



# A History and Analysis of Recent Immigrant Integration Initiatives In Five States

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# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION

Significance of this Study .....	3
Continuities with the Past .....	3

## THE GENESIS OF EXECUTIVE ORDER PROJECTS TO PROMOTE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION .....

The Illinois Model .....	6
Immigrant Community Activism Gets a Boost from National Foundations.....	8
Role of Research and Reports.....	9

## THE NATURE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER PROJECTS

Common Goal and Process Elements.....	10
A. In Pursuit of Immigrant Integration.....	11
B. The Executive Order Process .....	11
Common Substantive Elements.....	13
A. Expanding Immigrant Adult Education and Citizenship Preparation Efforts.....	13
B. Facilitating Language Access .....	14
C. Establishing Welcome Centers.....	14
D. Addressing the Plight of the Undocumented.....	15
E. Creating State Offices to Coordinate and Manage Integration Activities .....	16
Other Recommendations .....	17

## AN ASSESSMENT OF EXECUTIVE ORDER PROJECTS

Areas of Strength.....	18
Areas of Vulnerability .....	19

## CHARTING A WAY FORWARD .....

Strive to Prevent Political Backlash.....	23
Embed Immigrant Integration into Regular Government Operations .....	24
Allocate or Reallocate Resources to Make Immigrant Integration a Reality .....	27
Look at the Total Picture .....	28
Move from Broad Policy to Evaluation Studies.....	28

## CONCLUSION .....

## LIST OF REFERENCES

Executive Order Project Reports.....	31
Other References .....	31



# Introduction

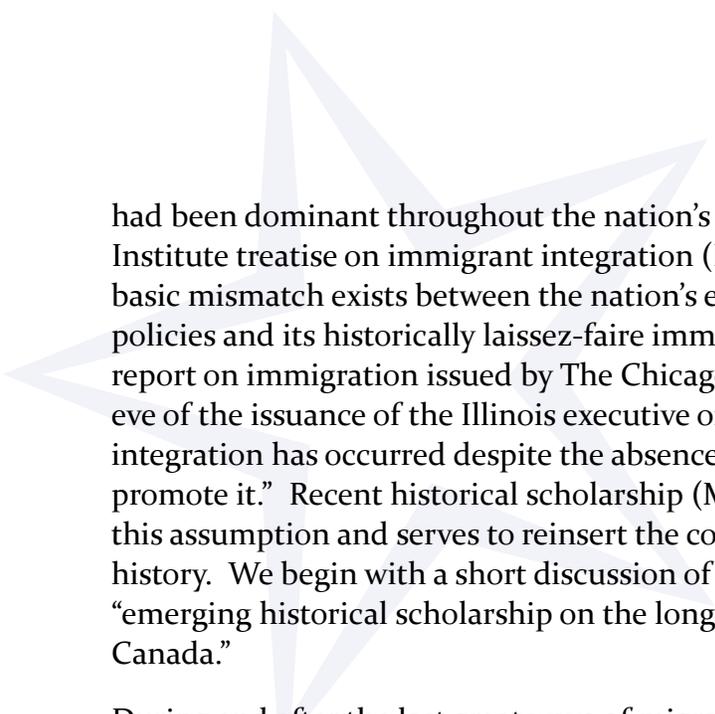
## Significance of this Study

During a three-year period from 2005 to 2008, five governors issued executive orders launching ambitious projects to integrate immigrants into the fabric of state life. The projects unfolded in the face of strong opposing headwinds. A proactive, government-led approach to integration is a tough sell to many native-born Americans, especially when myths about the self-reliance of earlier generations of immigrants abound, and misinformation about the extent of prior government involvement in immigrant integration activities is common. As “members in waiting” of the political polity, immigrants may not be viewed as entitled to the same level of support in times of crisis or need. Indeed, there is some evidence that the growth in size of the immigrant population, both on the national and sub-national levels, is correlated with reduced levels of social welfare expenditures for poor people (Freeman 2009, Hero 2010). Moreover, the notion that social service systems must adapt to the needs and circumstances of diverse populations, especially when there are potential costs associated with that adaptation, including lost jobs in public service for monolingual job candidates and lost contracts for mainstream service providers, is bound to antagonize those who are content with the status quo. Finally, all five projects had to contend with the fallout from the recession, which contracted state revenues and restricted investments in new state services, as well as the rising chorus of pundits and politicians urging a “get tough” state policy on immigration.

For all these reasons, the fate of these experiments and their implications for the country’s future are deserving of careful study. How did they manage to get off the ground in the first place? How did they achieve consensus on goals and strategies? What were the major findings and recommendations? What have the projects accomplished to date? And what are some of the factors that might prevent these projects from realizing their full potential and serving as models for other states? As Cristina Rodriguez (2008) points out, little scholarly attention has been devoted to the administrative steps that states and localities can take to promote immigrant integration, yet it is at the sub-national level that policies to respond to global migration must be developed and implemented. These five projects, therefore, offer useful lessons for public officials and administrators around the country. Although we will not be able to fully explore all these questions in this study, we hope to make a useful beginning.

## Continuities with the Past

When the Illinois executive order project released its first report in 2006, it was sprinkled with superlatives. Words like “landmark....groundbreaking....first-in-the-nation” were used to describe the state’s efforts to address “one of the most overlooked issues of governance” in the United States, i.e. how to integrate the millions of immigrants and refugees who came to the country during the prior 25 years. Proponents of state integration projects often saw themselves as bucking a hands-off, laissez-faire approach to integration that they assumed



had been dominant throughout the nation's history. For example, in an influential Urban Institute treatise on immigrant integration (Fix et al 2001, vi), the authors asserted that, "A basic mismatch exists between the nation's essentially liberal, if highly regulated immigration policies and its historically laissez-faire immigrant policies." This view was echoed in a major report on immigration issued by The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (2004, 51) on the eve of the issuance of the Illinois executive order, which stated that, "historically, immigrant integration has occurred despite the absence of public or private sector policies to facilitate, or promote it." Recent historical scholarship (Mirel 2010, Press 2010), however, calls into question this assumption and serves to reinsert the contemporary work into the mainstream of American history. We begin with a short discussion of what historian Franca Iacovetta (2011, 35) calls the "emerging historical scholarship on the long roots of multiculturalism in the United States and Canada."

During and after the last great wave of migration to the United States from 1880 to 1916, and particularly during World War I, when many old-stock Americans perceived the presence of millions of immigrants as a potential threat to national unity in wartime, massive efforts were made to "Americanize" immigrants. The Americanization impulse predated the war by at least a decade, but received significant impetus and some federal investment during the war (Hartmann 1948, 187-215). One root of the Americanization movement can be found in the work of the settlement houses established in the pre-war years. Settlement house leaders pushed for a package of social reforms designed to improve living and working conditions for immigrant workers, including child labor laws, housing reform legislation, and English classes for adults. Indeed in several states, including California, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, state commissions were appointed to investigate the plight of the foreign-born, and to develop recommendations to promote their assimilation. The reports of these commissions mirror in a way the reports produced by the five executive order projects. In at least two states (California and New York), actual administrative entities were created to manage what we might call immigrant integration initiatives today, but they didn't last more than but a decade (Hartmann 1948, 64-87). All of this work occurred in an environment very different from our own; before the globalization of communication, business, and migration; before the advent of the welfare state; and before the intellectual revolution brought about by the concept of cultural relativism in modern anthropology. Some might question whether the more coercive aspects of this earlier work could be characterized as a program of "immigrant integration," yet the faith in social engineering, the emphasis on social cohesion, and the attention given to adult English language education remain important elements of the contemporary movement for immigrant integration.

Immigration restriction in 1924 did not weaken the impulse to integrate immigrants and to manage diversity for positive ends. Indeed, Jeffrey Mirel (2010) has documented an intensification and strengthening of integration work during the interwar years, especially after the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt embraced immigrant adult education as a New Deal reform. Mirel also shows that immigrants themselves helped to steer the movement in more progressive directions, which he calls "patriotic pluralism." During this period, much attention

was also focused on the children of immigrants, whose criminality and anti-social behavior alarmed public officials and dominated the work of many social scientists – most notably sociologist Robert Park and many of his students at the University of Chicago. The intercultural education movement in American education, which flourished in the interwar years, was conceived in part as a way of boosting the self-esteem of immigrant children and strengthening immigrant families in order to reduce the attraction of gangs and criminal activity (Montalto 1982, Selig 2008). With the blessing of powerful “progressive educators,” schools devised the first curriculum materials devoted to the “contributions of immigrants” to American society and held school assemblies spotlighting the “cultural gifts” of immigrants. Scores of towns and cities, including Buffalo, Cleveland, and St. Paul, sponsored annual multicultural festivals — some of which survive to this day — in order to “bridge the ever widening gulf between foreign parents and children...”(Montalto 1982, 62-67). Although state governments, per se, were not actively involved in all these efforts, powerful opinion makers, professional associations, and foundations promoted local level solutions to the challenge of achieving “unity in diversity.” The movement of blacks to the North during the Great Migration and the Post-World War II “second reconstruction” shifted the nation’s attention to the eradication of racial discrimination and the shameful legacy of slavery in American life. Thus began a span of years when immigrant integration fell off the national policy radar, feeding the notion that it was never there in the first place.

## The Genesis of Executive Order Projects to Promote Immigrant Integration

The reappearance of immigrant integration on the state policy landscape has much to do with the demographic trends, the political calculations of governors, the work of immigrant rights activists, investments in community organizing by major foundations, and a flurry of policy-oriented research supportive of an integration agenda. All five governors used executive orders to jumpstart the work – a favorite and time-tested tool to advance controversial agendas in American public administration. Although seldom authorized by statute or state constitutions, executive orders are used on a fairly routine basis by many governors, as a way of carrying out their executive authority to guide and manage the state bureaucracy. Executive orders also operate as tools of “unilateral decision-making,” helping to avoid the give and take of negotiations with the state legislature to achieve policy change (Ferguson 2006).

We have arrayed comparative data about the five executive orders in Chart I. In addition to the names, years of election, and party affiliations of the five governors, we show dates of issuance, the percentage of each state’s population that is foreign-born, its ranking among the states in foreign-born percentage, and the state’s ranking in overall population. With the exception of New Jersey, none of the top seven states in foreign-born percentage — California (1), New York (2), Nevada (4), Florida (5), Hawaii (6), and Texas (7) — have undertaken executive order projects.

In addition, with the exception of Illinois, the top 10 states in terms of overall population are also missing from the list. Later on in this essay we will return to the question of why executive order projects of this type have not gained traction in the states with the largest immigrant populations.

**TABLE I: SUMMARY DATA FOR EXECUTIVE ORDER PROJECTS**

1. STATE	2. GOVERNOR AND PARTY AFFILIATION	3. YEAR(S) OF ELECTION	4. PERCENT FOREIGN-BORN AND RANKING <sup>a</sup>	5. STATE POPULATION RANKING	6. DATE EXECUTIVE ORDER(S) ISSUED	7. REPORT PUBLICATION DATE(S)
Illinois	Rod Blagojevich, Democrat	2003/2007 <sup>b</sup>	13.8% (10)	5	Nov. 19, 2005, March 31, 2010 <sup>c</sup>	December, 2006/June, 2008
Maryland	Martin O'Malley, Democrat	2006, 2010	12.4% (13)	19	December 3, 2008	August, 2009
Massachusetts	Deval Patrick, Democrat	2006, 2010	14.4% (8)	13	July 9, 2008	Nov. 17, 2009
New Jersey	Jon Corzine, Democrat	2006 <sup>d</sup>	19.8% (3)	11	August 6, 2007	March, 2009
Washington	Christine Gregoire, Democrat	2004, 2008	12.3% (14)	14	Feb. 20, 2008	October, 2009

<sup>a</sup> 2008 American Community Survey

<sup>b</sup> Removed from office by the Illinois State Senate on January 29, 2009

<sup>c</sup> Pat Quinn, who became Governor of Illinois in 2009 after the impeachment of Governor Rod Blagojevich, issued his own executive order continuing the Governor's Office of New Americans on March 31, 2010.

<sup>d</sup> Corzine was defeated for reelection on November 3, 2009. The new Governor is Republican Chris Christie.

## The Illinois Model

As the first state in modern times to attempt a coordinated immigrant integration strategy, the State of Illinois was an important driving force in the executive order movement. In November of 2005, Illinois Governor Rod R. Blagojevich signed an executive order calling for “a coherent, strategic, and proactive approach from state government and community organizations, working together to integrate the rapidly growing immigrant population in Illinois” (Illinois, Council 2006). The son of an immigrant steel worker from Serbia, Blagojevich spoke fluent Serbo-Croatian as a child and performed with a Serbian folk music group. Blagojevich grew up to be an attorney with political aspirations nurtured within the Chicago political machine of Mayor Richard Daley. Elected to Congress in 1997 and as Governor of Illinois in 2003, Blagojevich was keen to promote an immigrant integration agenda, especially if it might bolster electoral support within Chicago’s burgeoning Mexican and Latino immigrant population.

The groundwork for the Illinois project – probably the most ambitious state-focused experiment in immigrant integration in American history — had been laid many years earlier. An important catalyst was the Illinois Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services under the leadership of Dr. Edwin Silverman. As State Refugee Coordinator, Silverman administered a multi-million dollar grant budget used to award contracts to nonprofit organizations to promote rapid self-sufficiency among refugees resettled in the state. One of the most influential and innovative refugee

coordinators in the country (Silverman received the “Lifelong Commitment Award” from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement in 2010), Silverman believed in the importance of investing in the development of grassroots refugee and immigrant organizations. He also used whatever discretionary funds were at his disposal to promote a broader integration agenda, involving new service paradigms in fields such as cross-cultural mental health, school-based services, and services for survivors of torture. Silverman’s ability to impact the broader field of immigrant services was enhanced by the state dollars he controlled for the provision of citizenship and interpreting services, supplementing the federal dollars for refugee resettlement work.

One of the organizations that Silverman aided was the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), a grouping of over 100 immigrant advocacy and service organizations which Silverman’s office helped to create in the mid-eighties (Silverman n.d., 4). On the eve of the executive order, Silverman’s office managed a program called the Refugee and Immigrant Citizenship Initiative (RICI), which channeled about \$2.5 million in state funds to a network of some 35 community-based organizations for the provision of English and citizenship instruction to immigrants (No. 7, interview, 28 July 2010).<sup>1</sup> Most of these organizations were members of the Coalition. Not only did these organizations gain new resources, their leaders also encouraged community members to apply for citizenship and register to vote, building the political power of these communities. In addition, Silverman administered a project called the Illinois Interpreter and Translation Outreach Program (now-called the Illinois Family Resource Program), which awarded about \$1.6 million in state funds to immigrant and refugee community-based organizations to provide interpreter services for state agencies. The Coalition served as the fiscal and administrative agent for these funds (No. 8, interview, 19 December 2005). Programs such as these greatly strengthened the capacity of these organizations to become important players in Illinois politics. In 2002, Joshua Hoyt, a dynamic and experienced community organizer, trained in the tradition of Saul Alinsky, became executive director of the Coalition. Hoyt was determined to make the coalition a potent force in Illinois politics. Through the Coalition’s “New Americans Democracy Project,” Hoyt recruited young “democracy fellows” to engage in non-partisan voter registration and mobilization. Claiming that the Coalition had registered more than 40,000 immigrant voters in 2004 and 2005, Hoyt was someone that Governor Blagojevich wanted to court (Hoyt & Paral, 2005). In the meantime, key leaders from the immigrant service sector, such as Grace Hou, Executive Director of the Chinese Mutual Aid Association, and Jose Luis Gutierrez, Board Chair of the Instituto del Progreso Latino, were given major positions within the Blagojevich administration. Hou was appointed Assistant Secretary at the Illinois Department of Human Services in 2003 and Gutierrez was named as the Director of the Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy in 2006. Hou’s efforts to promote cultural competence within the Department of Human Services served as an important model for the Governor, helping to convince him to attempt a larger reform effort within state government (Illinois, DHS, 2009).

In addition to the ingredients of a willing governor, Silverman’s strong leadership, and a strong advocacy coalition and network, Illinois also had a philanthropic sector attuned to the needs

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1 I cite all interview sources anonymously by number.

of the immigrant population and willing to make investments in a demonstration project. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, for example, made a two-year grant of \$250,000 to the Coalition in 2005 and the Joyce Foundation followed with a two-year grant of \$150,000 in 2006 (Baldwin 2007, 7). These grants enabled the Coalition to hire staff and consultants to work on integration planning. Indeed, the MacArthur Foundation insisted that national dissemination activities be part of the Illinois project (No. 7, Interview, 28 July 2010). As a result, one year after the issuance of the executive order, when the results of “phase one” were ready to be presented, invitations were extended to 11 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Utah, Virginia, and Washington) to attend a meeting in Chicago on February 23, 2007. Each state was invited to form a delegation consisting of a policy analyst from the executive branch of state government, a local funder willing to invest in immigrant integration, and a representative from the state immigrant rights coalition (Copy of invitation dated 25 January 2007 in personal files of author). Also in attendance were representatives of major national foundations, including the Rockefeller Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and two funder collaboratives: the Four Freedoms Fund (see below) and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees — an affinity group of funders interested in immigration issues. This meeting provided both impetus and inspiration for similar organizing efforts in the four other states.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Carnegie Corporation of New York provided funding to the Illinois Coalition to award \$50,000 grants to coalitions in three other states (Maryland, Massachusetts, and Washington) undertaking similar projects (Curry 2008, 3).

## **Immigrant Community Activism Gets a Boost from National Foundations**

As events unfolded in Illinois, activists in other states were pressing for similar initiatives in their states. Their ability to convince governors to consider the Illinois model had much to do with the networking and organizational development that had occurred within the immigrant rights movement since 2003. In that year, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation — alarmed by the anti-immigrant rhetoric unleashed by the September 11 attacks — joined together to create The Four Freedoms Fund (The Fund), a collaborative grant-making initiative designed to strengthen the immigrant rights sector on the state and local level. By 2008, the Fund had provided \$25 million to support 85 grassroots efforts in 33 states (Baldwin, 2009, 2; Theroux, 2008). One dramatic result of this investment was the apparent boost it gave to the mass mobilization to protest the “Sensenbrenner bill” that took place throughout the country in 2006, described by Joshua Hoyt as “the largest civil rights demonstrations in U.S. History.” Between March and June of that year, more than three million immigrants and their supporters took to the streets to protest a bill in Congress that would have criminalized illegal presence in the country and penalized charitable organizations for providing humanitarian assistance to undocumented immigrants. Although the state coalitions were not the sole organizers (Mexican hometown

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2 Illinois’ effort to provide technical assistance to other states did not stop with this meeting. A subsequent national meeting was held a year later, by which time both New Jersey and Washington State had issued executive orders. Illinois leaders also participated in at least one special technical assistance session via videoconference with members of the New Jersey Blue Ribbon Panel on Immigrant Policy on March 13, 2008 (No. 6, Interview, 23 July 2010).

associations, Spanish-speaking media personalities, religious and labor leaders also played key roles), the coalitions helped to harness and direct the collective energy of these various players. A joint report on the marches, issued by the Fund and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (Wang and Winn, 2006, 3), credited the success of the marches to the confluence of “groundswell” with “groundwork” and cited the limited capacity of the coalitions to manage the awakening giant of immigrant community activism as justification for increased national funding.

The Four Freedoms Fund was quite intentional in its effort to build and sustain the immigrant civic sector. Not only did the Fund provide financial support to increase core staffing, it also devoted considerable attention to organizational capacity-building by creating opportunities for coalition leaders to meet and interact with one another on a regular basis and by contracting with technical assistance providers to mentor coalition leaders and sharpen their organizational skills. For example, the Nonprofit Finance Fund offered fund-raising and fund management advice, and the Alliance for Justice helped organizations remain in compliance with lobbying rules. Coalition directors also received leadership, communication, and e-advocacy training. The Fund designated the 11 strongest coalitions as “anchor coalitions,” enabling them to benefit from the widest array of support services. These were the coalitions that were invited to participate in the Chicago meeting mentioned earlier. All four of the other executive order states: Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Washington were represented at that meeting (Baldwin 2009, 4). National foundations also made grants to public sector organizations, including the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Governors Association (NGA), to advance a state immigrant integration agenda. The James L. Knight Foundation, for example, funded the NGA’s Center for Best Practices to conduct two webinars on immigrant integration and to convene a two-day roundtable of state officials in 2008 to share best practices and produce an issue brief on immigrant integration (National Governors Association 2009).

## **Role of Research and Reports**

In the meantime, there were developments occurring in these states that helped to create fertile ground for such initiatives. One such development was the appearance of a series of national and local reports pointing to the importance of immigrant integration as a national and local policy goal. In 2006, for example, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees published a 254-page “Toolkit” for funders interested in supporting effective “strategies for immigrant integration.” Designed “to catalyze inquiry, exploration, and action to promote effective integration programs and policies across the United States and beyond,” the Toolkit emphasized “multi-sector involvement” in integration work and highlighted a range of “promising practices” in the United States and Canada. Not unexpectedly, the Illinois executive order received prominent attention in the Toolkit and may have sparked the interest of funders elsewhere in the country to think about community-wide, comprehensive integration efforts (GCIR 2006).

State-focused studies were also laying the groundwork for the executive orders. Here again, Illinois was very much in the vanguard. In 1995, the state launched the Illinois Immigrant Policy Project (IIPP) to conduct research and analysis around issues concerning immigrants

and to develop policies and programs to promote immigrant integration. A 21-member Steering Committee consisting of representatives of immigrant and refugee serving organizations, state agencies, and policy experts, including those from the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., worked to produce a series of reports on key issues in immigrant integration. Most of the funding to produce these reports came from Silverman's Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services. In Fiscal Year 2003 alone, the Project released a series of four reports on the needs of immigrants in areas such as immigration law, labor, education, health, and human service.<sup>3</sup>

Although not as formalized and extensive as IIPP, research in the other states also helped set the stage and build support for integration projects. In Massachusetts, the Immigrant Learning Center — an immigrant adult education provider located in the Boston suburb of Malden — commissioned a series of six studies focusing on the economic contributions of immigrants in Massachusetts. Released from 2005 to 2010, the studies were funded by several local corporations and foundations and prepared by faculty and researchers affiliated with a number of local universities.<sup>4</sup> In Maryland, three studies laid “a sound empirical foundation” for the work of the Maryland Council for New Americans: an Urban Institute report on immigrants and the Maryland economy funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Capps and Fortuny 2008), a report from the Migration Policy Institute on skilled migrants (Batlova, Fix & Creticos 2008), and a 2008 report by the Maryland Department of Legislative Services entitled “International Immigration: The Impact on Maryland Communities” (Referenced in Maryland 2009, 6). In New Jersey, the Fund for New Jersey commissioned a report from the National Immigration Forum, which I authored, that assessed the need for a state integration strategy and anticipated many of the recommendations in the subsequent New Jersey report (Montalto 2006).

## The Nature of Executive Order Projects

### Common Goal and Process Elements

We turn now to the actual projects themselves, identifying common and divergent goal, process and output elements, recognizing, however, that a full assessment of the work of the various projects will take many years to complete. Indeed, some of the proponents of the projects understood from the outset that they were trying to trigger a long-term and transformative process of change in state government.

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3 Information about the Immigrant Policy Project drawn from the website of the Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs: <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30363>, Accessed 22 June 2010.

4 The first study (Borges-Mendez et al 2005) explored the connection between immigrant entrepreneurs and neighborhood revitalization. Subsequent studies looked at the contribution of immigrants in the biotechnology, health care, and hotel and leisure and hospitality industries (Monti et al 2007, Borges-Mendez et al 2009, Jennings et al 2010). A final study (Clayton-Matthews et al 2009) examined broad demographic characteristics and the “social footprint” of immigrants in the state and was cited extensively in the final report of the Massachusetts Council.

## A. In Pursuit of Immigrant Integration

All five states framed their work as an effort to achieve “immigrant integration.” Three of the states borrowed or adapted a definition of immigrant integration developed by Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR):

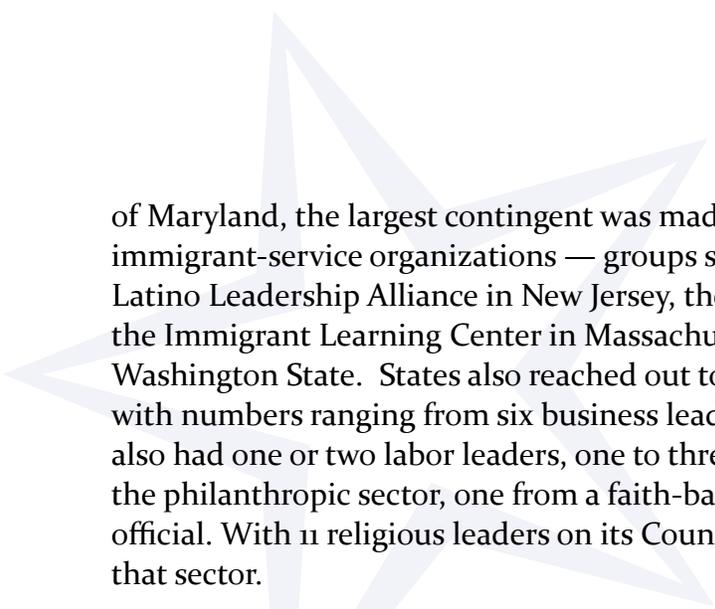
*Immigrant integration is a dynamic, two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities.*

Illinois and Washington State repeated the GCIR definition verbatim, whereas Massachusetts modified it somewhat, referring to “the combination of separate components into a harmonious whole” and “a two-way commitment with the host community and the newcomer population agreeing to work together to create a more prosperous future and a healthier, more secure Commonwealth” (Illinois, Council 2008, 5; Washington 2009, 5; Massachusetts 2009, 7). Maryland recognized that “integration is a complex, multifaceted, interconnected, and ongoing enterprise,” and opted to explore the implications of integration in four key areas: workforce development, citizenship, financial literacy, and governmental access.” In a glossary included in the appendix to its report, Maryland borrowed a definition from a publication of the Migration Policy Institute, i.e. “the process of economic mobility and social inclusion of newcomers to a host society; sometimes referred to as assimilation or incorporation” (**Maryland 2009, 55**). The New Jersey report and appendices did not attempt any formal definition of the term.

## B. The Executive Order Process

Besides being initiated through executive orders, all five states convened bodies, generally called councils, to study immigrant integration issues and to report back to the Governor within a specified time frame — from 9 months to two years. Three of the five bodies (Illinois, New Jersey and Washington State) had limited life-spans and disbanded upon completion of their work assignments. One body (Massachusetts) was a pre-existing advisory group expanded to include new members with policy and economic expertise and granted new authority by the governor, and another (Maryland) was a newly-created body designed to provide on-going advice and consultation to the governor even after completion of its initial 9-month task of producing a report.

Membership on the various bodies ranged from a low of 15 in Washington State to a high of 41 in Maryland, with an average of 29 members. The desire to create a public/private partnership was reflected in the composition of most of the groups. Three states (Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Jersey) appointed heads or representatives of major departments of state governments to serve on the Councils: 9 in New Jersey, 11 in Massachusetts, and 14 in Maryland. Illinois created a 20-member parallel body, called the New Americans Interagency Task Force, consisting of high-ranking officials within various departments and agencies of state government. Washington State seemed to view its council primarily as a source of community input and appointed only one member from state government to serve on the council. All states worked to ensure that diverse sectors were represented among the public members of their councils. With the exception



of Maryland, the largest contingent was made up of representatives of ethnic, immigrant or immigrant-service organizations — groups such as Erie Neighborhood House in Illinois, the Latino Leadership Alliance in New Jersey, the Organization of Chinese Americans in Maryland, the Immigrant Learning Center in Massachusetts, and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project in Washington State. States also reached out to the business community to serve on the councils, — with numbers ranging from six business leaders in Maryland to two in Washington. Every council also had one or two labor leaders, one to three academics or educators, at least one person from the philanthropic sector, one from a faith-based community or organization, and one local public official. With 11 religious leaders on its Council, Maryland had the largest representation from that sector.

In two states (Massachusetts and Washington), governors housed the councils within the office of the state refugee coordinator. In New Jersey, staff support was provided by the Department of the Public Advocate; in Maryland, support was provided by the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives, although additional support was provided by the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, under then-secretary Thomas E. Perez. Befitting its status as the “gold standard” of executive order projects, Illinois created a special Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy within the Governor’s Office to coordinate and link the internal and external bodies created to implement the executive order in that state.

In three of the five states, the executive orders either assigned formal roles to state immigrant rights coalitions or relied on staff support from the coalitions in implementing the executive orders. As stipulated in the Massachusetts executive order, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) would “organize a series of public meetings to take testimony from community groups, business leaders, local officials and other interested persons.” The Executive Director of MIRA was also named co-chair of the Council. In Washington State, the state coalition, called OneAmerica, would also coordinate the gathering of public testimony, as well as arrange the printing of the final report. In Illinois, ICIRR staffed the New Americans Policy Council, coordinated the input of experts, and helped to write the two formal reports produced by the project. The councils used a variety of methods for soliciting public and expert input into their fact-finding process. In four of the five states, hearings or special meetings were held to solicit the views of the general public or particular constituencies.<sup>5</sup> The Maryland Council, with the largest membership of the five state bodies, did not conduct public hearings, although all meetings were open to the public. All states enjoyed some level of private support for the

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5 New Jersey held three public hearings in three geographic areas of the state attracting a total attendance of about 500. Testimony, both oral and written, was received from 195 individuals and organizations (New Jersey 2009, 3-4). Washington State took testimony at two community meetings in Tacoma and Pasco, which drew a combined total of about 130 participants (No. 9, interview, 5 August 2010). Although formal hearings were not held in Illinois, the Policy Council hosted two large consultation dinners in order to secure input from “hundreds of immigrant leaders.” Massachusetts drew about 1,200 people to events organized and hosted by ten immigrant-service organizations in six different cities. The state also hosted a number of “policy meetings – in which over 175 state agency staff, community experts, and policy professionals met for two rounds of discussions about issues involving public safety, housing, youth, health, economic/workforce development, education, and civil rights” (Massachusetts 2009, 5-6, 9).

initiative. As mentioned earlier, private support was particularly significant in Illinois, but also a factor in other states, with amounts ranging from \$400,000 in Washington State, ca \$200,000 in Massachusetts, and lesser amounts in New Jersey and Maryland.<sup>6</sup>

## Common Substantive Elements

We now turn to an analysis of some of the key recommendations made by the various councils, as contained in their reports to the governors. There were many uniformities across all reports, as well as some recommendations unique to specific states.

### A. Expanding Immigrant Adult Education and Citizenship Preparation Efforts

One recurring theme in all reports was the importance of state support for adult English language instruction and citizenship preparation programs. The first-year Illinois report affirmed “that the most strategic and empowering actions that the State of Illinois can take to foster immigrant integration, immigrant success, and social cohesion is to actively promote English and U.S. citizenship campaigns” (**Illinois, Council 2006, 13**.)” Noting the mismatch between class supply and student demand, as evidenced by the existence of long waiting lists for admission to ESL classes, the report recommended the establishment of a \$25 million “We Want to Learn English” campaign. At least 50% of these new funds should be allocated to “community programs, with priority given to organizations in communities with emerging immigrant populations.”

The Illinois report (pp 14-15) also recommended expansion of the “New Americans Initiative,” a \$3 million citizenship campaign launched by the State of Illinois in 2005 in partnership with the Illinois Coalition. According to the website for this project (<http://icirr.org/en/nai>, Accessed 1 September 2010), some 35 ethnic and other community-based organizations received funding to organize citizenship “workshops” to help potential applicants understand eligibility requirements for citizenship, resolve legal issues, and fill out application forms with the assistance of trained volunteers. The emphasis on English language learning and citizenship preparation was echoed in other state reports. The Washington report, for example, borrowing the Illinois wording, also recommended new funding for a “We Want to Learn English” campaign. Likewise, Washington

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6 In Massachusetts, the Bob Hildreth Charitable Foundation contributed more than \$100,000 to bolster staffing at the Massachusetts Coalition over a two-year period, while the Barr Foundation, Partners Health, and other donors contributed approximately another \$100,000 (No. 2, interview, 24 June 2010; Curry 2008, 12). In Washington State, the Seattle-based Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation channeled \$400,000 in funding to One America, the Washington immigrant rights coalition, to cover the match requirement on a state grant for citizenship services, costs associated with convening two community outreach sessions, as well as production and distribution costs of the final report (No. 9, interview, 8 August 2010). In New Jersey, grants of \$25,000 from the Community Foundation of New Jersey and \$50,000 from the Laborers’ Eastern Region Organizing Fund were given to the newly created Program on Immigration and Democracy at Rutgers University for the purpose of convening a series of three symposia on topics related to immigrant integration and producing a report on the economic contribution of immigrants to New Jersey. And lastly in Maryland, the Annie E. Casey Foundation underwrote the production of two reports by The Urban Institute: the first on the economic contribution of immigrants to Maryland, and the second on the educational progress of immigrant children in the state. The Foundation also underwrote printing costs of the final report of the Council.

(2009, 6-7) recommended the continuation and expansion of state funding for naturalization services, with special attention to underserved areas of the state.<sup>7</sup>

## **B. Facilitating Language Access**

Another common strand in all the reports was the emphasis on access to government or government-funded services through language assistance or other initiatives. In Illinois, the first year report (2006, 21) of the New Americans Policy Council identified language access as one of the four key integration challenges faced by the state. The Council went on to recommend that every state agency should develop language and workforce diversity plans and that the Governor's Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy should be made a permanent entity in order to monitor implementation of these plans. The Illinois Interagency Task Force Report (2006, 14-16) supported and amplified on these recommendations, calling for the development of standardized tests to certify the competence of bilingual employees, new contracting standards to ensure cultural and linguistic competence in the delivery of state-funded services, and the collection of data on primary languages both by the state and its vendors.

Language access also occupied the attention of panel members in the other four states. New Jersey's report, for example, discussed language access in a wide variety of contexts, including healthcare, domestic violence, disaster management, court proceedings, and general social services. The New Jersey Panel (2009, Appendix, 42-44) recommended that monitoring and technical assistance functions related to language access be assigned to a proposed Commission on New Americans.<sup>8</sup>

## **C. Establishing Welcome Centers**

All panels also endorsed the establishment of immigrant "welcome centers" as hubs of "one-stop" information and referral on state and community-based services. Although the welcome center approach is open to varying interpretation, the Illinois model seemed to attract the most attention. In Illinois, the Interagency Task Force (2006, 7) – the internal body made up of representatives of 11 state agencies — made the creation of welcome centers the first of its seven

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7 In Washington State, the New Americans Policy Council (2009, 30-32) recommended that the Governor sign a Language Access Executive Order creating a new Office of Language Access to provide cross-departmental technical assistance in this area. In Massachusetts, the New Americans Agenda (2009, 29-30) called for a "fully funded" state language access office, housed within the Office for Refugees and Immigrants. The office would negotiate contracts with community-based organizations and language service agencies to make language resources available within state government. The Maryland report (2009, 39-43) urged the formation of a cabinet-level office to monitor Title VI compliance; the systematic collection of data on client primary language; and clearer guidance to state employees on the "reasonable steps" that state agencies must take under Maryland's 2002 language access law.

8 In Washington State, the New Americans Policy Council (2009, 30-32) recommended that the Governor sign a Language Access Executive Order creating a new Office of Language Access to provide cross-departmental technical assistance in this area. In Massachusetts, the New Americans Agenda (2009, 29-30) called for a "fully funded" state language access office, housed within the Office for Refugees and Immigrants. The office would negotiate contracts with community-based organizations and language service agencies to make language resources available within state government. The Maryland report (2009, 39-43) urged the formation of a cabinet-level office to monitor Title VI compliance; the systematic collection of data on client primary language; and clearer guidance to state employees on the "reasonable steps" that state agencies must take under Maryland's 2002 language access law.

“global” recommendations. As understood in Illinois, a welcome center was a one-stop facility, located in an area of heavy immigrant concentration, offering access to a wide range of state services, as well as information about and referrals to community services. Less than a year after the Task Force made its recommendation, the first Welcome Center in the United States opened its doors in September, 2007, in the Chicago suburb of Melrose Park. With a budget of \$1.1 million for operational expenses contributed by eight separate Illinois state agencies, the Center was housed in a community college and staffed with four state employees and eight co-located staff of immigrant-serving organizations (Chen, 2008). Illinois’ success in establishing the Center inspired the other four states to recommend similar initiatives.<sup>9</sup>

## **D. Addressing the Plight of the Undocumented**

Although project participants generally focused on state and local action to promote immigrant integration, they also called attention to the need for federal immigration reform and in several instances, to state measures to ease the plight of undocumented immigrants, such as in-state college tuition for undocumented children and state-issued driver’s licenses or certificates for undocumented individuals. Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Washington State were particularly emphatic about the importance of such interim measures. Both Massachusetts and New Jersey urged their legislatures to offer in-state college tuition for undocumented children (Washington State and Illinois had already passed such legislation). Massachusetts (2009, 21) went one step further by recommending that undocumented students be made eligible for state college financial aid programs. Massachusetts and New Jersey also pointed to the public safety threat posed by the denial of driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants and recommended federal or state action to address this problem. The New Jersey report (2009, 94) urged the state to “support the previously filed amicus briefs that oppose the City of Hazleton’s attempt to prohibit both the employment and housing of undocumented immigrants under a city ordinance.” In Washington State, one of the few states that still permit undocumented individuals to drive, the principal concern was federal action to regularize the status of undocumented immigrants. The Washington report (2009, 41) observed that the integration of undocumented immigrants was “one of (the) state’s biggest challenges,” and urged the Governor to continue her public support and advocacy for comprehensive immigration reform. Illinois touched on the subject

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<sup>9</sup> The New Jersey report (2009, 86) recommended the establishment of one or more “one-stop” welcome centers around the state “to guide and support immigrants through the maze of state and local resources” and to provide “targeted services” similar to those provided by immigrant settlement centers in Canada. Maryland’s report (2009, 27, 23) also endorsed the creation of welcome centers in order to “make critical information easily available” to immigrants. The Centers would also function as hubs for a “robust coordinated citizenship initiative” with a projected five-year budget of \$12.5 million derived from a combination of public and private sources. The panel concluded that the centers could be “housed at existing immigrant-friendly community-based organizations that are recognized and trusted by the community, primarily nonprofits and community colleges.” One of the major recommendations in the Washington State report (2009, 8) was to “establish sources of centralized, ‘one stop’ information for immigrants and refugees.” The report laid out a sequence of action steps to be taken over the short, medium, and long term, beginning with the development of a “very simple, multilingual website that provides important information and links to resources and benefits” and a feasibility study to determine the costs and requirements for a physical welcome center. Until a physical welcome center could be established, the Council urged the state to organize “mobile resource fairs” or “welcoming center days” in high-density immigrant areas across the state.” The Massachusetts Report didn’t explicitly call for the creation of welcome centers, but it did propose the establishment of “a multilingual resource line or office for immigrants and other newcomers to access information about state services”

of undocumented immigrants only in its “community safety” recommendations, urging local police “to craft policies restricting police inquiries regarding immigration status.” Maryland alone seemed to shy away from issues involving undocumented immigrants. Although the state had yet to pass an in-state tuition bill, this issue was not mentioned in the report because, in the words of one interviewee, the Council did not see its role as “pushing the legislature” on any integration issue (No. 4, interview, 13 July 2010).

## **E. Creating State Offices to Coordinate and Manage Integration Activities**

All reports recommended either the creation of new state offices or the expansion of existing offices to coordinate or manage immigrant integration activities. However, with the exception of language access, there was no discernible pattern as to the extent to which these activities should be cross-departmental in nature (the “horizontal approach”) or distributed to existing or newly-created offices within the various departments and agencies of state government (the “siloe d approach”). Three of the five states emphasized the role of the governor in driving the process of change. By creating the Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy within the Governor’s Office, Illinois recognized the importance of executive leadership, but did not assign program management functions to that office.<sup>10</sup>

The so-called “hybrid model” (both “horizontal” and “siloe d”) was endorsed by a special symposium of experts convened by the Program on Immigration and Democracy at Rutgers University in connection with its research in support of the work of the New Jersey Blue Ribbon Panel. The final New Jersey report (2009, 89-90, Appendix 42-44) envisioned nine key functions to be performed by a horizontal entity, including Title VI language access compliance, support for the integration work of county and municipal government, and “assessing the effectiveness of state agencies in serving immigrants through data collection, research, analysis, and reporting.” The report went on to recommend that the Governor’s Chief-of-Staff or designee should chair a “Governor’s Commission on New Americans” and that “the Commission must be closely affiliated with the Governor because the influence and authority of the Governor are essential to effectively carrying out the office’s core mission.”<sup>11</sup>

Both the Massachusetts and Maryland councils also recommended that new centers of coordination and leadership for immigrant integration should be established within state government, but that these new functions should be assumed by existing refugee resettlement offices. In order to strengthen the connection with the governor, the executives of these offices should be granted cabinet-member status. The Massachusetts report (2009, 29) recommended “a fully funded Office for Refugees and Immigrants, to coordinate state policy on language access.”

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10 Two signature Illinois immigrant integration programs were housed within the Department of Human Services. The New Americans Initiative was managed by the Department’s Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs, and the Illinois Family Resource Program was managed by the Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance.

11 When Governor Jon Corzine — in the waning days of his administration in early 2009 — ultimately created the Commission by executive order, he placed it within the Department of the Public Advocate and appointed a private citizen, not a member of the Governor’s staff, as its chairperson.

This office would also negotiate contracts with community-based organizations and outside vendors to deliver language services across inter-departmental lines. The Maryland report (2009, 43) advised the Governor to “consolidate New Americans functions in one office, primarily Title VI compliance, workforce development, and resettlement functions.” The Washington State report (2009, 8) refrained from recommending even a permanent advisory body, but did call for the creation of an office of language access to ensure compliance with Title VI requirements and to provide technical assistance to state agencies.

## **Other Recommendations**

The executive order reports dealt with many other issues, some discussed in all reports and others in only a few. All states, for example, examined the re-credentialing needs of highly-educated and highly-skilled immigrants. Maryland and Washington State gave this issue special prominence. Maryland (2009, 15), for example, urged the creation of “a credentialing office for foreign-trained professionals” staffed with “specially trained professional navigators.” Washington (2009, 38) called for the state’s higher education institutions to establish tailored educational programs to enable skilled professionals to transition into their respective fields. Three of the five states (Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey) examined the Pre-K - 12 educational system. The Massachusetts report (2009, 19-21) proposed initiatives in early education, parental involvement, curriculum issues, staffing, professional development, dual language immersion programs, and dropout prevention.

In the time-honored tradition of states acting as innovators and incubators of new ideas, a number of recommendations, perhaps reflecting the demographics or special circumstances existing in those states or the interest and expertise of council members, were unique to particular states. For example, Washington State (2009, 7) sought to address economic barriers to naturalization by providing tax incentives to employers who subsidize citizenship filing fees for their employees, encouraging unions to include citizenship benefits in union contracts, allowing use of Individual Development Accounts to cover filing fees, and giving public employees 3-5 hours a week of paid time off to participate in citizenship preparation classes. New Jersey (2009, 29-37) gave special attention to labor law violations, especially in low-wage industries that employ large numbers of immigrants. The New Jersey panel called for increased penalties on employers who misclassify employees, including the revocation of business charters; a targeted approach to the investigation of industries with chronic violations but low complaint rates; and the formation of industry task forces to engage in self-policing activities. Massachusetts (2009, 28) sought to increase the availability of public transportation in underserved areas to enable immigrants and other low-income populations to access job opportunities. Taken in their entirety, the reports cover a multitude of issues and lay out an ambitious agenda for reform. Whether the political will and resources exist to implement this agenda is a whole other matter, which we will turn to now.

# An Assessment of Executive Order Projects

## Areas of Strength

To the extent that immigrant integration is a cross-cutting challenge, determining equitable access to state resources and services, then state officials can theoretically achieve major improvements and efficiencies in service delivery by developing mechanisms to promote inter-departmental communication and resource-sharing on immigration-related issues. Likewise, efforts to promote immigrant workforce integration and immigrant entrepreneurship as key economic development strategies for states and localities will yield benefits for all state residents. Executive order projects, therefore, help to spearhead appropriate action by relevant state bodies and create a broader vision of government, responsive to the needs of diverse communities and attentive to the economic impact of immigration.

One of the major benefits of all the executive order projects is to open up stronger lines of communication between underserved communities and state government. As one official in New Jersey opined, the ability to have a high-level dialogue with the governor on a broad range of immigration-related issues raised the importance of immigration as a public policy issue. To the extent that governors and other state officials are unfamiliar with the realities of immigrant life, this kind of dialogue reveals problems and resources that might otherwise remain hidden. Not only do advisory or deliberative bodies of this nature open a window on community needs, they also permit government officials to work out solutions in consultation with people who may have insights or expertise missing within the bureaucracy, thereby sparing state government the consequences of poor decisions or costly mistakes. Although not always perfect mirrors of their respective communities, these bodies— especially if carefully constituted – may be a source of valuable information and an effective sounding board for new policies and programs. From this perspective, the decision of states like Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Jersey to give their councils an on-going advisory function appears wise.

Executive order projects also combat the inertia of bureaucracies, as well as the tendency to discriminate against newcomers. The churning of populations is likely to be a continuing feature of life in the United States. As community demographics change, governments must adapt to new challenges and new cultural and social configurations in local communities. By creating center of high-level leadership on immigrant integration within state government, projects of this type serve as catalysts for new thinking and creative solutions. They have the potential to develop appropriate metrics for measuring results across various policy and service domains and to promote the introduction of good practices in service delivery.

Finally, such projects enable states to serve as laboratories for testing various approaches to immigrant integration, including strategies to ensure their sustainability over time, such as partnerships with private sector organizations, structural innovations, and leadership changes. In this manner, executive order states are laying the groundwork for future federal/state partnerships to promote immigrant integration. Although it is much too soon to assess the full impact of these

projects, it is noteworthy that some recommendations are already being implemented. In Illinois, not only is the Welcome Center a reality, but the state funded an organization called Upwardly Global in early 2009 to provide training and mentoring services to underemployed immigrant professionals. In Maryland, the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation created a new position of “New Americans Workforce Coordinator” to train Workforce Investment Boards and job counselors around the state to respond effectively to the needs of immigrants (No. 4, interview, 13 July 2010). Maryland also designed an AmeriCorps program to promote citizenship and guide immigrants through the citizenship process, and established an interdepartmental Language Access Working Group to consider the Council’s recommendations in this area (Maryland 2009, 37-44; No. 10, interview, 10 August 2010). In Washington State, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded OneAmerica a grant of \$600,000 to implement the “We Want to Learn English” campaign, focusing on the use of technology and distance learning to improve learning outcomes (No. 9, interview, 5 August 2010). In Massachusetts, an inter-governmental work group has been tasked with implementing key recommendations in the New Americans Agenda.

## Areas of Vulnerability

**Politicizing Immigrant Integration:** Despite these important achievements, the executive order projects may have been too closely associated with the political orientation and electoral fortunes of the Democratic Party. While governors may be genuinely committed to immigrant integration as a process, and see a role for state government in fostering that process, they may also calibrate the projects to win electoral support within immigrant communities while avoiding antagonizing independent and traditional democratic voters. The stated goals of these projects may not be nearly as important to public officials as the unstated ones, e.g. to gain votes, or to placate critics by appearing to take action on an issue. When an integration project is dependent on a politician as primary champion — even a politician as important as the governor — the project may appear dispensable to a new governor, especially one from another party, because of its association with a prior administration. This is not to say that achieving a bipartisan consensus on immigrant integration will be easy, only that the sustainability of these initiatives may depend on it, or failing that, on embedding integration into the bureaucracy.

**Allowing Community Activists to Dominate the Process:** The projects have also generally operated in a traditional interest group manner, treating immigrants and their supporters as the primary constituency for immigrant integration and hence not according sufficient attention to other groups with a stake in the integration process, including business, law enforcement, and various professional associations. With the exception of Maryland, executive order states recruited leaders of immigrant advocacy and service organizations to fill the majority of seats on their councils. Many of these individuals were committed to easing the plight of the undocumented both through an earned legalization program as part of comprehensive federal immigration reform, and through gradualist approaches, such as in-state tuition, local identity cards, or driver’s licenses. By inserting the issue of the undocumented into the policy debate on immigrant integration, they may have inadvertently undermined public support for the broader

set of integration recommendations made by the various councils. In a certain sense, advocates played into the hands of their nativist opponents, who were manipulating the undocumented issue, with its undertones of lawlessness, to win public support for a broader anti-immigrant agenda. Clear evidence of this conflation of issues can be seen in the publicity surrounding the release of some of the reports. When the New Jersey report was made public, the inflammatory headline in the state's leading newspaper (The Star-Ledger, 31 March 2009) was "panel wants new rights for illegals;" in Massachusetts, the Boston Globe (17 November 2009) proclaimed: "tuition, driver's licenses urged for illegal immigrants." Also in Massachusetts, a group called "Speak Up and Matter" organized a petition drive to reject the entire "New Americans Agenda," as the state's report was called, because, it claimed, each of its 133 recommendations, not just the ones specifically addressing undocumented immigrants, would benefit "illegal aliens."<sup>12</sup> By way of contrast, the Maryland report – which generally avoided the volatile issue of undocumented migration – was profiled in the weekly report of the Center for Best Practices of the National Governor's Association (18 September 2009).

**Practicing Interest Group Politics:** By acting as if an immigrant integration agenda resonated with immigrants only, and by creating advisory bodies and/or offices designed to advance the interests of immigrants, according to an agenda crafted by activists, the projects may have unwittingly undermined their long-term viability. Often these bodies are the stuff of jokes, both because they tend to proliferate without any meaningful connections to actual governance, and because they often exist to placate an important constituency. As governments seek to streamline their operations, in order to eliminate waste, and as conservatives harbor reservations as to what they perceive to be the ethnic fragmentation of society, these bodies will be candidates for elimination. This has already happened in one of the five states. After taking office in January of 2010, newly-elected New Jersey Governor Chris Christie appointed an eight-member Red Tape Review Group, which recommended that 20 executive orders issued by the previous governor, including the one that created the Commission on New Americans, be considered for rescission. The Group also developed a list of more than 75 task forces, boards, councils, and commissions that might be axed by the new governor (New Jersey 2010, 28, Appendix I). Although as of this writing, the Commission survives; its fate is very much in doubt.

Redundancy of purpose is another conundrum faced by immigrant offices. In at least two states, proposals to create new immigrant affairs offices were thought to threaten the existence and/or funding of pre-existing offices serving the Latino and Asian communities. There are at least 15 states with Latino affairs commissions or offices, many of them with paid staff.<sup>13</sup> Knowing that the governor had proposed a budget cutting funding for all state ethnic commissions, activists in Washington State refrained from bringing forth a proposal to create an immigrant affairs office, fearing that any resources allocated to the office might be perceived as coming at the expense of the commissions (No. 9, interview, 5 August 2010). In New Jersey, the future of the

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12 A copy of the petition may be found at: <http://speakupandmatter.blogspot.com/2009/12/say-no-to-illegal-aliens-benefitting.html> (Accessed 29 November 2010).

13 A list of these entities may be found on the website of the Maryland Governor's Commission on Latino Affairs: <http://www.hispanic.maryland.gov/commissions.html>, Accessed August 7, 2010.

Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development, which managed more than \$3 million in grant funding for Hispanic community-based organizations, a portion of which was dedicated to immigrant services, was a complicating factor in deliberations over an immigrant affairs office. Some feared that the Center's funding might be diverted to support an immigrant affairs office; others thought that the Center should be the locus of integration services within state government, not some new office (No. 6, interview, 23 July 2010). The existence of other bodies within state government, with functions that overlap those of any proposed immigrant affairs office, suggests the need to streamline and coordinate future efforts to address diversity in the delivery of state services.

Another manifestation of interest group politics may be found in the alliances forged between state government and the immigrant rights community. Four of the five projects assigned key roles to local immigrant rights coalitions in securing community input into the planning process, undertaking background research, and managing integration projects. It is debatable whether this kind of prominence helped to advance the goal of immigrant integration. To the extent that the independence of the various councils may have been compromised by the perception of an alliance between immigrant rights groups and state government, the recommendations of the council may have fallen on deaf ears. Likewise, the immigrant rights coalitions, by accepting state money for re-granting to community-based organizations, however important as a strategy for organizational development or as a way of achieving greater efficiencies in state contracting, could succumb to playing favorites among their member organizations or enfeeble their advocacy work so as not to antagonize their government funders (No. 8, interview, 4 August 2010). While input into the planning process from the immigrant community is crucial, its control of the process may be unwise.

**Focusing Attention on Targeted Programs:** The sustainability of immigrant integration initiatives may also be threatened by the instability of all programs targeting what are often perceived to be narrow constituencies, especially immigrants who are subject to so much negative stereotyping and vilification. Any hint or suggestion that an immigrant integration initiative might benefit the undocumented population is enough to erode public support. For those who believe in rugged individualism and the fundamental fairness of American capitalism, targeted programs for immigrants appear to undermine initiative and foster dependence. This skepticism extends even to the pro-immigrant elements of the Republican Party. As Peter Skerry (2003, 26-27) has pointed out, American conservatives tend to be suspicious of all expressions of racial and ethnic group consciousness. These "immigrant-policy skeptics," as he calls them, whether fiscal conservatives, cultural conservatives or business interests, share a "pervasive laissez-faire ideology" and "tend to embrace high levels of immigration but are not very enthusiastic about programs to support immigrants once they are here." Advancing a version of history consistent with this ideological view, they believe that today's immigrants can pick themselves up by their bootstraps, just as they think earlier immigrants did, without the creation of special social programs. Although the Americanization movement in the United States remains poorly understood, and some of the institutions like political machines, labor unions, and a robust manufacturing sector, that facilitated immigrant integration in earlier times are shrunken in size

or no longer exist, people are prone to romanticizing the degree of self-reliance shown by their ancestors. Targeted immigrant integration initiatives may also fail to enlist the support of other disadvantaged constituencies, especially African-Americans and people with disabilities, who, like immigrants, recognize that one-size-fits-all approaches are the vestige of a bygone era and that government must adapt to the diverse needs and resources of ethnocultural and other special needs communities. Advancing immigrant integration and rights may require the development of a broader agenda appealing to other sectors of society.

### **Uncertainty Surrounding the Definition and Measurement of Immigrant Integration:**

Another challenge in integration work is both definitional and methodological in nature. As the field of migration policy takes on greater importance, policy makers and practitioners will have to strive for greater precision in the definition of immigrant integration and in the measures and procedures used to evaluate integration outcomes. If state and federal resources are to be allocated or redirected for integration work, state officials will have to put in place systems to measure the impact of these investments. But before such systems can be developed, states will have to strive for greater clarity in their understanding of immigrant integration. What does a “secure, vibrant, and cohesive community” – the language used in the popular GCIR definition — actually mean? If integration is a “two-way process,” involving adjustments on the part of native-born and foreign-born alike, then what exactly are the expectations of the native-born? If adherence to the core principles of a democratic society is one measure of integration, then is it possible that immigrants might be better integrated than the native-born? And is there a conceptual flaw in pairing the word “integration” with “immigrant” alone, when social scientists understand integration to be a multi-generational process, historically taking at least three generations to reach some semblance of completion. Integration may also have different meanings for different types of migrants. Integration into a receiving society may be counterproductive for temporary or circular migrants. And as Howard Duncan points out (2010), we may be remiss in even thinking of integration as an end in itself, as the meaning of integration may vary depending on the larger goal one is trying to pursue. Is the goal of integration policy to perpetuate a set of common political values and institutions, or to strengthen the economy, or to address hardships and lack of opportunity among immigrants, or to build a bloc of new immigrant voters? While it may be theoretically possible to pursue all these goals simultaneously, it is hard to imagine that integration can be maintained as a public policy priority without attention to the political and economic dimensions of integration.

## **Charting a Way Forward**

How can executive order projects avoid being shipwrecked by the emotionally charged politics surrounding immigration or being drawn into the shallows of client politics, where token, piecemeal or symbolic actions are seen as substitutes for real reform? There are no easy answers to this question, but I would like to offer a few suggestions, based on the experience of policy makers

and advocates in the five states and my own understanding of how immigrant integration can be woven more tightly into the fabric of state governance.

## **Strive to Prevent Political Backlash**

Throughout U.S. history, immigration has engendered strong passions, often cresting during periods of economic downturn and national emergency. Concern about race, religion, ethnicity, national identity, and national security are often present, even if unspoken. Although the political debate often centers on admission numbers, border enforcement, and legalization of irregular migrants, opposition to current *immigration* policy can easily distort perceptions of *immigrant* policy, especially when the advocates for liberal immigration policies are the same people pressing for new integration policies, practices and resources. It may be advisable, therefore, to attempt a clear separation of these issues.

It might be argued (Johnson 2010; Skerry, 2009) that the opposition to irregular migration is a smokescreen for a much deeper unease with high levels of legal migration, and that immigrant integration projects will never receive broad political support from those unhappy with either the racial or cultural complexion of new migrants, both documented and undocumented, or their potential to take jobs from native-born Americans or to drain public resources, especially in the areas of health and education. Although nativists would probably never warm to immigrant integration as a public policy goal, some conservatives would find an emphasis on English and civics education, along with a demonstration of the economic and national security benefits of immigrant integration, to be appealing. Thus, if the long-term viability of integration projects hinges on building bipartisan support, as I am suggesting, then amelioration of the plight of the undocumented, even if consistent with a broad integration strategy, should be pursued either at the federal level and/or through separate actions by states and municipalities.

In this light, the states of Maryland and Illinois, which tended to steer clear of these issues, followed approaches best designed to win broad political support. Maryland, for example, was very deliberate about avoiding treacherous political waters, not only by bracketing undocumented issues, but also by working to build a broad coalition for change. As one participant said, they “knew from the start that they wanted as many groups as possible to rally around a truly collaborative process.” It was for this reason that the state recruited a large number of business and religious leaders to serve on its Council (No. 10, interview, 10 August 2010). Illinois already had a bipartisan immigration tradition to protect. In the nineties, Illinois Republican Governor James Edgar and key Republican legislators supported key integration initiatives, such as the Refugee and Immigrant Citizenship Initiative (RICI) and the Illinois Immigrant Policy Project. Even though Massachusetts chose to prioritize undocumented issues in its final report, its effort to engage over 175 experts in a series of six “policy group” meetings, even though some of these individuals did not agree with all the recommendations in the report, shows sensitivity to the importance of engaging other stakeholders, and has been described by one observer as “unique to the Massachusetts model and a best practice to be implemented in other states” (Shusterman 2009, 57). As political scientist Daniel Tichenor (2009) has pointed out, illegal immigration is

“an American minefield,” with the power to destroy commonsensical policy reform. Linking immigrant integration to legalization of the undocumented may be a strategy doomed to failure.

## **Embed Immigrant Integration into Regular Government Operations**

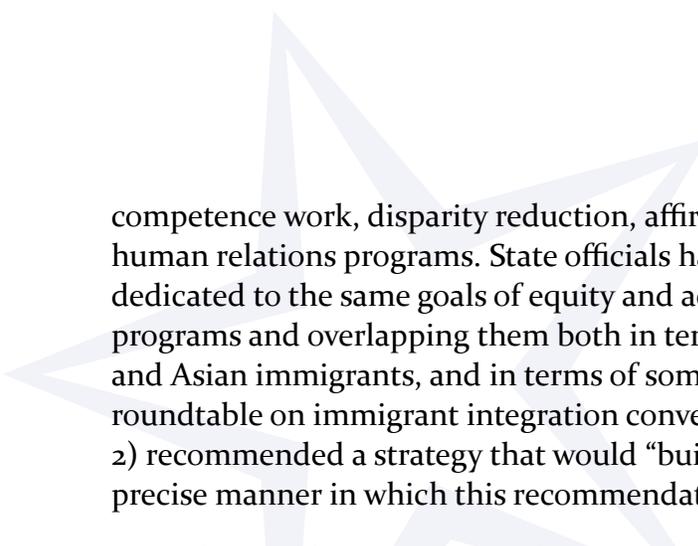
Another key question is the extent to which immigrant integration should be pursued through a set of targeted policy initiatives or through broad adaptations on the part of all human service and public safety programs administered by state and local government. This question has both substantive and tactical facets to it. Politically, it is much easier to maintain support for universalist as opposed to particularist approaches, i.e. for “mainstreamed” programs that serve the broader population as opposed to one segment of the population, especially segments defined by race, ethnicity, or place of birth (Brown et al 2008, 40-43). In many service domains, the goal of immigrant integration is advanced through effective outreach by existing programs, using culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate methods. If sociocultural diversity is an enduring feature of modern life, then continuing adaptations to the diversity of populations, whether immigrant or not, is a quality assurance imperative for all government or government-funded services. Yet, immigrants also have distinct needs, mostly related to lack of proficiency in English and familiarity with mainstream institutions, which call for the development or expansion of some targeted services. And universalist approaches run the risk of marginalizing immigrants if they only pay lip service to cultural competence or make only token efforts to serve immigrant populations. How best to reconcile these differing perspectives?

Certainly, the diffusion of immigrant integration as a policy goal important in multiple contexts is a key strategy. While four of the executive order projects sought to create or maintain “horizontal” centers of leadership and coordination for immigrant integration, housed within the Governor’s offices in Illinois and Maryland, the office of the state refugee coordinator in Massachusetts, and the Department of the Public Advocate in New Jersey, little attention was apparently given to the structural changes, or the “siloes” reforms, that would have to be made to institutionalize immigrant integration as a key function of the various departments, agencies, divisions, and programs of state government. Certainly the need for fiscal discipline at a time of budget austerity for state government may have dampened enthusiasm for siloed innovations, especially when the resources to establish or maintain horizontal offices for immigrant integration may have been in question. All projects, of course, developed recommendations specific to the various departments of state government, and representatives of those departments attempted to respond to those recommendations, but the environment for change within departments, including the nature and quality of leadership on immigrant issues, and whether immigrant integration could be embedded into preexisting structures, seems to have been largely overlooked. The one notable exception is the Illinois Department of Human Services which, under the leadership of its Assistant Secretary Grace Hou, undertook an effort to “re-engineer its service infrastructure,” creating a network of “LEP Liaisons” for its six divisions and appointing “LEP experts” to serve on the department’s primary advisory councils (Illinois Task Force 2006, 21; IDHS, 2009; No. 14, interview, 21 September 2010).

It should be pointed out that many states are not starting from scratch in their attention to the needs of minorities and immigrant populations. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, many of the states with the largest proportional populations of immigrants, such as California, Hawaii, New York, and Florida, have not followed Illinois in launching executive order-type projects. Yet these states have not been inattentive to the needs of immigrants. California, for example, enacted the “New Californians Act” in 2006, providing a legislative mandate for the \$3 million Naturalization Services Program (Curry 2008, 9). California is also attempting to develop a county-based infrastructure for immigrant integration, based on the pioneering work of Santa Clara County and with the support of 12 state and local foundations (Baldwin 2007, 11-12). In Hawaii, a law enacted in 2006 has led to the establishment of one of the most innovative state language access projects in the nation. The Hawaii Office of Language Access (<http://hawaii.gov/labor/ola>, Accessed 2 September 2010) provides oversight, coordination, training and technical assistance to state agencies as they comply with language access requirements. New York State, through the Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, is supporting the “New York Immigration Hotline” – a telephone information and referral service for immigrants in 17 languages; a \$3 million Citizenship Initiative; and an in-house Language Services Unit, to translate key state documents into the major languages spoken by immigrants in the state. In 2004, New York State also enacted the Immigration Assistance Services Law to combat the exploitation of immigrants by notarios and so-called immigration consultants; and in 2007, the New York State Department of Labor established a Bureau of Immigrant Workers’ Rights to crack down on labor law violations targeting immigrants (Markey 2007). Many of these programs were established as a result of advocacy by immigrant community activists and/or the threat of legal action to enforce compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Indeed, activists in New York deliberately chose not to push for an Illinois-style executive order project, believing that the state was more advanced in its integration work than other states, that any such project might actually stall the process of further reform within state government, and that the state had already set up a central office to promote immigrant integration through the New York State Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs. As one participant put it, “an aspirational statement” from a study commission “didn’t have salience in their context” (No. 8, interview, 4 August 2010). Nor did activists need a study commission to inform them of gaps and shortcomings that needed to be addressed in the future. To this participant, the highly touted partnership between immigrant leaders and state officials in Illinois appeared somewhat “incestuous” - compromising the ability of advocates to campaign for quick action on specific proposals and feeding the impression that advocates stood to gain from new grant monies for integration services awarded to their organizations.

However valid this critique may be, it points to a possible weakness in how executive order projects have been implemented. Elected officials have generally taken a narrow view of immigrant integration, as a series of steps to be taken to satisfy a new and growing constituency, rather than through the lens of professionalism and quality improvement in public service. In addition, there is little evidence that state officials have explored the possibility of anchoring immigrant integration within older initiatives to serve minority populations, such as cultural



competence work, disparity reduction, affirmative action, anti-discrimination initiatives, and human relations programs. State officials have thus tended to opt for a range of parallel structures, dedicated to the same goals of equity and adaptation to diversity reflected in these older programs and overlapping them both in terms of populations to be served, e.g. Hispanic, Black, and Asian immigrants, and in terms of some policy and programmatic elements. Although the roundtable on immigrant integration convened by the National Governor's Association (2008, 2) recommended a strategy that would "build upon existing infrastructure and resources," the precise manner in which this recommendation could be implemented seems ripe for exploration.

Several states, however, have taken steps to coordinate or unify these related functions. In Maryland, an earlier executive order issued by Governor Martin O'Malley, enacted into law by the state legislature in 2007, consolidated all ethnic commissions, i.e. African, African-American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern, as well as the Office on Service and Volunteerism, into a newly created Office of Community Initiatives. The governor later appointed the executive directors of these various commissions to serve on the Council on New Americans, which was also placed in this new Office, and asked the directors to take a role in implementing the Council's recommendations. In Pennsylvania, Governor Edward G. Rendell created the position of "chief diversity officer" in 2008 — reportedly the first state in the nation to do so (DiversityInc, 5 August 2008) — in order to "govern, evaluate, encourage, and monitor agency diversity planning, investment, and effectiveness" and to build a "culture of inclusion" within state government (Executive Order 2008-06). In Washington State, one of the largest departments of state government has incorporated immigrant integration measures into their general quality control system. The Quality Assurance Office of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), with back-up guidance from a Limited English Proficiency Program Manager, conducts periodic monitoring visits to the Department's 65 field offices to test compliance with a range of laws and regulations, including language access. Rather than employing a stand-alone monitoring process, focused exclusively on language access, DSHS has made language access one of its key quality indicators (Laglagaran 2010). Approaches such as these serve to insulate immigrant integration initiatives from the vicissitudes of political sponsorship.

Another promising example of consolidation is the pairing of the refugee resettlement program with immigrant integration. It is no coincidence that state resettlement offices have spearheaded immigrant integration efforts in four of the five executive order states, as well as in other states like New York without such projects. Although the needs of refugees are not identical to those of immigrants, nor do immigrants benefit from the same resources available to refugees through the Refugee Act of 1980, the collective experience of the American resettlement program since 1980 holds important lessons and provides important models for immigrant integration work.

Among the advantages of these more inclusive approaches are the cross-fertilization of ideas and the sharing of resources that occur when leaders with diverse portfolios communicate with one another on a regular basis, a process enhanced through grouping of related functions within the same entity. The particular form in which this synergic grouping of functions will take place

will vary from state to state, and locality to locality. Whether one uses “diversity” or “community collaborations” or “quality improvement” or some other appropriate descriptor as the organizing principle for such an entity, the important point is that each policy initiative can be strengthened, not diminished, through such reorganization. Such consolidation of related functions under one roof also guards against the duplication of services, or the inefficiencies associated with multiple centers of coordination for similar services.

## **Allocate or Reallocate Resources to Make Immigrant Integration a Reality**

Whatever structural and leadership changes are made on the cross-departmental, departmental, or program levels, all initiatives must be adequately resourced. The horizontal entity must have the capacity to provide training, technical assistance, coordination, oversight, and other forms of assistance to other units of state government wrestling with diversity-related challenges. Here’s where the rubber hits the road. It makes no sense to assign new functions to such an entity without giving it the resources to perform these functions. These resources may come from special appropriations for such purposes, or from a reallocation of existing resources. If this new entity is equipped to truly enhance the effectiveness of other units of state government, to provide a demonstrable return on investment, then it makes sense for these units to contribute to the budget of what might be appropriately called a “diversity assistance center.” An important test of whether a state is serious about immigrant integration will be the extent to which this office is able to perform these broader functions.

Having a center similar to the one we have described above does not obviate the need for other departments to create or sustain their own high-level centers of leadership on diversity-related issues. If a central entity is to function effectively, it must liaise with individuals within the various departments who have the ability to implement change. Many state governments have already set up such units, often to ensure compliance with various federal mandates. Examples include the offices of minority health or health equity within state health departments and offices devoted to the education of limited English proficient children within state education departments. Other states have set up specialized offices within particular departments to address issues of importance to the immigrant population.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Examples include the Office of Immigrant Assistance within the California Office of the Attorney General, which disseminates information about the legal rights of immigrants in multiple languages, and investigates and prosecutes cases of immigration fraud, and the Bureau of Immigrant Workers’ Rights within the New York State Department of Labor, which informs immigrants of labor law protections and facilitates immigrant participation in the workforce training system. In the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, a Minority Services Task Force, originally established in 1994, changed its name to the Cultural Diversity Advisory Committee in 2000, in order to reflect a broadening of its mission to cover the concerns of older immigrants.

## Look at the Total Picture

The paradox of immigrant integration in the United States is that, despite being described as “skeletal, ad hoc, and under-funded” (Fix et al. 2007, 1), and despite the dearth of comprehensive integration initiatives over the last half century, integration outcomes in the United States have been more positive than in other immigrant-receiving countries. This fact is not the result of some accident of history or some magical quality in the American environment, but rather of a set of broader policies that may have at least as great an impact on integration outcomes as the types of initiatives described in this essay. Several commentators, for example, have called attention to the importance of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, with its guarantee of birthright citizenship, as a powerful spur to integration. The Illinois Coalition’s Joshua Hoyt (2007, 21) credits birthright citizenship with making the United States “the most successful experiment in the integration of immigrants into a democratic society in world history.” This view was echoed by Mollenkopf & Hochschild (2010, 23), who recently undertook a comparative analysis of integration policies in the United States and western Europe, and pointed to birthright citizenship as one of a number of broad policy and human rights advances that have facilitated the integration of immigrants in the U.S. These researchers also argue that the civil right struggle waged by the African-American community in the United States produced a “scaffolding” of laws and policies missing in Western Europe, including “robust affirmative action laws, voting rights laws, minority advocacy groups, litigation against job discrimination, minority business set-asides, and all the other policies and organizational strategies intended to help mitigate the consequences of centuries of racial hierarchy (p. 28).” Although not originally designed to promote immigrant integration, this constellation of policies and programs has helped to produce positive integration outcomes. A complete understanding of immigrant integration requires attention to these broader policy dimensions, most of which impact immigrants and non-immigrants alike. Such an enlarged perspective may shift priorities for policy change to other domains not adequately covered in the reports produced by the five projects.

## Move from Broad Policy to Evaluation Studies

Although there remains an important role for research in the quest for effective integration policies and practices, the days of generic policy studies, similar to those that were undertaken in the five states, may be over. There are enough common elements in all five reports to provide guidance to other states interested in mapping out priorities for future action on immigrant integration. What may be more useful in the long run are comparative analyses of existing programs to determine their long-term effectiveness. As an example, instead of simply making the case for language access, it may be more useful to analyze the utility and cost-effectiveness of various approaches and technologies for achieving language access, such as telephone interpreting, video interpreting, community language banks, and machine translation. Instead of simply calling for more English language and citizenship services, it may be more productive to compare and evaluate various instructional delivery systems, including the potential of distance learning to lower costs and reach more people. Beyond diversifying the workforce by hiring more people from immigrant or minority backgrounds, the greater challenge, as David Pitts (2006)

points out in his review of the public administration literature, may be to find demonstrable ways to ensure the positive impact of diversity on organizational performance, while avoiding or mitigating the occasional negative impact. Instead of the usual prescription for diversity training for state employees, it may be time to rethink and reformulate such training to make it less about values and individual “sensitivity” and more about the “how-to” of serving diverse populations, perhaps linked to practicums to introduce and evaluate new integration strategies in real-life settings. The new frontier in research may be to undertake more evidence-based and random-controlled studies in immigrant practice rather than immigrant policy.

## Conclusion

Incorporating immigrants and their children into the mainstream of a dynamic society is a leitmotif of American history. The process plays out in different ways for different groups in different eras. Integration also has implications for native-born Americans, whose commitment to the principles of fair play and equality of opportunity, is continually tested, and who must themselves adapt to changing demographics and cultural influences. Throughout American history, whether through conscious design, as in the reforms and initiatives of the progressive era and interwar years, or through the spontaneous and creative responses of individuals and organizations in local communities, the nation has grappled with the consequences and opportunities of diversity. The five executive order projects have made a notable contribution to this tradition of experimentation. Despite the media attention given to anti-immigrant measures in states and localities, such as Arizona S.B. 1070 in 2010, the projects exemplify a constructive approach that is more common in state and local government than is often assumed (Newton & Adams 2009, 408-431; Mitnik & Halpern-Finnerty 2010, 51-72). The projects have broken new ground by highlighting the importance of immigrant integration as a public policy issue, promoting dialogue and common purpose among a range of actors in the public and private sectors, developing priorities for future action, initiating new programs and projects, and taking steps to establish new centers of leadership within state government on integration issues. In order to sustain, institutionalize, and strengthen this work, projects must seek new allies and stakeholders within and outside state government. A broader “advocacy coalition framework,” to borrow political scientist Paul Sabatier’s term, must be built, involving professional associations, the research community, traditional civil rights organizations, and the business community. Current immigrant rights coalitions will have to find common cause with other groups pursuing related agendas, even if the frame of immigrant integration may have to be incorporated into larger movements for social change, such as social justice initiatives, respect for diversity in all its forms, and even economic development strategies. Linkages with pre-existing but related offices in state government should be forged. In addition, greater clarity as to the meaning and scope of integration policy, as well as the measures to assess the effectiveness of integration practices, will gain new respect for integration policy in the public policy community. With unemployment rates above eight percent and state budgets under severe strain, the general public may be

in no mood to support targeted programs for newcomers. Nor is the economic argument for immigrant integration likely to resonate at a time when the “wasted potential” of unemployed and underemployed immigrants is shared by out-of-work native-born people. The better approach – at least in the short-term — may be to ensure equity in the distribution of existing resources and to re-conceive immigrant integration as one front in the battle for equality of opportunity for all Americans.

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