

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

BROOKINGS-PRINCETON "FUTURE OF CHILDREN" BRIEFING

POLICIES FOR CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

**INTRODUCTION, PRESENTATION, PANEL ONE AND Q&A SESSION**

Thursday, December 16, 2004

9:00 a.m.--11:00 a.m.

Falk Auditorium  
The Brookings Institution  
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM TAPE RECORDINGS.]

**PANEL ONE:**

Moderator:

RON HASKINS, Senior Fellow Economic Studies, Brookings

Overview:

DONALD HERNANDEZ, Professor of Sociology, University at Albany, SUNY

MELVIN NEUFELD, Kansas State House of Representatives, Chairman, Kansas House Appropriations Committee

RUSSELL PEARCE, Arizona State House of Representatives, Chairman, Arizona House Appropriations Committee

FELIX ORTIZ, New York State Assembly

**THIS IS AN UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT.**

**PROCEEDINGS**

MR. HASKINS: Good morning. My name is Ron Haskins. I'm a senior fellow here at Brookings and also a senior consultant at the Annie Casey Foundation.

I'd like to welcome you to today's session on children of immigrant families. The logic of the problem that we're dealing with here is straightforward enough, and I think it's pretty interesting for both people left and right of center.

It turns out that we have a lot of children who live in immigrant families in the United States, and a large majority of them are already citizens, even if their parents are not. And again, a large majority of them will stay here for the rest of their life.

So they are going to contribute greatly to the American economy for four or five decades, once they get to be 18 or 21, whatever the age might be. And in addition to that, they are going to disproportionately contribute to Social Security and Medicare in the years ahead.

So they are a really important ingredient to the American economy and to major sections of American social policy. And yet, as a group, these children are considerably behind native-born children in many measures of performance and achievement and, when they grow up, in employment.

So this is an interesting policy issue. Should we do something extra? How should we handle this problem? Should we ignore it, or should we have policy addressed specifically to it? And that's why we're assembled today, to answer that question.

I want to point out to you that this issue stems from the last issue of the journal *The Future of Children* that was published by the Packard Foundation. Packard had decided to have another group publish the journal. And so, they had a competition, and a team from Princeton and Brookings won the competition and will be publishing the journal in the future.

And in that regard, the first issue will be out in late January or early February of the new group who will be publishing the journal, and that issue is on the achievement gap, and especially school readiness and the achievement gap.

The new journal--the editor-in-chief is Sara McLanahan from Princeton, and also Cecilia Rouse and Christina Paxson, our senior editors there at Princeton, and Belle Sawhill and I are senior editors here at Brookings. And there are several other people today from Brookings who will be involved in the publication, including Margy Waller, who will be the outreach director, Julie Clover, Anne Hardenbergh, and Brenda Szitty, who will be the managing editor.

So we're looking forward to that. We will have a public event probably in March on that first issue, and we'll be having a number of events over the years. We'll probably publish two issues of the journal per year.

Let me also say I notice that there are several people here from the previous journal. Margie Shields is here, who was actually a jack-of-all-trades for the previous group that published the journal. And we're glad that she was able to come all the way from California.

There are also a few issues of this--the immigrant issue, that last issue--that are available. They may be gone by now, but we had maybe 20 issues that were out there.

Let me tell you about how we're going to proceed today. First, we're going to have a brief overview by Don Hernandez from SUNY-Albany, who used to be with the Census Bureau and has the lead article in the journal, which is available outside there. And Don is going to give an overview of the status of immigrant children.

So we'll start by filling in the details that I claimed in the beginning that immigrant children are behind average in America. Then I'm going to do just a very brief overview of our welfare policy, which changed very substantially in '96. It changed a couple of times since then. But it's very different than it was before '96. We treat noncitizens very differently in our welfare policies than we do citizens.

Then we are going to have comments from a panel that you see up here, that I'll introduce at the appropriate time, of state representatives. And then we'll have a chance for questions from the audience.

Then we have a diverse panel--panel of diverse views on these issues of public intellectuals, scholars, and advocates who will address the issues, and we'll also give the audience an opportunity to question them as well.

Finally, let me say that we did a background brief on this, for any of you who might be interested on in a little detail, that I did with Mark Greenberg, who is here somewhere, and Shawn Fremstad. I saw Mark here. And that's available out back. If any of you want those, we have plenty of copies. Everybody could have one of those.

So I look forward to an interesting morning. Oh, let me caution you on one thing. When we switch from this first panel to the second panel, we hope you will not ask people questions unless you go outside because we're not going to have a break. We're going to switch quickly and go immediately into the second panel.

So, Don Hernandez, thank you very much for coming--State University of New York--for an overview of children from immigrant families.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Thank you very much, Ron. And good morning, everyone.

It's a pleasure to be here today to open this meeting with a demographic portrait of children in immigrant families. This morning, I'll focus--

[Laughter.]

MR. HERNANDEZ: I just need to find my arrow here. This morning, I'll focus on the immigrant and race/ethnic origins of children and on their family strengths and challenges experienced by children in newcomer and native-born families. Then I'll present results from an overall index of demographic risk factors. Finally, I'll close by noting important education and health issues.

And that was that slide. There we go. Okay. Slide three shows that during the past century, the proportion of children living in immigrant families. By the year 2000, 14 million children, or 20 percent of all children, lived in immigrant families. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of children in immigrant families expanded about seven times faster than the number in native-born families. Nevertheless, most children in immigrant families are U.S. citizens because they were themselves born in the U.S.

Slide four shows that 97 percent of all children in immigrant families in 1910 had origins in Europe or Canada. Today, more than 60 percent of children in newcomer families have origins in Latin America, and more than 20 percent have origins in Asia. This shift in the sources of immigration is a demographic revolution that's transforming America.

Slide five presents population projections from the U.S. Census Bureau. Driven by third world population growth and economic opportunities in the U.S., most future population growth in the U.S. will occur through immigration and through births to immigrants and their descendants.

Because most children in immigrant families are Hispanic or nonwhite racial and ethnic minorities, the proportion who are Hispanic, Black, Asian, or some other racial minority is projected to reach 50 percent within the next three decades. The emergence of racial and ethnic minorities as a majority of the population in the U.S. is occurring most rapidly and will become a reality first among children.

Slide six presents Census Bureau projections by age. By the year 2030, the "baby boom" generation born between 1946 and 1964 will be in the retirement ages of 66 to 84 years old. The Census Bureau projections indicate that by 2030, 72 percent of the elderly will be white non-Hispanic, compared to only 56 percent of working-age adults and 50 percent for children.

As a result, as the growing elderly population of the predominantly white baby boom generation reaches the retirement ages, it will increasingly depend for its economic support during retirement on the productive activities and the civic participation, which is to say voting, of working age adults who are members of racial and ethnic minorities.

Many of these workers will, as children, have grown up in immigrant families. Because the education and health of these children will be critical determinants of their labor force, productivity in adulthood, it's essential that public policies direct increasing attention to the circumstances and needs of children in immigrant and racial and ethnic minority families.

Historically, children in immigrant families were highly concentrated in a few states. But during the past decade, their number has grown rapidly in nearly every state. The most darkly shaded areas of this map are the traditional immigrant gateways, which have large proportions of children in newcomer families.

In two states with the next darkest shading, Arkansas and North Carolina, both in the South, the number of children in immigrant families more than tripled between 1990 and 2000. In 10 additional states, the number more than doubled. And in another 17 states, the number jumped by more than 50 percent. Thus, in most states, the number of children in newcomer families has mushroomed since 1990.

Immigrant families have major strengths, but also face difficult challenges. Slide eight shows that children in newcomer families are much more likely than children in native-born families to have only one parent in the home, at 16 versus 26 percent. Thus, children in immigrant families are actually more likely than children in native-born families to benefit from having two parents in the home.

Children in newcomer families also benefit from growing up in families with a strong work ethic. Slide nine shows that 93 to 95 percent of children in both newcomer and native-born families have a father who is employed in the paid labor market. Three of every five children in newcomer families also have mothers who work to support their families. This is somewhat below the level of children in native-born families, but it is a large majority nonetheless.

In short, most children in immigrant families benefit from living in strong, two-parent families with strong work ethics. However, many of these children live with parents whose educational attainments are quite limited. On 12 percent of



children in native-born families live with a mother or a father who has not graduated from high school. But this jumps to 40 percent for children in immigrant families.

Parents who have completed fewer years of schooling may be less able to help their children with schoolwork. Parents with limited education may also tend to command lower wages in the labor market and are therefore constrained in the educational, health, and other resources they can afford to purchase for their children.

Equally important, they may be less skilled at navigating the education, health, and social service institutions that are critical to the well-being of our children.

Limited proficiency with English is another major challenge. Children who are English language learners may have substantial difficulty communicating with and learning from teachers because the teachers are, in turn, limited in their ability to speak the child's primary language. Children in families who are limited in their English proficiency may also experience barriers in communicating with health and other service organizations that are not prepared to function in a variety of languages.

The Census Bureau defines a linguistically isolated household as one in which no one age 15 or older speaks English exclusively or very well. Slide 11 shows that 26 percent of children in immigrant families live in linguistically isolated households.

An additional challenge for these families is that parents with limited English often experience difficulty in finding well-paid, full-time employment. Given the limited educational attainments and English skills of many parents in immigrant families, it's not surprising to find high poverty rates among children in newcomer families.

Slide 12 shows that, according to the official measure, the poverty rate for children in immigrant families is substantially higher than for children in native-born families at 21 versus 14 percent. It's well known, however, that the official measure underestimates economic need in the U.S.

Recognizing the inadequacy of the official measure, major public programs for children are increasingly studying eligibility criteria at higher levels. For example, families with incomes ranging from 130 percent to 185 percent of the official poverty threshold are eligible for reduced-price meals through the school breakfast and lunch programs.

Similarly, states--several states have set eligibility levels for the State Child Health Insurance Program at 200 percent to 350 percent of the official poverty level. To take account of this problem, an alternative measure that is often used sets the threshold for specific families at twice the official level, that is, at 200 percent of the official poverty threshold.

According to this measure, which I'll refer to as the 2X poverty rate, children in immigrant families experience much higher levels of economic need than children in native-born families. Nearly one half of children in newcomer families, 49 percent, fall below the 2X poverty threshold, compared to 34 percent for children in native-born families.

Up to this point, I presented results separately for several demographic risk factors. But some children experience none of these risks, while others experience several. To provide an overall assessment of these risks, I've created an index of demographic risk factors based on the proportion of children whose mother has not graduated from high school, whose family income is less than 200 percent of the official

poverty threshold, who live in linguistically isolated households, or who live in one-parent families.

Slide 14 shows that 44 percent of children in native-born families experience at least one of these four risk factors, but this jumps to 67 percent for children in newcomer families. In addition, one in five children in native-born families experience two or more risk factors, but this more than doubles to 42 percent for children in immigrant families. These are very high levels of risk.

Despite the fact that most children in immigrant families benefit from having two parents in the home and from having parents with a strong work ethic, many experience one or more serious challenges to their current well-being and future development. These risks have many consequences.

Compared to children in native-born families, children in immigrant families are substantially less likely to be covered by health insurance. In addition, as they enter the education system, they are less likely to have access to and benefit from early education programs. And years later, as they leave the education system, they are more likely to drop out of high school.

Insofar as children in newcomer families are increasingly important to the future of America, it's essential that public policies devote increasing attention to children in immigrant families. I hope this meeting will help to foster such policies to assure that these children will become productive workers and effective citizens during the coming decade.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Now one more thing as background--if I had more adventuresome blood, I would try this myself. But I've done it before, and it took a half hour to fix what I did. So I think I won't do it. And I don't want to have everybody up here have to talk with the technician up here doing the computer. So we're hoping he'll be here in just a minute.

Okay. Now the only thing I want to do here, the policy, like many federal policies, you know, like Social Security and Medicaid and retirement, my very favorite, it's extremely complex, has lots of sub-rules and so forth. So all I want to do is just give you a brief idea of what our federal public benefit policy is like for noncitizens because it has changed so substantially.

The most important concept is that policy now distinguishes very sharply between citizens and noncitizens. There are categories within that. But roughly speaking, especially for the first five years--we'll talk about this in just a minute--noncitizens are not qualified for welfare benefits except under emergency circumstances. Now there are exceptions to that, but that's a very good thing to keep in mind.

Refugees are different. We treat refugees differently. The concept is that they left their homeland, often without their property. Often they leave under emergency conditions. So they are eligible for welfare benefits from the time they arrive, and they are eligible for seven years, and then their benefits end.

Secondly, affidavits of support. This is a concept that was put in the law originally, I think, in the 1970s. And the idea is that people who come to this country should have a sponsor and that there should be a legally binding document that says that they will provide support in case the noncitizen falls on hard times and needs support.

Taxpayers should not do it. A sponsor should do it. And so, these affidavits of support say that--it's a legal document that says a sponsor will, in fact, provide support.

And then the third point is that, in addition to that, there is something called "deeming," so that the sponsor's income is deemed to be available to the person as if it were their own income in calculating the eligibility for welfare benefits after five years, when the time for welfare comes. So these are--both the sponsorship and deeming are attempts to prevent taxpayers from having to pay benefits for noncitizens.

Now here is just a rough--again, there are some exceptions. But for the first five years, for SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and TANF and Title XX, roughly speaking, noncitizens are ineligible with the exception of refugees. They're ineligible. For Medicaid, they can get under emergency circumstances. States can spend their own money, if they would like to, but federal dollars cannot be spent for welfare for noncitizens.

This was put in the law in '96. It's a huge change, and the concept was that people should not come to the United States for welfare. They should come for opportunity. And that was the by-word of Republicans who created these policies and passed them in the House and the Senate and signed in law by President Clinton.

After five years, though, there is eligibility, not for SSI. There is for food stamps, for Medicaid emergency, and there is a state option with deeming. So the states would have to pay part of the cost of this, but deeming is still in place. And then the same thing with TANF, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which is the nation's major cash welfare program in Title XX.

And let me say to you, since the law passed in '96, there have been several amendments, in '97 and in 2001. There were important changes in the first year

of the Bush administration that the President sponsored. But roughly speaking, the initial policy is still intact of the five-year bar for SSI and for most other benefit programs. The biggest exception, of course, is food stamps, where noncitizens became eligible for food stamps after five years. That was the biggest change in policy.

There are exceptions, which I've been mentioning. Here are some. Veterans are excepted. If you've worked in the United States for 10 quarters, and that includes if your relatives did, the person is eligible for benefits. I've mentioned emergencies before, and there are whole list of those.

And then the last one I call Horatio Alger. There was actually a certain logic to this policy. That the idea was that people come to America for opportunity, so they should be eligible and children should be eligible for programs that are educational or training or support their work in general. So, for example, the biggest program in this regard is earned income tax credit, which is about a \$35 billion program, and noncitizens are eligible. If they're legal residents, they're eligible for EITC.

Kids are eligible for Head Start. They're eligible for a whole host of programs that have to do with education and training, both the children and adults. Because, again, the idea is that people should come for opportunity, and taxpayers would support their education and training, which I think is directly addressed in a way to the topic of today's meeting.

And then, finally, these are data from the Census Bureau. Michael Fix is here, will be on the second panel. So any questions about these data, you can ask Michael Fix.

I can tell you that these come from the green book. They were done by the Congressional Research Service. And the only thing I want to show you is that the

policy of reducing participation in welfare programs that was adopted by Congress in '96 has been successful in that limited sense. There has been a very substantial decline in all of these programs in the number of noncitizens getting the benefits.

Now this question is much more complex. These data have a number of flaws. But I think there is general agreement that there has been a very substantial reduction in participation in welfare programs since 1996, which was the intent of the original policy. So, with that, we will go to the next part of our program.

Okay. We feel very privileged to have three state representatives here. I think it was especially appropriate that we invite people from the states because although we perpetrate all these laws here from Washington, these are the gentlemen that have to deal with the consequences of the laws that we dream up here in Washington. So we were very pleased to get a fine and diverse group of representatives from state legislatures.

So on my right is Melvin Neufeld from Kansas. Did you do that?

[Laughter.]

MR. NEUFELD: If you want me to take credit for it, I can.

MR. HASKINS: Let there be light. On the far left--I bet you love this. He never had an introduction like that--is Russell Pearce of Arizona state, of the State of Arizona House of Representatives.

And then in the middle, right square in the middle, is Felix Ortiz, who's an assemblyman from the State of New York.

Each of them have 10 minutes to make remarks about their views on these policies we've discussed and especially the issue of children. And we will begin with Representative Neufeld.

MR. NEUFELD: Thank you, Ron.

It's a real privilege to be here, and it's good to see a half dozen or so friendly faces in the audience. Don't make too many faces at me. Olivia, it's particularly good to see you.

I think it's a real honor for me to be able to be here and participate in this, and I think it's a major issue that all of us in the states are facing and need to work through it.

First of all, I'd like to say that I kind of have a little bit of personal feelings about this issue. All four of my grandparents were immigrants. My family was non-English speaking until about the time I entered grade school. And so, I know some of the feelings.

The fact is, my grandmother, one of the last things she told me before she passed away is, "Melvin, don't you marry one of those English girls."

[Laughter.]

MR. : You did it anyway?

MR. NEUFELD: Yes, I did. I want to kind of approach this a couple of different ways. First of all, I'd like to comment on the things that are working. And I think we have to look at this as more than just as a children's issue because it's really holistic, and immigration policy really affects what happens with the kids, and it's all tied together.

And I think the thing that's working best that we all forget about, no one pays attention to, that we do have something that works very good on immigration. And the populations that come through this are great for us and we have almost no problems, and that's the Foreign Worker Certification Program.



In my area, we have quite a few coming from South Africa, a few from Middle East countries, some from Europe. And that program is working extremely well. The problem is we don't even bother to try to use that program with our border countries. When you have something that works, maybe we ought to try to copy it elsewhere.

Another thing that is working, and probably the biggest thing we're doing in Kansas to help our immigrant children, is we're putting forth a serious effort on the part of the state to do ESL at the workplace, where you have high numbers of immigrant workers in the workplace.

Our community college system is involved with ESL. Then once we get them used to coming to those classes, then, of course, the next step is to try to move them into some GED, then step them into some of the college classes. Because if we fail to engage the first generation of immigrants in education and developing their own leadership, then the second generation is going to have a much tougher time.

If you do the model my family had, the first generation got involved and tried to better their education. Then the second generation went ahead and moved in. And by the third generation, although it may not appear like it, that I'd be part of them, you might say you've mainstreamed the immigrants.

And so, that first step of getting people to ESL early on I think is critical. And if you want the children to do well, you need to engage the parents in English. That's just--well, I think the data you showed proved that.

And the other thing that we're doing well is about half of our immigrant workers are in excess of 200 percent of poverty rate. And that's the good news, and that's the part we don't talk about much. And those families are doing pretty well.

What doesn't work? That's the things we usually emphasize. You know, we all like the negative better than the positive. Well, what doesn't work, I'll give you an example. There's a school in my legislative district out in southwest Kansas. Eighty percent of the students are immigrant children in that school.

I talked to one of the third grade teachers last year, and I said, "How are things going?" Well, she said, "There's three third grade classes in the school. We had an average third grade attendance for the year of 68, and we had three children from English-speaking, primary speaking homes."

But that's not the real problem and the problem we're ignoring with education is 80 percent of those immigrant children in that school are from illegal families, and we had a 240 percent turnover rate. That population is not stable. They do not stay.

Now the question is if you have virtually all of your students are various languages beside English, and you have 240 percent turnover, what are the children that are staying in the community going to learn in that school? It's a failed school.

It flunked on the No Child Left Behind testing. No big surprise. There's no education happening there. How can it happen? It's not a system that works.

We need to change the education system so that we actually find a way to educate both the native children as well as addressing what we do with these children from the illegal families that are in and out and this high turnover rate of students.

The biggest problem we have with children of immigrants is the citizen children of immigrants. They're eligible for benefits. Particularly if they're children of illegal parents, this moving around all the time, you try to put them in a child-only TANF case or a child-only food stamp, or whatever services--Medicaid--and you can't

track them. They disappear. They don't get services. I haven't found a way to address that, but I think that's one of our bigger problems.

And particularly in my area, we've got this tremendous problem with illegal German immigrants that's just driving us nuts because you've got these children of these illegals, and they're just impossible to keep track of them and to provide services. So we have high rates of tuberculosis and a lot of other things we don't want, which is--you know, creates some problems.

Other things that we need to do, to work on, and we're making a little effort, one of the things that doesn't work, for example, about 40 percent of our workforce in Kansas are not documented. As soon as they find out, they move jobs, of course. Buy a new set of fake IDs. If you need to know where to buy them, I can tell you.

Over half of them don't have bank accounts. We need to teach them how to do that, and that's part of our ESL program at the workplace. We need to work on that. And of course, another problem it creates for our communities, where you have this high community, like I was telling you about that school. With that exceedingly high percentage of undocumented, 60 percent of their payroll is sent back to the country of origin.

Every payday, there's a line at the grocery store buying money orders to send back. And that just destroys economic opportunity for small business in those towns. If that money was staying in there, we would see some of our immigrants starting businesses and moving ahead economically on their own. They'd like to do that, some of them.

That opportunity is not there because the money is not there. It takes away from the--you know, there's no sales tax collected on that. So it takes away from the local sales tax base, and that creates a problem.

I'm about out of time. A couple of things we've done that are controversial. Any child or any illegal student that's graduated or got a GED from Kansas, attended Kansas three years, is eligible for in-state tuition, provided they sign an affidavit that they're going to become--or they're working on becoming legal or becoming citizens. That cost a few people in the last election their re-election efforts because certain areas of the state, that wasn't popular.

Of course, we provide food assistance to blind, disabled, over 65, and under 18 for legally immigrants--for legal immigrants. And we're working fairly hard with our community college system for the children of the immigrants, as they move through the education system, to try to move them into community college classes, settings.

You have more luck getting them--while we have this program to give them tuition to the region schools, truthfully, you have more luck getting them in where they don't have to leave home, family, and their support system. And so, we have a program to try to do that. And my local community college, for example, now has 29 percent of the student body is from that demographic population.

Thank you.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you.

Felix Ortiz from New York.

MR. ORTIZ: Ron, let me move over there. That way, I can--

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Good.

MR. ORTIZ: Good morning. Let me just try to--like Melvin did, I'm going to try to personalize this with my own experience when I came to this country. And I think that that probably will cover a lot of the things that have been said here, and I will not get into the statistics. That was done already.

But I just--I would like to thank Ron for inviting me to be here this morning with you all. I think this is a very important issue. It's an important issue that we face in America. And it doesn't matter whether we come from Maine all the way down to Key West; from Seattle, Washington, all the way down to Laredo, Texas; or whether we come from Hawaii or Alaska, we're still human beings. That's what we have to remember, that we're still human beings.

And being human beings, I think it's very important that we--all who has managed to overcome a lot of obstacle and struggle in our life, and I'm talking now from my personal perspective. When I came here 18 years ago, I could not speak English at all. Just imagine now if I hadn't the opportunity to learn English, I mean, my early age, I probably wouldn't be standing right here at this microphone. I probably would be some place else.

But I learned English when I was 22. That was when I began to learn how to speak English. Then I've been in the New York State Assembly 12 years. So when I came to New York, I came to New York exactly about what Ron was talking about, with a dream of opportunity. A dream to have an opportunity for me to not just to learn how to speak English, but to have a great education and to also carry on my kids as they're growing up in this country.

Well, I'm the opposite of Melvin. Melvin is probably third or fourth generation. I'm the first generation of my family who decided to come to this country,

and that was a big fight between my father and myself because I was 22 years old, and he still thought that I--you know, because I was 22 years old, I could not leave the house. He want to keep me in the house.

And I said, "Dad, I'm already 22 years old. It's time for me to fly. So let me go." So I managed to leave and come to New York. That's when I arrive. I went to New York. And you know, although I came here to look for opportunity, unfortunately because of my problem with the language didn't give me that opportunity. And I already had a bachelor degree from the University of Puerto Rico when I came here, but I could not communicate.

And I was looking for a job just as a janitor. And let me tell you, immigrant workers, immigrant folks are very loyal workers. Very loyal workers. Very loyal. And they don't differentiate from one work to another. They will do whatever it takes to get the job done and to move forward.

Well, here I am. I'm trying to get a job as a janitor. I was not accepted to take the work as a janitor because when the guy saw my resume, he thought that I was overqualified. And then I tried to explain to him I cannot speak English. "No comprendo. No hablo Ingles." And I'm trying to make it through his eye that I need a job. That's what I needed. I needed just a job to make sure that I can move forward.

Well, the janitor job never happened. Then I decided to work in the car wash place. And now just what's going to make a big difference here because coming from Puerto Rico, we are U.S. citizens. Coming from Puerto Rico, we are U.S. citizens. So it was a matter of choice I decided to come to this country.

Well, I cannot get a job for my first three, four month. I decided to go to a place called welfare. I'm not ashamed to say that I'm part of the welfare system, but

I'm very proud to say that I was part of a welfare system who give me the stepping stone to be where I'm here today and to fight for those people who doesn't have the opportunity and the voice to fight for themselves.

Because I do believe, it's very simple, it's about dreams. It's about opportunity. But even some of those people who doesn't have a clue how to knock those doors to get those opportunities to make their dream come true.

While I was in welfare, you know, I told the lady, the social worker, that the purpose I wanted welfare is because I have two children, my wife, and we want to make sure that we can get some services. We got welfare. My wife and I decided to go back to college. So I went to study another bachelor degree. I did a master's degree. My wife decided to go for the DSW. She got a doctor's in social worker.

Then let me tell you, we was having fun at that point. Because every time that you go for revision, it was something else, that you went and looked for jobs. I said, yes, I went to look for job in the wrong place. I never went. I just want to make sure that I finish another education and get ready--to be ready for the workforce by becoming a little more proficient in English, the English language.

Then I got my first job, my first job with the Department of City Planning. Now I have a guy who is my supervisor, who comes to me and say to Felix, "Felix, I think you're a smart guy, but you have to get back to school and learn how to speak English."

Now I shared that with somebody next to me, and somebody next to me say, "Felix, do you know that that guy discriminating against you?" I said, "He's not discriminating against me. I do believe he's telling me the truth."

So through this guy who was my supervisor, then I went to Columbia University for a six-month extensive program in English. And I don't know if I still speak English, but I try my best. But you know, those six months were very, very enriching for me. And this is what we want. We want opportunity.

With the 1996 signoff of that particular welfare reform, believe it or not, I was very discouraged that Bill Clinton did that. Very discouraged. Very discouraged that he decided to make that step. So here we are in America. You know that song? "Here we are in America." Because we are in America, so we have to give and take.

I see some of the stuff that was taken away from these folks will be very hard to bring back again. But I will tell you this much, that as a state representative who represent one of the most diverse districts in the State of New York and probably throughout the country, who represent Russian, Asian, some Hispanic--because I do still have some Hispanic--and Arabic, one of the things that I decided to do in order for me to reach out to those community, to bring them to be part of my office and for me to be part of them, was to develop some program. And I'm talking about four different communities.

I developed there computer centers in my community. Things that Melvin talked about, GED, English as a second language was very important, very essential. Not only for their parents, but for our kids and for our kids' future because they are the ones who is going to be our workforce of tomorrow.

And those computer center get run by individuals whose native language happen to be Spanish-English, Arabic or Hebrew-English, Russian, Asian-English, so that way that they can get connected to each other, and that's the way we have to do things in America.



That way, the people will have the opportunity to trust, to believe that they do have a dream that can be fulfilled if we do the right thing for them. Nobody is locking them out by keeping them out and don't giving them the opportunity that they deserve.

Thank you. May God bless you, and I'm waiting for some of the questions that you might have.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Russell Pearce from Arizona.

MR. PEARCE: Like the previous speaker, maybe I'll stand up here and give me a podium to pound on. This is an emotional issue. And I'm grateful, and I appreciate Ron inviting me and the opportunity to be here.

This is a debate that is not going to go away soon. And again, I understand what mass immigration is. I'm 1 of 13 children. Every time we go out, somebody went someplace, they felt like that was mass immigration.

[Laughter.]

MR. PEARCE: So I guess, like my counterpart over here from Nebraska, that I'm appropriations chair in the State of Arizona, so dollars and balancing the budget is a big issue. And I suppose the reason that I'm the appropriations chair is because I am 1 of 13 children. I don't need any friends. So I'm not afraid to say no.

Just like the policy on immigration, I'm not afraid to talk about the things that need to be talked about. You know, we talk about America being a good place to live, and it certainly is. But you can't come here for freedom and then expect to be a welfare person and be a burden on the taxpayer. You have to have policies that assimilate you into society.

You know, I come from a very poor family. My dad was an alcoholic. We lived in houses that were condemned. Never took a penny from government. I'm not a believer in government programs, I can tell you. I think some of them do some good. But the bottom line is we're a country of freedom and personal responsibility. And one of the problems with immigration is we lure people into this country.

You know, to be poor in America isn't really poor. We don't let you be very poor compared to other countries. And we understand there are five billion people out there in this world that really suffer. We have some sad stories. And we start speaking from the heart, you know, we let our votes come from the heart, then we're going to make bad policies. We have to do things that are good.

It's like English only, you know? Twenty-six states have English only, and the reason is because we have this raging debate. You can't be successful unless you assimilate, unless you can fit in, unless you can communicate. And we do nobody any good when we don't force policies that bring about the ability to be successful.

And you can't hardly separate legal and illegal, and that's a difficult issue, too. Because we have about 79 different kinds of visas to come in this country, 1.4 million people who came to this country legally, legally, last year. We have three to four million folks that will come into this country illegally this year. So it is a huge policy.

When Ellis Island was in place and the Statue of Liberty with its arms out, we were a nation of 65 million people. Today, we're a nation of 290 million people. So we need to get serious about our immigration policies.

And education was brought up a minute ago. And I can tell you, in my community, Mason, Arizona--again, Arizona being one of the gateways for illegal

immigration as well as the immigration problem that we all are challenged with. We have many, many schools that are 95, 98 percent non-English speaking. And those that speak English are pulling their children out and sending them to other schools because they can't get an education in their own language because the emphasis and the resources and the effort is trying to bring those children that don't speak English into the mainstream America and allow them to assimilate and be successful.

It's a tough, tough issue. But we've got to change policy, and I'm grateful for the '96 welfare reform act. I think it was a start.

Again, you come to America. You have sponsors. You come here for freedom, and if that's the case, you need to be able to be successful. We need to have policies that force assimilation. And again, freedom requires Americans to share a common loyalty to the Constitution, to the principles of freedom, and there has to be more emphasis on that.

And I do believe that before one can be sworn in as a citizen of the United States that they must be able to speak and understand English, you know, at least reasonably well. And I think, yet again, when you create multicultural societies, and that's what you do when you don't require people to speak English, when you don't adopt the language. I mean, most countries have an official language. And actually, in the United States, we do, too. We just--because we're so concerned about the politically correct stuff, while we hurt America, that we're not forcing it.

And as a result, we hurt everybody when we don't assimilate or require policies, you know, that dignify the standards that we have. And because of this problem, 26 states have adopted English only, and that doesn't mean--I should say

English language. And that doesn't mean English only. It just means that we conduct official business as English.

And again, I have two boys that speak fluent Spanish, and they did that very quickly, and they did it by immersion. You know, immersion is a program that works. When we pander and don't force people to immerse and get involved, they can go on for years and years and years and not be able to do that. But that is the most successful.

California has passed programs to eliminate bilingual programs and deal with immersion only. Arizona overwhelmingly passed a program for immersion, and it is proven it is much, much more successful. In fact, the immigrant families agree with that and overwhelmingly endorse it.

In Arizona, we just passed a proposition, Proposition 200, that was, by some standards, very controversial. I guess enforcing the law is controversial on some standards. And if you'd listen to the opponents of that, because it dealt with elections-- and again, we just went through a very tough election throughout the United States, where there wasn't a day you could pick up the paper or listen to the news that there wasn't some concern over registration irregularities or voting irregularities.

And of course, in harmony with the welfare reform act, you know, besides dealing with the election piece in terms of trying to create a verification process that brought integrity to that process, we want the law enforced. Didn't change any eligibility, simply the enforcement of the 1996 welfare reform act, and that is you have to be eligible before you can get taxpayer dollars. And you had thought passing that initiative, that there was something hazardous to your health in order to require you to carry around some ID to prove who you were.

But anyway, this is a huge issue across America--immigration, both legal and illegal. And it's not going to go away. And we could debate, and again, it's always tough when we throw out the children issues. We do that to be--to get sympathy for our programs. And none of us, none of us, would do anything to harm children. But sometimes our policies, well intended, do much damage when we don't accept responsibility for dignified policies.

And again, this is the taxpayer. We're not listening to the polls very well. And that's why he talked about some folks who lost their elections. I can guarantee you poll after poll after poll in America, and we can cite the CNN poll, the GOP/USA poll numbers, Poll Project, USA poll, Ropers poll, and you can go on down the line, poll after poll after poll, that 85 percent of Americans want the laws enforced, the borders secured. They want us to do something, again, about policies that are hurting America, our failure to honor. We're a nation of law.

I don't have a problem with legal immigration. Every country is a country of immigrants. There's not a major country in the world that's not. America, we've benefited from immigration. But it has to be dignified. And when they come here, they have to come here because they're going to assimilate and not be a burden on the taxpayer. They're going to come here because they're going to be a patriotic American.

And so, we need to change our policies. We don't need immigration reform. We need immigration enforcement. And we need some policy reform where you come here, you're expected to be a loyal citizen of the United States of America and assimilate, not a clash of cultures, not--you know, which we're setting ourselves up for.

And again, it's an issue that we can talk for a long time in terms of what's going on, but because you've got those policies out around the country where they want to issue driver's licenses to folks in this country illegally. I mean, when are we going to wake up? You just can't continue to have a green light, but tell people it means stop. You can't put policies in place that lure people here or condone or, in some cases, encourage activity that is illegal.

And again, we can't continue to ignore the citizens who've paid the price for this. Again, we're a bloated welfare state. We understand that we have lots and lots of programs, and it's easy to buy votes with other people's money, and that's what we tend to do instead of dealing with the real issue.

America is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, you know, program after program--entitlement program after entitlement program. Well, you know, we can talk about these things all day long, and I'll tell you, I don't--I'm not afraid to debate anybody on these issues. You know, enough is enough. You know, you can't continue to pander and have pathetic policies that hurt America, destroy the economy, give away other people's money with entitlement program after entitlement program, and allow people who come here illegally to benefit, illegally in this country, that's even worse.

But when you're legal, you still have to come here. You have a sponsor. You have somebody in the workforce, and the person that sponsors you must take responsibility for your economic status, not the taxpayers. And again, we need to step aside of these programs. We need to go farther than the 1996 welfare reform act went. You simply can't come here. You don't have a right to somebody else's money.

And I always use the statement, as a government, you don't have a right to have compassion. Your job--your responsibility is to treat every taxpayer and every

citizen equally, fairly, and the same, not decide who gets benefit and who doesn't get a benefit, you know? And that's government's role.

Government's role is to treat everybody fairly and the same. And policies that dignify that and put into place, again, an accountability process, personal responsibility. And if you want to come to America, boy, come the right way, and I don't think anybody's offended over that.

But then also come here for the principles of freedom and opportunity, not to take advantage of the taxpayer programs that were very generous, and we are a generous nation. But that generosity comes--should come with accountability, and get some reforms into place to make sure it's not abused and the taxpayer is not taken advantage of.

And again, big debate, and we can debate it all day long and, I'm sure, spend hours up here. But it's not a debate that's going to go away. And again, 85 percent of Americans want something done.

In Arizona, Proposition 200, which was touted as racist and everything, 47 percent of Latinos voted for it. You know, those that are Americans, those that understand the damage going on also want something done about the failed policies and heading down this road that is further hurting America and doing damage, I think, to this great country.

And again, nobody is against legal immigration. But you must come here with the right attitude. You must come here and be self-sufficient. If you're going to come here, you know, you've got to assimilate and be an American, and that means you've got to fit in and be patriotic. And we need to change how we do business in terms of that process.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you.

Well, I'd like to apologize for failure to get diverse views on this panel, but--

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: --perhaps by the questions we can elicit some diverse views.

Okay. This is Washington, and I explained in the beginning what the federal welfare policy is. And I think it's at least somewhat fair to say that there was an attempt in crafting a new policy in the reforms in '96 to give something to each side.

And the idea was that people should not be able to get welfare benefits when they first arrive, but they should be able to get other public benefits that are-- whose intent is to help them in education and training so that they can advance and exercise freedom in the United States. So that was the attempt. It's somewhat of a compromise.

So my question to the three members of the panel is, if you were federal legislators or as state legislators, do you accept this compromise, or do you think that it should be changed further? And if so, which in direction should we go?

Let's begin with Mr. Ortiz.

MR. ORTIZ: Well, like I point out before, I think that it was a big mistake for the administration of 1996 to do that. And as a result of that, you know, we had to reallocate a lot of the TANF money to cover some of this damage that was created in Washington.

I would say that the federal government should go back and look to the demographics, how the demographics is changing. And that if they are really serious



about impacting positively to this demographic that is changing, that don't allow this demographic to impact the economy in the long run, I think they should begin to have some transformation rather than reform at this particular moment.

MR. HASKINS: What do you say to people who--a big point during the debate was that the welfare is not necessarily good for people, that, in fact, it could harm people. What do you say when people say that it's--we should not bring noncitizens in the country and get them used to welfare. What do you respond?

MR. ORTIZ: I don't believe that we're bringing them to get into welfare. I think they come here to try to look for exactly what you said before, that American dream. And I use myself up in example. I was not expecting to get myself attached to welfare when I came here. I was expecting to go on and go there and work.

But because of my lack of the language, so some other opportunity came. So I took the welfare, and believe that's a great opportunity. But you know what, I feel proud that I did it because that served for me as a stepping stone to go back to school to learn English and then get a better job.

And I think that we should give those opportunity to folks who come from other countries as well.

MR. HASKINS: So you reject the idea that people might get lured into welfare and become dependent on welfare? It would not halt their progress toward freedom and independence and self-sufficiency?

MR. ORTIZ: I don't believe people will become dependent to welfare. I think people need just that opportunity to move on, and that's what we ask for. We're not asking for us to stay dependent on the system. I think we would like to be independent somehow, somewhere.

MR. HASKINS: Mr. Neufeld, what would you say about the current federal policy? Would you want to change it?

MR. NEUFELD. Well, overall, I think right now, we have a pretty good balance as far as what we're doing with welfare and the federal guidelines, and I don't have much objection. I think most of the states thought that it was pretty critical to allow those children to get food assistance, and that was one of the big issues.

And I'll go back to the real issue here is we're not addressing the issue. The issue isn't TANF or food stamps eligibility. The issue is we've got a lot of undocumented workers coming in from across two borders, and we've got from every place else in the world, basically, that aren't coming across those two borders, they're coming in documented and are doing a good job, and we don't have a problem with that population at all that I can tell.

So I think we need to address the issue of the borders, and you know, the real issue is how do you stop illegal immigration because that's where virtually all of our problems are in Kansas?

MR. HASKINS: Russell Pearce, what do you think about current federal policy, and which direction would you want it to go?

MR. PEARCE: And again, good question. I think the 1996 welfare reform act was a good start. I think it had the right principles in mind. And that is that you have to come here for the right reason. And if you're--you know, you can't come here for the benefit of--because, again, we're a country with a big heart, and we have lots and lots of socialist programs out there and a lot of programs to get on, and we could go through a plethora of them.

[End of Tape 1, Side A, begin Side B.]

MR. PEARCE: --come here, you have to come here for the principles of freedom and opportunity, not to be a burden on the taxpayer. So I think it was the right start.

There are certainly lots of issues here, when you talk about children and education. And it's not an easy--it's not an easy minefield to wander through to try to identify policies. You try to be generous but, at the same time, be effective.

Again, I think it was a good start. But I agree with my good colleague down there that illegal immigration is really the challenge. I mean, they've got to assimilate, legal or--you know, legal immigrants must assimilate. They must come here. We must provide opportunity for them to assimilate, not provide opportunity for them not to assimilate, where they're not going to be successful or they're not going to have the opportunity.

And I think people need to understand. And when we talked about welfare, they're not addicted. The stats show that they do get addicted. They continue to stay on there. There are over twice as many as native-born foreign-born that are on welfare and those kinds of benefits, over twice. Historically, they continue generation after generation. So we have done damage, and we continue to promote policies that do damage.

But again, illegal immigration, you can't separate the two because of a bad policy such as anchor babies. The only civilized country in the world that allows you to come here illegally and have a child and call that child a citizen. It's bad policy.

And because of those policies and welfare policies, we lure people here. They come here for opportunity. They're taking jobs away from Americans. They're not

doing jobs just Americans won't work. They suppress the wages, keep the wages. And we could go on and on on this issue, and it's huge.

But we've started the right direction with welfare reform in 1996, but it doesn't go far enough because there's many, many other policies. They're not necessarily welfare reform. I think that's fairly decent. But many, many other programs where we continue to allow damage to go on to the taxpayer and the culture and America because of our unwillingness to deal with this, even though the polls indicate Americans want something done, support people who want something done, and are very frustrated that we're not doing something significant.

MR. HASKINS: So would you support the use of public dollars for programs that are intended to educate and train noncitizens so that they could get ahead?

MR. PEARCE: No.

MR. HASKINS: So you would not make them eligible for Head Start?

MR. PEARCE: No. I think immersion. Again, I've got boys that have gone to South America, and they learned the language. They did it by immersion. We continue to have feel-good programs that do more damage than they do good, and at a very high cost to the taxpayer and these programs.

And again, if you want something, you come here and you work on it and you get there. I'm telling you, I mean, it's just not necessary. I mean, they're good, if you think about it, for the heart side. They sound good. They feel good. But they do damage, and they're not good for America. They're not good for them.

MR. HASKINS: Even the programs that are designed for education and training?

MR. PEARCE: Well, again, there's a lot of programs out there. It's hard to just get general. I mean, there are some programs I think that probably do some good. But overall, our policies are pretty flawed and really do a lot of damage.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Second question. And at least two of you, maybe all of you mentioned this in your presentation. Language is a crucial issue here, and you dwelled on it at great length.

What should the policy in the public schools be to deal with English as a second language or with foreign-speaking children? How should the schools deal with this issue? What is your recommendation?

MR. NEUFELD: Well, I don't know that I have a recommendation because there's too many things out there. I do know what appears to be working best, and that's actually English immersion.

But you know, I go back to the issue that we've got in our schools. It's because of the large number of children of illegals that move so rapidly, it doesn't make any difference what program you have in the school because they're only there four or five weeks. And with the inclusion policy of No Child Left Behind, you simply destroy education for the other kids in the classroom.

So you need to undo some of that policy and allow us to have education for the children that are stable, both the immigrant children that are stable in the community and the citizen children, or we're spinning our wheels.

MR. HASKINS: Russell Pearce, what would you do about English in the public schools?

MR. PEARCE: Again, you learn--children especially, they learn quickly. And again, English immersion does work. And again, that's a debate, and there's many

articles, much material on this issue. But just to deal with it simply, I think you have to have programs that move people into the mainstream quickly, and that's immersion.

Not allowing them to linger and linger and linger and not fit in, and it does damage to those who come here that do speak English, that were born here, because the mix isn't just immigrants. We use these terms "undocumented." They're illegal aliens. I mean, they're not undocumented, you know?

And we have to get serious about what the law is. We're a nation of law. And so, we're hurting ourselves because of these policies. It costs us over \$10,000 more for a child that is foreign born in our education system than it does when he's there. So there's a huge economic impact.

So if they're going to do this, you can't continue to funnel money into programs that are bad. Again, we have limited dollars, limited resources. In fact, Arizona, \$2 billion deficit--

MR. HASKINS: Would you be willing to spend some of those limited dollars on language immersion programs so that foreign-born children would or even children born here who have non-English spoken in the home, would you spend public dollars to get them immersion programs?

MR. PEARCE: First of all, I'd have to see how they're going to craft the program. I'm very cautious to say yes to that because the truth is, it doesn't cost a lot of money for immersion, especially if you limit it to those that are in this country illegally. I mean, there's a lot of things have to be done on the front end before you deal with that.

Are we going to continue to pay for people who broke into our country, enter illegally. You know, they're a huge drain on the resources. Like I say, Arizona has a \$2 billion deficit. Health care systems are failing. The education system has

imploded. The criminal justice system, 80 percent of the violent crimes in Phoenix are involving illegal aliens.

You can't separate the two because a lot of those who came here illegally then have children that are legal. So you've got this mix. And so, it's a raging battle that's got to go farther than just anecdotal kinds of things like "What am I going to do here?"

MR. HASKINS: Mr. Ortiz?

MR. ORTIZ: Let me just tell you what has been working in New York. In my particular district, I have one school that the kids speak close to 25 language, okay? So how can we help the parents of the kids to integrate or to immerse into the English language?

Well, we have the school program, the after-school program that has been working for the family, working together with the parents and with the kids to ensure that they can do their homework. And there will be more--

MR. HASKINS: You bring the parents in in the afternoon so they can learn English as well?

MR. ORTIZ: That is correct. And when I mention my free program that I have in my community, that's exactly what we do--from 3:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon, it's the kids and the parents together to learn how--to get English as a second language.

And in the evening, you have the program offered from 6:00 to 9:00 where the parent then come and learn not only English as a second language, but also GED.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Questions from the audience. Let me caution the audience we'd like to have questions, not long statements. And please raise your hand. Tell your name and organization as soon as you get the mike.

All the way in the back? Wait until you get a mike.

MR. LEONARD: My name is Jim Leonard. I'm a former official of the U.S. Department of Labor.

I'm suffering from a case of disconnect here as between what Mr. Ortiz and Mr. Pearce said. Mr. Pearce seems to suggest that many people come to this country because they want to get welfare. Mr. Ortiz tells us that he was very reluctant to take welfare. He tried to get a job and he couldn't, and he was forced to. I don't know whether this means Mr. Ortiz is unusual.

My second question relates to immersion. Mr. Pearce tells us that his two children learned Spanish rapidly through immersion. Mr. Ortiz apparently also did, although it took him a long while to get into that six-month Columbia University program. And I don't know who paid for it, but how can you assure that people learn English without spending enormous amounts of money for some type of immersion or other English language training?

MR. HASKINS: Mr. Pearce just had an emergency call. He'll try to return as quickly as possible. Mr. Ortiz?

MR. ORTIZ: Yes, I guess I would like to respond to that because I'm not a very unusual case. I know more cases than mine of kids who have, believe it or not, who have been coming through the borders to this country and today not only they serve as a state representative or in the senate, or some of them are sitting in Congress.



As well as some of them are very fine attorneys and doctors who today are taking care of some of the people that are opposed to exactly what we are talking about here today. So in reality, it's not a very unusual case. You have many cases like that of people who come to this country and make it to the American dream.

MR. HASKINS: Next question. In the back. That's all right. Come on up here.

MS. CIFUENTES: Ines Cifuentes, Carnegie Institution.

What I've observed in D.C., as I look around, is that there are a lot of citizens who--and companies who hire people, a lot of families who hire women from other countries, a lot undocumented, to take care of their own children because they don't have a child care--we don't provide that. And construction companies who hire people who are undocumented as well to work in the construction companies.

So what I see as well is that our own country is looking for, we don't have that low-wage workforce. I don't see a lot of our citizens taking those jobs, for good reasons. I mean, they're very--they're long hours. They're hard work. They don't pay well.

So, you know, I'm a little bit confused if we're looking only at the cost that people who are coming here for that dream when, obviously, our country is benefiting. I don't know. I'm not an economist. I'm a seismologist. I don't know the numbers as to what our country is getting in terms of dollars.

I know a lot of them pay income tax even when they are undocumented. They buy houses even when they are undocumented. So, you know, if anybody here really knows the full picture on the economics of all these workers that we clearly seem to need and want?

MR. HASKINS: Do you want to comment?

MR. ORTIZ: I'm going to make a quick comment on that. Because I happened to be one of those undocumented workers, make-believe, that I went through the system in New York, and that came out on 20/20 and 60 Minutes because I discovered that some of these construction companies that you're talking about, not only they were taking the people to work, but they were taking them to work to Connecticut and New Jersey. And at the end of the day or the week, they would never get paid, and they also abused them, okay?

So I went undercover, and I discovered a lot of that, came out in the light. So the attorney general took over, and Pugh Construction Company got arrested.

Now regarding the economy, it's interesting because what's mentioned before on the driver's licensing issue, for example, I did a statistical analysis in New York, where we have close to 300,000 people who are eligible to get a driver's license, and they're undocumented or illegal aliens. If we produced that, that will generate close to \$44 million to the State of New York, just from driver's license issue.

So we're talking about the economic impact that that will have? We would have \$44 million revenue producer, number one. And number two, then New York state would not need to think about premium for insurance to go up because we would be able to have it down because we know where these people live and these people would not run away in case of an accident.

MR. HASKINS: One more question.

MR. ELLISON: I'm Allen Ellison with Reuters.

When you talk about combating illegal immigration--I'm referring here to Representative Neufeld--do you think it can be done by enforcing the border, or do you think it should be done by penalizing employers who employ illegal immigrants?

Is either one of those practically or politically feasible, or are we just going to struggle along with the status quo?

MR. HASKINS: Good question.

MR. NEUFELD: Great question, and the answer is yes.

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: Yes, both?

MR. NEUFELD: Yes. The truth of it is we need to enforce our borders with the certified worker program for the temporary workers coming in, instead of having this constant--you know, I've got people that live three months in Mexico, the rest of the year in Kansas. But the three months is in two different stints with their families. The families move back and forth.

We've got this big problem coming from Canada with all these illegal Germans coming through with Canadian papers, showing up, going back, going to Mexico, going back to Canada. Roaming around.

And so, we need to get some control on our borders, and we need to remember that there is a good reason these people come here. It's called economics. The simple truth is, in my state, the State of Kansas, we've not had a birth rate equal to the worker replacement rate for 40 years.

Now if you don't raise your workforce, you will import it. We started importing them from Iowa. But we ran out of them from Iowa.

[Laughter.]

MR. NEUFELD: And so, we're importing them from somewhere else. But we need to go after the employers.

There's a joke, for example, down in my area that if there's a bad hailstorm, you can't replace a roof unless there's illegal Germans. And you know, it's kind of true.

But the problem is that we also have a number of people that are actually hiring people who are illegal who don't know they're illegal because there are very good fake IDs out there on the market. In Garden City, Kansas, you can buy very good fakes.

I have one constituent who called me, said you've got to help me. IRS took my house, my bank account because I hadn't paid my taxes, and I paid them. Here's the check.

We get the check, and there were 82 people using his Social Security number because somebody in Garden City had decided that since he had an Hispanic name that it made a good fit for certain individuals, and they just sold his Social Security number to everybody.

So you've got employers caught where they think they've got somebody that's actually legal because if you look up the Social Security number, they're a citizen, but it's using a fake number.

MR. ELLISON: If you went into even the Marriott Hotel, and you could bust--anywhere in the country, you could bust immediately dozens of illegal aliens. The same goes for any--

MR. NEUFELD: I'd bust the manager.

MR. ELLISON: Right. Fine. But, you know, immediately, the head of J.W. Marriott--I'm picking that at random. It would be the same for Holiday Inn--would

phone--who's a contributor to both political parties probably, will phone his state senator, will phone his federal representative, and pressure will come down and the policy will stop. That's just plain fact, isn't it?

MR. HASKINS: Say "yes" again.

[Laughter.]

MR. NEUFELD: Well, it's not the policy of this representative. I won't defend any of them.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. I hope you'll join me in thanking the panel.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: And I also want to thank the National Conference of State Legislatures and Sherry Steisel, who helped us have at least diversity represented on this panel, and I'd like to thank you. I hope that phone call turns out all right.

Now we're going to move to the next panel very quickly. Audrey Singer from Brookings will introduce the members of the second panel. And if you'd like to talk to any representatives, you can go outside in the back.

**BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**

**BROOKINGS-PRINCETON "FUTURE OF CHILDREN" BRIEFING**

**POLICIES FOR CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES**

**PANEL TWO AND Q&A SESSION**

Thursday, December 16, 2004

9:00 a.m.--11:00 a.m.

Falk Auditorium  
The Brookings Institution  
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM TAPE RECORDINGS.]

**PANEL TWO:**

Moderator:

AUDREY SINGER, Immigration Fellow, Metropolitan Policy Program,  
Brookings

MICHAEL FIX, Principal Research Associate, Urban Institute Population  
Studies Center

TAMAR JACOBY, Senior Fellow, Manhattan Institute

STEPHEN MOORE, President, Club for Growth

CECILIA MUNOZ, Vice President for Policy, National Council of La Raza

PETER SKERRY, Professor of Political Science, Boston College, Nonresident  
Senior Fellow, Governance Studies, Brookings

**THIS IS AN UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT.**

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

MS. SINGER: Hi, everybody. Welcome to the second panel. I'm Audrey Singer, immigration fellow at Brookings.

And I'd like to move the conversation away from illegal immigration and back to children of immigrants and policies around children of immigrants. And as we've heard from the discussion, the children of immigrants comprise a large and growing part of the U.S. child population.

As this cohort becomes a larger part of our domestic labor force, they will contribute widely to various sectors of the economy, and they're also projected to assist in keeping the Social Security and Medicare programs afloat.

The future contributions of this group to the U.S. economy are also important for the nation's ability to compete in the global economy. Therefore, it's important that we make sure we address educational needs and gaps now to get these children on the path to economic mobility and to prepare them for what lies ahead for them and for all of us.

So we have a distinguished panel today--welcome--who will be presenting with a range of viewpoints to discuss the future of immigrant children and the policies that might help. I'll introduce everybody very quickly at first. You have bios in the handouts of everybody. And each panelist will speak for about five minutes, and then we'll open up to questions.

Michael Fix, in the green and blue tie, directs the immigration studies program at the Urban Institute. And next month, he'll become vice president and director of studies at the Migration Policy Institute.



Next to him is Tamar Jacoby, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

Next to her is Steve Moore, who is the president of the Club for Growth.

Cecilia Munoz is next to me, vice president for policy at the National Council of La Raza.

And Peter Skerry, all the way over on the other end, is a professor of political science at Boston College and a nonresident senior fellow at Brookings.

Thank you. And Michael, will you start?

MR. FIX: Ron told me--Ron Haskins told me I had to talk at warp speed, and I can talk faster when I'm standing up than sitting down.

Thanks a lot, Audrey.

What I want to do this morning is to look at federal policy for immigrant children, but I want to do so through the lens of young children of immigrants under age six. I want to do so for a couple reasons.

First, Randy Capps and I and some of our colleagues at the Urban Institute are about to release a report on the topic. It's funded by the Foundation for Child Development and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

I want to do it also for a more substantive reason, and that's because children of immigrants under six are different in some interesting ways, interesting policy-relevant ways, not just from native children, but also from older children of immigrants. And finally, it goes without saying, I think, that early childhood is crucial to development. So this is a critical time in life.

What I've been asked to do is to give an essentially statistic free, number free, PowerPoint free presentation this morning. But the claims that I'm going to make are, in fact, I hope empirically supported in the handouts that you've gotten that were at the front table.

Let me start where I always start when I talk about the children of immigrants, and that's that you can't--this follows up Don Hernandez's point. You just can't underestimate the impact of immigration flows on the composition of the child population in the United States, and you can see this particularly clearly when you look at the child population under six.

Where what you see is that almost one in four children under six in the United States is the child of an immigrant. Almost 30 percent of low-income children under six in the United States are the children of immigrants. And this has two obviously implications.

First, it underscores the fact that our federal child and family policies, all the way from SCHIP to No Child Left Behind to Head Start, are going to have big and maybe even you could say disproportionate impacts on the children of immigrants. But it also reinforces the fact that the effectiveness of those policies, how we judge whether they're successful or not, will increasingly turn on how well they equip immigrant kids to succeed and how well--and their effectiveness in underwriting my own expensive retirement.

I would argue, second, that these kids, these children of immigrants aren't only demographically prominent. I would also say that they're distinct in some interesting policy-relevant ways. In the first place, in contrast to all children of immigrants, almost all young children of immigrants under six are

citizens. Ninety-three percent of young children of immigrants are citizens, and they live in mixed-status families, that is to say families where one or more of their parents is a noncitizen, and that raises issues that Ron raised, the earlier issues of membership and access to benefits and access to services.

Second, and not surprisingly, the parents of these young children are more recently arrived than older children of immigrants. That has some implications. That means they are more likely to be younger. They're more likely to be poor. They're more likely to be limited English proficient, to have lower levels of education. And they're more likely to be undocumented.

In fact, our analysis finds that almost 30 percent of all the children of immigrants in the United States have one or more undocumented parent.

But while the risks then, Don talked about the risks and protective factors, the risks faced by these young children of immigrants are in some ways distinct, I think in other ways, they're emblematic of those faced by other children of immigrants. And they emblematic in ways that aren't, I would argue, reached by many federal policies that deal with children, policies--children and families policies that emphasize work, policies that emphasize marriage, policies that emphasize discouraging the use of public benefits.

Don touched on this, but I would just make three points. In the first place, these young children of immigrants are more likely to live in two-parent families than natives. However, the presence of a second parent in these families is less likely to translate into lower poverty rates than as the case with natives.

Second, work also appears to be less of an antidote to poverty in immigrants than in native families. If we look at young children of immigrants in families where both parents work, we see that they are more than twice as likely to be low income as natives.

And third, Don mentioned this, too, over half of children of immigrants under six are low income. But despite somewhat higher levels of hardship than natives, children of immigrants are substantially less likely to receive public benefits and work supports. They're substantially less likely to receive TANF, food stamps, housing assistance, and child care than are children of natives.

So what are some of the policy directions that flow from this statistical profile? First, since this has been largely a session around the question of welfare reform, one point to make here is that welfare reform's exclusion of immigrants from federal means tested benefits for five years after entry basically effectively excludes all noncitizen children under six from services during a critical period of their development.

Second, our study for the FCD and for the Annie Casey Foundation found that children of immigrants are substantially less likely to be in center-based child care than children of natives and that the children of the least educated are the least likely to be in center-based care. And of course, these are the kids who probably stand to benefit from it most.

Third, the fact that so many of these young kids are growing up in households with one or more undocumented parents, I think represents a new and a kind of troubling national experiment, one whose costs are as yet

undetermined, but whose costs also I don't think have been very much factored into current comprehensive immigration reform debates.

And finally, the high levels of limited English skills and linguistic isolation we see not just in the households of these children, but in the schools that they attend. And what we've found is that 50 percent of limited English proficient children in schools go to schools where 30 percent of more of their classmates are also limited English proficient.

This reinforces for me the deep logic of the No Child Left Behind Act provisions which, for the first time, holds schools accountable for the performance of limited English proficient children. And I would argue that if implemented well, if decently funded--both big ifs--I would argue that the No Child Left Behind Act represents perhaps the most important piece of immigration legislation enacted in the past decade.

Thank you.

MS. SINGER: Thank you, Michael.

MS. JACOBY: Well, Michael made me promise to come up here so he wouldn't be the only one. So that's why I'm doing it.

I want to thank Brookings for having us here and for putting this question in such sharp relief. I think the way Ron Haskins put it, you know, growing disadvantaged, at-risk population, but so much of U.S. self-interest riding on their success, I mean, that sharp--posing the sharp dilemma that way, I think, helps us all to think about it.

I'd like to bring something that's been, interestingly, not much represented here today, a little bit of a political perspective to it. I'm not an

elected official. I'm not a pollster. The evidence I bring is really more anecdotal than quantitative.

But it's my very strong instinct that a reversal or even a significant rolling back of 1996 would be extremely unpopular in this country, and not just unpopular, but would have, I think--as somebody who wants a more generous immigration policy, wants a more immigrant-friendly country, I think a rolling back of that kind would have very bad consequences for the kinds of policies and the kind of country I want to be.

I mean, I spend a lot of time on talk radio defending immigration reform and explaining why I think immigrants are good for this country. And I'll tell you, if there is one question that's considered a slam dunk for the people on the other side of the radio, as it were, is aren't immigrants abusing welfare?

I mean, it's the one thing where the--you know, we don't have to characterize them, but the Americans who are concerned about immigration and the Americans who aren't sure they like immigrants and the Americans who aren't sure that immigration is good for the country, it's the one thing where they're sure they're standing on solid ground.

You know, we're not sure about economics. Maybe, maybe not. Culture. Maybe, maybe not. But you know, they're coming here, and they're taking our taxpayer dollars? I mean, it's just not even close as an issue for people.

So I worry that an effort to roll back '96 or an effort to revise it significantly, to change that compromise, as Ron put it, really would very much tip the balance in an uncomfortable way in terms of immigration reform of the

kind that we're all hoping to see, or I'm hoping to see anyway, in the next couple of years. And would also tip public attitudes toward immigrants here in a divisive and troubling way.

So, you know, that doesn't tell us don't--absolutely don't do it. I mean, if people were starving in the streets and whatever, you'd think differently. But it certainly does sharpen the dilemma yet further.

What's the answer to that? Well, I mean, my instinct is people are not willing to go further with--the public is not willing to go further with giving immigrants welfare, but people are very interested, very keen--and this goes all across the spectrum--in what you might call assimilation policy or integration policy. People all across the spectrum in very strange political corners are willing to spend public money to help immigrants, as it were, become Americans.

And it doesn't necessarily mean become Americans in the sense of, you know, forget who their grandmother was or never speak their language again or melt into some stew. But it does--so let's not get hung up on the word of what "assimilation" means. I'm not suggesting assimilation in some sense of obliteration of your--the culture you bring with you. But so, you know, call it integration or think of it as what I mean as integration.

The public is very keen on that. And gosh, I'm already down to two minutes. How will that help? I'm going to skip the part where I talk about where I see the public is keen on it. How will that help these things that we're talking about? How can you use assimilation policy to help poverty, to help people with improper housing, to help people with problems with nutrition?

I actually think you can because I think the things that people are willing to pay for and would like to see the government pay for and would like to see business, frankly, step up to the plate and pay for more, and I think businesses increasingly are willing to take on this burden--English Prepares.

Well, English Prepares is going to help people obviously economically. It's going to help them get a different level of job. It's going to help them feel more part of the mainstream.

Similarly, surprisingly with citizenship. The public is very interested--and this goes across the spectrum, Democrats and Republicans, the public is very interested in helping people become citizens. And what's interesting is, well, so how is that going to affect poverty?

Well, interestingly, citizenship--changing your status in that way does affect people's socioeconomic outlooks. It helps people, people once they become citizens are much more likely to invest in this country, to buy homes, to start building wealth. People who are citizens invest in self-improvement. They go to school.

So, obviously, services are still going to have to be available, but assimilation assistance for the parents, I think, is going to be helpful. But I also think assimilation assistance is a way to tuck in various kinds of services for the kids. You know, ESL classes, additional funding for ESL classes, ways to bring people out of the isolation of the linguistic--the enclave and the schools that are only--that are what Michael just described of where these kids are limited English proficient kids are going to schools where everybody else is limited English proficient.



You could build into assimilation policy ways to bring people out of that isolation. It could be part of the--you know, in the name of helping them become Americans, you could help bring them out of their isolation.

Preschool, I think you could build into that. You could make the case that people are--that lots of these people that we need to help become Americans are having educational problems, and build in money for preschool in an assimilation policy. Build in money I think for a bigger effort in the schools to do ESL training and the kinds of things Mr. Ortiz talked about, about the after school programs where you bring parents and kids into the school. I mean, that sounds like an amazing program.

So I think you could use an assimilation policy to tuck in maybe not all, but a lot of some things that could be very helpful. And I think then you combine that with commitments to education, to No Child Left Behind, to basic sort of other--to community colleges, to other kinds of sort of social mobility policy that again Americans support.

I mean, the compromise of '96 left room for education training, you know, include more money for public schools, include more money for community college, include more money for different kinds of mobility--services that you justify in terms of mobility rather than welfare. And I think, you know, that combination of assimilation policy, money from sort of mobility policies, and--well, I mean, just really that combination.

The bottom line for me--the sign says "stop" in big letters. It's a good thing I got to this sentence. The bottom line for me is I think that we should all be sort of getting--the sharpness of this dilemma should be

encouraging us all to get much more creative in thinking about how we could use assimilation policy to address some of the difficult questions, difficult challenges that were raised here.

MS. SINGER: Thank you very much, Tamar.

Mr. Moore is up next.

MR. MOORE: Good morning. And Ron, thank you so much for inviting me to this conference.

I've been a fan of Ron Haskins for over a decade now, and I think that the country owes him a great debt of gratitude for the work that he did on the 1996 welfare bill, which I view as probably the most important social policy legislation we've passed in this country in the last 50 years.

And I think you've heard this morning many of the successes of that bill. And so, Ron, I just salute you for the work that you did on that. I think it's changed America in a very positive way.

I represent the Club for Growth, which is an organization dedicated to try to promote policies to make America's economy grow stronger. And one of the things that we feel very strongly about is that immigration is an essential part of America's economic growth in the future.

We absolutely need immigrants if we're going to continue to be the number-one economic superpower in the world. And so, it's very critical that we keep our gates as wide open as possible to legal immigrants.

It's interesting, when you look at the demographic situation, which you've heard about already this morning. I think that immigrants are probably more important to the American economy going forward over the next 25 and 50

years than maybe they've been at any time in American history. Especially when you all know about the low birth rates, the aging of the baby boomers.

I'm going to be speaking on a panel later today on the Social Security crisis. Social Security crisis would be a whole lot worse if it were not for immigrants and their children.

It's also interesting when you compare--I tend to be very bullish on the American economy. I think things look very bright. I think we're in a commanding position to retain this global superpower position that we have with respect to the economy. And I think one of the reasons for that is when you look many of the countries that we compete with--Japan, Germany, France, Spain--those countries, it's hard to be optimistic about those economies. You wonder where is the growth going to come from because of their very low birth rates.

And so, I would make the case to you that immigration is sort of America's demographic safety valve. We don't--number one, we don't have quite as low birth rates as most of the other developed countries do. But number two, the immigrants that come tend to be a highly dynamic population and add greatly to the population and to our growth rate.

So let me just make a few quick points about the topic at hand, which is the economic impact of immigrants and their children, and just go through these as quickly as I can. First, I'm a very big fan of this idea of immigration--yes, welfare--no. I think it has worked quite well.

I was very heartened to--I hope I'm not misinterpreting the data that Michael Fix has in his excellent report. But it appears from this, it confirms other reports that I've seen, which is that welfare use of immigrants has declined

very substantially since 1996. This is a very healthy trend because I believe that just as Tamar mentioned, that Americans in general are very favorably inclined toward immigration, but they are also very hostile to the idea of immigrants coming to this country and going on welfare.

They want immigrants to come to share in our economic freedoms and our political freedoms, not because they're lured here by the magnet of welfare. So I think we ought to stick with that policy, and I agree entirely with Tamar that it would be a great setback, both for welfare--you know, for social welfare legislation and also with respect to maintaining a public acceptance of immigrants if we move back to the pre-1996 policy.

The second point I'd like to make is that--this is an historical point, and I don't have any recent evidence to confirm this. But historically, that is to say at least, you know, as long as we have data over the last 100 years, one of the great assets of immigration is precisely their children. And so, when you look at evidence about how do various cohorts do in America economically, what the data has shown over the last 100 years or so is that immigrants themselves do fairly well, and they catch up with natives in terms of income over time.

But what's very interesting is that their children tend to be extremely successful, and they tend to go into professional classes and so on. And so, I always say to people, look, the problem is if you cut off immigrants, not only do you cut off immigrants, but then you don't have the value of their children. And by the way, what tends to happen is that you've got a regression to the mean over time. So that by the third generation and so on, the children become sort of Americanized and they're no different than Americans.

Third is that immigrants use--one of the great myths about immigration is that immigrants use more public services than they pay in taxes, and that is entirely false. And the reason for that is that a lot of times when you see this analysis of public services used by immigrants and their children versus the taxes that they pay, what is left out of the equation is what we spend the most money on in Washington, which is Social Security and Medicare.

And when you take into account those two programs, the great benefit of immigrants and, of course, their children is that they are young. Immigrants tend to come between the ages of 18 and 35, whereas the average age of Americans is a lot older than that. And so, essentially, you get this sort of one generation net benefit to the Social Security and Medicare systems because what happens is the immigrants start paying into these systems immediately, but there is no elderly cohort to collect the benefit.

And then, of course, when the immigrants start collecting the benefits themselves, they have their children who are coming into the system will pay for their benefits.

Another point I'd like to make is that quality matters a lot. And if we were to change our immigration policy in any way, I think, as an economist, I would say there is no question that we ought to keep the numbers as high as possible. We ought to, in our economic self-interest, move toward a more skill-based system because the higher immigrants are a form of human capital. And to the extent that the immigrants come in with high skills, it's just a major, major benefit to America.

Two last quick points. One is that I agree entirely with this idea of the importance of English acquisition. I am a very big enemy of the idea of bilingual education. I think it does a big disservice to the immigrants themselves. And if you knew nothing else about an immigrant and you just looked at the profile of that immigrant and you knew nothing else, and you want to just look at one statistic about whether this immigrant would succeed or fail in the American economy, the one overriding statistic that trumps everything else is whether that immigrant learns English.

And so, we ought to do everything possible to make sure that we hasten the learning of English by immigrants not only because it does lead to better assimilation, but also because it's good for the immigrants.

And finally, I just wanted to reiterate a point that Tamar made, which is that this idea of assimilation is such an important point. I face the same concerns even among our members who tend to be generally very pro immigration, but they're also very concerned about this idea, are the immigrants Americanizing?

And so, I believe that Tamar is right. We need to rededicate ourselves as a nation to building institutions that Americanize these immigrants. And by the way, "assimilation" and "Americanization" are not dirty words. These are very critical to the well-being of the immigrants.

So, Ron, thank you so much for putting on this conference. It is really quite an honor to be invited to speak here.

MS. SINGER: Thank you very much, Steve.

Next we will hear from Cecilia Munoz.

MS. MUNOZ: I was clearly invited to be the rebel on this panel. So I'm going to sit and make my presentation from here.

I largely agree with most of what Tamar and Steve just said, although I want to address just a little bit about the political feasibility of this notion of rolling back the '96 act because, in fact, parts of it have been rolled back three times now since it was enacted. And that's why food stamps are available to legal immigrants.

And that has to do with a couple of issues. One is the fundamental question of fairness, that if we're going to be providing a safety net for people in this country who are paying taxes, that it doesn't make sense to ask immigrants to ultimately have the same obligations as U.S. citizens in terms of paying taxes, military service, and every other obligation that you and I have and not allow them eligibility for a safety net--for the same safety net that their tax dollars pay for, when they fall on hard times.

Ron is right. We, in fact, strongly strengthened the affidavit of support, the sponsorship requirements. We made them enforceable. We beefed up sponsor deeming. The '96 act enhanced all of those provisions to make sure that sponsors are, indeed, responsible for the immigrants that they petition for.

But if that sponsor falls on the same hard time as the immigrant because they work in the same industry or live in the same community, federal benefits are not available to the immigrant at all because of the '96 law, and that strikes us as there's a fundamental fairness question because immigrants are, indeed, taxpayers. And it does seem to be overkill in that we've both beefed up

the sponsorship requirements and the sponsorship responsibilities and made people ineligible anyway.

And the second piece of the fairness question has to do with the impact of that on the states. And that is that, as you've heard Steve describe, the federal government gets something of a windfall because of Social Security payments by immigrants who are of working age and who largely come, arrive in this country in their working years.

When the federal government doesn't provide a safety net, but there are, in fact, needs in immigrant communities, the states end up having to step up to the plate, and that's ultimately what has happened. So when the federal government was not providing access to food stamps, the states were putting in their own dollars to provide nutritional services.

That is still true in terms of other services, and that again raises a fairness question of ultimately who's footing the bill when there are needs? And the answer is that the feds have been taking in the tax dollars and the needs are being addressed by state governments.

The second question after fairness is the wisdom of denying especially children access to safety net programs which it is economically wise to be providing them. One of the leftover riches of the '96 debate is whether we'll give states the authority to cover immigrant children under the State Child Health Insurance Program, whether pregnant women--legal immigrant women will have access to prenatal care.

It's, again, maybe penny wise, but pound foolish to be denying prenatal care to immigrant women are ultimately giving birth to U.S. citizen



children. It just doesn't make any economic sense to have that part of the restriction regime. And so, where there is a struggle going on, it is on those questions where it's quite simply not fair and quite simply unwise to be denying access to those safety net services.

But beyond that, I think was the question of integrating immigrants fully into American life, including economically, and especially economically is the paramount question. And I'm happy to report that there is no debate about whether or not English is important in that construct. Right? There is simply no debate about it.

The question is not should we be doing everything possible to make sure immigrant children and immigrant adults make the transition to English? There is no question that we should be. The real question is so are we going to be dedicating resources to doing that?

My organization, a Latino civil rights organization, we have 300 affiliates who are service providers all over the country. More than half of them are providing English language services to adults, English language classes to adults. And they're doing that with the educational equivalent of duct tape and string. There are no resources dedicated.

We have some programs at the community college level. But the demand for English language instruction by immigrant adults far outstrips the supply of those courses. So we don't need to have a debate about if we should be doing the English thing for adults and children. The question is how and with what? And it's ultimately immigrant communities themselves and their co-ethnics who are leading the charge because they see the need, and they're doing

everything they can to address the need, often with nothing in the way of resources.

But there are other--in addition to English, there are other policy discussions in which the question of immigrant children and the extent to which we should be making investments are relevant. You saw in the statistics in the slide presentation this morning that immigrant children and immigrants in general tend to use the services for which they are eligible less than natives.

For U.S. citizen children, that continues to be true, in part because often their parents aren't eligible and in part because we have stigmatized the use of anything smacking of a safety net service in immigrant communities. So there is a real fear factor which keeps kids out of Head Start, for example, for which they are eligible.

Again, if we're trying to help these kids make the adjustment into English and limit linguistic isolation, you want them Head Start programs, and you want those Head Start programs to be focused on multiple factors, including school readiness and including helping students make the transition to English. Those are investments that are worth making.

And in the No Child Left Behind context, there are provisions in the law that we worked hard to put there to create and implement parent training programs, parent involvement programs aimed at the parents of limited English proficient children, English language learners as we call them, and at parents who are English language learners themselves.

You heard Assemblyman Ortiz talk about one such program in New York. Think of what we can accomplish if we were to dedicate even

modest federal resources in the structures which already exist in the law to begin to invest in immigrant students and their parents. For starters, on moving forward in English, but also building that into our structure to help people advance their position in the workforce.

TANF right now makes immigrants eligible for these sort of bootstrap programs that Ron mentioned that are supposed to help people advance their skill sets. But very often, language instruction isn't part of that. So you're technically eligible for a program to teach computer skills. That program is taught in a language you don't speak. Ultimately, that eligibility doesn't lead to real access and to real improvement of economic opportunities unless we dedicate TANF resources, Workforce Investment Act resources towards language instruction for adults to help them enhance their economic position.

One other quick point on No Child Left Behind because the stop sign has come up, and that is that we're in the middle of a debate about, as you've heard from the state representative from Kansas, about what it means that we are imposing testing structures on schools across the country, including schools that have high immigrant populations.

And the debate is going to go one of two ways. One is that we-- that because students in these schools are failing these tests, in part, because of language issues, one very vigorous debate that's happening in my school system is that maybe we should be exempting immigrant kids from the accountability system altogether, which would be a mistake.

It's an acknowledgment of the fact that the testing regime isn't really testing what people know in their subject areas. It's testing their ability to

speaking the language. But the answer is not to remove the kids from the testing structure and, therefore, from the accountability structure for the schools.

The answer is investing in making sure we're really finding out what those kids know, investing in making sure that their teachers are trained in how to teach kids who are speakers of multiple languages, and investing in the resources to help them cross the bridge into full English proficiency so that they're successful and the schools are still being held accountable for their success.

MS. SINGER: Thank you, and thanks for sticking to the time.

Peter Skerry?

MR. SKERRY: Thank you, Audrey.

I want to chime in, too, and thank Ron for not only inviting me to participate here today. But also for being the coauthor of this paper, which I think is really a very useful document. It sets out an array of various policy proposals, but it also really reasons through differences, reasons through differences among the coauthors, which is then reflected in the panels we see today. And I think that's all to the better.

I also very much applaud the effort that's clearly the focus of that paper, to appeal to the self-interest of nonimmigrants in terms of how to broach these programmatic changes that are being suggested.

There has to be a bargain here. There has to be a quid pro quo, and I think that helps keep that front and center.

Having said that, I'm going to raise some questions about what was put forward in the paper. I'm probably going to wind up agreeing, I think,

with the cautionary note that Ron sounds or manages to sound among his two coauthors in that paper, but may get there in a slightly different way.

The first issue I would raise is that the paper suggests that now is a good time to move ahead with some not enormous, but significant changes in our policy toward immigrants, and I'm just not convinced of that at all. If this is a great time to make big changes in immigration policy, it hasn't--the news doesn't seem to have gotten to Senator Clinton, who's clearly making very different kinds of noises these days with a clear eye on the political horizon. I'm just not at all persuaded that this is the time for substantial changes.

With regard to the self-interest component that's emphasized in the paper, I applaud that, as I said. But to the extent that that rests on an argument about Social Security, about which we've heard several speakers emphasize this morning, all well and good. I'm just not at all persuaded that that's the kind of self-interest that's going to appeal to large numbers of Americans who are very anxious about the record levels of immigration we have. It's just too long term. It's too far into the future for most people to fathom. They have more immediate concerns about immigration. They want more immediate responses.

The other point I'd make is that there is a tension in this paper, an understandable tension, between arguing for more resources for immigrants as well as arguing for how those resources get used, and I want to focus a bit on how they get used, rather than the more. And I want to specifically raise some questions about how we use these resources to build on immigrant family strengths and not potentially weaken those strengths.

First, and here is where I want to just sound a note again agreeing with what I think Ron lays down in that paper. I think the distinction between citizen versus noncitizen is really important to hold onto. I think it's meaningful to large numbers of Americans. I think it's meaningful to immigrants, and I think we should definitely not blur that any more than we already have.

This is not the time to renegotiate that bargain. There are some notions about how to do that. The little Hoover Commission in California had some interesting thoughts a few years ago, but I don't think in this conversation I want to go that way. I want to try to maintain that line.

I also like Ron's emphasis on trying to tie benefits to work, and this gets to my more principal point, I think. I fear that we could walk down a road that I thought we'd learned to be more cautious about here, which is that in social welfare programs, there's always tensions between eligibility for programs and participation rates.

There's a tone in this paper of trying to encourage immigrants to participate more. The language of rights is never used, but no one ever talks about welfare rights in here, and I'm not suggesting they are. But it does sort of hearken to that. There was a time in our history when we pushed ahead with urging those eligible to take advantage of their rights to participate in welfare programs.

It seems to me we don't want to do that with immigrants. If we do, we risk undermining the strengths of immigrant families that we've seen today, the two-parent working families. This comes up in a related context with early childhood education, at least to my mind.

Participation rates in early childhood education programs among immigrant families, we've been told, are low. I think one reason they're low, inevitably, is the programs may not make themselves as available as they might. That's inevitably probably true. But it's also true, based on research from people like Bruce Fuller out at the School of Education at Berkeley, that immigrant families, especially Latino immigrant families, are so strong that they often don't want to relinquish their kids to institutions, formal institutions, whether those are Head Start programs or child care programs.

I'm frankly not sure we know if that's good or bad. But I know that the strengths of those families result in some of that disinclination to participate. I don't think we know enough about the impact of these programs on those strong family ties, and I think we ought to proceed with caution for that reason.

So what that leads me to emphasize, based on what others have said here this morning and what's laid out in the paper by Ron and his coauthors, is to emphasize that I think we ought to focus on some basics--basics politically and basics substantively. And that boils down, again, to what's been said before about education and English learning.

We don't do a very good job at teaching people how to learn English in this country. I couldn't agree with Cecilia more. I've visited a fair number of ESL programs. They're very inspiring, very heroic, but they work with abysmal resources.

I've been trying to learn German the last few years, using CDs while I'm doing all sorts of things. You go to ESL classes, and they have quaint-

looking Jane and Dick books with no kind of audiovisual aids that I've seen, very inadequate kinds of resources. There's all sorts of things we could do there to make those programs much more serious, much more engaging and successful.

So I think we want to focus on that and focus on, as what we've heard, on both generations. One of the downsides to assimilation that we don't talk a lot about is that when kids learn English and their parents don't--this is an old story that we learned 100 years ago--that undermines the natural authority relations of families and harms families. That's I think one reason why parents might be ambivalent about some of the assimilation processes because they see themselves losing influence over their kids.

So we ought to emphasize learning English both generations. The program that Representative Ortiz mentioned in New York, I know nothing about, but it sounds very interesting for that reason. I think we ought to focus on that. Focus on those basics and avoid programs that are problematic politically and, I think, problematic substantively.

Thank you.

MS. SINGER: Thank you, Peter. And thanks to our speakers, especially for keeping their comments short. I know it's hard with such an interesting topic.

We're running a little bit late, but I hope that we can go over and that you'll stay with us for questions and answers. I'm going to start with one question and see what people think here, and then we'll open it up to questions from the floor.



And the question or the topic I want to talk about is about a broader economic issue in the U.S., and that is the restructuring of the U.S. economy. So when we look at the earlier wave of immigration, the early part of the 20th century, there are manufacturing jobs aplenty in our cities. Immigrant workers came in, took these jobs, experienced mobility. Their children did well.

The concern with today's restructuring of the economy to a service-based economy is that the kinds of jobs that immigrants easily find themselves in aren't suitable for the same kind of mobility. And therefore, their children are more vulnerable to not experiencing this mobility. And so, we have an opportunity through education, through English language training, to enhance their opportunities, and that's what this program is all about to a certain extent.

So my question is, is there a role for employers in this sphere of immigrant integration in English language training and work support that will move immigrant families further? And if so, how do we think this is going to happen? Will it happen through federal or state funding, through private funding, or what?

MS. JACOBY: I'll start. Not only is there a role, but employers are really--

[End of Tape 1, Side B, begin Tape 2.]

MS. JACOBY: --McDonald's people, actually. People from the fast food industry. Because if you have an employee who's, you know, working the French fry machine, and he doesn't speak English, he's fine at the French fry machine, but it's very hard to promote him. You can't be a manager if you don't

speaking English or, you know, at McDonald's they don't promote to many managers who don't speak English.

So if you can't promote the guy, you can't retain him. And that is really bad for McDonald's because they spend \$1,500 training every employee when they first get there, and they want to retain them. It's a huge financial interest to retain them. So recruitment and retention are big interests for companies, and they're running up against problems of English language proficiency.

So in the fast food industry, companies are getting interested in actually paying for--I mean, not even wanting aid to do it. But they're thinking about how can we pay for people to learn English, and can we successfully teach them? And can we think of a cheap way and a fast way to teach them so that, you know--I mean, they're not doing it out of the goodness of their heart. It's not going to be the Rolls Royce version of learning English, but at least to learn the "French fry machine is hot, don't touch it" kind of English.

And I think there's a huge challenge for policy to figure out how to use that self-interest and build it into incentives and encourage people to do it, encourage companies that don't quite see the self-interest to figure out how to do it, lower some of the costs. You know, like if the federal government provided a curriculum that was English language instruction that was easy for McDonald's to then plug in and use, that would lower the initial cost of getting into that English teaching business.

And so, I think there's a huge kind of role here for public-private policymaking to get employers into the business of helping with this kind of

assistance. And you know, the one number that has kind of--the one study that's kind of interesting that supports what a lot of people on the panel have said. In New York, for every one immigrant adult who wants to learn English, there are-- excuse me, for every one class place where you can learn ESL in New York, there are 10 immigrants waiting for that slot, 10 to 1.

So there's a huge need for this. The federal government is not going to go into the business of teaching all adult immigrants English. The business sector could be positioned so that it could see its self-interest to helping in a big way. And you know, I think that's one of the huge things that we could do is kind of create some kind of public-private partnerships and incentives for business.

MR. MOORE: On this issue of immigration and the new economy, which is obviously a good question, I would just make a couple of quick points. One is that, you know, when you look at the skill level of immigrants, they tend to be sort of bipolar. We have a lot of immigrants at the very low end of the skill spectrum, and then we have a lot of immigrants at the high end. And actually, we don't have that many in the middle.

And I regard America as sort of a middle skilled country right now. And so, it's somewhat beneficial--I mean when you look at those low skilled immigrants, one of the things they really do is they have this knack of filling into these niches in the economy. You know, I love to tell the story when I was on the border a year ago and just interviewing immigrants on the border. And I interviewed this Mexican and, to be honest, I don't know if he was here legally or illegally, possibly illegally.

And he was saying to me in a very kind of broken English, he said, "I don't understand all this talk about unemployment, you know, and a lack of jobs in America." He said, "I've only been here four weeks, and I already have three jobs." So there is this tendency for these immigrants to come in and fill these niches.

Now on the high end, that's something I'm a little worried about, though, because it is--it's a cliché, but it's absolutely true that there wouldn't be a Silicon Valley if it had not been for this infusion of immigrant talent all over the world that came in through Stanford, and then you had this wonderful combination of Yankee ingenuity and some of the top engineering and scientific minds from all over the world that created this new industry.

One of the things I'd like to warn people about, I think a big public policy problem that we have to deal with is for the first time in many decades, we're not getting the top students into our universities here. And when they don't come here to study, guess what? They don't stay here. They don't go to Silicon Valley. They end up staying in Germany or France or China, wherever it is.

I view that as a really troubling trend, and I talked to a lot of university presidents who say, you know what? We can't get visas for some of these top students that we need to get to retain our competitive situation. So it's something that we should put sort of on the public policy agenda.

MS. SINGER: Okay. Michael, and then we're going to go to a question.

MR. FIX: Well, let me just put some numbers underneath because immigrants are 11 percent of the population, but they're 14 percent of the workforce in the United States. And they're 20 percent of the low wage workforce.

And while I agree with Tamar on this point that there is a huge opportunity in place for employers in this whole area of integration, language, and skill training, our own forays into the field on this suggest that employers are a rather unpredictable group. And even though--and their supply of these services is often fairly unstable.

I mean, the cost to the employer is significant. It costs them in terms of time. It costs them in terms of space. It costs them in terms of employee salaries. And one of the things that we noted was in the recent downturn in the economy, these were the programs that were the first to go in lots of workplaces.

MS. SINGER: Thank you.

Okay. How about Alan Kraut right here? The microphone is coming.

MR. KRAUT: Alan Kraut, American University, history.

I'm wondering if we could sort of broaden the discussion beyond economics and education and into the realm of health and health care? Because not much has been said about that this morning, and it's terribly related to the other things you've been talking about. The lack of access, especially of young children, to the basic services, preventive health care, health insurance, and so on.

And what needs to be done, what could be done within the context of the paradigm you've been using this morning?

MS. MUNOZ: I'd love to jump in on that question. It's a terribly important one. Again, especially if you're--if the focus of today is about immigrant children and the extent to which we're all ultimately going to be dependent on them economically, it is a mistake and it's terribly dangerous both to deny immigrant kids eligibility for the basic health care programs that are offered as part of the federal safety net, which we do.

But also the economic situation, the fact that their parents tend to be engaged in employment in industries which don't provide health benefits means that if you're an immigrant kid or a child of immigrant parents in this country, you're less likely to have--far less likely to have health insurance, which is, you know, related ultimately to success in school and to the larger public health.

And that's a very serious policy concern that a number of us are engaged in dealing with, both in terms of reinstating access to what safety net there is. Engaging in the debate on Medicaid to make sure that it remains available and becomes more available to folks who are restricted to access from it. But then also looking at our ability to expand health insurance coverage to cover more families that are in the workforce with children. That's one piece of the puzzle.

Another incredibly harmful policy dynamic which emerges from everybody's frustration with our broken immigration system and the high numbers of undocumented immigrants present in the United States is that we

keep having enforcement debates that focus on the emergency room. We had such an enforcement debate in the House of Representatives, you know, just a couple of months ago, where there was a serious proposal which got to the floor for a vote on essentially requiring the collection of documentation and that information when people show up in the emergency room.

Which doesn't get you very much in the way of immigration enforcement, but it has a real impact on scarring the tar out of people when they have a sick kid or they have an injury of some kind. And so, that has, I think, profound implications for the public health and for access to health care. Even when people are eligible for services like emergency care, if you discourage them from coming forward, you have a serious negative impact on health care for everybody.

MS. SINGER: Next question. Back there in back of the auditorium.

MR. SMITH: Merrill Smith, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, our new name.

This is for Tamar. But actually, anybody could answer it because it's about assimilation, and everybody is in favor of it, or at least nobody has said anything against it. Yet I think it actually is a little bit more contentious than perhaps we're assuming.

There have been several recent state referenda on the question of bilingual education versus immersion. One in California defeating bilingual education and in Massachusetts. But it failed in Colorado. Go figure.

Also the Supreme Court, in recent years, heard contentious cases about racial and ethnic preferences, not strictly speaking about immigration, but since most immigrants would fall in the protected classes, it's a very divisive issue that most Americans do oppose.

My question to you is--you laid out the challenge, and I took it as a challenge to the immigration advocacy community, of which I count myself as a member, what kind of grade--if you were giving a scorecard, what grade would you give the immigration advocacy community on actually taking on the tough questions about assimilation?

And feel free to differentiate between who's doing well and who's doing poorly. Thank you.

MS. JACOBY: Gosh. Really put me on the hot spot and ask me to criticize all of my friends. Let's see. I think I'm going to side-step this question.

No, I think the point--I think your question kind of has the seeds of the answer in a way, and Cecilia said it, too. Everybody is for better assimilation policy. I mean, we don't all use that word. But, you know, for 10 years, almost every article you can read about immigrants or immigration policy comes to the end, it says, well, and of course, we need better assimilation policy, too.

The problem is how, and the problem is where to find the money. What really can we do to help? And how do we pay for it? And is it business or is it government? And I think those are hard questions, and I think people, they



get lost because we are also absorbed in the debate about, you know, immigration reform and that sort of thing. That's obviously more contentious, more political.

The tendency with assimilation policy is, I think, for us and even for the public to say, well, of course, it would be better if we could help, but it is sort of happening. So it doesn't loom as an emergency. People sort of think, well, it's mostly going all right out there. And so, people kind of say, well, we'll take care of that some day.

It's like, I don't know, some improvement on your house that you'd like to make some day, but it's not as urgent as the water coming through the ceiling, and so we don't get to it. And we could all do better, and I don't have to grade individuals. But I, myself, you know, I work on it, and then I get more absorbed in immigration reform. And then you kind of go back to it, and then you lose sight of it again.

So, you know, I don't know what presses us to move toward it more. But I do think that part of the problem is resources. And what Michael says about business is true. I think they're the place--they're the people that have the resources, but how do we set up a structure that really gives them an incentive and encourages them to do it?

MS. SINGER: Let's hear from Peter and then Cecilia.

MR. SKERRY: Well, I don't want to rain on the parade, but the fact is, we don't all agree on assimilation. We don't all agree that it's a good word to use.

Coming from a college campus, I can assure you that lots of students, lots of immigrant students, minority students on my campus don't like

the word at all, and I've come to understand why. It's because Americans tend to use it, nonimmigrant Americans tend to use it as a kind of bludgeon.

Basically, what it means to assimilate to most Americans is we want you immigrants to shut up, keep your heads down, and make progress. But don't make any waves, don't make any noise, don't bother us. Act like our grandmothers supposedly used to act. And I can understand--I've come to understand why immigrants, you know, hear that and why they resent it.

Now that's not what Tamar means. But it is what the term has come to use in our political discourse when we talk about immigrants. It also is heard to mean, and I think this on the part of immigrants, it's heard to mean that you have to deny your past and deny where you come from. And I think on that score, when immigrants hear that in the term "assimilation," they exaggerate.

No immigrants have ever had to do that really. I mean, there have been attempts to kind of bleach them, to cause them to forget where they came from and Henry Ford scenarios of people prancing into melting pots and coming out, you know, pure Americans. There were those excesses. But by and large, the American ethnic and immigrant history is people managing to negotiate their past with their present, holding on parts of their past while moving ahead into the American future.

So on that score, I think immigrants and immigrant advocates often exaggerate. But on the more fundamental point about assimilation meaning "go away and progress and leave us alone," I think that is highly problematic for lots of immigrants. But that's why we should talk about specifics. Forget the

words, okay? Because I don't want to engage in polemics. Let's focus on learning English.

We've spent a lot of time and money in this country on bilingual education. A lot of time and money arguing about bilingual education. To me, a curse on both their houses. Let's talk about English. Let's talk about what immigrants want, what's in their self-interest economically and culturally. What's in their kids' interest economically and culturally, and what we all want of them.

So let's put our money where our mouths are, put some serious money and put some serious attention on English programs, and I think we'd make a whole lot, much more progress.

MS. MUNOZ: A quick illustration of the point that Peter just made, and he and I don't always agree. So I have to say that because this time we do. I mean, essentially, bilingual education has come up a number of times. It is the favorite strawman of the argument that immigrants don't want to assimilate and that those of us who are supporters of this particular educational strategy have some nefarious ethnic agenda to keep people speaking Spanish and not learning English, which is the inverse of the truth.

The bottom line is that two thirds of the kids who are English language learners in our school systems see no program of any kind whatsoever to help them make the adjustment into English. Of the third who see any kind of program, bilingual education represents a fraction of what programs are available.

We're having this huge debate over assimilation, about what is essentially a tiny program, which is meant to be a tool in the toolbox toward the goal of helping children be successful in school in English, and we're not having the broader debate, which is a source of extraordinary frustration.

MR. FIX: Just a footnote to that comment. We just had the director of the Office of English Language Assessment Acquisition at the Urban Institute a week or so ago in which he announced was that the empirical evidence of the best ways to learn English were immersion, but were also dual language bilingual. That the empirical evidence is there on those.

So bilingual education itself is a devious word, because it means quite a number of--quite different things.

MS. SINGER: I'm going to allow Steve Moore to have the last word. We've run out of time, and if you have anything you want to add? Otherwise, we'll close.

MR. MOORE: I was thinking about this discussion about the bilingual issue, and I thought I'd just tell you a little story.

I was in Austin, Texas, last week. We were driving from Dallas to Austin. There were about six of us in a van. And you know, these were not-- these were not rednecks and so on. These were highly educated folks. And when we were driving there--

[Laughter.]

MR. MOORE: --one of the things we saw, that we looked out at the road, and there were these four big billboards, and they were all in Spanish.

And one of the guys just turned to me and said, "You know, I just hate that. I just hate to see, you know, these big billboards in Spanish."

And the only reason I tell the story is he represents the view of just a lot of Americans who just sort of rebel against this idea that we're going to be a two-language culture, and you know, the average American voter, I think, is very worried about that. And so, I do think we can do a lot better.

I mean, I am adamantly opposed to bilingual education. It's one of the few things I might disagree with Cecilia on. I believe that the agenda for the bilingual education system is actually to delay people's learning of English.

And the other thing--I mean, there are little things, like why in the world do we have bilingual ballots? I mean, it just makes no sense to me.

MS. MUNOZ: So people can vote.

MR. MOORE: You shouldn't be able to even--

[Laughter.]

MR. MOORE: You shouldn't be--if you can't speak English, you shouldn't be able to vote. A citizen is supposed to be able to speak English. So, you know, I think those are important things in terms of moving the country in the direction that we want to go to.

I hope maybe you could give Cecilia a chance to have rebuttal on that.

MS. MUNOZ: Okay. He's told a story. I'm telling a quick story. I know we're almost out of time.

A gold star mother in Texas--this is a woman whose son served and died in Vietnam--came to lobby with us on behalf of bilingual ballots. Why?

Because she's a Texan who lived on a ranch where she--the school bus would not pick her up, and she could not get to school because she was Mexican-American. As a result, this is an adult who is limited English proficient.

She can get by in English. She could pass a citizenship test if she needed to, except she was born in this country so she doesn't need to. But have you tried reading ballot initiative language in a language which is your second language?

This is an American who gave up her son, who wants to be able to make an informed vote. The ballot in Spanish is useful to her, and that's why we have bilingual ballots.

MS. SINGER: Okay. Join me in thanking our panelists.

[Applause.]

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