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Influx of Child Immigrants to the United States: Policy & Practice Implications

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Influx of Child Immigrants to the United States: Policy & Practice Implications

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Outline

- Motivation
- Current Events
- Literature
 - History of Immigration in the United States
 - Current Influx and Reactions
- Methods
- Interviews
- Some Findings
- Conclusion
- Policy & Practice Implications

Motivation

- We know that immigrants are coming to the United States (and Iowa) in large influxes.
- We know that there is misunderstandings about immigration in the United States.
- What change(s) need to be made to ensure that immigrant children are safe and secure?

Current Events

Influx of Immigrant Children to the United States.

The Des Moines Register

13 WHO tv.com NEWS SPORTS ON 13 CONTESTS DEALS EVENTS WEATHER 42°

THINGS TO DO BUSINESS OPINION

Illegal Immigrant Children

...kle into Iowa

The Des Moines Register
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139 immigrant children placed in Iowa

CBS DC

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Iowa Governor: I Do Not Want To House Immigrant Children In My State

July 14, 2014 1:23 PM

Literature

- History of Immigration in the United States
- Current Immigrant Demographics
- Response to Immigrant Children
- Resources Provided

Methods

- Sample
 - Convenience
 - 8 organizations (5 non-profits, 1 community service organization, & 2 community activist groups)
 - 3 cities in Iowa (Des Moines, Davenport, & Storm Lake)

Interviews

- Interviewee Demographics
 - Gender: 6 females, 2 males, Ages: 30 – 65 years old, Ethnicity: 7 White, 1 Hispanic or Latino
- Completed demographic questionnaire, then interview questions were asked. Examples:
 - When did your agency first get involved in helping children in the state of Iowa?
 - What services does your agency provide to your agency's child population?
 - What do you believe is our next step, as agencies, in helping children?

Working with Immigrant Children

1) How it Began

- Five of eight agencies - June or July 2014.

2) Immigration Movement

- Identification of other agencies' responses
- Agency H:
 - *Some of our coalition partner organizations got together and were starting to have meeting regarding what [our organizations] we believed we wanted the response to be from the state of Iowa and the response from Des Moines.*

Services Provided

1) Direct Services

- Three of eight agencies – legal, education, emergency

2) Indirect Services

- Five of eight agencies – administration, advocacy, education
- Agency D:
 - *Currently, we are just finding local resources. Our agency does so by holding community meetings. I believe that I have held 20 different community meetings to find out who we need to talk to and knowing what we have to offer the children.*

Collaboration of Resources

1) Priority Agencies

- Three of eight agencies – legal, education, emergency
- Six of eight agencies agreed that legal services were most important, followed by housing services.

2) Typical Immigration Agencies

- NASW was the most common organization mentioned.
- Agency F:
 - *NASW Iowa Chapter has been really helpful in identifying bi-lingual social workers to help and social workers who we can call upon if necessary. With the phenomenal support of the NASW, they have worked to spread their knowledge of resources and holding themselves accountable for the fight against injustices.*

Politics: A Difficult Push

1) Political History

- 1980's - Governor Ray's Administration

2) Un-Iowan Way

- In the past, we have been known as welcoming.
- Agency D:
 - *We have failed to be a good neighbor, and as a human, I hope that others would make the effort for me if I were on the other side of the border.*

3) Private Support

- Collaboration of agencies without the government

Agency Representatives' Recommendations

1) State Level

- Before and after election results

2) Federal Level

- At this time, agency representatives believed that the federal level is more likely to make changes than at the state level
- Agency C:
 - *From my perspective of sitting in on trainings, I don't know how anyone understands it. I find it difficult to help immigrants through a system that very few can comprehend and understand the process. We need laws that are understandable for everyone.*



Agency D:

We need a policy in place so we know how to deal with immigration. It needs to be looked at comprehensively and the international issues must be looked at as well. We have contributed to the problem, as a country, so we must contribute to the solution! We spend lots of money and time travelling to the middle east, now we must take a humanitarian interest in the lives of our neighbors to bring them support and guidance in their time of need.

Conclusion

- The current services available include: emergency services, legal services, minimal counseling services, housing in federal facilities, and education services.
- Immigrants are still facing many challenges and barriers such as unpleasant remarks from government officials, limited resources, and seclusion.
- The results suggest the need for additional services – advocacy, housing assistance, foster care families, and support from the state and federal governments.

Policy Implications

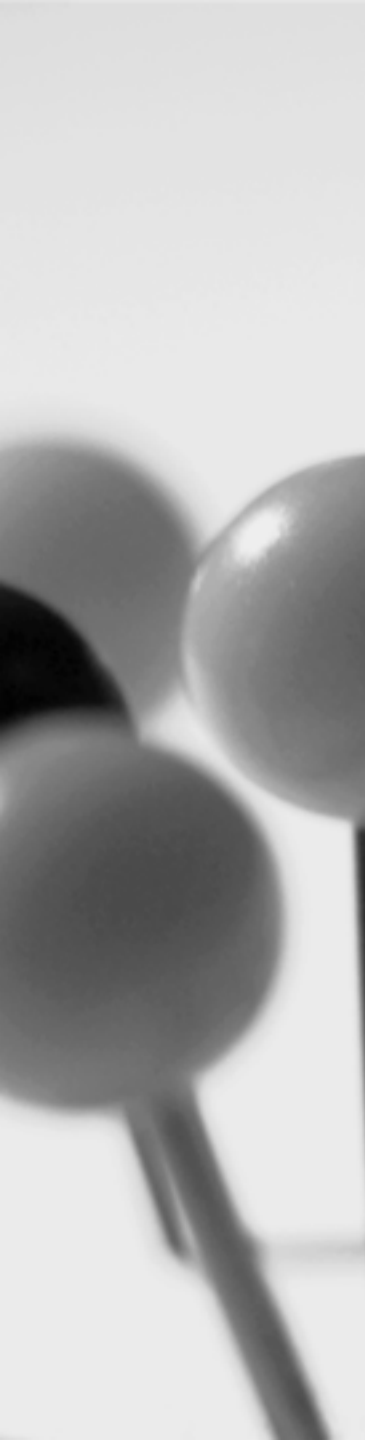
- Amendments must be made to the Immigration and Nationality Act to ensure proper protection of immigrants and easier accessibility for citizenship.
- There must be further education about immigration.
- Social workers are advocating for the children to be viewed as refugees, as they would then be allowed to stay in the United States. They would be eligible for the U-Visa or the T-Visa.

Practice Implications

- The system is broken, but the families are not.
- Social workers have two tasks at this time.
 1. Direct Care – provide services and resources to clients in need of assistance.
 2. Advocacy – policy and practice changes for those working with the immigrant children and families

Resources

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