

BROOKINGS CENTER ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
AND
FOUNDATION FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

REVIEW OF THE CHILD WELL-BEING INDEX

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[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM TAPE RECORDINGS.]

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P R O C E E D I N G S

Introductions and Overview

MR. SPAR: Ed Spar, Executive Director of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics.

MR. O'HARE: Good morning. I'm Bill O'Hare, with the Kids Count Project at the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

MS. TRAYLOR: Fasaha Traylor, with the Foundation for Child Development.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Don Hernandez, State University at Albany--SUNY.

MR. LAND: Ken Land, Duke University.

MS. LAMB: Vicki Lamb, Duke University.

MR. MATHER: I'm Mark Mather. I'm with the Population Reference Bureau.

MR. LEIBOVITZ: Harold Leibovitz, Director of Communications for the Foundation for Child Development.

MS. SCHECHTER: I'm Susan Schechter from the Office of Management and Budget. I'm also the chair

of the planning committee for the Federal Interagency Forum on Children and Family Statistics.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. SHERMAN: Arloc Sherman, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

MR. ABER: Larry Aber, NYU.

MR. ROLSTON: Howard Rolston, Brookings visiting fellow.

MR. ZAFF: Jonathan Zaff, vice president of research at America's Promise, the Alliance for Youth.

MR. ZILL: Nick Zill from Westat.

MR. CROSNOE: Hi, I'm Rob Crosnoe from the University of Texas at Austin.

MR. FALK: Gene Falk, the Congressional Research Service.

MS. FAGNONI: Cindy Fagnoni, with the Government Accountability Office.

MS. SIMMS: Margaret Simms, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

MR. LERMAN: Bob Lerman, American University and Urban Institute.

MS. SAWHILL: Belle Sawhill, Brookings.

MS. LI: Jin Li from Brown University. I'm one of these Young Scholars from the Foundation for Child Development this year.

MS. CHEAH: Charissa Cheah, University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

MS. KAUSHAL: Neeraj Kaushal Columbia University. I'm also an old Young Scholar.

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: Well, you're sitting next to the right guy.

Okay--well, welcome everybody. Thank you so much for coming. We've been looking forward to this meeting for quite some time.

Many of you may know that Brookings has had a relationship with the Foundation for Child Development for three years now, and Ken Land at Duke--who's the ultimate cause of this meeting. And we greatly enjoyed sponsoring public events, and now this meeting where we want to focus more on the methodology of the Child Well-being Index, and on its use. And the Foundation would like to learn as

much as it can, so this is a no-holds-barred discussion about the CWI and its uses.

And in order to facilitate that, of course, we asked for distinguished scholars and, in some cases, activists to write background papers that would stimulate our thinking. So we will go through these in order today. We'll start every session with a 10-minute presentation by the author, and then that will leave us a little more than an hour for discussion of each paper, with an emphasis on the discussion.

When the meeting is over, Brookings will write a report for FCD summarizing the papers and the discussion, and possibly making recommendations, depending on how the discussions go today.

So, let me now turn it over to Ruby, the head of the Foundation for Child Development, and get our charge from her, as well.

MS. TAKANISHI: Thank you very much, Ron. And thank you very much for organizing this meeting to critically review the CWI, the Child--and youth--Well-being Index, after three annual releases.

Representing the Foundation, I'd like to first start off by recognizing and thanking some key individuals who made it possible to have the meeting today.

Don Hernandez, who's sitting right along this table, who as a Foundation for Child Development board member encouraged us to pursue the idea of the Child and Youth Well-being Index; that is, to see about the possibility of a single composite number, indicating the status and well-being of America's children, based on the best available data at the time. And Don was, and continues to be, a steady and valued supporter during the early development of this.

And, secondly, Ken Land--who I believe is sitting next to Don--who, when contacted, readily agreed to take on the research and development of CWI--and it's been about eight years--and to also make it a part of his, and his students', scholarly work. So, in some fields you talk about scientific migration, and I'd like to think that Ken is an example of scientific migration to the children's

area. We are very fortunate to have Ken, who is a distinguished international authority on social indicators, to have taken on this effort. So thank you.

And then Fasaha Traylor, who is sitting also next to Don, has been the central program officer at FCD responsible for the Child and Youth Well-being Index over the past eight years, from the presentation to the FCD board, its releases and also, I would say, tenaciously focusing on having this meeting today.

As a Foundation our board sets policies and supports our work. And I think that we were very fortunate, because our Foundation for Child Development board is a very diverse board. It's not only made up of researchers, but people who deliver services; lawyers, investment bankers and so forth. We have strong support there.

And then, finally, I would like to thank Ron, and Belle Sawhill, who agreed about three years ago to work with us, and to host the events for the three annual releases. It's been very important.

We just did the third annual release on March 28th here at Brookings, which focused on education. And we were very pleased with that event. So, thank you very much.

It's been really quite a ride for the last eight years. And I think this whole effort, which you'll hear more about today, is a very good example of how a foundation must make a long-term commitment to an effort that it believes is consistent with its goals and history--even when things aren't going very well. And I would say that the outcome of this effort is certainly not clear yet.

So what are we trying to accomplish with supporting this Child and Youth Well-being enterprise? It's something very straightforward but, as the papers today indicate, very complex.

Consistent with our mission, we invested in the development of the FCD CWI as a stimulus for what we called "widespread public discussion about the well-being of American children," and particularly nationally. And we hoped that its existence, the annual releases, its ability to track

changes over time would contribute, along with many other efforts, to focus national attention on America's children--how well they were doing over time--and also to stimulate how we as a country could do better.

And, so far, I think the CWI record is reasonably encouraging. In the next two years, which will end with five years of annual releases, we will tie the annual release of the Child and Youth Well-being Index to child and family policy issues facing the United States.

In 2007 the focus will be on how America's children are doing in relationship to our peer nations, particularly in a globally competitive economic environment. And in 2008, which is the year of a Presidential election, the focus will be on how we as a nation can do better by our children and youth. And as the Child and Youth Well-being Index shows, we must do better than we are doing now.

For about 10 years at Carnegie Corporation I worked with David Hamburg, and he always said we

should not make the perfect be the enemy of the good. The Child and Youth Well-being Index is clearly not perfect. And, like most things that are based on national survey statistics, it's an approximation of reality. And we try to capture this reality as best we can and know how to do at any one time.

But is it a reasonable approximation? Is it the best we can and know how to produce today? Does it serve its function to stimulate public debate and discussion about the status and future of America's children, as FCD intends?

These are some of the questions I hope this meeting will address. And, in so doing, we seek to achieve a more perfect CWI for the future, and we hope to stimulate others to consider the CWI in their own work, and to contribute to building this area of research. And already, I think, the papers and other work that has been done by scholars here and in the United States--certainly the work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation for Kids Count--that field-building is already occurring.

So I thank you very much for participating in the meeting. And I look forward to the presentations and discussions.

Thank you.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you very much, Ruby, for a clear statement of our goals today.

Ken, would you like to add something?

MR. LAND: Well, I just want to thank everyone for organizing this session today and for attending. It's a great honor.

The Child and Youth Well-being Index project at Duke has been a long-term but relatively small effort, consisting of me and--on my right--Dr. Vicki Lamb, a piece of our time each year; that of a graduate student research assistant to help us maintain a database--and that's about it. And we've done the best we can with those resources to put together some data and piece them together in a meaningful way, and to study trends over time with respect to child and youth well-being. And I'll look forward to today's sessions to hear some

reflections on what we've done and what others have ideas with respect to.

And one thing you'll notice in our most recent paper that's forthcoming in Social Indicators Research later this year is that the project has grown and evolved over time with respect to addressing various methodological and conceptual issue. And we will continue to do that, and there's no doubt that the sessions today will stimulate a number of additional thoughts and analyses to come.

I would be remiss if I did not mention at this point that, with respect to presenters, there are three of us here--in particular Nick Zill, Don Hernandez and myself--who have a long history in this complex. We were part of what was called the "Social Science Research Council Center for Coordination of Research on Social Indicators"--a very long title--down at 1755, down at the other end of the building, which existed for about 10 years in the 1970s and early 1980s. And I was on the advisory board for that center, and Nick and Don served as staff members for awhile. And I believe

Nick evolved and established Child Trends as an organization out of the center at the time. And, of course, Child Trends has come to be an important institution in Washington, D.C., as well.

I might add also that I've known Brett Brown from Child Trends, who's a presenter later on today, for a number of years; and Bill O'Hare, of course, he and I share the quality that we're both card-carrying demographers who have seen each other at the annual meetings of the Population Association of America for a number of years, and talk about things demographic on those occasions.

So it's great to see these very significant and experienced scholars reflect on our work and on this general task today, and I look forward to the presentations.

Thank you very much.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, Ken.

Okay--so now on to substance.

We're very fortunate to have Don Hernandez here, as Ruby already said. He really wrote a

remarkable background paper. I hope all of you have read it. The results are quite surprising.

I can remember the very first year that we released the CWI we had a lunch afterwards, and one of the most frequent comments at the lunch was that the CWI could do a better job of reflecting ethnic group differences. And so this has continued to be a criticism, and this is the kind of thing that Ruby and the Foundation would really like to look at. And I think already we're off to a great start with this wonderful background paper.

We're going to start each session with a 10-minute overview--or not to exceed 10 minutes--and we'll be keeping time, so let's hold to 10 minutes, and then we'll have plenty of time for discussion.

Don Hernandez.

**Measuring Social Disparities: Ethnic, Racial, SES,
and Immigrant Status**

MR. HERNANDEZ: Thank you very much, Ron. It's great to be here and see so many faces that I know from various venues in the past, as well as some new faces as well. And I'm very excited about

the CWI and the prospects of making it even better, and the interesting ideas that will come out today.

I'm passing around two more handouts that I'm going to use, and I'm going to ask you to refer mainly to handouts rather than to the PowerPoint, because I want you to look at some graphs in particular. So if you could have those two in hand; and then there's a third handout, which was in the Brookings package, which looks like this. It has color lines on it. That's the third handout that I'm going to be referring to during my presentation.

Basically what I'm suggesting in my paper is a new alternative approach for looking at disparities across race/ethnic groups, across immigrant groups, across socio-economic groups, and so on.

And what I'm going to do very quickly is to cover five topics. One, I'm going to very quickly talk about group-specific measures for Whites and for other groups, and review the approach that Ken and Vicki and their colleague have developed, and then talk about the approach that I'm proposing.

Second, I'm going to do the same thing with regard to group disparities. Then I'm going to go through some examples of some major results. Then I'll say a few words about what I'm planning to do in terms of looking at immigrant disparities and SES disparities, as well.

I'd like to begin by thanking Ken, Vicki and Sarah for sharing their data. As you can imagine, there's an enormous amount of data that's been compiled underlying this research, and it was wonderful to open my e-mail one morning and have those data available. It really eased the task of preparing this paper in a timely way.

I also want to thank the Foundation for Child Development who is supporting this research, and note the contribution of my co-author, Suzanne McCartney as well.

What I'd like to do now is--if you could, this handout which I just sent around, which is the paper by Ken, Vicki and Sarah--if you look at the second page of it, there's a graph which reflects how they approach group-specific summary measures.

And, as you all know, the way that they do this is basically they set the first year for an indicator to a baseline of 100, and they do this individually for each group. So if you look at Figure 22 from their paper, at the beginning of the time period-- 1985, in this case--all groups started with "100." So the baseline for each group is set as 100, and then percent change for that group is calculated over time.

Let me also say that they do this for individual indicators, and then they take an average within domains to get a domain average, and then they take an average across. What this allows you to look at when you actually look at the graph and think about interpreting it--in this example it shows that Blacks and Hispanics have improved more than Whites over the course of the periods studied here; from 1985 to 1998. So that's sort of what jumps out at you as the basic inference that you would draw from this.

The approach that I'm proposing, which is in Figure 1 of your handout in this color graph:

instead of setting each group equal to 100, what I do is I take the total population, set its value in the baseline year equal to 100, and then calculate for the first year what is the difference of each group from the total population. So if you look at 1985, you can see--and I present the numbers down below, as well--that Whites were doing about 7 percent better overall than was the total population; Blacks were doing about 26 percent worse; and Hispanics were doing about 12 percent worse.

So it shows immediately the disparities as of Time 1; it takes that as a starting point. It then calculates, for successive years, differences between each group for that year, and the original baseline total population. So it shows those trends over time.

What sort of pops out at you from looking at this graph is that all the groups have improved somewhat, and that there's been some narrowing of the disparities. But what I'd really like to highlight here is the fact that this approach shows

you those disparities in a very clear way. It allows you to sort of see visually how they change or don't change over time.

The next two graphs I'd like you to take a look at: the graph from the Land, et al., paper, Figure 25; and then Figure 2 from the paper I prepared--focused more specifically on disparities. And the way that Ken and his colleagues approach this is they calculate the disparities between Whites and Blacks, for example, at Time 1; set that disparity equal to 100; and then look at percent change over time and the magnitude of disparity, and then do the same thing for Hispanics.

So as you can see from their graph, what you immediately conclude from this graph is that disparities increased over time for the period they're looking at, and then they decreased. In the case of Hispanics, they returned basically to the level of Whites; in the case of Blacks, the disparities were somewhat larger than they had been earlier.

If you'll turn to Figure 2 from my handout, what we do is basically these numbers are calculated by taking the estimates that we had in the first graph, and subtracting Blacks from Hispanics, or Whites from Hispanics. So it's showing the gap, or the size of disparity, at a given point in time.

So you can see that, as of 1985, Hispanics were doing about 20 percent worse than Whites; and Blacks were doing about 33 percent worse than Whites at Time 1. And then we can look over time to see how those gaps have changed. And a value of zero in this case, if and when a minority group such as Hispanics were to achieve a value of zero, that means that there would be no disparity; that Hispanics would have achieved parity with Whites with regard to the overall index. And then we can do the same thing with the seven domains that constitute the index, as well.

So those are the basics of the two approaches, and give you an idea of the kinds of portrayals and information that sort of jumps out at you when you look at these two different approaches.

What I'd like to do now--and maybe I should just do one of these slides, because I'm running out of time already. This slide summarizes--if you look at Figure 11 in my handout--this shows the overall gaps between Whites and Blacks with regard to index as a whole, as well as with regard to the individual domains. And what it shows: that the overall disparity favors Whites; that is to say, Blacks are doing less well than Whites. And I must say that I was chagrined yesterday to learn that 1985, 1986 and 1987 are miscalculated. The spreadsheet formula didn't make it to the first three years, so you should really start with 1988 looking at this.

So what this says, if we look at it from 1988: there's a 25 point gap in 1988 between Blacks and Whites. It's narrowed somewhat to 19 points by 2004. So we have about a 25 percent reduction over about 19 to 20 years in the gap separating Whites and Blacks on the overall disparity.

A next step that one can take in looking at these is to see how the different components of the index, the different domains, were acting in a

similar or different fashion with regard to disparities. And what we see is that disparities in two of the domains favor Blacks: so in the safety/behavioral domain, Blacks are actually doing better than Whites and this disparity expanded over time. For the emotional/spiritual domain, it's also the case that Blacks are favored compared to Whites, but there was little change at least between the beginning and the end of the period.

The other disparities--the disparities in the other domains--all favor Whites. Now, as you can see in the slide on the screen, or if you look at the numbers across the bottom, some of these disparities increased, some of them decreased, and so on.

I think what I'll do is just skip over the next three slides for the sake of time, to leave more time for discussion.

Next steps: I think we are all well aware that children in first, second and third generation families--children with different origins and so on--often differ enormously with regard to the

indicators that underlie the CWI. So we're going to carry this research forward to look at how it varies across immigrant groups.

And if you look at the very last page of one of the handouts that I just sent around, the slide-show handout, the very last page shows what indicators it's possible to classify children by-- immigrant generation and country of origin--with regard to the indicators mostly available on economic well-being, health, community connectedness and social relations. So we'll be able to do a fairly thorough analysis of those domains. They're less available for the safety and behavioral domain, the education domain, emotional and spiritual domain.

The reason we don't have those data: most of those indicators come from Monitoring the Future surveys of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It would be terrific if the Monitoring the Future and NAEP were to collect that kind of information. I think for NAEP, since the tests are being conducted for young children, it might be

difficult--for example "mother's education." On the other hand, teenagers can answer many of these questions pretty well for their parents.

So we're going to do that kind of analysis.

We're also planning to look at socio-economic disparities, breaking the population into major socio-economic groups. We're going to do that with mother's education, to look at how these domains differ for children who differ by mother's education. And as you can see, again, from this handout, in all of the domains there's at least one indicator available, and in several of the domains--particularly economic well-being, health and safety/behavioral, as well as social relationships and emotional/spiritual domain--most of these domains are pretty well covered with available indexes. "Mother's education" is available on the data set.

We're also going to do some analysis with income quintile groups, looking at disparities across these groups. Here the data are unfortunately much more limited to largely economic

well-being and the health domain, as well as social relationships. But there are two or three other indicators available as well.

So we're going to try to look at how these disparities differ, not only for major race/ethnic groups using this proposed approach, but also for immigrant generation groups and the SES groups as well.

And I look forward to your thoughts and reaction to this; ideas about limitations we may have, other directions we might take it; and suggestions about otherwise how to improve this approach.

Thank you very much.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, Don.

Okay--what I'd like you to do if you have a comment: put your tent up like this and I will call on you. The tricky part about a discussion like this is to stay on a topic long enough so we don't go jumping around from topic to topic.

So who would like to make the first comment?

Naomi Goldstein.

MS. GOLDSTEIN: I actually have a question.

You presented two different approaches to tracking disparities. And I wonder if you could talk a little bit about how they differ. I mean, the graphs obviously look very different, and I wasn't quick enough to quite get in my head exactly what we're calculating in each case.

But if you could talk a little bit about whether one is more sensitive to changes of a certain kind, or what distinguishes them, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Yes. Well, they're based on the same underlying data, so in that sense they reflect the same reality. What's most important about the differences, I think, is what they emphasize.

The approach that Ken and his colleagues have used sort of take a baseline year--1985, in this case--because that's when the race/ethnic data became available in many of the U.S. data collection systems. And they say "how are things different

compared to 1985?" So if you go back to Ken's Figure 22, for example, what it tells you is, first of all, for the overall measures: all three groups are doing better in 1998 than they were in 1985. So there's been improvement for all groups, and there's been a little bit more improvement for the minorities than for Whites. I mean, that's what you conclude from this as a sort of public presentation and from an interpretation of the data.

But what this does not show you in an obvious way is how big the disparities are, because everyone's been set to the same value of 100 at the beginning.

Then if you look at our Figure 1, what we do is we highlight those disparities so it becomes very clear and sort of obvious--for a New York Times article, or for researchers, or whomever--what the levels of disparity are.

So that's the fundamental difference. We're carrying our analysis a bit further, and subtracting the White value from the other groups so that in the second graph, for example, we can see:

what are the differences? What is the magnitude of the disparity, in effect, is what we're really focusing on. What is the magnitude of the disparity, and how has that changed through time? And it does it in a way which, I think, has a kind of intuitive appeal to it.

Whereas, again, if we look at the Land, et al., Figure 25--I mean, it focuses on disparities, too. Again, we're looking at the same underlying data, but the sort of starting point is 1985, assuming that a disparity is a disparity, if you will. In effect, that's what their approach does. Whereas, again, our approach is: what's the disparity to begin with and how has it changed? Rather than saying let's set it at a value of 100 and then look at how it's changed.

So you draw--again, I think, particularly for public purposes, but also for scholarly purposes as well--I think it sort of leads you down a different chain of inferences.

In terms of sensitivity: the basic underlying data are the same. Because they're

calculated differently, the values sort of look different, and are different in magnitudes. But the real difference, I think, is in what about the disparities is being highlighted by the two approaches.

MR. HASKINS: Do you want to follow up?

MS. GOLDSTEIN: That does answer my question. I wonder if we could hear from Ken about why he chose the method that he chose?

MR. LAND: Look, you know that 2001 paper is a very long and complex paper, and we tried to cover a lot of bases and forge ahead, and get out there in front. And there are many different ways of analyzing disparities, and I really do like Don's suggestions.

I think, as he pointed out, it's a way of illustrating some things that are different from the way that we did them. I think the quality of story is much the same, but I do think that there's contribution here because you can see some things in these ways of analyses that aren't as apparent in the way we did it.

So it's a really good contribution.

MR. HASKINS: Anything else on this particular topic?

Go ahead, Bill.

MR. O'HARE: I think this is the same topic.

Part of it, I think, goes to a question that probably is going to cover a lot of things: who's the audience for this? And to the extent that it's a scientific audience, this chart that was in the 2001 paper is probably okay.

But it's always bothered me that it looks like in 1985, for a common reader, it looks like the races were all the same in 1985. And that's not, obviously, the case. So I think it could easily be misleading for a popular audience, and that always bothered me. So I'm really happy to see this alternative approach that Don used.

I guess one of the things that struck me is the scale. You know, this looks like big changes; this doesn't look like so much change, but it's really a matter of the scale of the graph that is the issue there.

So I guess it's really a comment more than a question: I really was always bothered by this presentation, and really like this one a lot.

MR. HASKINS: [Off mike. Inaudible.]--the graph that we all are familiar with these tricks. Mark Twain said: "There are lies, damn lies and statistics." And, you know, figures are part of statistics, so you could make that look totally different depending on how you do it.

So that would be interesting to change the ordinate in such a way that it would show the differences a little better.

Any other comments on this topic?

Larry.

MR. ABER: [Off mike. Inaudible.] Don was quite articular about the absolute differences in disparities between ethnicities being the main thing that his approach makes quite visible.

The relative rates of change is what Ken's does. So you can get to Ken's by using information from Don's. You can't get to Don's by using

information in Ken's. I mean, that's one relative difference.

But the relative rates of change, I think, really emphasize relative time differences. If you take a look at Figure 22, if your audience is the general public, it would be called a "Democratic graph," because the slope is way down, '85 to '92, for Blacks and Hispanics, and way up '92 to '98. And I'm only illustrating it because there are quite sensitive time information that's transparent in Ken's that isn't in Don's. There's quite transparent disparity information at points in time in Don's that isn't in Ken's.

So we're going to keep Harold Leibovitz busy.

[Laughter.]

Because it's a communications challenge. Analytically, they're emphasizing different and important things.

The only other thing to say, for me, is that I think there's a danger in Ken's just to call it that way, and it's not the political danger. The

danger is: absolute disparities being non-transparent. So if it's the only figure emphasizing race/ethnic differences, it just doesn't have information about the absolute differences at any point in time. And that seems like a huge--that actually seems like headline number one.

The changes over time, you can't understand except in the context of the absolute differences, it seems to me. So, logically and analytically therefore, from a public communications point of view, I think reducing misunderstanding and increasing information, the nod is to the Hernandez approach--if you have to pick one. Communications people usually do. That's why they get paid.

MR. HASKINS: Larry, as I was saying at the beginning, I remember all the way back to when we had the very first session and we had a lunch afterwards, and we discussed this. And several people raised this very point--with a certain amount of energy--that they really thought it was a mistake not to make it transparent that there are huge differences between these groups.

So, in that respect, I think Don's approach addresses something that a lot of people have said for many years. So that's already, I think, a good achievement of this paper and it's a great example of the purpose of doing a meeting like this.

MR. ABER: Well, can I just say one other thing?

Ken's approach really calls our attention to: what was it from '85 to '92 that led to decline among Hispanics and Blacks? And what was it from '92 to '98 that led to increase?

And that is punch in Ken's, and it isn't in Don's. You've got to spend a lot of time fishing that out of Don's stuff. You can do it, but you've got to spend a lot of time.

So--I'm done.

MR. HASKINS: Vicki?

MS. LAMB: We've had a lot of discussions about disparity. This was what we came up with when we wrote the first paper. And the problem is coming up with a number to represent disparities. Even with the graphs that we have in that first article,

it doesn't tell you what's going on underneath; who's doing better, versus who's doing worse.

And people want this magic graph that they can look at and say: "Ah, Blacks are doing better now." Or, "Ah, Whites are doing worse." And so what's pushing the numbers around is still not very--you can't really see what's going on.

And I think what Don has done is very useful, particularly Figure 11, where he's talking about the different domains. Because I've talked about these racial and ethnic disparities before, and people assume that African-Americans are always doing worse than Whites. And this is very nice, showing that that's not always the case.

And so it's useful in that sense, in looking at, say, the safety and behavioral domain: African-American seniors don't smoke and drink and use drugs as much as White children do. And their teen birth rates are going down at a faster rate than Whites' are.

So this is nice in showing that everything's not bad for minorities. So I think

this is a useful exercise. Because we've been trying to talk about--there's not, like a "genie index" for disparities that we've come up with. So a lot of work needs to be done.

MR. HASKINS: [Off mike.] Go ahead, Ken.

MR. LAND: Well, I'll follow up on that.

You know, one thing you have to keep in mind is the purpose of the 2001 paper. The main focus was on trends over time. And that's one reason we chose to represent things the way we did.

We did not approach that paper as an analysis of disparities. This is a part of a larger project. And, of course, we know the disparities are there. We deal with the data, and it's just a matter of a good way of representing it.

And I think Don has made some really good suggestions here, and I appreciate the contribution.

MR. HASKINS: Listen--we should have this rule: the author of the paper can speak up anytime they want to because it's their paper.

[Laughter.]

So feel free to jump in.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Okay, good. I just wanted actually to pick up on Vicki's point, which is made very clearly in Figure 14: the fact that Blacks are doing better than Whites in a variety of "abuse domains" as it were. And there's huge convergence in the teen pregnancy gap. The narrowing of that teen pregnancy gap, I think, is quite dramatic in that particular graph.

There are a lot of ways to sort of cut these graphs and to highlight one or another aspect of changes or components.

That's all.

MR. HASKINS: Nick?

MR. ZILL: I also want to commend Don's work and both approaches to this. And I think trying to extend this to the immigrant population, is very important when that effort, as much as possible, goes forward. And obviously it does need some improvement in the data that are available.

One point that I think is incorrect in your graph here is that the NAEP data--at least some of the NAEP test scores, at least for the 12th graders,

the 17-year-olds--are available by mother's education level. And, in fact, you made use of it in your last presentation.

There are some problems. I looked at that from the point of view of the accuracy of the reporting of the different groups. There seemed to be over-reporting by minorities of the educational attainment of their mothers, compared to census and birth certificate data. So it's problematic, but still it is available.

But on the topic of education, I want to raise a couple of issues.

One is the magnitude issue: to get some sense from these numbers, and using this kind of index, of the importance of the gaps. And clearly the achievement gap that remains fairly fixed for Blacks and Hispanics is tremendously important for the life chances of minorities.

And there's an interesting story that is kind of missing from these set of indicators. And that is that there has been tremendous change in educational attainment. There are many more women

who are Black--Black college graduates. And the proportion of high school dropouts has gone down a lot. There have been similar changes, though not as profound, for Hispanics. And there are still disparities in both Black and Hispanic groups; there are many more children being born to high school dropouts than are being born to college graduates, where the reverse is true for Whites and Asians.

And the very juxtaposing of the lack of progress on test scores, and the increase in educational attainment raises some very troubling problems. Are we getting attainment because we're lowering our standards? Is that part of what's happening here? How can we boost the achievement test scores so that, indeed, we make a change?

Those very important dynamic stories about both Blacks and Hispanics--and, indeed, about our nation as a whole, in terms of trying to create equity between groups--is not present in the indicators now. And the question is: how can we highlight that more? I think that's a very important issue.

MR. HASKINS: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. : I think Nick raises a good point. It's a massive point. The achievement test scores could stay the same in this kind of time series if the composition of children change.

So--just what he said: if the proportion of children born to certain people who traditionally have less attainment gets greater, even as other people's attainment goes up. And so the underlying issue is how to estimate some of this, accounting for the mobility and compositional change.

This is a huge issue in many, many ways. Gigantic.

So I just want to kind of say that I think Nick has opened up a very important and complex issue.

MR. HASKINS: This is somewhat of a question to Ruby, and I think it's a challenge for us for the whole day.

I think our major intent is to take these substantive examples as reflecting the picture we see from the CWI, and how that could be addressed by

another approach, or some change in the way the calculations or some such thing; as opposed to an in-depth discussion of the substance itself.

It's not education in itself, and the differences in racial groups by different measures is not necessarily our concern. Our concern is: is there an important thing that the CWI misses or gets? That's what we ought to focus on--right?

MS. TAKANISHI: [Off mike.] Yes [inaudible].

MR. HERNANDEZ: Yes, just a couple of quick reactions to what Nick and Larry were saying--which I think are very good points.

One is: we have Graph 16. There are actually two sort of what we sometimes think of in education indicators as part of community connectedness. And what this shows for the Black-White gap is that it does show this convergence in high school graduate rates for 18 to 24-year-olds by race. For the B.A. degree, though, there's sort of a lot of change, but overall not an improvement relative to Whites for Blacks in that bottom blue line there.

So some of this is built in, although it's in a different domain, in the way the index is currently formulated.

The other, in terms of composition of the mobility is certainly very difficult to get out with existing data, because you sort of need longitudinal data to some extent. But we are, obviously, trying to get at that to some extent by going beyond; not only looking at Blacks, Whites and Hispanics, but looking at the SES groups in particular, with regard to mother's education.

I didn't realize NAEP had parent's education. That's terrific. But we can use that as a classifier, then, for almost all of the indicators, and get a sense of how social class, or socio-economic differences are operating over time; you know, people may move in and out, higher or lower, but what's happening to the bottom fifth and what's happening to the top fifth and so on is the way we're planning to address that. So I think it's critically important, but not quite as far as what

Nick was suggesting. It needs to be addressed at some point.

MR. : I think part of my comment was that the educational attainment is lost in another indicator. And so people don't naturally bring the two together. And I can understand the rationale for having it separate, but it makes it harder to make that connection. It's not apparent to people.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Bob Lerman has figured out a way to talk, it's [inaudible].

[Laughter.]

MR. LERMAN: Well, actually my first impression was that it seemed odd that high school graduation was not involved in education. So I would kind of support that point.

But I think there's an important point about these data in general, which is: what happens when there are kind of new indices that call into question some of the existing indices? And, in particular, this very important issue of high school graduation has been called into question. I mean,

I'm not an expert, I'm not taking a position--I just say "called into question"--that the rates for all groups are overstated, but that for some groups especially, that they're very overstated, and the differential going to zero is very overstated.

The third point there is that it's unclear whether--and the committee was just starting to learn about this index--whether with the high school, are you looking both at the formal graduation and GED?

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. LERMAN: The two together. Okay. Thank you.

MR. : [inaudible] It doesn't include Black males in prison, because it's based on household surveys--at least the CPS is. And obviously they tend to have lower education. And the group is increasing in proportion to the population over time.

MR. : Which raises just one other question, more broadly, about the index, which is:

there doesn't seem to be much on this whole delinquency question.

MR. : Let me go back to your point. Your middle point was primarily that the dropout data is crummy.

MR. : Well, it's been called into question. Let's put it that way. He's going to say that it's not--but, whatever.

MR. : Well, if someone's going to say it's not, speak up now.

MR. : I was also trying to make a broader point, which is that, you know, I think you confront a difficulty in any kind of time series because you start out with the data that you think is the best data available, and then something happens--some research comes out about, you know, it could be health insurance or something--where maybe the original series has some problems. You know, every series has a problem.

But maybe there are some very--you know, there are modest, normal problems, and you live with that. But what happens when you discover that there

are some sort of systemic problems with a particular series? Is there a way to try to incorporate that? That's all.

Otherwise it could be awkward, because if people really believe that one--you know, obviously, you have so many indicators, so maybe any one won't matter that much. But if somebody focuses on one and says, "Well, you know, how do we trust all the others?"

MR. : So you're going to present the other side of the dropout data?

MR. KOMINSKI: Absolutely not. This is Bob Kominski from Census.

I think the high school graduation rate--if you want to flip it over, because that's where the discussion mostly tends to get focused now--is a good example of an indicator which has been measured, at least through the measurement instrument, actually very, very consistently over the entire time period. However, the social meaning and context of that measurement has changed dramatically.

And the only point I want to make is that while high school completion right now happens to be the landmine in this field, virtually any other measurement in here is susceptible to the same sorts of things; even, I would submit, very good and well-constructed scientific instruments like the NAEP-- all right?

The fact of the matter is that the measurement context could change what we decide is important in knowledge and an educational context could shift. It could shift very quickly, within a matter of a few years. And if NAEP can't respond effectively to that, then the NAEP instrument itself would be no longer a good instrument.

And other measures that are in here I think suffer from that, as well. Obesity is one which we're all very concerned about. But the fact of the matter is that when you get inside the internal workings of how obesity is measured--well, maybe it's not really measured as well as it ought to be; and maybe if we measured it better, then we'd have a better component.

This ultimately does go back to--and I'll introduce this now, because I like this analogy-- what are the ingredients in the sausage? The sausage tastes awfully good. It looks awfully good. It smells really good when you cook it. What's inside the sausage? And that's where the devil's in the details.

But I don't know that this point right now--all these points are relevant--I don't know that it's critically relevant to where, certainly, Don's presentation has been today.

MR. HASKINS: Is part of what you said that if you have bad measurement in longitudinal data, that it could be less serious than just a point estimate, because you may have the same error year after year?

MR. KOMINSKI: Well, what I'm saying is that over time, the error could change.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. HASKINS: I recently had a conversation with a mayor of a fairly substantial sized city in the United States, and he told me that he knew from

day one that the principals were not reporting accurate data. And he called them, sent them memos and so forth--and so they still reported inaccurate data. He could not do anything. He threatened them and everything, but he couldn't get them to report accurate data.

And they would do things like they'd report attendance the first day of the year rather than the last day of the year--which, you know, gives you inflated.

But over time, though, your number might not be very good, but your trends might be more reliable.

MR. KOMINSKI: The trends might be more reliable. I actually--and Ken and Vicki probably have a stronger sentiment about this than I, or certainly much more knowledge--the fact that it is a component measure, in some regards--and Bob was making this point, too--protects you against any one indicator going astray in its measurement context.

Now "going astray in its measurement context," I want to say, I think is different than: "It was good, and now it's just plain wrong."

The measure could be driven--and these guys know this--to some extent by one or two items which, for some reason, have just taken a strong left or right turn. Now, that's a different problem. But, again, in the sausage context--oh, well, if we put a little bit of rat hair in the sausage, you really won't taste it and it still tastes pretty good. And we know there's a little bit of rat hair in the sausage. [Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: You won't if you know what's in there, though.

Okay--on this topic?

Margaret?

MS. SIMMS: I'm not quite sure what the topic is--[laughs]--so I'll say, yes, it's all on topic.

MR. HASKINS: We drifted into something like measurement error.

MS. SIMMS: Well, actually, I started out to make one comment and thought of another as the conversation went on.

MR. HASKINS: Well, give us both of them.

MS. SIMMS: I'll start with one of them, and that is the question of engagement with the criminal justice system. Because it seems to me it sort of builds on the two comments about how things change over time, so maybe 20 years ago it wasn't such a big issue, and now is a much bigger issue in terms of disparities, both for Black and Hispanic males, and growing for females, as well. And I'm not sure whether it's better captured in the community connectedness, or in the social relationships, but it has implications both for the individuals and for the people who are left behind, because it changes the nature of the communities in which they live.

The original comment--

MR. HASKINS: Wait, before you do that--Ken, do you want to respond to that?

MR. LAND: Well, you know, I don't see it in Don's charts, but we do have, from the National

Crime Victimization Surveys, the rates of violent crime victimization and offending series. And those are quite interesting series, as well. So we can pick up some indicators of those risky behaviors, of safety behaviors, as well.

MS. SIMMS: The other one is, I think, by implication, in Don's paper, but not explicit-- unless I missed it, because I'll admit that I was skimming it. And that is that if you look at the overall disparity index, you get much smaller than you do for individual domains. So, yes, you can say you're masking some of the variation by looking at the overall.

But then the question is: are you weighting them "appropriately?" And you sort of address that a little bit in your conclusions, where you say: well, in these domains Blacks and Hispanics are doing so much better than Whites, and we don't see that. But then there are these other very important domains, like income and so on, where the disparities continue to be very large.

And the question then becomes: well, you know, do we weight those equally with social relationships and so on?

MR. HASKINS: We have a paper specifically on this topic, and we'll discuss it in great detail when the time comes.

MS. SIMMS: Okay.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Could I respond? Two things.

I think you're right: in a way the paper doesn't highlight that some indicators have very enormous differences. But I think there are sort of two values to me--at least two values--of this overall index. One is that it does provide an overall index that if not masks, at least combines, a lot of different trends to give you an overall sense of the general direction of disparities or well-being for children.

But the other is the sort of immediate question I think everyone asks is: well, why does it go up or down? And that leads very quickly to looking at domains and then, ultimately, to

indicators. And we sort of cascaded down through that in the paper. But one could certainly, obviously, start in the other direction. But I think from the point of view of a paper about an index that it sort of makes sense to start at the big picture and then highlight those.

With regard to the weights, we did do a little bit of analysis--and Ken and Vicki have, as well--with regard to the indicators. And there's one graph--I think it's Graph 3 that we have--where we did the sort of weighting that Ken and Vicki have used, which is to average within domains, and then average across domains.

We also did an alternative, which was just to average all the indicators so that each indicator is equal. So ignoring domains--

[Tape flip.]

--results were very similar, except for the first three years, which I now think are probably some sort of error in the spreadsheet somewhere.

So at least that variation, from the point of view of the kind of approach that we have here

for disparities, it doesn't actually make much difference--at least overall.

MR. HASKINS: I have Arloc Sherman, Bel Sawhill, Brett Brown, Gene Falk and Cindy Fagnoni.

So we're going to start with Arloc.

MR. SHERMAN: This goes back both to the original choice between showing trends versus ongoing level differences, and to Charles' point about sort of the devil's being in the details.

This is a very broad point that I'm sure has come up in past discussions, but I want to raise it again today, which is: any time you boil down so much data about changes over time, about so many different aspects of child well-being, you're going to miss a lot and, in some sense, get things wrong. And as a procedural matter--I didn't know if it had already been discussed or decided--but it would be ideal if the release of the Child Well-being Index could be seen as a portal to help lead people; the teaser to tempt people to look a little at the actual underlying data, so have links to one place on-line where, of course, all of the levels and

trends are laid out accessibly, but also make sure not to neglect in the press release mention of important specifics: what are specific components of the domain indexes; things that are concrete enough to get people interested; what are some of the levels of those components.

I don't think you would ever talk about the number of unemployed Americans only in terms of how it relates to 1985. It would be important in a press release always to mention some actual numbers of kids. And so if just a couple of the levels, the components that could always get in there every year, people could easily find their way to more rich detail on-line.

MR. HASKINS: We're going to have a session just on press release and PR and so forth. But I would say that certainly this last time--and I think almost every time--we have released on the day of release, and made available to everybody, a lot of information about the domains. The domain scores not only are in there but there's a figure that shows them.

So I think we have given the individual domains at the time that it's released--maybe not in the press release, but in the entire report which we make available.

MR. SHERMAN: And the point was about going the domain averages so that people see a little judgment.

MR. HASKINS: So your recommendation is to have those available on a website so people could see them if they wanted to.

MR. SHERMAN: That's right--and, examples in the press release of something within each domain that seems particularly important each year; essentially take the system a little bit off autopilot.

MR. HASKINS: We do that--to some extent. I mean, we can always talk about more or less. And there is a link to our basic web page which does contain all of the charts and all the tables.

Yes?

MS. SAWHILL: There seems to be a focus here on ethnic and racial gaps. And in the title of the

paper it talks about socio-economic status as well. But we haven't really talked about that very much.

I'm very interested in that. I've been doing a lot of work recently on intergenerational mobility in the United States. We have a volume coming out on that in the fall--I may advertise it right now. That's what I'm spending a lot of time on.

I'm very, very sensitive, as a result of that, to the fact that there are big differences, obviously, by SES, and I believe they're growing over time.

So my question to Don, Ken or anyone else is: what have we done to look at that?

MR. HERNANDEZ: I've done almost nothing in this context, but six months from now I'll have a paper that says a great deal on it--with mother's education and income quintiles as a focus, insofar as data are available; and then with kind of a pitch for where data are not available for these SES classifiers, to try to get it introduced into data

collection systems where it's practical and feasible.

MS. SAWHILL: Ken, could you say a little bit more about what kind of underlying data we have that enables us to do this? I mean, I'd love to, before six months from now, have a little more information on that when we're beginning to focus on this issue in the fall.

MR. LAND: Part of the problem is the many different data sources for all of our series, and there are a number of the series for which we don't get any type of SES information--from parents, or from individuals. And many of the other data sources, the codings are inconsistent. And so there are just enormous data problems.

And I look forward to seeing what Don does, because this may stimulate some more systemization across data sources, among other things.

MS. SAWHILL: We've changed that to four months.

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Brett Brown.

MR. BROWN: one of the things that I really like about Don's approach is that it dovetails so nicely with several of the major sort of macro-level policies that we have on children; namely, the Healthy People 2010 effort, and No Child Left Behind--both of which emphasize the reduction of social inequality. And so being able to measure those effectively becomes very important, and being able to make the CWI relevant to a lot of the concerns and discussions around these major policy issues.

But I'd also like to propose that we think about feeling a little more comfortable about using different indices to make different points in the same conversation. So that whereas don's approach can tell you about reductions or increases in social inequalities, I think Ken and Vicki's work can--but you don't know where it comes from, right? Did [inaudible] tank? Or are White kids running away with the show? And that's something that allows you to see.

And Ken, to start with your point, which is where things are going, and you can follow up with their index that tells you: and this sheds some light on why the inequalities have either expanded or contracted. I mean, this idea of using more complementary indices I hope will [inaudible].

But the other question I had is: when I read your paper the only comment I made [inaudible] for other social cleavages. And so I'm very happy to hear about your plans.

But one issue about doing this under the rubric of an index is that some of the social cleavages you're talking about, you know you don't have 20 measures, you don't have 17 measures--you have nine measures, you have eight measures. And they aren't evenly distributed across the domains, so the integrity of an index, or even the integrity of some of the domains starts to crumble a little bit.

And at what point do you feel that you can no longer really do this work under the rubric of an index, and really are better off either talking

about just individual components of well-being and how that's changed over time, or consider using more contemporary data sources, where you can produce stronger composite measures.

MR. HERNANDEZ: It was a first step with regard to the last comment. Our plan is to essentially do a kind of sensitivity analysis, so that we can, for example, we can do everything for Whites, Blacks and Hispanics--we have all the indicators--and look at the trends for the overall index and for specific domains.

Then when we break out Hispanics, for example, into immigrants and non-immigrants, and we only have a subset for the immigrants, we can also create an index based on subsets for the non-immigrants to sort of calibrate it, if you will, or at least to look at the sensitivity--what happens when we lose one or two or three or four measures?--and draw some conclusions about--I mean, I don't know where the cutting points are yet--but maybe losing one or two measures, or even five or six, if

certain measures don't matter very much in this sort of calibration sense. But others are more critical.

So that's the sort of analysis that we're going to try to tease out as we go through this process, to try to answer that question in a fairly thorough way.

And then the next step--I think you're right--is to think about looking at other approaches besides the sort of index approach to this kind of work.

MR. HASKINS: Gene Falk.

MR. FALK: This was great, fascinating.

Figure 6 in your handout, it's the one that stopped me. Two things: one, if you could talk it through so that I know that I'm interpreting it right. I mean, I think that would be helpful.

But also if there is anybody who could talk about the limitations of the MTF, one of the data sources on the safety and behavioral domain?

MR. HERNANDEZ: Okay, Figure 6 is showing the gaps in safety/behavioral domain, and what it suggests is that, overall, there is not much gap

between Blacks and Whites for the first decade of the graph, and then what emerged.

And now to sort of understand what's gone we would have to sort of look at other gaps and look at what the underlying indicators are, which was one of Brett's points.

And then for Hispanics it shows that Hispanics have been doing worse than Whites, bouncing around a good bit, and changing, but that the gap had essentially been eliminated.

So that's how I would interpret that. And then to understand it, we'd have to go and look at the underlying indicators; first of all, the gaps for specific indicators, which we do, and then looking at just the indicator levels to see why there are gaps that are increasing or decreasing between whites and some other group.

MR. FALK: So the gaps between the Blacks and Whites, that's a positive gap for Blacks.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Right, it's a disparity that favors Blacks, yes. Someone else made the point earlier--I mean, that's, I think, one of the nice

things about this approach is it lets you see very clearly that in some domains Blacks or Hispanics are doing better than Whites.

MR. FALK: And this would be driven in part by these indicators--cigarette smoking, alcohol drinking and illicit drug use--from the MTF.

I'm totally unfamiliar with the MTF. What is it? What is the universe that is surveyed or tabulated in that data set?

MR. LAND: This entire effort is only possible because of a number of surveys that were begun in the mid-1970s as a consequence of that early effort to create social indicators. One of these is the MTF study, conducted annually by the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan. Lloyd Johnston, Gerald Bachman, have been PIs on that project for years.

It originally started as the "High School Senior" survey, and that's a continuous series from 1965 to the present. And in 1991, eight graders and 10th graders were added.

And it's a large survey, stratified sample of schools across the country. It has its limitations, like any data source does: parental permission for students to participate in the survey and so forth. But it's really the only long-term trend monitoring game in town.

MR. FALK: So it is a survey of kids in school. Okay, so you would not have, say, the institutionalized population.

MR. LAND: That's correct.

MR. HASKINS: Yes, go ahead.

MR. ROLSTON: This has nothing to do with the issue of presentation, but it does seem to me it would be useful on this measure to mention more than once that you really don't have the safety component in there--Don, in your presentation, because you don't have the arrest and victimization. So that when you look at sort of the positive side of this for African-Americans, I think if you had the full index, you might see somewhat similar trends, but I don't know what the result would be. But I think it's kind of shocking that Blacks are "safer."

So I would say it more than once--which is what you do.

MR. HASKINS: "Say it?" Point out that the victimization is not in there?

MR. ROLSTON: Yes. He points it out once in the paper, but then it's forgotten.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Yes, thank you for highlighting that, Howard. We had a sort of technical difficulty with dealing with those series, so we didn't include them. And that's why--I think this graph that you got, it says "draft" all over it, because we really haven't been able to sort of bring it up to snuff with regard to some of the variables which are missing.

So that's a good point to emphasize.

Please don't take this to the New York Times--or anywhere outside of this room--until we've had a chance to really check all the data, and also introduce--there are about three or four series, actually, that we were not able to include for various reasons.

MR. HASKINS: I think in view of Howard's comment, at the very least you need to change the title. You know, if you use the same title, people are going to assume it's the same measures--right? On Figure 6.

Cindy.

MS. FAGNONI: Yes, I agree with Howard. I circled that word "safety," because that to me means something very different.

But this all relates to something I've been thinking about as I've been listening. We've been asked by a couple members of Congress--one Democrat, one Republican--to study issues related to what some people call the "disengaged youth." And so I've been trying to think about how one would take a child well-being and youth well-being index and kind of flip it to what would you need to measure to look at sort of "disengaged youth."

And one observation I have is it seems like some of the key aspects of what you'd need are not in this, in the sense of delinquency, interactions with the justice system, incarcerations, perhaps

interactions with the child welfare systems. There are lots of problems with how jurisdictions measure drop-outs, and one of my concerns has been: if kids move around, it could be easy for nobody to count a kid as a drop-out, because they're sort of done jurisdiction by jurisdiction.

So it's just something to think about: how would one capture those sorts of measures that, in some cases, cut across some of these indicators, but in other cases one would need some constellations of indicators that right now aren't here. And to think about what data sources would be available to do that would be helpful. Thank you.

MR. : I wanted to highlight the fact that there are measurement issues that are particular to looking at disparities between ethnic groups.

At the last Population Association meeting a paper was presented on, for example, the use of the standard health rating of "excellent" and "poor" by Hispanics and African-Americans, compared to other health indicators, and trying to do some IRT

scaling of that; and suggesting that, in fact, the cut-off levels were different for the different ethnic groups, and so "good," "very good," may be different, may have different meanings, for different ethnic groups. And that's a very fundamental indicator in the health area.

In the crime and delinquency area, part of what's been discussed here is there's a problem in terms of self-reported data, as opposed to institutional data, as opposed to in the Crime Survey, some of the offending data comes from the victim of the crime saying, "This is the characteristics of the person who attacked me." And those are very limited. It's kind of age and race and sex, and you can't say much other than that. But that's an independent source of information.

So there is, in the criminological literature, evidence that there is under-reporting of delinquent behavior by minorities, and also illicit drug use. So that comparisons that depend on self-reported surveys may have some problems.

In the education area, the discussion earlier, I think the Census series on which these data are based is actually quite consistent. But the problem is: do you consider a GED to be a high school graduate? What's the value of the GED? Do you give it the same value as to someone who completes school on time? And a lot of the recent focus has been looking at more on-time graduation and dropout.

And so, in fact, the Census data are good, and can be relied on--but you have the issue of when the person says, "Yeah, I completed high school. I got a GED," does that mean the same thing as someone who completed on-time in a regular school?

One of the things that should be associated with this effort, I think, in the child well-being, are the kind of lobbying efforts that Bill O'Hare at SPAR has done.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. : No, no--well, I mean, educational efforts with the agencies to try to highlight some of the issues in terms of consistency

of series, in terms of improvement of measurement methods. And, in particular, I think we really have a wonderful opportunity with the No Child Left Behind, and the possibility of having some standards for how you report students' progress through school to really perhaps have some consistent reporting across states, because of the mandates of the No Child Left Behind.

And I think that highlighting some of these measurement issues, and following up with the agencies to say, "Hey, what can we do to improve some of this?" is not going to be of benefit to the index right now, to Ken Land, but it will be of great benefit in the future. And it's an important part of the effort.

MR. HASKINS: Okay--we have about six or seven minutes left, and we have six speakers. So the people that are going to talk, I want you to bear that in mind. It's roughly a minute apiece.

And here's who I have: Martha Moorehouse, Neeraj, Bill O'Hare, Ed Spar, Naomi Goldstein and Robert Kominski.

Go ahead, Martha.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. HASKINS: So we have five minutes and five people. So keep in mind that if you talk longer than a minute, you're going to bump somebody off, because we're going to end at 10:30.

Neeraj.

MS. KAUSHAL: my question is about, Don, this index for immigrant children living in immigrant families that you're proposing to develop.

I think one of the issues when we talk about immigrant children is the legal status of parents. And I know that a lot of data says "don't have any information on the legal status of parents." I don't know whether your data set--I would like to know your thoughts on this.

A lot of data sets, I think, have questions about the financial integration of immigrant or families. And that is one measure that people don't use this thing, whether a family has a savings account or a checking account. This is something

that has been talked about by Ben Bernanke, but I haven't seen researchers using this.

I think, you know, if a family has a savings or a checking account, that can be an indicator of whether they have a legal status. Even if it's not an indicator of that, it's an important measure.

So I'd like to know your thoughts on whether you are worried about the legal status, and how do you handle it?

MR. HERNANDEZ: Well, since I only have five seconds [laughs], I'll just say that right now I'm focusing on the indicators that are part of the index. The issues you raise are important ones, but they're not ones I can certainly deal with immediately, or plan to do it in the short run.

MR. HASKINS: Bill O'Hare.

MR. O'HARE: I'll pass.

MR. HASKINS: Ed Spar.

MR. SPAR: Either for over time, or between groups: is there a way of showing statistical significance? I think it would add an awful lot to

the value of the data to show--watching all these dips, and watching these changes, especially over time--are there any real changes?

Sometimes to see from the first point to the last point that nothing actually happened. However, there's been quite a number of changes across time.

Can you measure that? Do you plan to measure that.

And the other, of course, is the statistical significance between, let's say, the Hispanic differences and the Black differences; or those versus the White.

MR. LAND: May I respond?

MR. HASKINS: Yes.

MR. LAND: Yes, we have thought about the issues of statistical significance, and obviously in a time series analysis context, there are ways of approaching that, and we have studied some of those.

I just want to make a comment in response to Martha's commentary.

You know, in our original 2001 paper, and in our more updated series, one of the untold success stories of the past three decades is in the mortality trends for ages one to four, five to nine, and so forth. They've dropped by 50 to 60 percent.

So what's going on? It's everything. It's child safety seats. It's playgrounds. It's better EMS services. It's all those things.

But that's one of the really great success stories of the past three decades, and it's a largely untold story: that children are dying at a much lower rate today--from injuries, especially--than they were three decades ago.

MR. HASKINS: Okay--Naomi and Robert have credit in the bank.

We are now going to have a 15-minute break. Please join me in thanking Don for this wonderful paper.

[Applause.]

[Break.]

Session II: State-Level Indicators

MR. ABER: We are going to start Session II. Session II is addressing issues of State indices of child well-being.

Bill O'Hare, from the Kids Count program at the Annie E. Casey Foundation wrote our concept paper. And he has 10 minutes to initiate this discussion through his reflections.

Bill?

MR. O'HARE: Thanks, Larry. It's a pleasure to be here this morning. And I feel intimidated by don's presentation: all the graphs and the PowerPoint and everything. I don't have any PowerPoint. I have a few charts in my paper. So, it's typical of the poor non-profit that I work for.

[Laughter.]

VOICE: [Off mike.] As opposed to the rich universities.

[Laughter.]

MR. O'HARE: That's right, you guys have all these things.

This is a comment that's completely out of context, but I just want to make it public, because I've said it privately.

I want to thank, and acknowledge, Ron and Bill's work in setting up this Brookings Center on Children and Families. I think the fact that there is a Center on Children and Families at one of the most prestigious policy institutions in the country is gratifying, and telling, and in many ways is a reflection of the work of a lot of people around this table. It wouldn't have happened 10 or 15 years ago.

And so I'm really please that you did it. And I really think it's a reflection of the growing interest in children's issues. So that's a comment I've shared with you in the past. I just wanted to make it publicly here.

The paper I put together and sent out starts with a couple of important background points over this topic. One is that states are important actors in the public policy decision-making. They've always been important. They're probably a

little more important now than they were 10 or 15 years ago. There has been what some call the "devolution revolution," although I don't think it's quite a revolution. But, certainly, states make a lot of policies and decisions about programs for children, and therefore very important to have good data at the state level.

I probably should add that the party in power at the White House and Congress, certainly philosophically often believe that states should be the states that these public policy decisions are made. And the fact that the Federal government has been running three or four hundred billion dollar deficits for the last several years, and will continue, probably means that states are more likely to be the place where public policy initiatives emerge, rather than at the Federal level.

The second point is that states are different. States are different from one another, and different from the national numbers you get on measures of child well-being. Table 1 kind of shows some data on that. You know, our Kids Count Data

Book--hopefully you've picked one up, or know about it--we used 10 measures to assess child well-being across the states, because this is measured across the states and over time. And if you take those 10 measures for 50 states, you have 500 possible comparisons with the national measure. Most of those--like 340 of them--are statistically significantly different than the national number.

And, in addition to that, at our website, we last year put together these spreadsheets that show statistically significant difference from state to state in these kind of spreadsheets. And the bottom line is: most states are different from most other states on most of the measures.

So states are not only important actors, they're different from the national numbers and different from each other. So it's important to have state-level data on the well-being of children.

The other thing I'll just mention is that, from a press point of view or communication point of view, it's been amazingly easy for us to get press attention, since we put state level data out and

ranked the states. And I think from getting attention, putting this CWI in the state context would also be very useful.

A couple other quick comments: one is that my comments here and in the paper focus on producing indices of child well-being across all states, or most states, as opposed to doing it for one state-- which would be a little different context, and some of the comments in my paper don't really apply there.

And, secondly, my comments are more focused on broad measures of state indices of well-being, as opposed to taking the exact measures from the CWI and trying to apply them state-by-state.

So with that as background, I talked to Ron a couple times. I had a little bit of trouble trying to get my head around what is the issue here that I'm supposed to write and talk about, in large part because we've been doing this since 1990; we've ranked the states based on an index of child well-being, so we kind of feel we already have an

existing measure of child well-being, have done it for a long time.

And so I think the focus is more on kind of cooperation, communication, dovetailing, harmonization. I'm not quite sure what it is, but a lot of it is probably more organizational than it is methodological.

But I did identify three kinds of issues that I think would be relevant to anybody trying to put together an index of child well-being at the state level. And the three issues are: basic data availability; some kind of technical-methodological data issues; and the communication aspect of this, which I'll talk about a little bit.

On the data availability issue, there is also a table in my handout that kind of shows how many of the measures from America's Children--which is kind of the backbone of what Ken uses--are available at the state level, and how many of those are available at the city level. And the bottom line is: many of them are not available at the state level, or certainly not in the same way they're

measured, or available over time or across states consistently. And at the city level, it's even much worse.

So that's kind of the bad news.

The good news, in my estimation, is that there has been--I guess I'll use the word "explosion"; that's probably not quite the word to--use, of state-level measures from the Federal statistical system over the last five years or so, leading with the American Community Survey, which has been generating state-level numbers since 2000, and in August of this year will have the data from the full-scale 2005 survey; the National Survey of Child Health that was taken in 2003 that has a lot of good measures on--"child health" is a little bit of a misnomer. It's a very broad assessment of child well-being that is very useful, I think, for state-level assessment.

The No Child Left Behind and the NAEP scores that it required all states to do--administer the NAEP test now, which wasn't the case prior to 2002 or 2003, I'm not sure what. So now we have

that set of measures, and the graduation and drop-out rates that are kind of part of that. I'm not quite sure whether that's going to add to our ammunition on state-level measures or not, but certainly the NAEP scores will.

And, in many ways, the time is ripe for us to move forward on producing better or more or different state-level measures of child well-being; both individual measures and indices. The one caveat to that, I guess, is: so much of this is so new that, as a scientific field, I don't think we've had much time to really look at the quality of this data; to assess how good it is, how comparable it is; and whether we're measuring the same things across different surveys, or whether surveys can be put together to assimilate it. So there's a lot of work I think needs to be done on that part of it.

There were a couple of kind of technical issues that I brought up that I think make measuring well-being at the state-level different than at the national level.

One of those is the small-numbers issue that comes up in a lot of state measures; both in sample size and in numbers of events. A couple quick examples: the current population survey that's taken every year and has a lot of good measures of children, doesn't have enough sample size in many states to produce reliable data for states. Even when you put three years together, as we often do. Sometimes the samples aren't big enough. So sample size is one issue.

Number of events is another one. There's a table in the back that talks about teen suicides. And many, many states have so few teen suicides in a given year that you can't produce a reliable rate from them. It would double from year to year, or halve, or triple. And even if you averaged several years together, some of the states the numbers of teen suicides are so small you couldn't get reliable measures over time, or across states.

Another problem with state-level measures is inconsistency across states, and particularly administrative data is what I'm really talking about

here; that things are just defined differently, or collected differently, or tabulated differently--so that you can't get consistent data across states.

One of the examples of that is child abuse data that's reported every year under the NCCAN system, but is defined quite differently in different states. And, in fact Pennsylvania comes out head-and-shoulders above every other state, and all the experts that I've talked to say that's just an artifact of the way they define child abuse. And if I understand this, what has happened in Pennsylvania for a long time is now happening in other places. So even over time, you have inconsistency about what's really being measured by the number of kids in substantiated child abuse situations.

Education data is probably another place where this happens. If you rely on states to report their drop-out rate or their graduation rate, you'll get 50 different measures that--well, not 50-- probably 40 different measures that are inconsistent. If you look at NAEP scores compared

to tests given by states, you find enormous gaps in competency at every level. So it would be unwise to use state-produced data on how much children know.

Another example I use is juvenile justice statistics. We used to use a juvenile violent crime arrest rate from the FBI statistics in our data book as one of the 10 measures that we used, and when we first started using that in the early 1990s, it was a relatively robust administrative data set. But the way the data is reported from the FBI system is that the local jurisdiction's report up to the FBI, but not all of them report, or not all months, so you have a sample of data over states that varies across states, and those data are inflated to represent the states. So if they know 10 percent of the kids lived in a county that reported, they'll multiply that by 10 to give you a state number.

This really came home to us when, a couple of years, Philadelphia was the only jurisdiction in Pennsylvania that reported juvenile arrest rates. And, of course, they amplified that to reflect the whole state.

[Laughter.]

And we were stupid enough to report it in our data book for a couple of years, until we heard otherwise. That whole administrative data set just kind of eroded over time, to the point that we couldn't use it anymore. So those are the kind of problems.

The last point I'll just talk about a little bit probably blends into the lunchtime conversation, but it's a communication point of view. We have used 10 measures. It's a relatively simple presentation for each state. If we have 27 measures in seven domains--27 or 28, I can't quite tell how many measures--but something around 30 measures of state well-being, even if we had those reliable for all 50 states over time--which we don't, and probably won't in the near future--it would be a challenge for us in the Kids Count context for reaching out to the public audience that we do, to figure out how to present that data in an easily understandable form to the public.

So I'm not sure even if we had that kind of data whether we would try and produce or replicate the CWI at the state level, more for communication issues--certainly for communications, not for scientific issues. The other part of that, I suspect, I'd want to look and see how states rank based on the 27-index compared to the 10, and I suspect they'd be very similar. The outcomes that most people care about would be the same, and the parsimony of using 10 measures that are more easily understandable is a big advantage in communicating this to the public.

Two other comments, and I'll end. One is that there's this whole question of statistical significance that Ed kind of raised. And we pretty much ignored it in Kids Count for many years-- although I will share with you: every year since 1994, the first Data Book that I put together, we had calculated standard errors for all the measures that we have, and we had a sentence in the book that says if you want these standard errors, contact me.

Over that 1993 to 2005, we probably had about six or seven people contact us wanting to know that.

[Laughter.]

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

MR. O'HARE: That's right--or thought they did.

Last year we put up a lot of data on statistical significance on our website, and we only had like a dozen or 15 people actually go to that part of our website.

So, from the scientific perspective it's an important issue: are these states different from one another; are the changes over time really statistically different? From a public perspective of getting this information out, and people using that kind of information, it's much less important.

And the last part of this, I guess, that goes to this broader 27 measures if we had them, is kind of: who's the audience--for all of this? And for us it's very clear: it's not a scientific, data-

driven audience; it's a public policy audience, a child advocacy audience. It's a media audience. And so we don't write or produce stuff for scientists.

I think there's a broader question on the CWI about where is the audience? And you could say it was both--which we always say; it's everybody. But to some extent, at the bottom line, you've got to figure out how to package your material to reach the audience you're after. And I think that probably bleeds over into the lunchtime conversation--but how we communicate this, at the state level particularly, is a very complicated issue.

So let me stop there.

MR. ABER: Thank you, Bill, very much. Let's continue with Ron's approach to putting up your tent. If you're interested, I'll add one other thing: if you think I've passed you by, by your noticing that somebody else's tent went up after yours and I didn't call you next, you can give me

one of these. And that way you'll know I'm really ignoring you.

[Laughter.]

And we've got Martha and Bob, to start.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: I want to talk about states using information--states or others using information. As you know, on the work we did with states, we focused on state government, often in partnership, with your help, with their Kids Count grantees.

And so my question relates to: okay, so you get the media report, especially because they're rank-ordered, and they're compared to others, and what happens after that? And what we heard from states: for anything to happen after that, I think it's fair to say two things. One, they had to be able to drill down--school districts, counties--to mobilize further action within the state. Or, two--and this is a little bit narrow example, and it's probably more some of the small states--they had to be close to being ready to work on a specific problem. So examples there: Rhode Island looked at

lead. And they knew they could do something about lead; they knew where it was; they had their lead strategies, and that came back to policy makers with reductions in lead in relation to expenditures-- which, of course, everybody likes. And the policy makers want those changes. But, as you know well, promising more reading by X grade, by X percentage of students, we have a lot of evidence problems of what it takes, how many kids you have to reach.

So we saw some state action, more at a state level, when it was a very specific targeted problem. But otherwise, it seemed to involved knowing that you could break it out further and then begin to get state action out of the state legislature on a range of issues, potentially or not.

MR. ABER: Just one comment before you respond.

Some of you might know I'm a little more liberal than Ron--so you are allowed, until Ron fires me--to bring in other issues, in other sessions, as they directly relate to this session.

So, your first one is right on this session. Your second one bridges to the communications one.

But do try to address the first issues of each session first.

MR. O'HARE: I'm not sure this is going to be right on target, but let me just provide a little more information.

One is that you might not know that in addition to producing the national Data Book every year, the Casey Foundation funds a Kids Count grantee in every state, whose main mission is to take the kind of data-driven advocacy approach that we use here, so they often present data by counties, or cities or school districts--sub-state areas. So that is a way to generate a lot of the kind of data that you were talking about.

Two other kind of factual responses, I guess, that don't quite get to it: one is we've always talked about Kids Count as raising public awareness. And that really sounds good, but I'm not sure how you measure it, other than the fact that

for the last five years we've gotten about a thousand news stories every year when we release the data; about 800 to 1,200--it varies from year to year. So we think that is promoting some kind of public awareness about children's issues.

The other thing that kind of gets to what you're talking about is that we commissioned a series of surveys in the last couple of years of key target audiences. The most relevant is state legislators. And we found, gratifyingly, that about 75 to 80 percent of the sample we surveyed--actually the National Conference of State Legislators surveyed for us--for a fee--that about 75 to 80 percent were aware of Kids Count, and about 50 or 60 percent said they used Kids Count data in some kind of context like deliberations, and thinking of legislation and those kinds of things.

So we think that it's had some impact in that way, in terms of making more data-based decisions.

You know, monitoring exactly what happens, it's a much more complex topic, and we have a lot of anecdotal--

[Tape change.]

MR. : This is a comment that relates not only to this paper, but to some extent over time, but maybe even more so with regard to states, because of the heterogeneity: and that is the issue of whether you would want to have some sort of adjusted measures; sort of regression-adjusted measures. Because I can see that if I were in a state, and I were trying to especially judge my ranking, my first reaction might be: "Well, we're doing better--"--let's say, but, in fact, maybe from the point of view of relative to the nature of my population, or the nature of how it's changed, on a policy basis anyway, I'm not really doing better. Or vice versa: it looks like we're doing lousy, but if you make the appropriate comparisons, it may look like we're doing better.

I mean, in a sense, there is this relevance also--I think brought up earlier--that you could even think about this over time.

Now, I don't recommend changes the press release, or the simplicity of the indicators, in terms of reporting, but I do think that if there were some way that these things could take into account a few key exogenous variables, that they would be more revealing, and avoid kind of what might end up being really misleading information because they don't take that into account.

Now, obviously, you say what it is--and what it is is what it is. And that's fine.

But the uses of it could be more misleading.

MR. O'HARE: If you'd give me an opportunity to make comment I was going to say earlier when I took down my card--it has to do with the really fundamental distinction between description and analysis, and the use of data for description versus analysis.

And what we purport to do--and I think we do a reasonably good job--is to describe the well-being of children in states; and do very little to try and explain that, certainly in statistical analysis terms. And there's a couple of reasons for that. One is that we kind of stumbled onto that, and it's simpler. And secondly, I have some compunction about if we started to introduce other measures to explain why states were doing better or worse, it would introduce more controversy to the data book and to what we're trying to do.

So we've kind of shied away from that. And certainly any rigorous statistical analysis, although we are doing something with the Population Reference Bureau right now.

I've tried to track that kind of research over time, and I've only found about three or four studies, or maybe five or six studies over the last 10 years, anybody who's tried to explain there were differences in child well-being across the states.

So I think you're right in terms of where states are. But I think for our purposes we probably just want to describe.

MR. : I wasn't trying to say you should change that. I'm just trying to say: somewhere underlying all this, there ought to be someplace that people could go.

MR. : [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. O'HARE: Well, for example, if we said, "Gee, Mississippi is doing pretty good because they have a large Black population." Well, I don't think having a large Black population explains why kids in Mississippi are dying at higher rates than other states. But I could see it easily used as an explanatory variable in some model.

MR. : They may use it anyway. I mean, that's the point. In other words, a legislator may use it as an excuse.

MR. ABER: Jonathan's in line next. Is your comment on this issue?

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. ABER: A little different--then I'll take the priority of the chair to just add a comment or two on this issue, which is: remind me who the person was who analyzed the relationship between racial composition in a state and their ranking in Kids Count.

MR. O'HARE: Who?

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. ABER: You did that? I knew it was somebody who was forgettable.

[Laughter.]

But there was somebody else who did, too.

MR. O'HARE: A guy in New Hampshire--I can't think of his name right now--is one of the persons.

MR. ABER: Right. That's who I'm thinking of.

But about 70 percent of the variance in state ranking is accounted for by racial composition?

MR. : No, 75 percent of the rankings are from the combination of racial composition and--at the time we used income measure.

Income was very significant. And probably if you add in single-parent status you get some additional things, too.

I mean, a lot of the variance is explainable by some fairly simple--and loaded--variables. There's no question about that.

But to me the question is: do you turn away from that, or do you try to deal with it in an analytic way?

MR. ABER: And this does dovetail with the first discussion, which is compositional change in the state, and change in well-being. So I think it's a really critical issue. And when it's not my turn to moderate but to talk again, I will have some other things to say about that. But I don't want to break up this part now.

MR. HASKINS: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

MR. ABER: Say that again, Ron?

MR. HASKINS: [Off mike.] I said if we always [inaudible] the moderator [inaudible].

MR. ABER: What I set up? Yes--that's right. That's right. [Laughs.]

Jon?

MR. ZAFF: to bring up some more of the Hamiltonian versus Jeffersonian issue--

MR. O'HARE: Refresh my memory. I know I'm old, but I wasn't around.

[Laughter.]

MR. ZAFF: I think, Bill, and also Martha, you brought this up, which is the specific interest of different states regarding what issues they're dealing with. And so you could imagine that if we're more interested in intra-state differences over time than inter-state differences, then you could possibly argue that a set of indicators you'd want to track in an index in New Mexico might be drastically different than New York.

So I just wanted to get your thoughts on whether maybe we need some--say at Westat, set it up as a technical assistance shop for all these states, or can be developing their indices.

MR. O'HARE: There certainly are differences across states of what people are interested in, but I think if there's a science of child well-being, which I think is kind of what has drawn most of us here, then you would think those measures would be pretty similar, if not the same, across states.

And probably the bottom line--or a bottom line--is: even state-by-state you don't have a whole lot of good measures of child well-being. So if you wanted to do something individually in each state, you'd still have enormous challenges.

MR. ABER: I have Naomi, Ken and then Ed.

MS. GOLDSTEIN: Bill, I just wanted to comment that I think your assessment that publishing--trying to go into the explanatory and analytic arena would be controversial is absolutely right, and that's based in part on my experience, which is heading the Interagency Work Group for America's Children.

And I think obviously it's important to do, but I'm not sure that it's a good idea for the same institution that is putting out what's meant to be a

flat, objective, not interpretive volume, should also try to explain the statistics in the same breath.

MR. LAND: A couple of comments. First of all, Bill has actually done a couple of fascinating papers with Vicki Lamb that has computed, at the state level, using their 10 indicators, analogs of the Child and Youth Well-being Index; and have actually compared the average across the states using the 10 indicators with our larger index using the 28 indicators. And, indeed, those are available on our web page. If you want us to pull them off and print them out and give copies to everyone, we can.

But basically, they show, for example, that some of the states improve, because they're over-time comparisons, more rapidly than other states. And while the states that improve less may actually be at higher levels of well-being initially--so they have less capacity for improvement; whereas those that are lower come up more rapidly.

And those are a couple of fascinating papers, Bill. You should make those available.

The second thing I want to say is that regarding statistical significance, after computing the CWIs at the state level, Kelvin Pollard, over at Population Reference Bureau, who does a lot of the data analyses for Casey and Bill, approached me. And I put on my statistician's cap and helped Kelvin to develop a statistical test for assessing whether the CWIs at the state level were statistically significantly different between states in any given year.

Let me ask you: do you appreciate the idea of the spatial autocorrelation? Basically what our statistical tests show are that the overall index for Mississippi is likely not to be statistically significantly different from that for Alabama, but it's probably statistically significantly different from that for New Hampshire.

And so what we found was there's a lot of spatial autocorrelation of the CWIs at the state level within regions, so that states within regions

are more likely to be like each other with respect to child well-being than those from very different regions.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

MR. O'HARE: The papers that Ken is talking about are on the Kids Count website, at www.kidscount.org. And we have looked at changes over time.

One of the things that I'll just mention from having done this for many years is that, particularly at the state level, it's much harder to differentiate states' changes over time than it is states of child well-being at one point in time. You know, Mississippi and Vermont are very different in terms of child well-being in 2003. The change from 2003 to 2004 across that set of states, there's so little change and so much noise in this data that I have very little confidence that we can get a good set of measures that will tell about year-to-year change. We looked at changes from 1990 to 2000 in these 10 measures. And even looking at 10 years of

change, over a relatively volatile decade, you know, I'm pretty confident the top five or 10 rankings are different than the bottom five or 10 states in rankings, but that middle 30 or 35 states, I'm not confident we can really tell how much different they are from one another.

MR. ABER: I've got Ed, Fasaha, Brett and Arloc.

MR. SPAR: Actually, before my question--the spatial autocorrelation is a fascinating subject. I'm just going to refer you all to somebody named Paul Voss, who many of you may already know. Paul has done an enormous amount of work in spatial autocorrelation--very valuable. But Paul, I think, if he were sitting here would be smiling, because he found in so much of his work exactly the same types of issues. That's just an aside, actually.

My question is: with the upcoming American Community Survey, which is going to be, clearly, annual, and a mammoth amount of data at the state level, which will be, I hope, fairly accurate, are you planning to either change any of the indicators

or add to the indicators, based upon the data that are coming down from ACS?

MR. O'HARE: Well, actually, of the 10 indicators that we have been using for the last couple years, five of them come from the ACS. That started in 2000. And this is more organizational than technical, I guess, but we talked a lot about whether that was really going to be funded? How good they were? Was it going to continue? We didn't want to switch over to the ACS--most of you know about the Congressional battles over the last couple of years--to see whether that was going to continue or not.

But we did jump on that bandwagon.

The other part that I'll mention is that in addition to what's in the Data Book, we now have a web site that has about 120 to 150 state-level measures of child well-being. Now, many of those are very closely related: 50 percent of poverty, 100 percent of poverty, 150 percent. But, nonetheless, that is the place we have a lot of the ACS data, making it available to the public.

So we are using that. Whether we would use that to add or change data from what we already have--ummm--we've kind of kicked measures around but we haven't found any that we like any better than the ones we have.

MR. ABER: Fasaha?

MS. TRAYLOR: I'm afraid that this is going to be a fairly inarticulate question, but I'm going to try to ask it anyway.

I guess I'm trying to figure out what should be--I know that might be a loaded word in this company--but what should be the relationship between state data and national data? In other words, between Kids Count data and CWI data?

And I guess maybe the way I've been thinking about it, I guess you could think about that in measurement terms, and I guess you could think about it in communication terms. And you might also be able to think about it in policy terms.

But I'm interested in trying to see what either of you think about that relationship.

MR. O'HARE: Ken and I and Vicki and I have had conversations about this off-and-on, so there's a very informal kind of connectedness that we've tried to develop.

And I think one other point I guess I'll mention: that having done this work now--I was involved with the first Kids Count Data Book that was published in the 1990s, so I've been doing this since then--the only data we have ever found that is comparable across all the states is data produced by the Federal statistical system.

And so if you want data that is comparable across the states, I don't know where else to look that you're going to find that kind of comparability and quality over time and stuff.

If you're talking about only one state or a small number of states, I think Cathie Walsh from Rhode Island, our Kids Count grantee there, there's a lot of other opportunities there where we might be able to do two things: draw on some of the work that has been done by Ken and his colleagues to help our state grantees think about measures that they could

use, or use measures that already have the kind of quality-control work that Ken and his colleagues have done.

The other question that you and I probably have talked about, or Ruby has, is what can we do, or what should we do as organizations to maximize the impact of our separate reports. And I think there probably are some things that the two organizations could and should do. But I'm not quite sure what they are at this point.

MR. ABER: Ken, do you have any additional comments?

MR. LAND: No.

VOICE: [Off mike.] Can I say something on this point?

MR. ABER: Sure. Ron on this point, and anybody else on this point--but quickly.

MR. HASKINS: I would say that it's very important to this whole enterprise to go from descriptive to social indicator models that help us understand relationships between variables. And the states can be very important in that sense, because

there is policy experimentation that goes on in the states; there are differences in when states adopt specific laws. And by looking at some of that, looking at variations in welfare generosity, child support enforcement, one can begin to make some cautious statements about the relevance of policy to changes in children's well-being.

I mean, I realize it's fraught with difficulties, it's fraught with lots of issues. And economists have been doing a lot of work recently about the whole thing that was in Freakonomics about abortion laws and crime rates.

But I think that that is an important way to go--if we're going to bring these indicators really to the policy arena and have people say: yes, this really does matter for our policy decisions, and we're going to use this to inform our policy decisions.

MR. : Could I just comment? I think you're right about the opportunities that exist there across states that are so different in almost every way. And it kind of goes back to one

of your early comments: when you look at race and urbanization and income and a couple other things, you explain most of these differences.

But most of these indicators are for all kids, as opposed to low-income kids. And I really think there are some sources emerging now, like the ACS and the National Survey of Children's Health, which will allow you to get some measurements of child well-being for low-income kids, or some group that are more likely to be affected by social policy than the broad population of children.

So I think there are some opportunities that are emerging along those lines that we haven't had in the past.

MR. O'HARE: In response to Fasaha's question there's an obvious point here--and those are the kind of things I specialize in--that states don't like to be behind other states. I mean, this is a huge motivating factor for the states.

So part of the answer to your question what should the relationship be to the national level, if

I'm a governor or a state legislator, I want to say:
"Not lower than the rest of the country."

And this is a fact that advocates can use to great advantage, I think. And someone can come along--the Republicans will be defending themselves, and I'll bring Zill in, and he's say, "Well, it's all explained by race," and so forth.

MR. ZILL: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

MR. O'HARE: Oh, you would refuse to go and tell the truth, Nick?

Anyway--so I think that's part of the answer here. Let's face it: all of us are interested in the well-being of children, and if you can use something like this that, at some level, is an accurate portrayal of how Mississippi compares to Vermont, or whatever it happens to be, and that motivates a state--I can think of a specific example of this. Many people here might not like the policy result, but Oklahoma was very concerned about its poverty rate, and they called in a whole bunch of experts and everything. And they decided that the

reason it had such a high poverty rate was because they so many single parents. At that time they had the highest proportion of single parents in the country. So they launched a marriage initiative.

And I just offer that as an example of how numbers like this, and comparisons across the states really can motivate states to take action.

MR. : To follow up--I think the data are an important part--what is it, necessary but not sufficient? That you have to have local advocates or policy makers or someone who's interested in acting on that data to really make that work. It's an important part, but--

MR. O'HARE: In this case, as far as I can tell, it was the governor, and that's about it. And he sold everybody else.

MR. ABER: I've got Brett, Arloc, Neeraj and Robert.

MR. BROWN: I wanted to talk about the "necessary" part, which is the data part we're talking about. And Bill has already mentioned that the amount of data that are available on children

across states--across all 50 states--has really increased exponentially since 2000.

The National Survey of Children's Health, which is gathered every four years--at least that's the plan--has a very nice collection of data, indicators not only in health, but probably about development and family functioning, and positive measures of socio-emotional development. It really is quite a rich resource for social indicator data. I wish it were measured a little more often, but once every four years is not so bad.

And the ACS, of course, is a tremendous resources for socio-demographic information.

And there have been other efforts, as well. The National Survey of Drug Use and Health was redesigned in order to produce state level estimates, which it does every year. The National Health Interview Survey was also redesigned to start producing state level estimates--though they didn't quite get all the way there in terms of the sample size.

So I think there's been a consistent effort to increase the amount of state level data. A lot of these efforts are coming out of, are driven by things like Healthy People 2010, and No Child Left Behind.

And I'd be very interested if we could talk a little bit about strategies for both securing those gains in this Federal statistical system, and expanding them over time so that we can end up with indices that are as rich at the state level as they are at the national level.

Now there was an effort this past year, as part of the Welfare Reform Bill, to include mandatory data collection at the state level that did not succeed. That doesn't mean that that avenue--well, that avenue, I think is closed. But legislatively it's not necessarily closed, and there are people working in this area--and the Casey Foundation is one of them.

I just think that's important to point out, and that the larger scheme of things here should be thinking about where efforts can be applied most

fruitfully in order to secure and expand the data resource.

MR. O'HARE: I hate to be the spoilsport, but given the budget deficit that we have and we're going to have for awhile, data is an easy target. And I saw that with the CIPP survey, and the National Children's Survey--is that what it's called? And I think as a community of people interested in data, we've got a real challenge before us to figure out ourselves how we can save some of this data, or get new data is probably a more remote possibility. But I think there's a kind--I don't know if "political challenge" is quite the word, but as I look forward, I think this is going to be more of an issue than it has been in the last 10 years.

MR. ABER: Arloc.

MR. SHERMAN: I had a narrow, technical calculation question, and don't know if I should be asking. It relates more to states than to national calculations, but I don't know if I should be waiting for a different session to ask it.

MR. ABER: There will be no other session to ask that.

[Laughter.]

MR. SHERMAN: Then here we go.

Ken, when you do calculations of change indices over time, you're sort of comparing Time 2 divided by Time 1 to calculate a percent change?

MR. LAND: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. SHERMAN: I guess my question is about upward bias over time. If you imagine an Index A that goes from 1 to 2, it's a 100 percent increase. And then some other Index B, that goes from 2 to 1, it's a 50 percent decrease. The average of those two is a 25 percent increase. Over time, you get a lot of movement, and eventually everything creeps up. You know, if those two wobbled back and forth like that, you would eventually go upward. And by state, that would be much more important, because you have much more wobbling in your state indices.

I can imagine--well, there would be some bias at the national level. It might not be important.

And other people will understand this, if I'm saying this right or not. I'm the wrong person to be asking about this. But I could imagine that eventually all the states' being above average, in terms of their change indices. And should your denominator really be the average of Time 1 and Time 2?

MR. LAND: I'll respond a little bit.

Yes, we want to be "all children above average--"--

VOICE: [Off mike.] A worthy goal.

[Laughter.]

MR. LAND: We have been concerned with the base problem, and you just highlighted a potential illustration of that.

I think in the case of the national level CWI, it's less of a hazard because of the way it's constructed, and the fact that we have numerous indicators. So we get some reliability that you possibly wouldn't get with a smaller number of indices.

However, again, the papers that they did with the 10 indicators at the state level are fascinating. And they show national trends which are quite comparable to the ones that we get over similar time periods.

MR. O'HARE: I think the change is so slight over states over a short period of time, and there's so much other noise in this, that I'm not sure that's a problem worth worrying about in the kind of measures at the state level that we would do.

The bigger issue is what period of time you're looking at. And the fact that we use ACS data for the states means we can't go back prior to 2000. So it's a pretty restricted time period we're looking at.

MR. SHERMAN: [Off mike.] So you're saying that there's so little change [inaudible].

MR. O'HARE: Well, the big changes are typically random error.

MR. SHERMAN: [Off mike.] Well, exactly. But what I'm saying [inaudible].

MR. O'HARE: I think there is an issue there. I guess in the range of issues that we have to wrestle with, I'd put that at a low end.

MR. ABER: I'm going to suggest you guys take this outside.

[Laughter.]

It's an important point, but I want to go to the next comment.

Neeraj.

MS. KAUSHAL: My comment is--I guess you're aware of this, and somebody actually pointed this out in the earlier session--that time series measures based on cross-sectional data are affected by changes in samples as well as population. And these measures are, I think, a lot more likely to be a lot more affected in the case of states, because lots of things are going on. People are moving across states, there's also immigration going on. And, you know, states that are having more favorable policies, people are moving probably--especially the population that's likely to be affected by those policies, moving across states.

MR. : Well, it kind of goes back to this question of description versus analysis, that that kind of change in composition might explain why a state is getting better or getting worse. But for us, we're trying to describe whether it's getting better or getting worse, in sufficient precision.

MS. KAUSHAL: Yes, so we don't know what is causing what.

MR. : The very language, "getting better" and "getting worse" is a little tricky.

MR. : If we have 10 measures and they've all improved since 2000, I'd say that things are getting better.

MR. : [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. : I would still say things are getting better.

MR. : [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. ABER: Rob far, is that your comment for your tent to be up? No--okay. Okay. I just wanted to make sure if people were still in line. That's great.

We've got Rob near and then Rob far.

Robert.

MR. ABER: There's a lot of Roberts, and I don't know either of you personally, and I don't read very well.

MR. CROSNOE: In my activities at the Foundation for Child Development over the years there's one slide or figure that I've seen many times, and that was a map of the United States color-coded by immigration statistics. And so there's basically three colors: the traditional immigration states, like California and Texas; the non-immigration states like Indiana or Ohio; and the "new" immigration states--and I think the best example of that is North Carolina and Georgia.

And having lived in three of those states that I've mentioned, I know that legislatures--and people in general--are very sensitive to that issue, and usually they're touchy about it, especially with education statistics. And they're less likely to bring it up when they have good infant mortality rates--which immigration is probably helping.

However, I think that if I took this map and overlaid it on that immigration map, I would see an overlay. And I think that this gets at this explanation-versus-description issue. And to me, giving statistics about the demographic composition of the state--race, ethnic and immigration--is something that goes hand in hand with giving these statistics about indicators. I wouldn't say that the demographic indicators are indicators of well-being, but they are of the state of the state, if you will.

And in some ways that gets around this issue of analysis versus description. I know that among the young scholars at the Foundation, the thing we talk about most is this idea of what explains immigration statistics that we find. Because a lot of we find shows that immigrant children aren't doing so well. And usually that's because they're poor, and their parents aren't well education.

And so from a statistical standpoint, we find it misleading to give immigration statistics

without taking that into account. But I personally feel it's misleading from a real-world perspective to take that into account, to some degree, because it shifts attention from where populations that we would normally think deserve the attention, and it gives people excuses, if you will, to talk about it.

So I really agree with what Naomi said about the people who present the statistics don't necessarily need to explain them, but at the same time I wonder if you present the demographic, explanatory statistics, along with indicators at the same time, so that people who know something about that could draw their own conclusions.

And I'll say from a personal standpoint, I remember that Newsweek a few years ago did a breakdown--a demographic breakdown--of every state. And having been in the world of demography for a long time I know a lot about those things, and I was still totally shocked--and interested on a fundamental level--by the fact that there were essentially no Black people in Iowa.

So I think that that's just a really useful service. I don't think that the average American understands that at all. I mean, I really don't. I know that they don't.

And I think that that is part of giving these indicators.

MR. O'HARE: Well, let me just add a couple comments to that: that we do provide a lot of economic--in the very technical jargon of Kids Count, we have a right-hand page and a left-hand page for every state. The right-hand page has the 10 indicators. It shows change. The left-hand has a lot of the background information you're talking about, of race, and median income, and health insurance, and lots of those kinds of things. We try to change that from year to year to keep it fresh, but a lot of that kind of stuff is there.

In addition, as I mentioned, we've got a lot of this data on our web site, and we try and direct people there more and more, as that's becoming the way people find out about information and use it.

The other thing I'll just mention is: we have, over the last five years especially, produced a number of publications directed towards kind of state demographics. When the 2000 Census came out, we did a state fact-sheet on African-Americans and Hispanics and Asian-Americans and American Indians. We've had other publications that focus on immigrants and so on.

So there is an effort to provide that kind of information, at the same time trying to keep the description part pure--if I can use that word.

MR. ABER: Robert Kominski, then Catherine Walsh.

MR. KOMINSKI: I guess I just want to take a minute to sort of push this back in another direction, Bill. And it has to do with the comment I made.

You're dealing with 10 indicators. The CWI is dealing with 28 right now. But given the discussion that's gone on, it's only a matter of time--in fact, it may already have happened, and somebody's just sitting on it and they're not going

to talk about it unless we draw them out--before somebody has got a similar CWI for every state.

And my point is this: you know, I challenged you about 10 indicators. I challenge them about 28, if there's a state--or even the United States--where from this year to last year, 28 indicators went up, but using the statistical construction of the estimates, which I think for a few of these there really is no variance associate, but we could come up with one that's theoretical as opposed to statistical--and none of them went up significantly, but the indicator goes up. What happened?

I'll use a different analogy--stay away from sausage for a little while--okay?

A whole lot of you, every day, or every morning, I suspect, check the paper to see how your funds went yesterday; how did they do? How did the stock index do? And even on the drive home--if you're driving home and not taking the Metro--when they say "Dow Jones was up 133 points today," I see that smile on your face, because you know in your

heart "I did well today. Things went up." If they say, "Dow Jones went up seven points," you don't smile. Now, the next day, when you check the paper and you see that the entire seven point rise was due to the quadrupling of the value of the one stock that drove it, now you smile.

My point is: there's a distinction between this aggregate indicator and what's feeding into it. And it could well be that all of them move just a little bit, and because they all move a little bit, the aggregate goes up quite a bit. I'm not sure if that's a significant change in child well-being or not.

And I think, to bring this back to a different part of the topic, this really gets difficult, as you know, when Illinois decides they're going to put out a press release that says, "We went from 37 to 33. Things are better in Illinois."--which is the problem we face all the time at the Census Bureau, especially now in the ACS, where we're generating--if you go to our web site--lots of indicators that people can look at.

And even with those nice graphic depictions that clearly show the variances, people say, "We moved from 42nd to 31st. We're doing great."

No you aren't. You're within the sampling error of where you were last year. And next year you're going back to 42.

So I don't know how we deal with this problem.

It is a statistically-based problem, but it is more than a statistical problem. And I'm not sure how we address this.

MR. ABER: Bill? Have any response?

MR. O'HARE: I share Bob's uncertainty about how to address it.

Part of it--how do I say this? A lot of the stuff we package and send out, we very seldom make any statements about statistical significance or improvement. We kind of just put out the data. But the other context is we get questions, and people call, and all these kind of things. And a lot of the response that I would give, and the people in the Foundation, I think, depends on who

you're talking to, and exactly how much--if everything improved a lot, then you feel pretty confidence, even if you don't have statistical significance, if it's just minor change.

One of the thing that we do put every year is: take a longer look, and look at a lot of measures. Don't look at one measure over one year. And I think that's a fair statement. But there's still a lot of uncertainty beyond that.

MR. ABER: Okay.

Catherine?

MS. WALSH: [Off mike.] I'm Cathie Walsh from Rhode Island. We do advocacy work and policy work based on the data from Kids Count, and other data that's at our disposal in Rhode Island. And I didn't realize my comment was, in fact, in response to Bob's.

Because what we see as the added value of both the Kids Count work--and we loved Ken Land's stuff. I hadn't looked at it as carefully until I flew down here this morning and read all the papers.

But what we have found valuable is the fact that it isn't a one-time, one-year, because if you only did this for one year you would really be in that trap that you're talking about. But because you're doing it every year, on time, it's an annual report, you have the ability to look at these kinds of trends over decades, and trends over five to 10 years, which we have found to be incredibly useful in terms of really keeping a focus on child well-being, even with changing policy-makers and changing political climates.

I mean, that's really been the added value. I think it's the added value of the Kids Count annual report, and it's the added value of something like a CWI at the national level. If you only did it once and you never did it again, it probably wouldn't be worth your money. But if you do it every year, it gives you that ability to really see what's happening.

So that would be one thing.

The other is that what I saw as the added value of CWI, if you put Kids Count and CWI

together, is CWI embraces a number of indicators that we increasingly know matter to child well-being, in terms of some of the early childhood indicators like access to pre-school, the indicator around childhood obesity, which isn't being looked at at Kids Count, and sort of is a newer emerging issue.

So there probably, from my perspective, would be some usefulness in doing more conversation with some state folks around how to blend some of the Kids Count 10 indicators with the approach that CWI has taken with a broader range of indicators.

And also the other thing they do that Kids Count doesn't do is has the domain focus. And the added value you there is that in order to move these indicators over time, you really need people to be working across disciplines. You can't have the health people just looking at health, and the education people just looking at education. And as soon as you have the domains, and you can look at a chart that shows--I have the safety behavioral one--it brings unlikely partners together, and unlikely

policy partners together. And that's an approach that I think, at the state level, from a policy advocacy making-change perspective, it would be worthwhile having some conversations across the Kids Count grantees and the CWI folks.

MR. O'HARE: Thank you. I'll just mention that I think the holistic approach to Kids Count and CWI and America's Children has really been valuable in terms of promoting people across disciplines discussions.

MR. ABER: I only see tents up of people who've already asked questions. So if you intend to do it again--and I'm going to come to Nick in one second--but I am going to jump in for three minutes.

So--okay. Some new business. Nonetheless, I'm going to spend the three minutes raising just three things myself to get on the table.

Partly because there's a little kind of cyclical to what's been spoken about so far. So far everybody has been advocating--anybody who's advocated has advocated for a larger number of better measures.

And I just want us to remember Bob Haverman, at one of the first meetings on indicators of child well-being, in his summary address came to the exact opposite conclusion, which is that we need a small number of very powerful measures.

And I just want to remind us of his two rationales. The first is if we spend more money on a smaller number of measures, they're measured more often, more reliably, and at disaggregated levels, with a fixed pot of money you can do some things at a disaggregated level that is hard to do right now. And there are budget issues related to that, but that's part of his contention.

The second is: he doesn't believe that all these measures are conceptually equal. And so I want to build on a couple of comments. Child well-being is a construct, so there are component parts to it. But if it has meaning at the construct level, it isn't just its components. It is something else.

But then there's a factor analysis like Nick's, that I fear is not a very reliable one

because of the n to k ratio. You've got a lot of variables and a few number of states--if I understand the factor analysis right.

But four variables, a low .9 on that. And so there are some of these indicators that are more highly correlated with others.

And I bring these two issues up in the state session because I think that a smaller number of more powerful measures could complement a larger number of rich measures for the purposes of disaggregating down at lower levels.

So the larger the number of measures, the more likely it's going to be that you can collect them primarily at the national level. There's going to be a correlation between the number you collect and the level of aggregation--I think; the way the world looks to me.

So another part of the state discussion is: are there a couple of measures that are so good that they could pass some of the technical muster that people have been criticizing the lower measures? So please forgive that.

If Bill or Ken have a brief comment about that, I would invite it. Otherwise--forgive me.

MR. O'HARE: From my point of view there's kind of contradictory pressures that we're talking about. One is the parsimony of the small number of people, then you're talking about small number of measures, then you talk about domains, which require multiple measures in each domain. And both of those sound like good ideas.

MR. ABER: That was my only point. And I just wanted to put the other good idea out on the table, because it hadn't been expressed today so far. And I think it is especially salient the lower down in aggregation you go.

But--Ken?

MR. LAND: I want to pick up on response to your question, and on Catherine Walsh's comment. And I just mentioned this to Nick Zill during the coffee break.

I think one of the key contributions of the CWI work is the following. Does anyone here remember the late 1980s?

[Laughter.]

MR. ABER: We assume that's a rhetorical question. Keep moving. We have nine minutes.

MR. LAND: Okay. I remember those years. And I remember a lot of things were falling apart with respect to children and youth in American society. But I remember experts in public health talking about teen pregnancy. And I remember experts with respect to public safety talking about what's happening with respect to crime victimization. And I remember experts in test scores talking about deteriorating test scores-- etcetera, etcetera. But no one was talking to each other.

And I do think that the CWI work--assuming it continues into the future--helps to articulate those separate indicators in the way that Catherine just emphasized, and forces us to think about their interconnections, and how they embody a notion of well-being that's something more than each of the indicators taken individually.

MR. ABER: I agree with that. I'll just say one other thing.

Some of the variance among the indicators is shared. Some of it is unique.

You could have a couple of powerful lead indicators that correlate .9 with the entire index, and then you could look at that part of the variance of each of the other indicators that isn't associated with that, and get a much clearer idea-- conceptually--than what you're talking about, I think.

May I suggest that we take this outside?

[Laughter.]

Because I have Nick and Ruby and Naomi in eight minutes.

But you have the last word, sir.

MR. LAND: One of the papers I thought would be presented was a paper that FCD asked Jared Bernstein to do last year. Jared, of course, is at the Economic Policy Institute and is an economist. And he studied the CWI trends over time and tried to determine the extent to which variations in the

index over time were correlated with economic indicators.

And it was an interesting analysis, but then Jared went around to his shop and he asked his colleagues to weight the various indicators with respect to importance to well-being. And, of course, these were all economists. So--surprise, surprise--in fact his colleagues weighted the economic indicators more important than any of the other indicators.

I thought that was an interesting exercise, but I do think that there are many aspects of monitoring here that we need to keep our eye on. And that's all I'll say.

MR. ABER: Great.

Nick, Ruby and Naomi.

MR. ZILL: [Off mike.] I have one specific question for Bill, and that is: you didn't mention [inaudible]--potential source. I realize it's somewhat incomplete.

MR. O'HARE: It's only available for half the states.

MR. ZILL: I thought it was kind of higher coverage than that.

MR. O'HARE: Well, there's like two different levels. They report them for 35 or 40 states, but they say they're only useful for 25 states, or some kind of--the bottom line is: not available for all states is what really counts for us.

MR. ZILL: Do you see any hope there, in terms of the future?

MR. O'HARE: I hope so. I haven't heard anything encouraging to suspect that.

MR. ZILL: And apropos of your comment Larry--and this is stealing a little bit of the thunder from later on--I do think if you look at something like the disability-free life expectancy that people have worked with in the public health area, that's an example of a single measure that brings together a lot of important things. And you can look at components of that and why it changes, but that is a kind of central, single measure that captures a lot in the public health area.

And I think that is a sort of model that we ought to think about more in this area as well.

MR. O'HARE: Well, when you say "captures," what--

MR. ZILL: No, changes in disability-free life expectancy are due to a lot of other component changes. And one can go down and look at trends in things like smoking, or better management of disability issues. But all of those things are components that contribute to a central good, which is that you want to have as many years as possible of disability-free life. And that index tells you a lot. You can compare that across different countries and what have you.

MR. ABER: Ruby.

MS. TAKANISHI: I want to go back to Bill's paper, and page 3, and the bullets at the top. And I think this has to do more with what I guess they would call Federal and state data collection, or data collection and statistics policy.

The first point is that there is a dearth of data. And the third point is that there is a

lack of consistency in definitions in data collection.

And I think we have this kind of situation because of, certainly, state policies where--let me just focus it on education, but I think it's true in every other area as well, that each state can define the data they collect and so forth, in many different ways, so that when you try to do cross-state comparisons it's very difficult to do that.

At the same time, there is not--let's say--the data that you really want to make those kinds of comparisons. And I'll be very interested, Cathie, in your perspective on this.

And then how does state data relate to national data? And I think the best example that a lot of people have talked about is state testing versus NAEP, and the discrepancy between those scores by state.

I'm just interested, Bill, in whether you think as a result of 16 years or so of doing Kids Count, whether you think there's any possibility in developing a state-based data collection system

let's say in any area of child and youth well-being more consistent across states. Because right now we have a lot of inefficiencies.

I mean, I think that's what Bob Haverman's point is all about. When you really think about it, it's not only resources but it's also time. And at the end, you don't have good comparable information.

Would you comment on that?

MR. O'HARE: I am not very optimistic about that happening, for a couple reasons. One is: most of these states already have a system in place, and unless you have some incentive for them to change--like money from the Federal government--or some ability to impose change on them, they don't have much reason to change what they're doing which are inconsistent.

So the only positive side, I guess, is there's a wealth of data now coming out at the state level, which I think is partly due to what we've been publishing for 10 years, and others, that policy-makers and legislators appreciate data for

their state. And I think that is part what's behind the ACS and so many of the other things.

I'm not optimistic about any cooperative movement on the part of the states.

MR. ABER: Naomi, you have the last question.

MS. GOLDSTEIN: The last one before lunch.

It seems to me that a lot of the discussion today has been about how to look at child well-being in more nuanced, more sophisticated, more multi-dimensional ways. And I'm all in favor of that. But I feel like we've lost a bit of the focus on the Child Well-being Index--which, by definition, is simple and unidimensional and integrates apples and oranges. And it's never going to be perfect.

And I just wanted to make that point: that everything we're discussing is good to do, but I'm not sure that all of it belongs with the Child Well-being Index. The Child Well-being Index can be a gateway to all of this other activity, but I would hate for these discussions about various kinds of breakdowns, and links to other work, to be kind of a

backdoor, unintentional way to lose what makes the Child Well-being Index unique and different from various other approaches, at multiple indicators of child well-being.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. ABER: Yes, you may.

MS. LIN: I just thought about this, hearing this. Fascinating.

I'm not an expert in large data set analysis and things like that. I'm thinking about some people made the comment, I think earlier-- Martha?--saying that the state, the way they respond is like: there's a single issue. Let's do this marriage thing, and the Rhode Island--actually, I live there, and I hear that. Definitely it's very highly featured.

I'm thinking there's a lot of complexity going on with these data. The Child Well-being Index is wonderful, as everybody said. But I'm thinking, going back to somebody's article mentioned Bronfman. I think Bronfman was a big achievement

for information for child development early on, supporting this work.

There is an issue in developmental psychology, we know; there are contextual variables, and there are child variables.

So looking at these 28 elements, and it's a mixture of both.

Part of the problem that you could not really lay your hands on the actual analysis of explanation, predictive power, things like that you shy away, was because it's really hard to say what is causing what.

I think in terms of policy-making, it's kind of really important that we know what gives rise to what; what causes what. And of course this is more easily said than done.

But where we can start is to tease apart, even within the 28, or within your 10, what are the contextual.

I think the policies are most around to the context.

MR. ABER: I think your comment is a perfect bridge to a later discussion. Because in Brett Brown's paper, he raised exactly that issue.

So we will have a chance to talk about that very important issue later in the day.

I now turn things back to my nemesis, Ron Haskins.

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: You ain't seen nothin' yet, Larry.

Well, now we have lunch. The lunch is on the other side. We're going to come back at 12:30, and we have a discussion starting at 12:30.

MR. ABER: And thank you, Bill.

[Applause.]

[Whereupon the meeting was recessed, to reconvene at 12:30 p.m. this same day.]

Session III: Presentation and Use of the CWI

MR. HASKINS: This session's going to be a little bit different than the other sessions.

Harold Leibovitz from the Foundation will initiate the discussion with, let's say, 10 minutes of commentary; and then Melissa Skolfield of Brookings, who is the Vice-President for Communications--and Melissa's just joined us. She's down here on my right. Normally she's on my left, but this time we'll make an exception.

Melissa has a great distinction in life. I believe she's the only PR person who was ever able to control Wendell Primus.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. HASKINS: [Laughs.] Oh, now we hear these inside stories.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. HASKINS: Now, that I don't about. But Wendell I do know about.

Anyway, Melissa has been around Washington for a long time and has done a lot of important

work, and has thoughts about how you bring attention to something. And that really is our topic here: about how can we bring more attention to the well-being of children in general, but specifically how to use the CWI to focus the nation's attention on children.

So--Harold, why don't you get us started.

MR. LEIBOVITZ: Thanks a lot, Ron.

What I wanted to talk about first a little bit is: what our communications objectives were when we thought about promoting the Child Well-being Index; then talk a bit about our strategy, and some of the impact I think we've had, and some of the concerns we still have about how to improve the visibility of the Child Well-being Index.

With the CWI we saw the consumer price index as our model. The idea is that there is an index that provides a single number, with an overall view of how the economy is doing. And the consumer price index combines data from a variety of different sources to come up with this single number

that people use consistently to say the economy's doing better or the economy's doing worse.

We believed that there needed to be a single number that could measure changes in child well-being over time, that would also give us a bird's-eye view of how the well-being of children was different. The simplicity of this number was part of its virtue.

Underneath that, there were clearly at least seven stories to be told. These were the stories of the seven different domains of child well-being that Ken was doing. And we wanted to use some of the changes in these seven domains to be able to link changes in the overall Child Well-being Index to policy, because we felt that importantly, as the consumer price index is frequently used as a lead to develop policy to improve the economy, we wanted to see that the Child Well-being Index would also be used as a canary in the mine, if you will, to identify areas where policy, one, had succeeded, but also where policy attention needed to be placed.

Finally--and I think it's one of the things that we talked about in the last session--initially our work focus for the Child Well-being Index was national. We saw that through Ken's work that there were 28 indicators of well-being; that one of the things that made this index work was that we had that number that allowed us to flesh out the seven domains of well-being in such a way that we could make some useful statements.

Unfortunately, as we've seen, many of those data did not exist at the state level. And so it was a limitation that we accepted, that this was going to be national-level data. And so our focus was primarily on national policy.

Our release strategy said: what we want to do is highlight the change in the overall well-being of children; that this, again, was one of the most important parts and values that we saw in the Child Well-being Index. But within that, we wanted to highlight at least one of the domains of child well-being as a way of identifying, one, where children were doing better--so we had some good-news stories

to tell; it was not just a matter of constantly carping on the fact that we're not doing enough to improve child well-being--as well as to focus on areas where we felt that improvement was needed, and where policy-makers did need to pay attention and to take some new directions.

This also allowed us, as I mentioned before, to connect policy or social changes to the issues that we were identifying. So, for instance, in our first year one of the major points that we made was the tremendous decline in the health domain for children; that despite improvements in areas like health insurance coverage, the overall health of children had declined, led by the tremendous increase in obesity.

And so Ken, in his inimitable way, was partially saying: this is a very complicated issue. Part of the issue may be that kids are spending more time in front of video games, and that part of what we're seeing is the chips, soda and video game reality of the way that kids are being raised right now.

But we also knew that there were issues surrounding something that's come up that we were talking about a few years ago: the kinds of foods that are offered in schools. And so there were clearly some policy issues that we knew needed to be dealt with at the school level to really deal with this problem appropriately.

We also said that there's a responsibility of parents to provide more nutritious meals for their children.

So we wanted to be able to use the Child Well-being Index as a broad way of commenting on both the policy and social changes that were taking place in America that had something to do with the factors underlying these changes in well-being.

We also decided that it was important, in many ways, to separate the release event, which we held here, to the media outreach. And so our media outreach really focused on sitting down with national reporters, from national media outlets, to talk about what some of the changes were in the index of child well-being. And this allowed us to

be broader in the kinds of work that we mentioned, or the issues that we discussed with reporters, than the release event sometimes was.

It also assured that even if we did not get reporters to the release event, we would be able to get some national press coverage. So we were able to get stories in the New York Times, U.S. News & World Report, CNN, Washington Post, and so on.

We worked with Associated Press as the mechanism for getting information on the Child Well-being Index into state and local media outlets. Again, since we did not really have specific state data, it seemed much easier to approach it from that way, from that perspective. But we've gotten excellent pick-up by state and local papers of the national Child Well-being Index.

The other approach that we adopted was the release of a radio news release; essentially a canned studio from radio that allowed us to pitch this to the top 100 markets around the country. And that's also been a very good way of getting information about the Child Well-being Index onto

both national news radio networks and state networks, as well as individual stations.

I think that one of the major challenges we have in moving forward, and one of the ways in which this conversation has been most helpful for me, is to think about how we can make the Child Well-being Index a story more than once a year. If familiarity breeds contempt, it also breeds recognition and acknowledgment. And I think at this state of the game we need to be able to talk about the Child Well-being Index more frequently, and put it into the vernacular of the way people are thinking about how are children doing overall? Where are the areas where children are doing better? Where are the areas that improvement in child well-being needs to take place? I think that's something we need to do a better job of: putting it on the national policy agenda, of national policy-makers, as well as, hopefully, something at the state and local levels.

That's it.

MS. SKOLFIELD: Thanks very much.

I'm just going to respond briefly, because I am by far the least educated person in this room about what you've been doing, and what your plans are.

I did work at HHS for several years, with people like Howard and Naomi, trying to get press attention to issues around children and, in particular, to statistics about children. And it's very difficult. So I guess my first point would be that you all are doing very well with this index.

I don't know how many of you reviewed the press coverage of the last year, but there was a story in USA Today, the AP story was covered very widely throughout the United States, and was picked up by broadcast. So I think that was really a terrific job. And the strategy is very solid.

I would just make a couple of points to open up the discussion.

One is that there is a difference between maximizing media exposure the day that the Index is released, and the much more ambitious goal of turning it into a reference number, much like the

CPI. And that latter goal requires a whole different set of strategies, and requires, obviously, a 12-month strategy, not a 24-hour strategy. And that, I think, is just important to think about and keep in mind.

The other challenge, I think--just looking through the material for this discussion--it's important to recognize at the beginning that you have laid out a set of multiple audiences. You've got the public, you've got policy-makers, and you've got the research community. Those are three very different kinds of people.

The public needs something that's very simple. Researchers are going to be interested in something that's more complex. If you really do want to get the public and policy-makers to focus on this like CPI--you know, "The well-being of children went up from 103.5 to 104--"--you know, that is not for the news media a compelling story, so you have to put some more tactics around that; although it's simple enough for parents to understand and maybe act on.

One of the other challenges: when I think about some of the indices that Brookings puts out, like the Iraq Index, or the Katrina Index, which are in many ways similar, is there is not a group of beat reporters who cover children. There is a definable group of reporters who cover Iraq or Katrina on a day-to-day basis, but when you think about children's issues--and this is something that struggled with all the time--there are reporters who cover education, there are reporters who cover social policy, but not a defined set of reporters who cover children per se. So you've got to put a lot more time and attention trying to figure out who the relevant media are, and maybe having a variety of strategies and news hooks for them.

Just some things to keep in mind--options--recognizing, of course, that there are always budget and time constraints on everything.

There is a way to reach the public through the media, if they are a major audience. I know you discussed this morning the idea of more statistics around racial and ethnic differences. That's always

very interesting to people, and interesting to the media, and really broadens the set of reporters who would have an interest in covering this.

Certainly there are a number of tactics beyond the ones that Harold talked about. The audio news release I know worked very well this year. You can go a step beyond that and do a video news release, which is essentially the same thing: you're reaching out to television, particularly local TV stations.

Parents' magazines--Ladies Home Journal, Family Circle and the like--if you really want to reach the public and parents, that's the way to go.

And then I think if you sort of veer off from that and you think about policy-makers, you've got to put a lot of time and attention into venues like the Washington Times, Roll Call, National Journal--all those publications that are really key to reaching policy-makers which, again, is a little bit different.

Some ideas for doing a 12-month effort:
Mother's Day, Father's Day, UN Children's day--you

know, you name it, find a hook, remind reporters that as they're writing these stories there's a CWI they should rely on.

And then I would just make the point--we'll probably get to this--that the media is one tool to reach people. It's not the only one. So, Capitol Hill briefings, one-on-one meetings, partnerships, better use of the internet are all things that we can discuss.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, thank you.

Harold, do you have any response or comments?

MR. LEIBOVITZ: I really appreciate this. I think we have had a very difficult time making this a seven-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year activity. We've tried pitching, sometimes, stories for Mother's Day or Father's Day, and part of what we've found is that recirculating the same research in that context has been very difficult to do. We have not gotten a lot of good response to doing that.

I think being more focused on the policy-maker, or the media that policy-makers read, I think

that would be something that would be very good. We would like to be more involved in the policy area.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Comments or questions?
Nick?

MR. ZILL: Having attended a number of the briefings on the release of the CWI, I'd like to give you my reaction, that I think there was this wonderful work, very careful work that goes into the construction of the Index, and the preparation and the presentation of the Index per se. And then, typically, that is followed by some discussions and questions about why things are changing.

And, frankly, then I think things have become embarrassingly anecdotal. And they have been all over the map. Partly, that's Brookings for trying to bring in relevant people who have their own agendas to talk about, whether they relate to the Index or not.

But I do feel that, as social scientists, we have an obligation to say--if we're going to say some statements, that we should either do some hypothesis testing, or we should highlight research

in which some careful work of this sort has been done, rather than making up stories that may or may not relate to the trends being presented.

And doing that--in other words, presenting some careful research that does talk about why things may be changing--I think would help make the thing more newsworthy as well.

So that's my personal reaction.

MR. O'HARE: This is an observation more than a question. And I'm not sure I could even turn it into a question.

But it struck me that in the Kids Count Data Book, after the first two or three years, we started putting an essay up front because we thought the news was old and that's the way we could get news attention.

Now, in the America's Children report, I think they have guest indicators every year that changes, so they can kind of get attention to something that's not the same old data.

And in this one, it seems like the last two or three years you've had some particular focus that

you've brought people in to talk about: obesity, or schools, or whatever it is.

And it just strikes me across all three of those things that it seems to be the data by itself doesn't seem to be able to carry the load; that you have to put something special on it--which kind of distracts from the whole point of the overall index changing.

MR. HASKINS: So the thought here is to give something immediate that you can bite into, and that you have interesting people that can talk about there's policy action at the state or Federal level.

It's hard to figure out--I mean, how exactly would you have an event and bring attention to the whole Index?

MR. LEIBOVITZ: Well, one possibility--this is probably only a one-time deal, I guess--if we showed the index went up a lot in the late 1990s but now has been relatively flat, or flatter; get two different people to explain why that happened from a policy point of view, from different perspectives--

or more than two, I'm not sure. It seems like that would be one event.

I don't have a good answer to this questions, because it seems to be pervasive across most of these kinds of things.

MR. HASKINS: I'm sorry, were you getting ready to say something about this? Please do.

MS. SKOLFIELD: I could. I wasn't planning to.

I think that's the challenge. It's two different things. And I'm not sure I have complete clarity as to what the goal is, myself.

If the goal is to say: we really want to get the CWI in the minds of people. It's really important for them to know that it's 103.9, and we want it to be 110--or whatever. That is one goal. Kind of getting attention once a year is a different goal entirely.

So I think, as far as getting attention for the day, what I'm hearing from both of you all is a good strategy. You say: this year the number increased from x to y, but we want to focus your

attention on this one piece of it that is particularly in the news, perhaps; education, or childhood obesity, or something like that. I think that's a very good strategy for that one day, and saying to reporters who will say, "Well, gee, last year it was 103.4, and this year it's 103.9. You know, that doesn't seem particularly interesting to me. Give me something else." For those jaded reporters, it gives them something new, which I think is useful.

But I think if there is a different goal, which is to really get the number into circulation, and get people to know it's 103.9, and get them to refer to the CWI the way they refer to the CPI--then that's different. That does require constant reinforcement, and constantly--you know, every chance you get--e-mailing reporters and saying, "I know you're writing about this issue--"--whether it's welfare reform, or adoption, or Mother's Day--"--it may interest you to know that we have this thing called the CWI, and it's 103.9, and here's why you should care."

So I think of it as two different tracks.

MR. HASKINS: Martha.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: On this question of what is it you want on people's minds, my thinking is that you want on people's minds: is it up or down? You know, what direction it's going in.

But I realize I'm not sure whether that's the case. So I don't have an answer to the question of: is it knowing there is an index and here's the number? Or is it really you don't care if they remember the number, but you want them to be thinking about whether it's changed, and in what direction the change is going?

And when you want this national conversation to happen--I'm going to return to a point I made earlier--it's compelling for me to think both of the day and of what you want to have after that, to have as much unpacked that's important. You mentioned the obesity, the education. No Child Left Behind got a lot of discussion in the last round, and I think that was compelling.

The other thing, as I have said: I would love to see the young kids, the middle-school kids and the teens. Because today's teens are on their way into the workforce, so we've got a lot of issues with the Child Well-being Index for those kids. So we're going to deal with the transition to adulthood for a group of kids who are less well off than last year's kids, or kids over the last five years.

Middle-schoolers, they're on their way into the teen years. The young kids, they're moving into the pipeline.

So, for me, that starts a conversation of: where are these kids headed? And are these kids in more risky status? Are they in better shape than in the past?

As I say that, I'll just put one note in that we heard a lot in working with states, of the downside of those kinds of comparisons, which is: if it's better, are you done? So it's part of the absolute level discussion.

But what we hear with states is that "We're on top." So our state looks at the fact that we're one of the top 10, and they say, "Great. We'll move other issues.

[Laughter.]

So the extent to which it's going up, whether that's the full good-news story or, hopefully, it at least means it's a conversation of what will sustain that or not.

And I want to just tie this back to one thing that I hope Nick is saying. That's the kind of unpacking that I think is really powerful. If moving into the causal analysis--Naomi also made a point--everybody can take it different directions. So if you want to do in the explanatory side is not unpack it more what's moved, why it's moved, what is the story that you're telling here, but start to move into broader "Did the policy do this? Did the policy do that?" you're not going to have agreement on that. One, I think it's good if you do that on a separate track, but then you can end up with competing policy causal analyses that you can't

really get to the bottom of. And I just am cautious on that side.

So I hope Nick was endorsing more of this digging deeper: what is it that's changing, particularly into the explanatory.

MR. HASKINS: Once again it's clear we're going to have a lot of speakers and not much time. So please bear that in mind as you talk.

Rosemary Chalk.

MS. CHALK: I think there's a two-part strategy here that might be developed.

One is I think you have to brand this in some way. One example that comes to mind is the tremendous success the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists had with their Doomsday Clock, in which every national discussion about some event with respect to arms control made reference to, you know, "Where's the clock?" And they would put it on the cover of their monthly bulletin, and it just became a national icon associated with measuring the state of arms control in our country.

So I think you have to come up with some kind of icon or brand that's going to be immediately recognizable and associated. The Index is very print-heavy, and we're moving into an electronic age in which icons and symbols are increasingly powerful in getting attention--not explaining, but at least getting attention.

The second piece: I think one suggestion I would make is to think about yourself as a content provider, and not necessarily a newsmaker. And you can disaggregate the Index, you can get your annual story out of what's happening with the totality of the Index, but you could break it down into four or seven different stories over a year, by either taking individual domains or the age groups that Martha was just suggesting. And I would approach two dozen, three dozen key organizations that have web pages and say that a couple, five, six times a year you would give them content that they could post, either on the domains or on the age groups. And I'm thinking of groups like the American Association of Retired Persons--who really care

about kids; the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; the National Association of Mayors.

You know, you can brainstorm what they would be--but try to reach out to those groups that wouldn't see this as one story that they would cover, but if you offered to make yourself a content provider, with a steady stream of reliable, evidence-based information, they might be very receptive to it.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, good. Thank you.

Howard?

MR. ROLSTON: I'm just not sure that the CPI is really a plausible analogy here. I mean, you could sort of say, well it's a breadbox, it's a basket of things. But I think it's just not integrated enough, and I don't think it, frankly, has the underlying scientific, historical basis to do the same thing.

I would sort of argue on the side of people who are saying: you need to get under it to make this into a story. Plus it's not going to come out monthly. It's not as if sort of if there really got

to be a bad trend in inflation, you'll see the number every day if they really start to run amok.

So I'm just not sure that analogy is all that useful.

MR. HASKINS: Larry.

MR. ABER: There is an opportunity, I think, to have more of an annual cycle through focusing on domains. And going back to what Melissa said, the education domain, the appropriate time to do that is back-to-school. The economic domain, the appropriate time to do that is tax day. Some of them don't fit, but some beat reporters are looking for that.

I agree with Howard that the CPI is an aspiration. It's not close enough now. And the main issues are the two that were described. One is frequency, and the other is sensitivity to short-term change. So the lack of sensitivity to short-term change is a big challenge in dealing with it in the news-story way.

We might think about, 10 years from now, can we breed indicators that are much more sensitive

to short-term change. I don't think that it's not that there aren't some sets of fluctuation to it.

And the final one is the issue of: what would you do about it? And it struck me that maybe the idea about how to use something like the CWI should be more aspirational. I forget who said it, but what if somebody said: "We're at 103. That's not going up fast enough since 1975. What would it take to get to 120?" And then actually each domain contributes to that average score. There's some consensus for it.

The domains, the one advantage--I don't like the domains from a measurement point of view. You're going to hear me say that again when we talk about papers. But from a policy or political point of view, it does mobilize different sectors: the health sector, the education sector, etcetera.

But I think there, in a way, needs to be more of a political strategy connected to the CWI; some kind of change strategy, aspirational. I mean, it's made up. Let's set it at--you know, there was some analysis of what would it be if everyone was

the highest it ever was historically? What's the number there?

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. ABER: So one definition of quality is to do as well as you can all the time. I mean, that's what McDonald's--

[Laughter.]

--no, no, I'm not kidding.

So is there some way of setting the highest you've ever done as some kind of benchmark and use it as a challenge, as an aspirational challenge, and as a gauge against progress as opposed to some other things.

MS. GOLDSTEIN: I want to echo a few people. I very much agree with what Nick and Howard and some other people have suggested, which is: unless you get underneath the overall index and first say which domains are pushing it the most, and then secondly, what is driving that domain. I mean, if we're focusing on obesity, for example, then the next question is: why are children more obese?

And, yes, reporters are going to ask you that, and policy-makers are particularly going to ask you that. And Nick is exactly right that we have been much too superficial about that, in my view. And I think you would get much more attention to the Index if you had simultaneously put some effort into getting people to do the closer analysis, and the high-quality analysis, of what's driving a particular trend. And that probably then has implications for policy. So that's point one.

I think a second suggestion is: the number is too abstract. One thing you could think about doing is taking some individual families--this is a media thing--and saying, "What is the score for the children in that family?" And then, you know, a reporter can go interview Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and Tommy and Mary Smith, and write a story around the fact that their child well-being index is way above average, about average, below average--and what that family is like; and what are the real-world aspects of this.

I hadn't thought through whether it's possible to do that, but I think it should be possible, and I think it would be very attention-grabbing in a media sense. It would be very anecdotal, so in some ways it fights with what I first said. I think you have to do both. I mean, I think you have to get serious about this, but also find some cute ways of getting attention to it.

So those are my main thoughts right now.

MR. HASKINS: I would just add that several people have said that what we need is more quality, scientific--whatever term you want to use--analysis of specific policy alternatives. And everything that we've looked at just about, and every aspect and domain has some policies that have received often lots of different analyses.

So what I'm saying is: if you wanted to take this route, you could certainly do it. There are people that have both theories and actual programs, sometimes with random-assignment designs, on obesity. And the same thing with education.

Almost everything in a domain you could do that sort of thing.

I'm not sure it would necessarily address the PR part of this, because a lot of times these things are a little boring, and reporters will always tell you: one anecdote, or one actual person that illustrates the problem is worth 10 social scientists. But they don't know the kind of social scientists at the Brookings.

Okay, Jim Weill--your card was up. Did you take it down?

MR. WEILL: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. HASKINS: You'll never make a good Senator, I'll tell you that.

[Laughter.]

MR. WEILL: I want to underline what people are saying. I think you really have a stark choice between trying to make this a CPI-like number, which requires abandoning a lot of the complexity and policy connections and focusing on driving that over a period of years. And making the number or the change in the number mean something is one choice.

Or making a much more complex, policy-driven analysis and trying to get media around that for opinion-makers, as opposed to the public, and policy-makers is another choice.

And I think the choices are probably fundamentally inconsistent--which I think is what people are saying, but I would make it starker.

MR. HASKINS: I'm glad you said that. I didn't think anybody said that. That was very clear.

Neeraj?

MS. KAUSHAL: I used to be a journalist in my last life, so you guys probably have to address all your issues to me.

While you were talking about this I was thinking how will I use CWI; what kind of a story will I write on this? And the only thing I could think: there are various aspects of child well-being. And if there are inter-racial, inter-ethnic differences, that makes a story. But that CWI would be just one line in the story; maybe the last line,

maybe somewhere else. So the focus has to be various aspects of children's well-being.

The reason why we see CPI every month, or every week, or whatever, is because there are people who are making decisions it: stock market, investors and all that. And that's why it's there.

But it is not an indicator of the country's well-being. I mean, there are a lot of indicators out there. Even then we are not satisfied--you know, GDP does not reflect any quality, for instance.

So, again, we have one indicator here, but then it constitutes eight aspects, or various aspects of a child's well-being. And then, again, there are various aspects of that, in the sense of inter-ethnic differences.

So I'm thinking that the way I can sell this story to my editor is by looking at various aspects, and then because of these things the CWI is behaving like that. And the only other way I can focus just on CWI is the story, the life, of CWI; how has the concept evolved, why we need it. You

have to maybe get some journalists interested in the life of CWI. Otherwise I can only see that's one line.

It's an important indicator. We brought the children's issue to the focus of the media, but we just have to be satisfied with one line, I think, in a story.

MR. HASKINS: Okay.

So we have four people and four minutes. Do the math.

Catherine--show us how to do it in one minute or less.

MS. WALSH: The idea of whoever aid that CWI could ultimately be aspirational, because it would give you something to be shooting for, either by comparing it to the best the U.S. has done, or also putting in some international measures that really resonate with people when people realize the U.S. is not as great on everything as we thing it is-- especially for kids.

So, using that as a way to be able to say "This is what we're shooting for," and then tie it

to either Federal policy and/or state policy that will help get us there, I think you could create some energy around that.

And, again going back to being a resource for reporters, there's a lot of really good information in that report that has never seen the light of day. So there's a lot of really good information there that could be shared more widely with other.

MR. HASKINS: Very good.

Jonathan Zaff.

MR. ZAFF: It's more a question actually than a comment, but it's about the audiences and then your metrics of success in doing all this. You know, I just think about where the CWI sits in the world of child and family statistics. And Ron and I actually were sitting in a focus group yesterday for the America's Children report talking about our use of it. And it was this great thing--it's like the Bible of Federal stats. You know you can go to it, and reach for it.

Is this supposed to sort of complement that? Easy to use metric? Is it supposed to drive people to action? And "people"--who are those people?

So is it you want the individual citizen who reads USA Today to pick this up and say, "Oh, my gosh. This is horrible. There's some hope, but it's horrible. What do I do?" And I think it's that "What do I do?" part that I think I've heard a lot of people talk about, but it's very important because I think what I've heard many times--people on the ground, in Congress--is, "Okay, we know there's a problem. We know there are many problems. What do I do about it?"

And I just want to get your thoughts on how you define that success, then, of getting people to act?

MR. HASKINS: You have 10 seconds to answer that.

MR. LEIBOVITZ: I think it's been a very difficult challenge, because there is a fairly significant gap between what is actually in the

Child Well-being Index, and identification of any kind of specific policy change. The number itself, the things that we're looking at, are at such a general, high level, it's hard to get to that point.

And I think people can look at them and come up with very different policy alternatives.

MR. HASKINS: Bill O'Hare--one minute.

MR. O'HARE: The question I have for those who have kind of looked at the news results more than I have is: whether, in those stories, they mentioned the CWI? Or was that not at all, or afterthought?

And the reason for asking that question is: if the story is really about obesity, or education, or some sub-component, what do you need the CWI for?

MR. LEIBOVITZ: Most of the stories have mentioned the Child Well-being Index, because it's really been the Index that has been the impetus for the story.

The piece that people, I think, find valuable is that the Child Well-being Index puts obesity in context. So, obesity is in context, not

just of overall health of children, and how is obesity affecting changes in the overall health of children, but it also puts it into a context of the overall well-being of children, because the health domain has pulled down the overall well-being of children.

So I think that context is a value that the CWI adds.

MR. HASKINS: Ken Land, you get the last word--but, it's only about 30--oh, wait a minute; Weill's going to join again. Let him go first so you can get the last word.

Go ahead.

MR. WEILL: I just wondered whether, ultimately, the CPI was the wrong analogy or wrong model, and whether there are other models to look at, like the Index of Leading Economic Indicators?

The CPI always goes in one direction, and people just look at the change. Something like the Leading Economic Indicators--leading social indicators, in this sense--goes in different directions in different years, and that's what

people look at more than the rate of change over different months. And it's a forecast, rather than looking retrospectively, which is really what you want to pose this as.

MR. HASKINS: Ken.

MR. LAND: Lots of useful comments and suggestions.

The elemental focus is monitoring what's happening with respect to child well-being. And Nick, your comments suggest that we should do a better job in our panelists. But I've always seen this work as resting on a huge body of studies in social sciences and epidemiology that help us to interpret and understand what's going on with respect to the various indices we've constructed.

And the complication of that, however, is-- just as, Ron, you and Belle could illustrate with your recent "Future of Children" special issue on obesity--if you have more than one social scientist on a panel, you'll get the right hand and the left hand. The body of studies is important, but I do

think that one complication is that we have many different studies, and sometimes divergent findings.

The second thing that I want to emphasize: what struck me about working with the media is the negative story gets the news.

MS. GOLDSTEIN: Can I just comment quickly on the comment that Ken made?

MR. HASKINS: You think I'd dare to say no?

[Laughter.]

MS. GOLDSTEIN: About the issue of the Future of Children that focused on obesity and its causes.

I would say that there was quite a consensus coming out of all of that work that soft drinks were at the heart of the matter. And now we have a situation where action is being taken; where the soda companies are volunteering to keep these drinks out of schools. And that's exactly where the research pointed to. So I've been pleased to see that.

We began--what was it?--three or four years ago, through the CWI. We weren't the only people,

obviously; or CWI wasn't the only indicator, but beginning to bring attention to the problem. And then you needed to really analyze and bring all the expertise together to figure out what was driving it. And now we're beginning to see some solutions.

MR. : The companies changed their policies under a certain amount of pressure.

MR. HASKINS: Now we move to the fourth session--Nick Zill's session. And Martha Moorehouse will be the moderator.

Martha?

**Session IV: Using Weights to Express the
Relative Importance of Specific Domains in the
Overall Index**

MS. MOOREHOUSE: Nick are you doing
PowerPoint?

Handouts have come around pretty well, I think. Does anybody not have Nick's handout? It came around earlier this morning. It says, "Are All Indicators Created Equal?" I don't know if there are extras there.

MR. ZILL: The purpose of my paper is to draw attention to problems that may arise with regard to the validity and acceptance of the CWI because of the use of the equal weighting procedure.

The paper describes several methods that might be used to corroborate or cast doubt on the notion that equal weighting is the optimum communitorial strategy. Methods could also be used to produce an ordering of child indicators in terms of their relative importance, and I think to also

foster some important advancement in the field of child indicators.

We all know--I'm not going to dwell on this--but you know how the current equal-weighting strategy is done. And what I see as possible problems with this is that it may be difficult--for causal reasons, or perceptual reasons, or for both--to use equal weighting.

Changes in some components may have, or may be seen to have much more profound implications for children's longevity, activity and development than changes in other indicators.

An example of what I see as an anomaly in the CWI--of course it's been all discussed in very positive terms, in terms of publicity--is that currently the CWI health index gives equal weight to the prevalence of a health risk factor--which is "overweight"--and rates of occurrence of catastrophic events--namely the death of children, infant mortality. These are weighted equally. And the CWI health index has shown deterioration in

recent years, primarily because of the increase in the proportion of overweight young people.

However, a number of the other indicators-- and other indicators which are not mentioned in the CWI--have shown continue improvements or stability in child health; things like death rates--mentioned by Ken about the big improvement in death rates among young children. Other things, like smoking during pregnancy, have gone down.

So is it right to have this index being weighted by overweight?

In a recent issue of the New England Journal of Medicine, the estimate was made that if all overweight adults attained normal weight, there would be a fractional gain in life-expectancy. In the same issue, Sam Preston made the point that in many ways the effects of obesity were already imbedded in current life expectancy tables and the forecasts of longevity from those tables. And yet the most recent tables show continued increases in the expected life-expectancy of U.S. adults.

So this suggested on balance, the obesity is being over-weighted by a number of positive developments. And Preston goes on to talk about some of those, like the decrease in cigarette smoking, general better health, immunization of large parts of the population.

So it seems like the current health index, however useful it may be for publicity, is somewhat misleading as a combination of factors.

So what I'm suggesting is that we should gather and analyze evidence on the relative importance of different indicators in child health, achievement and behavior, to test the utility of the equal-weighting strategy. I think this would advance the child indicators field. It might also make the CWI more information for child policy.

I lay out three possible methods for testing. One is factor analysis of component indicators as they vary across geographic units or time. The second is scaling based on expert or lay judgments of the relative importance of different indicators. And the third is regression analysis of

longitudinal data on the life-course of representative samples of children.

Let me say a little bit about each of those.

Factor analysis is a technique for exploiting variability among a set of observable variables, in terms of a smaller number of unobservable variables or factors. The observable variables are modeled as linear combinations of the factors, plus error terms. This technique provides insight into the dimensionality of a data set--in other words, what's the least number of factors or dimensions that you need to explain this data set pretty well. It also provides composite factor scores and weights for each component indicator, which can be used to construct an other than equally-weighted index.

Now, the equal-weighting strategy would be supported if most or all of the component indicators contribute to a large first factor, and have sizable loadings on this factor. That means they're all pretty much co-varied together, and they all

contribute to it. This strategy would be called into question if two or more factors emerge with some indicators on first factor, others on a second or third factor. That would tell you that perhaps you need more than one index to really capture what's going on with this set of indicators.

The data requirements for factor analysis-- it could be applied with existing state-level indicators data compiled by Kids Count, enhanced by some newly available data series which Bill O'Hare discussed. However, it's the case that key indicators in some domains are still not available at the state level, so you can't completely test it. I'm going to give you an example in a minute of a partial test that I carried out with one of my colleagues.

Factor analysis with cross-national data, which would obviously be very desirable, but it's limited by the lack of comparable indicators in several important domains.

Scaling--scalings are a technique for expressing comparative judgments in numerical terms.

You ask judges to compare each of the 28 component indicators with that of the 27 other indicators, in terms of their importance for overall child development or well-being. In practical terms, you can sample from the set and not have any one person have to do all of these comparisons. But those judgments could then be converted into scale values, and these could serve as weights for the CWI.

The panel of judges that you use to do this scaling could either be child-development experts from various disciplines, or informed citizens. And it would actually be interesting to compare the scaling that resulted from each of these. And it would provide evidence on the degree of consensus that exists about the relative importance of different child indicators.

You could also do similarity judgments--in other words, instead of saying "Is this indicator more important than this one?" take three of them, and which two are most similar to each other. And then you use multidimensional scaling to validate or modify the set of indicator domains. You create a

space--conceptual space--to see whether the grouping that you've done now is in accord with how most people see the universality of child indicators.

Now, you would have to collect new data to do this, from various groups of experts or informed citizens. And, of course, you need fairly good sample sizes to have statistical reliability. But you could test it out with samples of convenience for a pilot test. And if that looked promising, you could then collect judgment data from large and more representative samples of individuals.

In the paper I give an example of an index--a life-event stress index that was created and has been widely used in the public health field--to do an enumeration of "what events have you experienced in the last year?" and then add them up according to your scale value, and you get an overall kind of life-change index, which public health researchers then relate to the incidence of disease and other things.

And then there's regression analysis. This is a technique for accounting for variations in

adult developmental outcomes from individual attributes and events in childhood. The statistical size and the regression coefficient for each child attribute and even is a measure of its predictive importance, net of all the other events. The regression coefficients could provide basis for weights for a CWI.

Now, obviously, there are some causal issues here. And we don't always have experimental random data sets, so there will be some issues of causality. But, nevertheless, we could do this.

An example is: let's say it takes a developmental outcome of "growing up into an adult who at age 30 is alive, in good health, gainfully employed, earning enough to avoid poverty and welfare-dependency." That's our outcome. Some might add "married," "happily married." Then you say: how is its probability affected by low birth-weight, family poverty, disability, family disruption, family moves, proficient achievement scores, high school drop out, teen parenthood, illicit drug use? How predictive are each of these

factors--net of the others--of whether you grow up to be a healthy and productive adult?

You could do secondary analysis with existing longitudinal data sets such as the NELS--the National Educational Longitudinal Study--and the National Longitudinal Study of Youth. These contain substantial subsets of the FCD indicator variables, or approximations thereto. There are some problems. For example, you have to make some provision for incorporating indicators based on death events, because those change probabilities very substantially.

But nevertheless what you're talking about here is saying: okay, in 1985 what was the probability of a typical child growing up into a productive, healthy adult? And how has that changed with the events that have happened now? And what's the contribution of various component indicators to that overall probability? It's a central pathway by which you combine all these things. And this is another particular approach.

If you will turn to your handouts, you'll see that, with my colleague Soumya Alva, we made use of the great website that Kids Count provides to take 17 of 28 component indicators in the Land FCD CWI, and do a factor analysis with the data that was in the 2005 report. Some key indicators could not be represented. They form separate dimensions, possibly. Crime victimization, criminal offending, drinking, drug use, voting and religious participation were not in there.

Nevertheless, we did analyze those data and come up with three significant factors. And those factors accounted for a majority of the variance in the indicators.

And the first factor was a large factor-- and, indeed, in some ways this supports the equal weighting strategy, because many of the indicators come out with significant loadings on that first factor; things like child poverty, achievement test scores were negatively related. And many of the indicators came out with sizable loadings.

And, indeed, when you created a factor score and ranked the states on that--which is shown in the next table--you came out with pretty much the rankings that Annie E. Casey comes out with, and Bill O'Hare comes out with--with the typical suspects at the top--New Hampshire, Vermont, Minnesota--and the typical suspects at the bottom--Mississippi, Louisiana, West Virginia, New Mexico.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: Nick, you're at 10 minutes, so you if can take another minute.

MR. ZILL: Yes.

But there were two other factors that emerged, and one had to do with children with activity limitations. This seemed to be a separate dimension which loaded heavily on some states; some states it came out pretty well on the first factor, and some states it did not. And there was another factor that had to do with child death that was separate, and also did not relate as a simple socio-economic kind of overall good-bad index.

So I think the results of this very preliminary factor analysis in some way do lend some

credence to the equal-weighting strategy, but also raise some issues of possible separate dimensions that ought to be looked at.

So my recommendation--finally--is that before continuing to generate and publicize the CWI, research should be done to evaluate the soundness of the current approach. You could explore possible alternative approaches to create the index at the time. And these studies, I think, promise to advance the field of child indicators, as well as aiding in the construction of a sounder and more easily understood Child Well-being Index.

Thank you.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: Thank you.

Naomi Goldstein.

MS. GOLDSTEIN: I have partly a comment and partly a question.

It seems to me--and this is actually the question part--that there are a number of features built into the index, that elements of it are implicitly weighted in some ways that may be kind of quirky, so that we're not really considering sort of

a simple equal-weighting strategy against some other strategy, we're considering a hidden complicated weighting strategy against some other strategies.

So, for example--if I'm understanding correctly--the domains are weighted equally. And within each domain the indicators are weighted equally. But since there are different numbers of indicators in each domain, some indicators implicitly have greater weight than others. A domain with just two elements, those elements will have a greater influence on the overall index.

Similarly, most of the indicators are rates, but a few of them are not; like median income, or the math and reading scores. So you're combining different kinds of measures, and that may also have an implicit effect on weighting, depending on how the scales are constructed. Some of them are more prone to bigger or smaller changes relative to 1985, but that doesn't necessarily mean the changes are--you know, a 10 percent change for one relative to 1985 may have a very different meaning. So, again, there is some implicit weighting there.

And then, lastly, I think just using 1985 as a base may also have an implicit weighting effect, because if a given indicator had a blip up or down in 1985, that may affect how much the change is from 1985.

So all of this leads me to think that this--there must be another way to say this [laughs]--that this actually a hopeless exercise. It seems very complex.

And perhaps the sort of Delphi technique that you suggested, where you consult with experts who rely on their judgment may be the best way to go. I'm just concerned that the sort of elaborate statistical approach may be building on a very un-solid base.

MR. LAND: May I respond? Give me a break.

We chose equal weighting for a number of reasons--first of all, transparency. Secondly, in our basic data files we compare both equal-weighting of all indicators with equal-weighting within domains, and equal-weighting of domains, and they yield the same results over time.

Thirdly, there is a methodological paper here that's forthcoming in Sociological Methods and Research. I call your attention to the abstract. We studied--and this has passed muster with some pretty heavy statisticians--we studied equal-weighting schemes and alternative weighting schemes, and we show, as indicated in the abstract, in every case, intuition underestimates the extent of agreement among individuals with respect to the importance weights of individual components of indices.

We analyzed the World Health Organization Index, we analyzed the Index of Social Health. We showed in this paper the strategy that underlies--the reasoning for the strategy that underlies our equal-weighting approach, and it's pretty solid.

Thirdly, I want to call your attention to this other paper that's in your package, that's forthcoming in Social Indicators Research later this year. One question that could be raised is: does the CWI tap into anything that really might be taken as indicative of subjective well-being of children

and youth? And, of course, those data generally are not available. However, the Monitoring the Future study, which does have, for high school seniors, a subjective well-being measure going back to 1985, is available. And we show in one of the figures here, a comparison of trends over time between the CWI and the smooth series from the MTF high school senior satisfaction responses. And we show that's a good deal of covariation over time. And those two indices--the CWI was not formulated in any way by use of those data, so this is a sort of external validation of the CWI as an index of subjective well-being of young people.

Now, of course, it's only seniors. But, since 1991, the MTF study has included 8th graders and 10th graders. Unfortunately, they do not have the satisfaction question for those folks. However they do have a number of other questions. And basically what we have found, studying those data, is that there is a good deal of covariation between trends for 8th and 10th graders and those for 12th graders.

So we have a fair amount of confidence that this, indeed, is tapping into a dimension of well-being that goes beyond the objective indicators.

I'm going to stop there, but that's just a small set of responses to these questions.

And, yes, Nick, it could be done, to use some of the alternative approaches that you suggest. But I want to point out to you, you really need to take a look at the methodological paper, because transparency is one reason we use the equal-weighting strategy. Secondly, we show in this methodological paper that intuition--including our intuition as social scientists--greatly underestimates the extent to which equal-weighting leads to composite indices that make a lot of sense.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MS. GOLDSTEIN: I wasn't suggesting that the CWI is a hopeless enterprise. I think what I was suggesting is that seeking a perfect weighting strategy is a hopeless enterprise, because any weighting strategy either explicitly or implicitly assigns weights.

So it seemed to me that, in fact, a transparent, simple approach is what makes sense; and trying to be too elaborate may not be worthwhile.

And thank you for pointing out several things that I hadn't realized, from not reading the materials carefully enough. It's nice to know that the performance of the index is not all that sensitive to some alternative weighting schemes, and that it has some external validity as well.

Now, as I said, part of why I would like to encourage these additional studies is in part of validate the Index, and to answer some apparent anomalies, incongruencies, and some things about people's perceptions. And we've discussed some of this issues.

I think part of the issue also does come to looking at different groups within society and their well-being.

The preliminary factor analysis does, in some part, validate--that first factor does seem to indicate that at the moment the indicators that we

put in there, at least they did fall on a common first factor. I'm not so sure that some of the other ones, if you had state data on, say, religiosity and some of the other ones, that they would also contribute to that.

But I think these are relatively low-cost investigations that could be done, that would give you greater confidence, and might provide you with greater confidence about the results. And I think they would also illuminate; it would actually be good to see some judgments by people about importance as a way of really--for example, seeing differences between different groups, say social workers, as opposed to child development psychologists, as opposed to educators, and seeing their relative values to different components I think might be interesting and illuminating, and help to also help in the communicating of changes in index to those different sub-populations.

MR. : Unfortunately I formulated my question before that flurry of exchange, but I think I'll stick with it. And it was something that

had just occurred to me while Nick was presenting the paper. And it's a question for Ken, because I'm not as methodologically sophisticated, and I don't really know the answer to this.

It's concerned me, on the face of it, that the obesity measure had driven so much of the overall health domain. And my question is: what would happen if you were to define that measure in terms of the percent of kids normal weight, rather than obesity, and looked at the domain score relative to change in the percent of kids who were not obese? Would that not change its relative effect on the overall sub-domain index?

If that is, then we have to think about that, because that is, in principle the identical thing going into the Index, and yet it may have a different effect on how we interpret it, and how that particular aspect of well-being is weighted.

MR. LAND: That's a suggestion that certainly could be followed.

One strategy we've tried to do, and it's illustrated, again, in the paper that's forthcoming,

is we do sensitivity analyses. And so we do health domain with and without obesity; we do overall index with and without obesity. And, yes, we are concerned with the impact of that particular series on the health domain index, and the strategy we've used up 'til now is sensitivity analysis.

MR. : Ken, can you just tell us what happens if you drop obesity, not just from the health index, but from the whole index, I would assume the whole index would go up quite a bit--right?

MR. LAND: You can see it in our paper, in the figures--if I can find the right one.

MR. : Which paper is this?

MR. LAND: The forthcoming--the measuring paper.

[Pause.]

It's--I think it's Figure 2.1, page 40. March 10, forthcoming paper.

Figure 2.1 on pages 39 and 40. There are two pages there together. It shows the health domain index, with and without obesity.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. LAND: Well, if you can find that-- again, the "Measuring Trends in Child Well Being: an Evidence-based Approach" paper, page 39 and 40.

Figure 2.1 shows the health domain index, with and without obesity. And basically the health domain without obesity shows substantial improvements in the first decade of the series, and then kind of an oscillation. And with obesity you get the impact.

Obesity really takes off in the mid-1980s with respect to children and youth, and you see that impact there.

MR. ZILL: What I'm arguing on the falling Sam Preston is that, in fact, this is an overweighting of the thing. And the life-expectancy tables suggest that even with obesity, that still the trend is toward improvement in overall health status; and, in addition, there's still the issue of what's the association between childhood obesity and adult obesity, which still remains to be nailed down. I mean, it's not true that every fat kid

grows up into a fat adult. There's a good deal of variation.

MR. HASKINS: Fortunately, or vice versa.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

MR. LAND: Nick--okay, the point's well taken. But let me point out that that discussion with Sam Preston is still ongoing, and there is a substantial divide among demographers about the long-term implications of the obesity trend for longevity and health of the whole U.S. population.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. LAND: Pardon me?

MS. : And particularly lifetime of obesity. Because most of the obesity is measuring people who are obese in adulthood and late life, rather than throughout the entire life course. And that, we don't know what the effect will be.

MR. : Gee, all the people that we heard from at Princeton on our expert conference thought that childhood obesity had huge effects on

adult obesity as a risk factor. I'm really surprised about some of the comments.

MR. LAND: I was just going to say that. All of the longitudinal studies do seem to indicate very substantial complications for adult health of childhood obesity.

But the second thing--at least a side comment with respect to adult obesity--is that the demographic studies seem to suggest that it acts kind of like cigarette smoking; that is, for people who are susceptible to mortal health complications of obesity, they tend to be taken out relatively early, in middle age. And then those who are not susceptible to mortal health complications of obesity, because of health management or whatever--genetic structure or whatever--tend to survive to older ages.

But kind of like with respect to smoking, you see a mode in middle age, and then a number of people survive to older ages. But that's just a side comment.

I think Belle's comment is the most important: that childhood obesity generally has enormous implications for adult health.

MR. ZILL: I'm not arguing--I'm opposed to obesity also.

[Laughter.]

What I'm saying is two things. One is: a cautious approach would not give this health risk factor so much weight that it drives the overall health index. And, secondly, there's just also the subjective thing: if you take a parent and say, "You know, your child's a little overweight now." Or "Your child just died." And you say, "What is the impact of those two statements?" And to give them equal weight on the face of it seems like it's a little out of kilter.

MR. LAND: Okay--we need to look at the precise measurement of obesity that's used here. And basically the measurement is a CDC-based measurement, based on the population distributions of BMI, the Health Examination Survey sample of

children and youth in the mid-1960s. Nice bell-shaped curve.

And you look at the BMI that defines the upper 5 percentile, and subsequent measurements are taken with respect to the percent of kids who are above that cut point for the upper 5 percentile.

So it really is relative to a base year: namely mid-1960s population distribution of a BMI with respect to children and youth.

And, yes, I agree: it gets a lot of weight in the health domain index, and that's why we've conducted the sensitivity analyses. And we're studying ways of computing that index differently. And your suggestions certainly are useful.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: I want to check and see, of the names tags that are up, whether anyone else is burning to say something about obesity.

Okay.

Then I'm going to move to Bill--oh, Julia does--maybe half burning, since her hand went up slow.

MS. ISAACS: I guess I'm just sort of troubled by the math of this index. Because we're saying it's equal weighting, but if I understand it correctly it's not equal weighting, because you're starting with where we were in 1985. And if the obesity starts at a low rate and then goes way up, that gets more weight than something that doesn't vary as much, but the change might be as bad, it just mathematically doesn't show up as much. And so maybe I'll end with Naomi that there's no way to do better weights, but I just think it's not really equal weighting.

It's also not equal weighting because if there's two things in a domain and six things in a domain--I mean, if we took high school completion, which sounds like an education attainment and moved it, it would get more weight when it's with two other education things than when it's in community-connectedness.

So there's no perfect weights, but I'm just not convinced the math of this is equal weights.

And I think I will, then, jump to point which I didn't get a chance to make during the media part, that this is not like the CPI. I mean, I know this conversation--the CPI we overweighted the homeowner piece and all--but it's a pretty imperfect measure.

So I guess I go back to what's the purpose? It's to spark a conversation about child well-being. I don't really think we want people to walk around saying the number went from 104 to 105, because we're not sure enough at all. But we want people to care about child well-being, have an annual even where you sort of focus on it and look at what's driving it. But I don't think we're measuring it well enough that we really want people to focus on it as much as the CPI.

MR. O'HARE: This is kind of along the same lines, I guess--I'm a big fan of transparency and simplicity.

My question is to Ken and the people who have kind of dealt with the public. Do people ask

about the weighting when they ask you about this thing?

MR. LAND: [Off mike. Inaudible.] Same number as ask you about statistical errors.

MR. O'HARE: Statistical errors--about one every two years.

[Laughter.]

So it's not been an issue when dealing with the public in releasing this.

MR. LAND: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MS. : [Off mike. Inaudible.]--the last session, about being more aspirational, and having some normative view here, and linking that to what Nick said about doing some longitudinal analysis of what is it that drives success. And you then have to have a normative, aspirational view of why you care about this. Is it because you care about how well off children are right now as children? I mean, you know, if you were actually looking at subjective child well-being, they might like to have all their meals at McDonalds; they might like to have much longer vacations from

school. We can go on and on, right? But that's probably not what we want.

What we want is children who grow up to be successful adults. Now that's difficult to define normatively, but Nick took a stab at it. And my stab would be similar. You know, we want them to be productive and self-sufficient. We want them to be healthy. And we may have some aspirations about not having babies outside of marriage, or something like, although that would be more controversial. We don't want them involved in crime. We want them to be literate citizens.

So you could define your normative goal here, and then link this indicator to it. Even if that didn't lead to a different methodology--I don't know whether it would or not; I resonated to what Nick said, but I'd be interested in what you think, Ken, about whether it would come out pretty much the same?

I think, going back to the last session, that would then begin to grab people in a way that

the current Index doesn't, because it doesn't seem to be imbedded in a normative framework.

MR. LAND: Okay. The problem of the normative framework is we have all sorts of norms. And, again, that was the purpose of the methodological paper, which was to study: suppose there's a population of distributions of weights out there, what's the optimal set of weights for achieving the highest consensus? And it turns out the equal weighting strategy is privileged in that sense.

And, yes, we use equal weighting within domains, and equal weighting of domains. And, in part, that's because we get the same results when we equally weight all indicators. And, in part, that's a bow to the subjective well-being studies--dozens of subjective well-being studies, including children and youth over the past three decades.

And what do those studies show? They show that, among other things, the things that most closely relate to subjective well-being are the things that perhaps we have the least good

indicators on in the Child Well-being Index. And those pertain to things like social relationships and emotional well-being.

And, of course, I recognize that especially economists would say it's all about economic well-being, but at least that's not consistent with the subjective well-being studies.

So, again, the problem with normative approach is there are lots of norms. And we have an increasing--

MS. : Well, I mean, you're using norms right now--right? I mean, just the choice of indicators and domains is normatively chosen.

MR. LAND: Well, not necessarily. We use the best guidelines we can get from the literature--from the research literature--in choosing indicators and compiling them into indices.

We didn't have an objective in mind in constructing those, other than building upon the body of research literature.

MS. : Literature on what? I'm just lost here. Sorry.

MR. LAND: Subjective well-being and--

MS. : Subjective well-being of the children? Of whom?

MR. LAND: The subjective well-being studies, and quality of life studies, in general.

MS. : Of adults or of children?

MR. LAND: Both. Both.

So what we do, again, for comparisons with respect to norms, is in the 2001 paper, we compared recent values of the CWI with respect to what would the values be with the best historical practice in the U.S. That's one way of getting a normative comparison. And we did a similar analysis of taking nations of the world, looking at the best values on all of the indicators and computing a best-practice analysis: if the U.S. had these indicators at the best values of the nations of the world, what would the value of the CWI be? And so that's a different cut on normative comparisons.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: [Off mike.] Cathie?

MS. WALSH: My comments have changed as I've been listening to the conversation, but I think this

conversation and the tension and some of the angst associated with it may be the best reason to keep the index as transparent as possible by not necessarily weighting things differently.

Because I feel like I'm a pretty sophisticated user; I have a good understanding of data. I use data a lot. I've looked at lots of different kinds of measures and indexes, both individually and collectively. And the conversation that's transpired around the weighting and the various methods feels like it makes it much more confusing, even for a sophisticated user, to really understand even what you're looking at.

We use, in terms of really trying to move forward with change that benefits kids, we try to use the standard of best available data that passes the credibility and the methodology test. And it feels like this really does that. There can be refinements and improvement, but what's here-- somebody said--you know, I don't know if this resonates with people. I feel like I'm a very good user. When I read all of this on the plane and

really looked at it, there were lots of things here that I could immediately use back in the state to really inform change for kids in public policy issues. So, to me, that's a pretty good test of: is this doing some of what you want it to do? It might not do all of what you want it to do.

So I would argue for the transparency approach in terms of the individual indicators. You know what they are. You know how many there are. And you can kind of make your own judgment based on your various ways of viewing the world and your statistical knowledge of what that means for you, and how much you buy it and how much you don't-- which we all have to do when we look at studies and when we look at research.

The other thing I just want to comment on, if I can take one more minute, is the childhood obesity question. Because that was another one that sort of was interesting to me. When I first looked at the health domain, I was like: "Wow. How come health is going down? We've made all these great investments in health, but yet we're seeing it going

down." And when I looked at the breakout chart and it showed childhood obesity, I was like: oh, okay.

It forces you to think about that in a different way--which is a good thing. Because it makes you look at it, and it grabs your attention, and you say, "What's going on here? There's something going on here that isn't intuitive that I need to look more deeply at." So I liked the fact that it did that.

And in terms of the childhood obesity thing and well-being, the other reason I wouldn't take it out is: it has so many implications across all the domains, both in terms of emotional well-being, and community connectedness, and all of those other things. The research shows so much of an across-the-board connection with that issue that before kind of throwing that out or moving it I would be careful, because I think it probably cuts across all the domains in a way that's probably more powerful than a lot of other things.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: I have Larry and Bob and Ron.

Are you trying to react to a specific thing that Cathie just said, or shall I go onto Larry? Okay. I'll put you on the list.

MR. ABER: So I'm still struggling, today, with a number of indicators and their richness and their differentiation in showing different patterns, and simplicity, and summary. And my question relates to that.

If I understand what Ken and Vicki have been doing, they develop lists of indicators, guided by the quality of life and satisfaction literatures. And now we're validating them against the subjective satisfaction measures on Figure 6, page 44.

Which raises the question: why the middle part? So make the hard case about why use the CWI instead of the MTF Life Satisfaction data on Figure 6, for your single summary measure?

MR. LAND: I think the answer to that is the CWI, because it is a composite, tells us much more than the single life satisfaction question for high school seniors does. And that exercise was mainly to

show that there was some consistency over time in the two very different series.

And part of the problem with the MTF study is its limitations itself. It has its limitations also from the data design and so forth.

So I think the response is that there are many other aspects of well being that we like to monitor, and the CWI allows us to do that.

MR. ABER: For the single summary measure.

So I'm still stuck on--I think there are multiple purposes for this, and I totally understand that there are different patterns of components underneath it. And I understand that you'd logically like to link those into the overall one, etcetera, etcetera, but I'm still kind of at piece-of-social-change-information-per-unit-price.

[Laughs.]

And because I desperately want--I'd like to come up with a strategy that allows levels of aggregation at the state and local level. I just don't think a national index, collected

infrequently, is going to ever be bred to have the policy impact we want.

So that's my motivation for the question.

Does it change your answer?

MR. LAND: Well, even the MTF study is only done once a year.

The nature of social demographic statistics is they're not like economic statistics, report every month or every quarter. And so what we have to deal with oftentimes is annual series--at best. And even there, we're limited in terms of the richness of the data base. And so it's very difficult to get an interval less than a year.

MR. ABER: Okay. Thanks.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: Bob?

MR. KOMINSKI: Okay. Thanks.

Well, now, I guess I have four things I want to talk about.

The first thing I want to talk about is the table in Nick's presentation--Table 2--where he does the principal components analysis. And I need to remind you that he did have all 28 indicators

available to him, he only had 17. And what you need to remember is that when you look at the first factor, if you just look at the last two things-- kids without health insurance which, by the way, are incredibly highly related to kids in poverty; and kids with special needs, which is sort of a thing all unto its own--the other 15 elements all have, from my estimation, very similar factor-loading scores. Okay?

What this says is--what Brett and I were taught many years ago at the University of Wisconsin: everything matters a little, nothing matters a lot.

My point is that to me, this analysis itself speaks to the fact that there are really very similar--that is factor-loading 1--scores for almost all the elements. That's what it says to me. And this and other things--including this work that Ken's done that I just became aware of, the paper that they included--I think does point to the fact that equal weighting at this point is probably the best way to go.

Now, this then takes me to this point I tried to make maybe earlier today but not real well, which is: you know, 28 is a nice number. But to me, more is better. And, to a large extent, certainly in the realm of the Federal Interagency form and the indicators book, one of the biggest limitations that we've seen that drives us in terms of what's in and what's not in is simply: what's there? What's available?

You know, there's this constant tension that we have in our own internal discussions about why is 25 the magic number? And I still will submit that 25's the magic number because that was about how many good things we had. And, to day, not to many other good things have surfaced.

And I'm usually in the minority of arguing: if we can get 130 things, open up the web site and put the 130 things up there.

The reality of it is, if you move towards 130, or whatever big number it is, equal weighting will become even more justified--okay?

This will even be the case when--to move to an even earlier discussion this morning--we have not just one but five different bad measures of high school completion. Throw them all in the pot. Do not get involved in a debate, an argument and a fight about which one is the best one. Unless one of them is clearly, somehow, very different from the other four, then they're really all just slightly different reflections of the same phenomenon; each one showing a different wrinkle perhaps.

I'm not throwing out the possibility that ultimately--and it might be one of these 28 right here, probably isn't--ultimately we may get a really bad apple in the barrel. I think if that happens, it will be smelled out pretty quickly and we'd get it out of the barrel.

But the driving force here ought to be really focusing on where can we get more indicators.

And then finally--and then I'll defer-- there is this other point about virtually all these indicators. And maybe you've done this, or maybe someone else needs to do it. You know, social

science data really, for the most part, does not move very quickly. Working out of the Census Bureau, I can tell you the typical press release, or call with the press goes like this: "So, it's 10.2, huh?" "Yeah." "What was it last year?" "10.1." "Should we be worried about that?" "I don't know." Obviously you know that I'm bound by the laws of statistical significance within the walls of the Census Bureau, so almost always my answer is: "No, it isn't any different at all." But even when it is, there really is the substantive difference.

My point here is that: what would it take to make a dramatic change in this composite indicator? There would need to be a tripling of fat kids in one year. I don't know how that happens-- unless the price of soda goes to three cents a bottle.

[Laughter.]

There would have to be an amazing explosion in--oh, I don't know--NAEP scores. I don't know how that happens, unless four or five critical states all realize they can train to the test.

That doesn't happen. It's, for the most part, a slow moving boat. And, I mean, I hear a little bit of--I don't know--almost remorse that, "Damn, I wish we could get this stuff every month."

I don't really think you want this stuff every month--okay? I think you have to be realistic here in terms of what you're trying to track, and that this boat moves very slowly through the water.

Now, that having been said, the work that Ken and Vicky have done where they have, in essence, back-worked the data to get us, in essence, 25 or so years of trend data right on day one--that helps a great deal, because that does give you some perspective.

So those are a number of rambling comments and I'll stop now. I'm done.

MR. LAND: I have a quick response.

Again, I call your attention to the forthcoming paper in Social Indicators Research, the "Measuring Trends in Child-Well Being" paper, Figure 7, on page 45. We engaged in an exercise that asked that question precisely, Robert. We said, "Well, we

have the basic CWI with 28 key indicators, what would happen if we searched the data web a little bit closer and found some additional indicators?" And we did, indeed, find a few--even a couple that went back to 1975.

And Figure 7 shows the comparison of the trends over time on the basic CWI and an expanded CWI which has 44 indicator series. And you can see the trends are pretty much the same.

MR. KOMINSKI: Because there was a point I didn't make in that. There is also a secondary utility to an expanded base, which only becomes clear when you want to start to disaggregate the overall indicator into either geographic units, or sub-populations--which is almost immediately some of the indicators aren't going to be available for all of the groups you want.

With an expanded base it starts to become possible to model the missing stuff so you can drive it down into the groups for which, let's say, you have half the indicators for the two groups or five groups of interest, and you can model the remainder.

So that's an added strength and utility that you'd get out of this. That starts to be a little bit voodoo-ish, but on the other hand, it's not unreasonable.

MR. HASKINS: I want to go back to obesity. I'm still bothered by this.

Kenneth, you said to look on page 39, Figure 2.1. And this is just the health domain score--the sub score. And the top graph is: if you take obesity out, then it would go from 100 to approximately 111, or whatever that is; 112.

If you leave obesity in, in fact the health domain goes from 0 to 72--is that right?

So the difference with and without obesity is 40 points.

Okay, now if you turn it over, and you--I cannot be reading this one right--but look on 41, Figure 3.1, is that the whole index, but just for the subgroup of kids six to 11?

MR. LAND: As we point out in the paper, we have disaggregated the Index by age groups, and we point out in the paper that the indicators available

for that age group, six to 11, are dominated by the health indicators. And, of course, in that context the obesity trend has enormous impact.

So if you just take out obesity, leave everything else in there--27 other measures--obesity still has this much impact?

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. LAND: This is, again for this age group: six to 11.

MR. HASKINS: I understand that.

[Multiple simultaneous comments.]

MR. LAND: No, this is just for the age group six to 11.

MR. HASKINS: I understand.

So normally the whole index is 28 indicators.

MR. LAND: Oh--yes. No, we have that table somewhere that shows the number of indicators for that age group.

MR. HASKINS: Well, just approximately--is it 10 or is it 20?

MR. LAND: Umm--let me find it.

[Pause.]

MS. LAMB: It wouldn't be 20.

MR. HASKINS: Fewer than 20?

MR. LAND: Yes--oh, yes.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Well, anyway--now, you've talked about transparency, and I don't want to talk about statistics or factor analysis. I just want to talk about some transparency, which is: one measure stacked up against all of the other--school achievement and all of the other things that are in here--and it has this spectacular--you know, we're talking about a huge--you never see an effect like this in any experiment.

It doesn't compute.

MR. LAND: Okay. What you have to understand is: this is a measure of trends, over time, from the base year--okay? And that's what the series is telling you.

And, again, as we point out in the paper, for that particular age group, the main indicators available are in the health domain, and in that context, that particular series has enormous impact.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, I didn't see it in here, but maybe you have in here: what would the whole index be for all the kids? Not for six to 11-year-olds, for everybody?

MR. LAND: We have that somewhere. It may not--

MS. LAMB: It's not in this paper.

MR. LAND: It's not in this paper? But we have that in some of our analyses.

It does have an impact. The overall CWI, without the obesity series shows more substantial increase over the years than with the obesity.

MR. HASKINS: All right, well let's just say for the sake of argument it's 15 points. I don't know if it is, but let's say it is. This is 40, maybe it's 15 if you include all the kids.

Well, that's equivalent to the entire change during the '80s, and then the recovery after the '80s, due to just one measure of 28. I'm just saying that's not transparent, Ken. To me it's very misleading.

It's the only example like this. I agree with everything you say, and I'm all for transparency, and I would sacrifice a lot of stuff for transparency. But in this one case, it is so misleading it just it just bothers the hell out of me.

MR. LAND: Well, I understand what you're saying. And I think my response is: again, what we're mainly focusing on here is the pattern of qualitative changes over time, and trying to get a sense of does overall well-being improve or deteriorate relative to a base year.

And I think in that context of that question, the overall composite tells a pretty decent story.

But, again, the impact of obesity is enormous. There is just absolutely no question about it.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: Julia, you're specifically on this issue?

MS. ISAACS: This is putting more weight-- it's like saying if something wasn't a problem in

1985, and now is a problem, it's sort of by mathematical definition a bigger problem than something that was a problem all along.

And so the trend analysis--which is important in itself--but it's driving the overall number at the end in a way that doesn't seem right.

The point that someone made that if you did--I don't know. I guess it's that: a new problem is worse than an ongoing problem, the way this math is working.

Is that correct?

MR. LAND: Ahh--

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. LAND: Yes--again--

MS. ISAACS: It was small in 1985. A growing problem is worse than sort of a steadily bad problem. And I don't know if that fits.

MR. LAND: A secular trend up or down, as in this series, across that roughly 20-year period can have a big impact on the index. No doubt about it.

And that trend has been--many of the other trends have been less dramatic. Many of the other

trends, some of them have been up and down. This one has been so uniformly down that it has a huge impact.

MS. : I'd like to go back to one other point. I think it was Naomi who raised it.

Nothing like this can conceivably happen with the NAEP scores--just because of the nature of the score. I mean, they could go up enormously, but since the way the scoring is done, it couldn't have a big effect on the index.

MR. LAND: Right.

MS. : That's a problem with implicit weighting.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: Naomi, you're up next--speaking of Naomi.

MS. GOLDSTEIN: Thanks. I actually wanted to respond to Larry's earlier question about why construct an index instead of just measuring satisfaction. And it's a little bit in contrast to my earlier comment that we shouldn't lose sight of the value of the Index as being a single unitary composite.

I think the benefit of having an index constructed of elements, compared with one satisfaction measure is that it is constructed of elements which are policy relevant. So, one of the reasons we think it's valid is because it is associated with satisfaction. But you're not going to design government policies specifically to improve the satisfaction of high school students.

[Laughter.]

VOICE: [Off mike.] I was with you 'til the last sentence.

[Laughter.]

MS. MOOREHOUSE: Nick, you're next. Then Bill.

MR. ZILL: Two points. To go back to Bob Kominski's comments about the first factor, basically I agree with it and I think that's what I said, that it does support it.

But I also want to draw your attention to the second factor, because it suggests that there's a separate cluster of things that have to do with children with special needs, and low birth weight,

and I want to point out to you that childhood disability affects other than low income.

I think the first factor in this is really a very socio-economic--teen birth, low achievement, high poverty--you know, it's a major kind of thing. But there are also variations in middle-class, many of them White, families who have a child who has a disability, and who are concerned about things like special education, and who look different--for example, if you go to Head Start and you look at the kids who are in there not because of poverty but because of childhood disability--they're separate. They have higher vocabulary scores but they do worse in other kinds of things.

And I think this is picking up another cluster, which may in fact be useful to track and have an index of, even though it's not the big variance the first socio-economic factor is. And it does tap things that are police-relevant, and it may change over time, and it may be important.

So I basically agree that the first-factor supports the equal weighting, but I think it also

suggests there may be other dimensions in there that are worth looking at and worth constructing indexes about.

Now--to go back to the question of the overall index, I think that one of the questions I tried to raise here beside the weighting is the issue of a meaningful index, as opposed to a somewhat arbitrary--you know, change score of 105. What does that mean? It means a percent change.

If you take life expectancy, that is very meaningful. You say, you know, "How many years do I have to live at this age?" Everyone can understand that, and you can say that in Russia it's gone down, and it's much lower in Africa than it is in the United States. That immediately communicates to people something very concrete.

And I think the same sort of thing-- following up on what Belle was talking about--if you said, "Well, what are the odds of a child born today growing up to be a productive adult at age 30?" We don't even know what that probability is. But if you had that probability, and if you could compare

that for different groups of the population, and compare what it was in 1975 with what it is now, that would have an inherent meaning that doesn't depend on where things were in 1985.

And I'm not saying we should abandon the current Index, but it might be useful to move toward that kind of an index that has an intrinsic meaning to it.

MR. O'HARE: Actually, the question I had when you raised this has already been answered, but it stimulated a couple other questions.

And it goes to this Figure 7 that you talked about, in "Measuring Trends in Child Well-Being: An Evidence Based Approach," where you compare the CWI to the expanded CWI--I guess it's 42 or 44 items.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. O'HARE: It's on page 45, Figure 7.

MR. LAND: Right.

MR. O'HARE: Really two questions, I guess: given the fact that you've got 42 or 44 measures, why pick these 28? Why not some other subset?

And, beyond that, why not go down to 10 or 12 if they show the trend--for some parsimony.

MR. LAND: Good question.

The major purpose of this paper was to explore these various conceptual and methodological questions. And what you suggest, Bill, certainly would be possible, but it's only possible after we've done the analyses. And that's what Figure 7 reports, is the basic CWI and the expanded CWI.

MR. HASKINS: There is an answer to this that supplements what you just said, and that is that domain scores themselves have meaning--especially in Washington where you, roughly speaking, have committees and programs and so forth that correspond.

So you want the domain scores, even if they don't contribute much to the overall score. They wouldn't change it if you dropped it. It still, in and of itself, has meaning.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: That would be the White House.

One of the things I just wanted to say, because Nick's come back to it multiple times is his factor analysis.

If I'm right, that's 50 states and 17 variables--right?

So--

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

[Laughter.]

MR. O'HARE: But the number of subjects you have--states--for the number of variables you have means that these are highly unreliable estimates; not necessarily replicable.

And if you did a confirmatory factor analysis instead of a principal-components analysis, you probably wouldn't find that a one-factor solution fits worse than a three-factor solution.

So I agree with your logic, but you're taking the logic farther than the data will permit, in my opinion. And I say that because I'm the guy who wants parsimony, so I like it, but I just don't trust it at this moment.

I think that one of the more compelling issues that is on the table is these domains, and how policy-important they are, and how much conceptual new information they bring.

And it would be very interesting at some point to think about, in a way, some differential predictive validity of those domains.

So as the day has gone on, it feels to me like the main response to me wanting one big simple thing is how great the individual things are--partly from a policy point of view, and I buy that; partly from a differentiation in real causal processes and different patterns underneath.

That's where it feels like it would be particularly valuable to do some additional empirical work to some extent.

MR. ZILL: This analysis was whipped out in record time. It was only meant to be a preliminary example of the kind of thing that you could do more carefully.

But I would stand behind these results. And I think if you replicated it for several

different years you'd come up with a very similar solution. I don't think it would vary all over the map.

But that's just my opinion.

[Tape change.]

[Break.]

**Session V: Does the CWI Measure Representative
Domains of Child Well Being?**

MS. SAWHILL: Okay, everybody, we're going to get started again. And this last session is on whether or not the CWI includes the right domains.

And to start off the discussion we're going to have Brett Brown present at least a summary of his paper.

MR. BROWN: Thank you very much, Belle.

In this session we're going to talk about the measures that are used in the CWI index. And I assume, anyway, that in previous years that there's been a lot of discussion on the order of, "Well, I think you missed this measure," or "You should include that measure."

And I wanted to take a slightly different tack here and talk about something a little more on the macro level. And I want the measure folks to be--you know, what do we need to do in order to move the CWI forward as a scientific and a policy instrument? How can we set it on a developmental

track that will keep it improving and becoming a stronger and stronger measure?

All right--what's at stake here in getting measures right?

Well, first of all, an index, if you have a missing measure that's important, or if you have superfluous measures that are actually, in fact, not important, in either case looking at trends, you can have false trends, you can have misleading cross-group comparisons which end up subverting the fundamental functions of the index. You know, if you're not able to actually measure whether child well-being on the whole is actually getting better or worse, or accurately summarize what are the gaps in well-being across groups, then that's a real problem for the index. So it's important that we get the right mix of measures.

And second, it's important because of the components. As was said here in just the last session, the components of the CWI really are its links to the policy discussions here. And I think there was a bit of a tension--and I think probably a

productive one--between wanting simplicity for the sake of communications and focus--right?--versus completeness--which I think Bob was emphasizing more.

And being complete--you know, getting 130 measures, or whatever he included--has the advantage of being able to hook into a lot of different policy discussions, and sort of makes that easier. The simplicity, you can probably drive fewer messages home better.

But trying to get those measures right so that you can effectively relate them to policy is very important. So that's sort of my justification for this session.

Now, what is currently determining the content of the Child Well-being Index?

First of all what I think are very strict data requirements is that it really is depending on the pool of data that have been collected periodically since the 1970s. And compared to what's available right now--if all you're interested in is contemporary data--that's a much more restricted

pool of measures. There's been good measurement development since the 1970s. There's been a lot of data development since the 1970s. So you're dealing with a much reduced set of potential measures.

And second, what determines what actually gets chosen for that would be the quality of life framework that Ken has chosen to sort of guide the work. And we're familiar with the seven domains that it has. And I think that my point would be that, especially given the constricted set of available indicators for the CWI, that this is a reasonable guide. You know, good researchers can fit all the important stuff that they want to know or measure about child well-being under those seven categories. Whether it's optimal is another question, and we can talk about that a little bit.

And finally, one box I didn't have on here--because the framework really is built on top of existing child well-being research which does not tell us about the domains but what ought to go into the domains. And finally, there was also something that was mentioned here that I had not really

considered when writing the paper, or how important it is: the importance of what is salient to the people who intend to use it out there. So public opinion is important, trying to figure out what it is that people value inherently about children's lives and will motivate them to improve those lives--that's also important.

And here's, I would say, a linchpin observation for me, which is that the stock of periodically collected data on children and youth has grown substantially since the 1970s. And, if anything, that growth has accelerated since 2000. And I won't go through each of these, but most of you will recognize those various surveys, many of which could be used to augment an index that was based on a shorter time period, for example. And I'd also point out that a lot of these surveys in fact now are state level, and the capacity to produce a rather rich state-level index of child well-being I think is within our grasp.

[Slide.]

My conclusions about whether the Index has the correct measures or not.

Well, the answer is "yes"--or close enough to yes--as long as one really is limited to the universe of data that have been measured since the 1970s.

There's been, I think, some very creative--it's been done very creatively. I think there have been some nice augmentations to it. But basically, as long as we stay in the 1970, I think we're about done. There are some things you can put in, some things you could take out. But I don't think the content is likely to change very much.

The answer is "no" if one considers the possibilities offered by more recent data sources. And, as an example, some of the recent work done by some of my colleagues at Child Trends--Kris Moore and Laura Lippman--on using the National Survey of Children's Health to do some index construction, and that actually has a very nice set of sort of positive socio-emotional development measures, family functioning measures, that get beyond the

sort of socio-demographic stuff; and community-connection measures that are real connection measures--you know, about their relationship with the neighborhood, levels of supportiveness and so on. So there is a lot out there.

And the answer is "heck no," or certainly no, if one considers what could be available in the future.

[Slide.]

What are my recommendations--which are really just proposals for discussion?

First of all, I would recommend that Ken and FCD consider developing a whole complementary system of indices that can set the Child Well-being Index on a developmental path for perhaps decades to come--one would hope, with continuous improvement. And the first element of the would be what I would call a 10-year CWI that one would rely on for trends. A 30 to 40 year time frame says some important things, but it's probably not worth saying every year; you know, it's not going to change that much.

And a 10-year time frame is probably the outside of what most policy-makers are interested in. What are they interested in? What change has happened in the last few years.

Ten years give you the chance to tell maybe a little more complete story, and allow some of those slow-moving measures to really have some movement. So it's important for informing policy.

But beyond 10 years--probably not so much. And this would allow you to take advantage of more of the existing data sets, and even more as we go over, say, the next five years, even more new data resources will come online that could enrich the index.

Second would be what I call a "state-of-the-art child well-being index. And this would use the most recent data available. And that would allow you to bring even a richer set of measures to the index, and would allow you to give, I think, probably the most solid data grounding for the subgroup comparisons. There are a lot more ways you could go with that. Subgroup trends are important,

but when you're talking sort of about current inequalities, you want to have the richest set of data possible.

And finally, I would say you need an "ideal child well-being index" that grows up out of the research literature and will allow you to drive future data collection; that future data collection will then feed into the state-of-the-art child well-being index; and eventually, through that, into the 10-year CWI.

There was a question in the agenda as to whether or not having more than one index was confusing, and I sort of decided to take and run with that--in the opposite direction--and say, no, I think it would help, if they're properly chosen.

Second, the adoption of a new framework. I think we should at least consider--especially as this conversation broadens out there; more and more and more members of the indicators community--adopting a developmental-ecological framework that is grounded in the child and youth development literatures. A lot of the research that supports

the CWI really comes out of research traditions where they think developmentally. And these are the frameworks--you look at youth development and the early child development literature, and this is sort of the way that the conversations and the research is structured. So if you're going to try to get the entire research community together to help provide input into this, I think that having a framework which is familiar to the people who are going to have the most input is important.

Quality of life index can be made to work--and has been made to work--and well. But especially now that there is a richer set of data and measures available out there to choose from, and if we're going to use it actually to drive data collection, I think it will probably just work better if we have something that's grown organically out of the research traditions of child well-being.

Finally, we should consider developing indices for child outcome measures and for social context measures. The Child Well-being Index and Kids Count and most of the other indices that I've

seen really freely mix the two. But the question for me is: what have you got there? You know, if you've got both family and community influences affecting child well-being, and direct measures of child well-being, do you have an index of child well-being? Probably not. Maybe what you have is an index that's predictive to future well being, because you can imagine setting up Nick's regression equations that would have all that and predict the future. But you don't really have what I would call a "pure" index of well-being.

Now, some of the other work that's being done at Child Trends, where they actually are separating these out and using them together, they've got child well-being indices, and social context indices, and what they call "condition of children" indices, which is the mix. And I think all may have their us.

And the advantage of having, say, a separate social context index is that those are actually the levers that policy-makers are going to be interested in primarily in using in order to

improve child well-being. So being able to monitor them directly and have that drive policy discussions, that can be an advantage.

That's my presentation. These are my ideas. Let's talk. [Laughs.]

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you very much, Brett. Comments? Questions?

This last comment strikes me as a particularly useful one.

Ken or Vicki, you want to say anything about separating outcomes from social context?

MR. LAND: We've heard this suggestion before from Kristin at Child Trends. And, indeed, we've studied those possibilities. And you will see some separation and sub-indices in our future work.

Let me add: I do like your suggestion of a 10-year--we could do a 10-year moving time period, as well as the 30-year for historical purposes.

MR. BROWN: Yes, and I know that the researchers will perpetually find the 30-year time frame interesting, because there are important questions about how society functions and did

function that academics will be tuned into, and that will be important for them--but just less important for the policy-makers.

MR. LAND: And I should also mention that the suggestion of this framework is certainly not new with me. There was an article by Nick and--hmm-- that essentially made the same suggestion.

Do you remember that one?

[Laughter.]

Well it was brilliant.

MS. SAWHILL: Since nobody seems to be eager to jump in here, let me--

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MS. SAWHILL: Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

MR. : I'll go ahead.

I just wanted to say I also think the 10-year index would be useful. But when we've talked to journalists in the past, they often need to know the historical context. They're used to reporting things like "the Dow Jones being at the highest level ever." So they like that historical context,

and they're going to want to know: is this number the highest ever?

If you only report the 10 years, you'll kind of lose that piece of it for the media. And I think that's also important.

MR. : That brings to mind, when I make presentations of our trend analyses to adult audiences, who may have children themselves today of childhood or adolescent years, I take great pleasure in showing them the safety-behavioral domain index and its components, and pointing out to them that while American society today is quite intolerant of kids' smoking, drinking and abusing drugs, and getting involved in crime, in fact the indicators at least tell us that today's kids are doing better on those measures than their parents did in 1975.

MS. SAWHILL: Bill?

MR. O'HARE: The term "outcomes" probably means different things to different people. I know we use it a lot, everybody does. But I don't know if we have a very good consensus of what we mean by an "outcome."

I guess I'd like to see us, as a group, explore that more; what is context and what is outcome? Clearly a death is an outcome. Everything other than that is an intermediate step to something.

[Laughter.]

You drop out of high school, but that's not really the problem; the problem is you don't have a job. Well, you don't have a job, that's not the problem; you don't have income.

So it's not as easy to define, I think, as it might seem.

MR. : I would say that something that's a direct measure of the child, such as an achievement test score, a behavioral measure, a health thing--such as the health rating by the parent, or disability--that those things certainly qualify as outcomes. And then you have the intermediate things, where it has something to do with an attribute of the child as evaluated by the system--like high school graduation.

And I think that's a starting point, at least.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. : Well, see, I think that's more of a context measure.

MS. SAWHILL: Ron?

MR. HASKINS: Brett, can you talk more about: would the current CWI continue and we would add these new things? How exactly would this work?

If the Foundation really wanted to consider this, would they do a whole another enterprise? And would Ken do that? Or would they try to find someone else?

How would it work?

MR. BROWN: All right--you can't have too many indices flying around all over the place. And I would be tempted to think about swapping out the 1970s-based CWI for a 10-year CWI--even acknowledging some of the historical context that you'd lose. Because every time you have a slightly different set of measures you want to have some

clear way of signaling the reader, the consumer, that this is different.

Now, as long as you use them for different purposes, that's at least manageable--right? So if you're focusing on trends with the 10-year, and you want to focus on group contrasts with the state-of-the-art one, then you can manage to keep people from getting confused. But if you have your 30-year version and your 10-year version, both of which look at trends, that gets to be Harold's job. It becomes really tough.

And I think the '70s is a prison that CWI needs to burst out of in order to make progress.

MR. HASKINS: But here's another part of that: you also recommended all these new data sets, which presumably would mean that the whole--are you thinking of just adding them on so we'd now have different or more items than the domains? Or would we scrap the CWI and start again?

How exactly--

MR. BROWN: A reconsideration of the--I mean, one might think about reordering the domains.

The domains concern me less, as long as you can get all the basic elements.

Now there is a communications issue around the domains. And it could be Harold would want a slightly different set of domains so that he can connect it to popular concerns more easily. And I think that that would be fine. But, yes, I think it would be--

MR. HASKINS: The thing that I'm really asking you Brett is: I mean, new is good, I guess, would they be better in some sense? And how? How would you define that these new data sets are producing information that's more relevant to a meaning of child well-being than what's already in the Index?

Because you're going to have tremendous cost for changing the Index from what it is now. I mean momentum is huge in human affairs--including the CWI.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. HASKINS: And to change it is going to take an act of the FCD Board or something, I assume.

So why would we assume that if we put these new measures in, and do 10 years and so forth, that it would be better.

MR. BROWN: Well, for one thing, because there will be competing organizations putting out more defensible indices based on more contemporary data, and eventually it will lose relevance. I'm not sure there's a choice.

I think the data are available, and I think FCD is out front and probably needs to stay out front.

VOICE: [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MR. BROWN: Well, one would decide that based on the current body of research on child and youth development and well-being.

I can give some examples. The National Survey of Children's Health I think represents at least one important group's vision for what well-being is. And they try to cover, to some extent, most of the domains of well-being with these kinds of measures. For example, they have a domain of psychological health, which includes not only

problem behaviors--which are, you know, similar somehow to the [inaudible]--but also includes self-esteem and coping skills, which are lacking but important positive developmental achievements and milestones--right?--in the area of social health, a positive parent-child relationship.

One would have to look hard at the measures to see whether or not they thought that they were high-quality measures. But these are constructs that are coming out of the research that says that these things are important.

There are interesting community-context measures, like perceptions about levels of supportiveness in the environment for children and for parents; safety levels in the neighborhood--and so on.

There's just more out there. And I think the process one would use, you don't need to call a whole bunch of people together. You'd probably need people who are familiar with the research to go through it systematically.

MR. HASKINS: Well, I'd love to hear Ken's response to that.

MR. LAND: Well, many different data sets are being developed, including longitudinal studies, and repeated cross-section studies and so forth. And I do think those add interesting data bases to the mix.

Again, the objective of the Child and Youth Well-being Index is to monitor changes over time, from historical benchmarks. And, you know, we used 1975 as a base year because a lot of series only date back to the mid-'70s. We used 1985 as a base year because ethnic-racial identification really is available only in the mid-'80s, and gender.

And I like the idea of the 10-year moving average. I have to think about that one a little bit, but I think that's a good idea.

But the fundamental objective here is monitoring; you know, reporting changes over time. And a lot of the special studies that you mentioned have different forms of data, and you can address them in different ways and so forth. But they're

less likely to allow you the annual monitoring that you can get with the CWI. Not too many of the surveys are replicated every year, for example.

Those are great data bases, and you can ask questions that we can't ask. And you can use different conceptual frameworks and so forth. But I just think they add to what we do. And, you know, to the extent that we have time and resources available, we'd like to do some things with those data bases too.

MS. SAWHILL: Martha.

MS. MOOREHOUSE: The question of how to think about new data that comes on line seems like an important one to keep open and pursue--not necessarily that there's an answer at this moment yet.

It seems like it's going to matter a lot what the richness is and quality of the data sources that come on line. So, for example, to the extent--you know better than I how many years we have of health survey questions--when you can do trend lines around that, and that's going to be health data, the

implications for thinking about some of the domains may get very interesting; and thinking about how, within the index, you would then want to think about this new data that's coming on line.

So thinking strategically about how this might work over time is useful to do.

I may have put these things together more than you intended, but I heard and saw in the paper the need to respond to new data coupled with also only needing 10 years of data for policy-makers. And I would really de-couple those. I think the points that have just been talked about around new data make sense to think about.

I think it's a different issue if you're trying to respond to policy-makers what amount of time you wanting to be thinking about there. And I find, at this stage of the game, "policy-makers" probably means possibly something sort of similar and sort of different to most people in the room. There are a lot of different people involved in the policy process. And the chunks of time they're thinking about and interested in--there's nothing

meaningful to me about saying 10 years. And in the setting where I work, it's not automatically a sensible chunk of time to carve off.

So there may be particular windows, but if the main reason to do that was to get to the newer data, I would take that in its own right, and not necessarily wed the policy piece into that.

MS. SAWHILL: Larry?

MR. ABER: The last couple minutes of discussion remind me of the challenge of beginning to think about how to change poverty measures when you've got a trend. So one suggestion that hasn't come up yet is the idea of a couple of parallel series, in that you don't change the CWI over the short term; you begin a parallel series of some of these best ones and see how they perform over time.

I think that the other thing to say: Ron was pushing Brett on what are the advantages to some of the others. There are going to be different profiles of advantages and disadvantages. So the National Survey of Children's Health right now, there is no trend line. It was collected once. But

it is 100,000 kids, 2,000 a state, and you can get state differences in 2003--reliable state differences--that you can't get.

In eight years, if we're not having a different conversation about if you want to look at state stuff, or are you using the National Survey for Children's Health, most of us won't be awake. I mean, we'll be wanting to do that.

So I think that this larger issue about running some parallel series, thinking about the strategic advantages among them, and using them to complement each other--so at some point, if the National Survey of Children's Health is saying "How does this stuff change over time," we'll they'll say, "Well, we don't know. Talk to Ken and Vicki." And if Ken and Vicki are asked, you know, "Over the short term, how are these states changing?" And if they don't say, "I don't know. Ask the National Survey of Children's Health," we're making a mistake.

Not any one of these things are going to serve multiple purposes.

But the communications challenge I think is secondary. The communications challenge can't totally drive the fundamental analysis. The communications challenge comes second. And it's huge, but it comes second.

MS. SAWHILL: Cathie.

MS. WALSH: I just wanted to reinforce what both Martha and Larry said: to kind of de-couple of the new data over time that might become available that would be helpful to understand child well-being, but keep the ability to go back to 1985, for the racial and ethnic splits particularly. Because if you only start at 2000, especially with the racial and ethnic gaps--if you look at the racial and ethnic gaps between White kids and Hispanic and African-American kids--you lose the fact that there was progress up to a point, and then things have leveled off for a lot of indicators.

There's interesting stuff going on there, sort of over the past 15 years, that you don't see if you only look at the last five or 10 years. So that would be a major reason to make sure you keep

going back to the 20 or 30 year window, so you can see those kinds of changes over time.

MS. SAWHILL: Vicki?

MS. LAMB: I just wanted to mention that we actually are looking at new data sets, or new sources of data. We had had conversations with Fasaha about focusing on pre-K kids because in the '70s and '80s there aren't a lot of data. And in the paper Ken was referring to that we have coming out, the expanded CWI actually have immunization rates, and proportion of children who are read to by a parent in some of the more recent 1990s data. So we are aware of that, and talked about maybe having a young children's index.

And I was thinking of your question this morning about focusing on different ages, because most of the data are teenagers. We've got 20 indicators for teenagers, somewhere in the teenage years. For the children and pre-school kids, it's mostly health: mortality, low birth-weight and things like that.

And so we've been trying to find new sources of data that are now available that are measuring and predicting future outcomes--"leading indicators," as Fasaha says, about future outcomes, in terms of school readiness, and health and ability.

MS. SAWHILL: Is this on this?

MR. LAND: Related point. [Laughs.]

Again, those of us who helped to get many of these data series launched in the mid-'70s, here we are today. We can do things we couldn't do three decades ago.

We need to ask the question: where do we want to be 25 or 30 years from now with respect to the data base for monitoring child and youth well-being?

And I want to toss out a suggestion to this august group that I've made occasionally before: a great data design out there that we could add onto, without--100,000 in a new survey of kids, sponsored by the Department of Health is an enormous expense.

But there's an ongoing data collection out there. It's at the University of Michigan. It's the MTF project. And two of the areas in which we have really lousy indicators that we found from this effort are the social relationships and emotional well-being areas. We could add modules of questions to the existing instruments used in the MTF study for 8th graders, 10th graders and 12th graders--at a marginal cost--that could provide a data series into the future that would be, I think, quite valuable.

In addition, I would suggest--

MR. HASKINS: Ken, would you say those two dimensions again?

MR. LAND: Social relationships and emotional well-being.

In addition, I think we could get those folks to add a fifth grade sample, and so you'd pick up the last year of primary school--again, at marginal cost. And you're not talking about \$500 million here. You're talking marginal cost to an existing data collection operation that could give us tremendous new data sources in a few years.

MS. SAWHILL: On this?

DR. BROWN: On this, yes. I just wanted to add to it.

I think that's a smashing idea, and a very practical one. Because unlike most existing surveys, where one has to draw out the long knives in order to get another measure wedged in, because you always have to give up something else, my impression of Monitoring the Future is the funders are overwhelmingly concerned about the drug-use information. Everything else is more or less to make the children interested and comfortable doing the survey--right? They don't pay for them to do the analyses. So this is a tremendous data resource which is very much underused.

And so I also think they would be flexible and willing to sort of re-tool some of those other measures that they use.

MR. HASKINS: Belle, can I ask Ken a clarifying question?

If you did this, would you incorporate it in some of the domains you have now? Would it be a

new domain? Let's say you got both of these, what would you do?

MR. LAND: If we had a short instrument for each of these two domains, a half a dozen questions or so, added to the MTF questionnaires--again, collected on an annual basis into the future, definitely the future Child Well-being Index could incorporate those data into our existing structure. And I think it would provide a useful, interesting and fascinating--

MR. HASKINS: Still in the same seven domains?

MR. LAND: Well, we would do this kind of thing Brett has suggested; namely, we would keep the historical, long-term comparisons there, but we would add in a new base year for the new data.

MR. HASKINS: Okay.

MR. LAND: And--full disclosure--I have no connection to the University of Michigan.

[Laughter.]

MS. SAWHILL: But then that seems to be a more general point, that any of these new data

sources that Brett has alluded to, that had data on something that you think is missing right now, you wouldn't be uncomfortable about starting a parallel series with.

MR. LAND: Absolutely. And we continue to look at those things.

And of course, again, we are interested in data bases that provide, ideally, at least annual collections. Occasionally we have to settle for every four years or so--or four to six years--with health examination survey data for obesity. But, ideally, we'd want data series that are collected relatively frequently.

MR. : We of course would love to help with that if you wanted that.

[Laughter.]

MS. SAWHILL: Jonathan, and then Bill. I think it's really Bill this time.

MR. ZAFF: This is actually building off of what Ken said, so I'm glad you brought this all up.

I think this aspirational, or ideal, index that Brett talks about would be very powerful--which

also relates to your point about the developmental context as a framework, as a theory, within which to frame this. Because if we're talking about sort of setting out an agenda of indicators, we need to tell the full story about kids, well that's very powerful in its own right. I think that's very powerful for policy-makers, since they tend to only look at what we give them data-wise.

So if we say, "We'd love to give you this story. We just can't yet," at least it's on your radar. At least it's a start. So I think that's a big thing.

This is my own self-interest here: at America's Promise, this was a big thing for us, because we're all about the assets in kids' lives to tell the full story. Those data don't exist, really, on the national level. So we had to go field our own survey--which will be coming out in October [laughs]--with the help of Child Trends, and some of our esteemed [inaudible] council members.

But that was a big problem for us. We couldn't find those data points.

So, in a sense, this first go-round with the survey we fielded, we're not saying it's the best, we're not saying it's perfect, but we're sort of putting them on the docket and saying: we need these data to tell the full story.

So I think this is ideal, and coupled with this framework change, it could be an important piece.

MS. SAWHILL: Bill O'Hare?

MR. O'HARE: This is for Ken and Vicki. You may have already answered this question, but I'm going to ask it anyway, and add a second question.

The question I had is the one that is always asked of me: what data do you wish you had that you don't have? If you had to pick three or four indicators, what would they be that you really wished you had?

And the second part of it that you kind of stimulated is: if you were going to use this kind of data from Monitoring the Future, you'd want it to have secure funding so that you'd get it every year.

Do you have any recommendations on how you'd get that?

MR. LAND: Vicki, do you care to comment here?

MS. LAMB: Well, the two that Ken had already mentioned: the emotional and social well-being. There is no measure of depression or things like that on an annualized basis, or things that are consistently measured. And so we have to look at religious attendance and suicide rates, which sometimes when we make presentations about that people balk at "You're measuring religion. Religion shouldn't have that much importance," or "Suicide is a very extreme measure for emotional well-being or lack thereof."

Again, the social relationships--we're trying to get to it through measuring single-parent households and residential mobility, in terms of breaking of ties and not having a strong relationship. Well, that's very, very, very indirect, rather than asking about one's relationship to family, friends, and things like

that; and to teachers, do they have role models and things like that.

So if there were more measures of connectedness, that would be great.

MR. LAND: And your second question is how to fund it? [Laughs.]

MR. O'HARE: I mean the point is: you want measures that are going to be there year after year after year after year, before you start investing in putting it in. So how would you--how would we--how would one make sure that you had the kind of secure funding that would get you those kinds of measures year after year from Monitoring the Future?

MR. LAND: Good question.

[Laughter.]

MR. LAND: Does anyone have an answer?

[Laughs.]

MS. : Maybe I'll comment on that-- not that I ever want to take budget questions. But Brett was asking me some budget questions before. Maybe I'd answered the budget questions about Federal data.

When you're talking about added costs, you know this is a really tough conversation to have always--and especially hard to have now. So if you're talking within the purview of an existing Federal agency, with their funding stream, and they can handle what you're talking about within the budget allocation they have, that's an interesting conversation to have.

And even if it's some additional cost, increasing cost right now is a really big conversation to have. So it's sort of hard to have a small conversation about more money right now, within the Federal system.

Bob may have other perspectives off Census-

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[Laughter.]

He's having big conversations about cuts over censuses broadly.

So, this is the climate that we're in from the Federal side.

And I think the other thing that is complicated--Bob and I are both on the planning

group for the Interagency Forum for America's Kids-- and there is work going on there, and we need to sort of finish some of the work that group's been doing about what we've got for America's Kids and where we have gaps.

And you can undertake conceptual work--and some people here have been part of saying "which indicators don't we have? What about spirituality? Social connectedness? Religiosity? And that's a whole sort of undertaking.

We don't have a whole lot that's ready to go in big scale national data collections. We also don't have easy homes for the data testing work around doing that, which costs money. I mean, I know in various places--in Census there's a little cognitive funds that you can do certain things at certain times, but that sort of testing ground: if you wanted a new measure, what would it look like? You know, that's a piece that doesn't really have a home.

The NICHD, for the first time that I know of, is actually developing measures. You know it

was a long complaint. It's coming out of a completely different framework than whether or not we have population-based indicators of kids' well-being. But every single developmental study that goes out is trying to measure kids' well-being in some fashion.

And no study ever just got funded to get the measures right. So you had to be doing the developmental study, or the intervention study, and then you had to do the adaptive work on measures if you didn't think you had good existing measures to do it.

And I don't know how long those projects are, but that's sort of the first source we'll have of those measures. Those don't naturally translate into something that you're going to get picked up in large-scale surveys. So this is where a lot of those gaps come.

The Forum will eventually have full meetings again, informational meetings. So maybe with Bob's help I can remember, as we sort of talk about planning items, looking at where we are on

good indicators for kids--and we're doing some of that--existing. But where would new ones come from? How would that work? How does it relate to the work that the Federal agencies are doing.

Because right now they have to be able to do it out of the resources they've got already--without losing ground; or being willing to say something they're doing ought to be cut and this ought to replace it.

MS. SAWHILL: Nick?

MR. ZILL: A couple of thoughts.

On the emotional well-being and behavior, I think a very useful source of information that has been used in some national surveys are teachers' ratings of classroom behavior of children. And there are some existing scales based on Achenbach and the SSRS.

Teachers are in a unique perspective because, unlike parents, they see a range of children. So their ratings tend to be more internally consistent and better distributed. And we've shown that they are predictive to ratings and

rater grades by other teachers. And so you're picking up anti-social behavior, depressed/withdrawn behavior, hyperactive behavior.

There's no current mechanism for doing this on a recurring basis, but it would be, I think, a very good source of information about trends in this domain which is under-represented.

A second thing would be to get better background data along with NAEP--the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The issue was mentioned before that for the younger kids, they can't report meaningful things about the parents, but we know that the NAEP data's going to be there on a recurrent basis. And if we could have some easy kind of take-home, send-home scan-able parent background sheet that could be filled out, then we would have more reliable information about things like parent education level and other things, and then would be able to relate that to all that recurrent achievement data. It could be very useful.

And finally I want to mention: there was a good component of the National Household Education Survey, which we have been involved in in the past, which was called a "citizenship and civic participation," which included a brief knowledge scale for teenagers, a brief knowledge scale for their parents, on basic things like: how many Justices on the Supreme Court, what body is responsible for raising money for the government. And it included participation in voluntary activities and citizenship.

And in its wisdom, the National Center for Education Statistics stopped that, even though it was interesting data, and a lot of analytic use was made of it. So it's the kind of thing that maybe we could get them to start up again, because it did cover that not-so-well-represented domain in some interesting kinds of ways.

MS. SAWHILL: Julia.

MS. ISAACS: I just wanted to circle back to the conversation this morning about child safety. And I think the issues that came up were child

welfare and incarceration. And I think I know the child welfare field well enough to know that we don't have consistent time series.

But I didn't know about incarceration--just like numbers of people under 18, and administrative data, whether that was something you'd ever looked into, and whether we have those data; and whether it's not in because we don't have the data.

It just seems that as that population has grown, and as most of our measures are household based, it would be nice to have that in there.

MR. LAND: We have not used any administrative data. We've used the National Crime Victimization Survey data for violent crime victimization and offending.

One question that sometimes comes up is: how about child abuse? And it's the case that the violent victimization data series does include child abuse by one's parent. Of course, this is restricted to respondents ages 12 to 17.

And, in fact, another study--I cannot remember the name of the author off the top of my

head--but another study teased those parental abuse data out of the broader NCVS victimization data series. And we were pleased to see, for our own point of view, that the trends over time, and the parental violent abuse of children--at least based on these reports--was very comparable to the overall trend which we use in the CWI.

MS. SAWHILL: Brett, did you want to come in again?

MR. BROWN: Nick's comment on the NAEP, on collecting additional data under the NAEP--which I think is a great suggestion. But I just want to point out that contrary to what I actually was saying earlier, it has not been a uniform march forward in new data. In fact, I believe the National Education Goals panel, which is a bi-partisan group that controls the NAEP, as one of its final acts ended up getting rid of everything they thought was "superfluous to the educational experience."

So, in fact, a lot of the data that were collected from the kids were struck from the survey.

It doesn't mean it can't be added back now, especially now that No Child Left Behind--you know, one could probably justify--

[Tape flip.]

But because of their reading of the legislation, and because of the data burden issues, they eliminated some really useful stuff.

Closing Remarks

MS. SAWHILL: I'm going to suggest that we move on to some summary concluding statements here.

We have three people on the agenda for that: Ron, Fasaha and Ken. And I'm not sure what's the best order to go in, but I kind of think we should start with Ken because he's the substantive author, father, grandfather--whatever--of the CWI.

And you may want to say something about what you've heard that's been most useful; what you think you can use and what you can't--any comments along those lines.

Then we might want to go to Ron, who will just talk about what we're going to do with this meeting, here at Brookings.

And then, finally, to Fasaha, because the ultimate group that has produced this and funded it and has the greatest long-term interest in it is the Foundation. And she may have some thoughts about where she might like to see all of this go.

So if that makes sense, why don't we start with you, Ken?

MR. LAND: Okay, good. Thanks. It's been a useful day; interesting day; a lot of suggestions that we'll follow up on.

In particular, from this morning's discussions, obviously we appreciated very much the analyses that Don Hernandez reported to us, and I find those very interesting, and a different way of looking at social disparities. We will continue to work with the Kids Count folks and Bill O'Hare and group. And Bill didn't report any of those analyses in his paper, but I think they're quite interesting.

Brett's discussions this afternoon on other data sets and so forth, quite useful. The idea of a moving 10-year indicator is quite useful.

Nick's suggestions on other analyses with respect to weights is useful.

The one comment I would make is that the structure of this meeting today--I had no opportunity to make a presentation. And, you know, we did put three papers in your package, but: we've done a lot of stuff here, folks. And we've thought through a lot of these issues, and done a lot of analyses, including some fairly sophisticated methodological studies.

And, you know, I can respond to your comments ad hoc, but I had no opportunity to present those things beforehand. And I think--of course hindsight is better--but I think it would have been good for me to have had such an opportunity this morning, because we've done a lot of stuff.

The question always comes up--especially, you have to realize that it's a piece of me and a piece of Vicki that's done this project for several years. And I think, given the resources we have, we've done an enormous amount.

The question always comes up about monitoring child and youth well-being, are we really measuring what we want to measure? Are our indicators really telling us what we want to know? And, you know, that's an impossible question because there will always be things we want to know that our indicator series just don't tell us.

And I want to give you one illustration. This came out of the Durham paper a couple weeks ago. As you know, in the national media there's been a lot reporting about Duke and the lacrosse team's escapades and so forth, and one of the commentators in the local paper a couple weeks ago made the following comment.

He said that he consulted with a "worried management consultant in Minnesota who tells me, 'My corporate staffing buddies are saying that American companies do not want to hire American students.'" Repeat: "My corporate staffing buddies are saying that American companies do not want to hire American students." Because "One, they have a strong sense of entitlement--'Give me a big salary because it's due

to me;' two, they have no work ethic; three, their college education is lacking--"--even college graduates, their education is lacking--"four, they are not good employees."

That's a rather strong indictment of the current generation of young folks who are in colleges and universities in the U.S.

And it relates to concerns that I see coming our of our CWI work. But, again, we can imagine it's there, and we get bits and pieces of evidence, but what we see is consistent with a pattern of parenting by baby-boomer parents-- especially late boomer parents. Don and I--you know that baby-boomer period covers 1946 to '64 birth cohorts, but we usually distinguish the first decade, or nine years of that from the second nine years, "early boomers" versus "late boomers." And late boomers have been parents of many of today's children and young folks.

The evidence that comes out of our CWI work is consistent with what we see from other observations and data sources, of enormous attention

of this current cohort of parents to the well-being of their children, including enormous monitoring, programming of after-school activities, with soccer practice, band practice, language instruction, etcetera; enormous protection of their children from the risk of life--which means taking them off the streets.

I was at the American Statistical Association meetings last summer in Minneapolis, and talking to a faculty from statistics at Minnesota, and he said, "You know, I drive home to my suburban neighborhood in the evening four or five o'clock. And I know the neighborhood is full of kids. But I never see them." And that's such a contrast from circa 1980, when if he had driven home in those days, he would have found kids out playing self-organized sports of some type.

So what are they doing today? Well, their parents are either programming their after-school activities intensively, or the kids are inside the household playing video games and drinking those soda pops that Bill talks about, which adds a couple

hundred calories a day and accounts for the obesity trend.

So the trade-off that late baby boomer parents seem to have made with the frightening prospects of rearing children in contemporary American society is to protect them from many of the risks that we know are out there, or think are out there, at the cost of keeping them inside the household, and programming their activities and, associated with that, increasing size--obesity.

And a point I would make is: you know, this pattern seems to extend through not just the childhood years. I've seen reports of parents of children in colleges and universities, like at Duke, who talk to their children 15 to 20 times a day on cell phones. Now, this is beginning to get picked up in the popular literature a little bit, and these parents are often referred to nowadays as "helicopter parents;" parents who are hovering above their children like a helicopter and watching their every move. Helicopter parents.

And, you know, these are the kinds of things that we get some indications of in the Child Well-being Index trends, but you have to put what we see in the data in the context of other observations. And we have to recognize, of course, that these are the kinds of things that may be virtually impossible for any long time series study to pick up. But at least we can see some indications in the data series.

So, anyhow, those are just some informal observations on child and youth well-being.

MS. SAWHILL: I can't resist asking you-- since you gave that very provocative essay about some interpretive stories--do you think that there are major differences in the description you just gave by socio-economic status, with a growing bifurcation, which I've seen in some of my work.

I'd just be interested in your comments on that.

MR. LAND: it's hard to say, because we don't have the data base there for growing bifurcation.

One of the remarkable things--a really good story; indeed, we focused on it in the CWI report in 2005--is the improvements in the safety and behavioral indices, indicators and domain index. And it's across the board. It's teenage childbearing, it's violent crime victimization and offending, it's smoking, drinking and drug abuse. And it appears to have been pretty much across the SES spectrum, but there are variations in terms of rates of change across that spectrum.

So that's probably what you're seeing a little bit in your studies and data sources, is that while the overall trends tend to be in the same direction, there indeed are some divergences, and we need to continue to focus on those.

MS. SAWHILL: Okay--thank you very much, Ken. And I think we're all, by the way, enormously admiring of what you and Vicki have done.

[Applause.]

It was inevitable on a day like today that we were going to probe, and critique, and raise all kinds of issues. But I think we all know how

difficult it is to do what you're doing, and are quite impressed with the results. And I'm sorry we didn't give you more chance to present some of your own methodological work.

Ron.

MS. : Could I ask just a clarifying question. Is that all right? She's glowering at me. [Laughs.]

Ken, were you saying that when you were making the observations you were making just now about [inaudible], you made a couple of references to things you see in the index. Are you saying there are specific data trends that you see that you think link in time and--you know that you can map the lines to it being this group of parents?

MR. LAND: We see patterns in the series, and in the domain indices. And these are consistent with the picture I just painted.

MS. : Can you give me just one example? Because when I thought of the index, I couldn't think what this is.

MR. : [Off mike. Inaudible.]

MS. : You were focusing on obesity. Is that the piece?

MR. LAND: No, it's not just obesity, it's also safety-behavioral and obesity. And it's indicators that we don't have here of parents' programming children's after-school hours, and the way children are spending their time, etcetera. So it's time-use sorts of data, as well.

In other words, we see some patterns in the index and its components that are consistent with what we see from a broader set of data, including informal observations.

MS. SAWHILL: Okay--Ron.

MR. HASKINS: So our understanding of what the Foundation would like to do is to really subject the CWI to critical analysis on these four dimensions--possibly five, if you include the PR dimension--that were selected for this meeting.

And so we're taking them at their word. We're going to summarize, without too much interpretation, what you said in this meeting. And we'll send it to the Foundation, and once they

approve it we'll send it to everybody so you can see it.

If we have time, we'll try to do this--it would be a very quick turnaround if we did this--but get your comments, too, in case we left something out. And possibly at the end--we haven't really discussed this very much--we might have a more interpretive thing at the end about what the Foundation could do to improve the CWI if they wanted to. And, of course, we'll give Ken a chance to respond to this, as well.

So that's our plan. We haven't set a time line, but we'll try to do it within the next month or two months.

And, personally, I greatly appreciate the background papers. They were really wonderful, and did set a context for the discussion and the brief presentations at the beginning, and a very lively discussion. So thank you all very much.

Fasaha?

MS. TRAYLOR: I have nothing but thanks to give. I really think that this has been a very stimulating day.

As an aside I will say that it's really gratifying to know that very deep within the United States Census Bureau is someone--so lively. Let me put it that way--such a lively individual. The next time I hear anything about the Census I'll think about you.

So I really want to thank everybody for the intensity of this discussion; the honesty, the clarity. I think that a lot of issues that have sort of been floating around about the index, that they were really very pointed critiques today. And I think that they will be helpful.

I want to really thank Ken, because I think that this really has been a tremendous amount of work, and it would almost have to be a labor of love. So I really want to thank Ken and Vicki for their work on this.

I guess I would remind us of something-- well, Ruby heard it from David Hamburg, but I heard

it from one of my demography professions, way long ago, about the perfect being the enemy of the good. Actually, I think it comes from engineering--is that right? But, anyway, I think that it's a very, very important point.

And I think that the Foundation is going to take all of these points into consideration as we continue to work on continuing to make this Index what we really hope that it can be. And, once again, our hope is that it will be useful for Americans--both policy makers and the public, in thinking about the future of our kids.

So thank you very, very much--Belle, Ron, you did a wonderful job. Thank you.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, everybody.

MS. SAWHILL: We're adjourned.
[Whereupon, the conference was adjourned.]