.7
2009	2577	34293	88,373,061	7.3
2010	2577	35133	90,537,741	2.5
2011	2577	35836	92,394,372	2.1
2012	2816	36768	103,538,688	12.1
2013	2842	37540	106,688,700	3

Source: 1993-2007 A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds (Underwood et al. 2007, p. 2); 2008-2013 Legislative Fiscal Analyst Annual Appropriations Reports (http://le.utah.gov/asp/lfa/lfareports.asp?src=LFAAR)

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC EDUCATION AUDIT REQUESTS: 2000-2010

Audit Request	Audit Requestor	Gender	Party	House	Request Date	Date Approved	Actual Date Release	Time Between Audit Request and Releases	Time Between Approval and Release
Star schools Program	Rep. Margaret Dayton	F	R	Rep	1/19/00		NA	NA	NA
Canyon View Jr. High (Alpine School District)	Senator Stephenson	M	R	Sen	2/12/97		NA	NA	NA
	Senator Mayne	M	D	Sen					
Applied Tech. Education Follow-up						12/16/99	NA	NA	NA
Decentralization of State office of Ed	Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee					8/26/97	NA	NA	NA
Class-size Reduction Funds	Pres. Beattie	M	R	Sen	4/6/00	4/11/00	12/28/00	262	257
	Sen. Mansell	M	R	Sen					
School Text Book and Supplies	Public Education Joint Appropriation Subcommittee				4/6/00	4/11/00	11/28/00	232	227
Textbook Monitoring	House Bill 40 (2001 GS)				6/8/01	6/14/01	2/16/04	968	962

Topic	Sponsor								
School District Funding of Association Representatives	Senator Hale	F	R	Sen	6/8/01	6/14/01	12/17/01	189	183
School Closure Procedures	Senator Julander	F	D	Sen	12/12/01	12/17/01	NA	NA	NA
	Rep McCartney	M	D	Rep					
Use of Technology in Education	Rep. Kory Holdaway	M	R	Rep	12/12/01	12/17/01	2/28/05	1156	1151
Utah Performance Assessment System for Students (UPASS)	Education Committee				6/24/02	6/25/02	NA	NA	NA
Utah High School Activities Association	Rep. Duane Bourdeaux	M	D	Rep	2/21/03	2/21/03	NA	NA	NA
Education Association Activity	Sen. Bill Wright	M	R	Sen	4/16/03	4/16/03	NA	NA	NA

Topic	Sponsor	Gender	Party	Chamber					
School Boards and Open Meeting Act	Rep. Wayne Harper	M	R	Rep	12/15/03	5/18/04	7/14/05	569	416
Interscholastic High School Athletics	Rep. Ann Hardy	F	R	Rep	5/14/04	5/18/04	2/3/05	259	255
St Office of ED Budgetary Practice	Executive Appropriations				5/18/04	5/18/04	NA	NA	NA
Nebo School District's Admin Control System	Rep. Glen Donnelson	M	R	Rep	12/15/04	12/15/04	7/14/05	209	209
Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship	HB249				3/2/05	3/27/07	1/25/08	1043	298
Public Education Retirement Benefits	Pres. Valentine	M	R	Sen	2/20/05	2/20/05	7/14/05	144	144
	Speaker Curtis	M	R	Rep					
Public Education Vending Machines	Rep Pat Jones	F	D	Rep	10/18/05	10/18/05	9/20/06	332	332
Charter Schools	Rep Jim Dunnigan	M	R	Rep	11/22/05	2/16/06	1/16/07	414	330
	Sen Howard Stevenson	M	R	Sen					
School Building Construction	Rep Margaret Dayton	F	R	Sen	12/15/05	12/15/05	11/18/08	1053	1053

Topic	Sponsor	Sex	Party	Chamber					
Delivery of Adult Education Services	Sen Howard Stevenson	M	R	Sen	12/15/05	7/18/07	8/27/08	972	399
Cost of Education for illegal aliens	Rep Margaret Dayton	F	R	Sen	12/15/05		5/22/07	517	38662
	Rep Margaret Dayton	F	R	Sen					
Turnover savings in Education	Rep David Clark	M	R	Rep	1/19/06	1/18/06	NA	NA	NA
School Bussing Costs	Rep David Cox, 31 reps	M	R	Rep	1/26/06		11/18/08	1012	39198
School District accounting control	Pres John Valentine	M	R	Sen			10/16/07	38806	38806
	Speaker Greg Curtis	M	R	Rep					
Class Size Reduction	Sen Curtis Bramble	M	R	Sen	2/5/07	3/27/07	12/18/07	313	261
Parent choice in Education Program	HB174				2/28/07		NA	NA	NA
Identification of Critical Teacher Need	Rep Glenn Donnelson	M	R	Rep	2/6/07		NA	NA	NA
Post Retirement Re-Employment in Public Ed	Rep John Dougall	M	R	Rep	2/14/07	8/27/08	NA	NA	NA

Project	Sponsor	Sex	Party	Chamber	Date	Date	Date	#	#
Ogden City School District Building Construction	Rep Gage Froerer	M	R	Rep	8/15/07	NA	NA	NA	NA
Survey of Educator Classifications	Pres John Valentine / Speaker Greg Curtis	M	R	Sen / Rep	10/16/07	10/16/07	6/8/08	82	82
Class size in Utah's Pub Ed Elementary schools	Sen Curtis Bramble	M	R	Sen	2/25/08	6/30/08	1/30/09	335	210
School LAND trust program	Sen Howard Stevenson / Rep Bradley Last	M	R	Sen / Rep	6/30/08	8/27/08	1/30/09	210	153
BCI Check of Public Education Employees	Auditor General				1/30/09		4/7/09	67	NA
Survey of School District Association Leave	Rep Chris Herrod	M	R	Rep		NA	NA	NA	NA
Cost Comparison of Health Care coverage for school Districts	Rep Jim Bird	M	R	Rep	8/26/09		7/12/11	676	NA
Charter School Oversight	Rep Jim Dunnigan	M	R	Rep	10/4/09		10/21/10	347	NA

School District Travel Accountability	Rep Jim Bird	M	R	Rep	10/4/09	10/21/10	347	NA
Utah's School Community Councils	Rep Bill Wright	M	R	Sen	3/9/10	2/1/12	682	NA
School District Reserve Fund Balances	Pres. Michael Waddoups	M	R	Sen	12/8/10	NA	NA	NA
	Sen. Chris Buttars	M	R	Sen				

Source: Audit Prioritization Sheets: Legislative Auditor General working documents.

Key: M=Male, F=Female, R=Republican, D=Democrat, Rep=Member Utah's House of Representatives, Sen=Member of Utah's Senate, NA=Not Applicable

APPENDIX C

UTAH LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR GENERAL'S OFFICE

APPROPRIATIONS AND PRODUCTION: 2003-2012

Year	Appropriation	Number of Audits	Informal Reports	Annual Report	Average cost per report	Average cost per total activity
2003	$1,958,700	10	5	1	$195,870	$122,419
2004	1,946,000	11	1	1	176,909	149,692
2005	2,133,000	14	3	1	152,357	118,500
2006	2,564,800	12	3	1	213,733	160,300
2007	2,740,500	15	6	1	182,700	124,568
2008	3,138,900	13	4	1	241,454	174,383
2009	3,232,600	19	3	1	170,137	140,548
2010	3,471,700	17	6	1	204,218	144,654
2011	3,164,600	15	2	1	210,973	175,811
2012	3,217,300	15	6	1	214,487	146,241
Total	27,568,100	141	39	10	196,284	145,712

Source: Utah Legislative Fiscal Analysts Annual Appropriations Reports. Utah Legislative Auditor General's Audit Report

APPENDIX D

UTAH'S PUBLIC EDUCATION AUDITS BY YEAR AND

STATE SUPERINTENDENT TENURE

Year	#	Audit Report Title	Release Date	Superintendent Tenure # of Audits	Audits/year
2012	2	A review of School Community Council Election Practices	1/26/12		
2011	7	A Survey of School District's Health Insurance	7/12/11		
	5	A Review of Public Education Cosmetology Programs	5/17/11	Shumway: 2009-2012 5 Audits	1.7
2010	12	A Performance Audit of School District Travel Accountability	10/21/10		
	13	A Performance Audit of Charter School Oversight	10/21/10		
2009	8	A Performance Audit of Public Education Employees' Criminal Background Check Procedures	4/7/09		
	4	A Performance Audit of Elementary School Class Size	1/30/09		
2008	2	A Performance Audit of the Carson Smith Scholarship for Students with Special Needs	1/25/08		
	11	A Performance Audit of School Busing	11/18/08		
	13	A Performance Audit of School Building Construction	11/18/08		
2007	1	A Performance Audit of Utah Charter Schools	1/16/07		
	6	A Limited Review of HB 382 - Educational Salary Adjustments	5/8/07		
	7	A Review of the Public Education Costs of Undocumented Children	5/22/07	Harrington: 2004-2009 17 Audits	2.8
	13	A Performance Audit of School District Internal Controls	10/16/07		
	14	A Performance Audit of Class-Size Reduction Funds	12/18/07		
2006	10	A Review of the Use of Vending Machines in Public Schools	9/20/06		
2005	2	A Performance Audit of the Utah High School Activities Association	2/3/05		
	3	A Limited Review of the USOE's Use of the Superintendent's Discretionary Fund	2/28/05		
	4	Best Practices in Using Technology in Public Education	2/28/05		
	6	A Performance Audit of Nebo School District's Administrative Controls	7/14/05		
	7	A Review of the Public Education Retirement Benefits	7/14/05		
	8	A Review of School Board's Closed Meetings	7/14/05		

Year	No.	Title	Date	Auditor	Value
2004	3	A Follow-up of $23.7 Million Textbook Supplemental Expenditure by Education (Report #2004-03)	2/16/04		
2001	4	Addendum to an Audit of State Textbook Funding	1/25/01	Laige: 1999-2004	0.8
	11	School District Funding of Education Association Activity	12/17/01	5 Audits	
2000	7	A Performance Audit of State Textbook Funding	11/28/00		
	8	A Performance Audit of Class-size Reduction in Public Education	12/28/00		
1998	5	A Performance Audit of the State Office of Education Discretionary Funds	7/8/98		
	9	A Survey of the Utah Public Education Career Ladder Program	11/12/98	Bean: 1992-1999	0.6
1996	2	School Textbooks and Supplies	2/1/96		
	6	Centennial School Program	11/1/96	5 Audits	
1994	5	District Computer Services	11/1/94		
1990	1	School Expenditures for Textbooks	1/1/90	Taggart: 1990-1992	1
	2	State office of Education Follow-Up	1/1/90	2 Audits	
1989	3	Custom Fit Program	1/1/89		
	7	Telecommunications in the Uintah Basin	7/1/89		
	10	Purchasing in Public and Higher Education	9/1/89		
1988	1	Early Retirement First Year Savings	2/1/88	Moss: 1986-1990	1.6
	2	School Building Utilization	2/1/88	9 Audits	
	3	Early Retirement Projected Savings	3/1/88		
1987	15	USOE Follow-up	11/1/88		
	10	USOE	12/1/87		
1986	2	Reserve account USOE	2/1/86	Furst: 1985-1986: 1 Audit	1
1985	6	St Sup Travel and Person	5/1/85	Burningham: 1982-1985	1.5
1984	4	Alpine SD Follow Up	6/1/84		
	5	Summary of Public Education Audits	7/1/84	5 Audits	

1983	6	School Lunch Program	9/1/83
	8	Business/Maintenance Functions, SLSD	12/1/83
1982	6	Alpine SD	6/1/82

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