



The **Opportunity** Agenda

*Building the National Will
to Expand Opportunity in America*

Immigration and Gender:

*Analysis of Media Coverage
and Public Opinion*

Acknowledgments

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About The Opportunity Agenda

The Opportunity Agenda was founded in 2004 with the mission of building the national will to expand opportunity in America. Focused on moving hearts, minds, and policy over time, the organization works with social justice groups, leaders, and movements to advance solutions that expand opportunity for everyone. Through active partnerships, The Opportunity Agenda synthesizes and translates research on barriers to opportunity and corresponding solutions; uses communications and media to understand and influence public opinion; and identifies and advocates for policies that improve people's lives. To learn more about The Opportunity Agenda, go to our website at www.opportunityagenda.org.

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Executive Summary

As a group, immigrants who are women face challenges that are often overlooked in public discourse surrounding other immigration concerns. Women often find themselves at the intersection of matters related to work, immigration status, family, and gender, affected by each of these in ways that are often ignored in the policy arena. To ensure that women's concerns are included in conversations regarding immigration, we need to know how current discourse and public opinion treat these women, and how we can leverage existing opportunities, improve coverage, and shape discussions. We can then better draw attention to the specific issues faced by those who are both women and immigrants, and to the solutions needed to address these concerns.

This report analyzes mainstream and niche media coverage and public opinion research regarding issues at the intersection of immigration and gender. What overarching story are the media telling about immigrants who are women? Does that story help or hinder the mobilization of public opinion behind policies that pave the way for the integration of immigrant women into American society?

Media Research

We analyzed the content of 20 mainstream print news outlets representing every region of the country, five print or online magazines with politically progressive readerships, seven print or online women's magazines, and two outlets with a large audience of "Millennials."¹ Major findings include:

- ▶ Mainstream print media coverage of immigrant women falls into eight broad categories, with stories about detention, deportation, and family separation receiving the most attention. Also receiving significant media attention are stories about abuse and exploitation, and the impact of repressive state legislation on immigrant families.
- ▶ Overall, pro-immigrant voices outnumbered anti-immigrant voices in our sample of articles by a wide margin. Immigrants, pro-immigrant advocates, and pro-immigrant policymakers were 65 percent of those quoted, with immigrant women representing 24 percent of those quoted.
- ▶ The dominant narrative in mainstream media portrays these women as victims who are powerless to find safety and security for themselves and their families because of public policies and private exploitation. Missing from the narrative are accounts of immigrant women as contributors to society and agents of their own destiny.
- ▶ This picture has clear policy implications. The depiction of women immigrants as helpless victims strengthens perceptions of otherness and dependency and tends to reinforce the belief still held by a large percentage of Americans that immigrants are a burden on our country who benefit from various public services but don't pay taxes or contribute to society.
- ▶ Media that reach women, progressives, and Millennials rarely report on immigrant women and their issues. This creates a lack of visibility among target audiences important to the immigrants' rights movement.

¹ There is still a debate around the parameters of the Millennial generation, but is generally considered to represent anyone who came of age around the millennium. Pew Research Center considers anyone born after 1980 to be a Millennial, and has not yet determined a cut-off year. See Pew's Research Methods section from its 2010 study of Millennials, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1501/millennials-new-survey-generational-personality-upbeat-open-new-ideas-technology-bound>.

Public Opinion Meta-Analysis

We drew on data from 25 public opinion surveys, most of them conducted in 2010-2012. Our objectives were to: (1) review opinion research conducted since our last meta-analysis focusing on immigrants and immigration policy, contained in The Opportunity Agenda's report, "Public Discourse on Immigration in 2010"; (2) learn about American's attitudes towards immigrants who are women and the issues that affect them; and (3) understand more about how women who have immigrated to the United States feel about their lives here. Major findings include the following.

General Audiences

- ▶ Very little research exists regarding how the intersection of gender and immigration registers in the minds of Americans.
- ▶ A majority continued to support the Arizona law, S.B. 1070, up to the time of the Supreme Court's decision in June 2012. There was, however, movement indicating that the least popular parts of the law were those that fostered detention without due process and criminalized people who were looking for or accepting work.
- ▶ The public is conflicted about whether immigrants in general are good or bad for the country, but the trend is moving toward positive perceptions. A majority, by a two-to-one margin, believe that immigrants take jobs Americans don't want.
- ▶ A strong majority supports a roadmap to citizenship with conditions, and that support has increased over the past five years, from 63 percent in 2007 to 72 percent in 2011.
- ▶ The public is split on whether or not the Constitutional right to birthright citizenship should be changed to exclude those born to "illegal immigrants."
- ▶ A majority of 62 percent supports the DREAM Act, and President Obama's decision to implement aspects of the Act by executive order garnered a 64 percent approval rating.
- ▶ Support for immigrants' rights is strongest among Hispanics and young people.

Immigrant Women

- ▶ Few surveys have been conducted of the attitudes or opinions of immigrants living in the United States, and fewer still specifically of women who are immigrants.
- ▶ According to the most comprehensive survey of immigrant women, conducted in 2008 by New America Media, 38 percent came to the United States to join family members and 22 percent came to make a better life for their children.
- ▶ Respondents identified the problems they face in America as: the language barrier, access to quality healthcare, and discrimination. Latinas were more likely to say discrimination was a major problem than were women from other nationalities.
- ▶ A majority of these women said they had "become more assertive at home and in public" since coming to the United States.
- ▶ A huge majority (84 percent) said they would like to become U.S. citizens.

Cognitive Linguistic Analysis

This report is also informed by a language study completed by Anat Shenker-Osorio, a communications consultant who specializes in linguistics. We have referred to some of her observations about the language used in the discourse on immigration and women throughout this report, and have included her findings in Appendix A of this document.

Recommendations

While there is a positive level of support for several key policies, our findings around media coverage and continued public support for laws like Arizona’s S.B. 1070 show that Americans are not yet receiving a balanced picture of the lives, contributions, aspirations, and challenges of women who have immigrated to the United States. Advocates, policymakers, journalists, and others can promote a better-balanced public discourse that builds support for policies that encourage the full integration of this important constituency into U.S. society.

- ▶ Conduct new public opinion research. As this report demonstrates, gender-based research on immigration-related issues is scant, both with respect to the general public’s attitudes and the attitudes of immigrant women themselves. More research is needed to get a better understanding of how these women are perceived in order to identify both challenges and openings for improving the public discourse and increasing support for policies relating to integration, due process, and abuse or exploitation.
- ▶ Emphasize how basic due process rights are threatened by current immigration policy and practice. Important segments of the American public are troubled by the government’s draconian deportation practices, racial and ethnic profiling, and other due process violations. Our media analysis shows that mainstream journalists are interested in writing about these issues. An effort should be made to encourage women’s and progressive media outlets and outlets favored by young people to cover stories about the unfair, discriminatory, and arbitrary nature of U.S. immigration policy.
- ▶ Highlight positive examples of immigrant women as agents of change and of the contributions they are making to their own communities and to American society overall. Include voices of women from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and showcase entrepreneurs and leaders. Underscore their desire to be a part of the fabric of American society and their quest for citizenship.
- ▶ Project a more full and diverse picture of who immigrant women are. Many immigrant women have achieved success in a variety of professions and occupations. Their stories, and the pride they have in their immigrant identities, need to be told. Similarly, while millions of newcomers are mothers and “stewards of their families,” they are also workers who contribute to the country’s economic engine.
- ▶ Encourage more coverage of LGBT immigrant issues, including uplifting stories of achievement, integration, and contribution, and not just stories of victimization.
- ▶ Emphasize systemic problems and solutions. Stories about individual women can be powerful hooks to engage reporters and the public, but whenever possible, those individual stories should be linked to the need for systemic solutions.
- ▶ Promote government as a solution, not just as the problem, and avoid perpetuating the idea that the government as a whole is always ineffective. When criticizing a government policy or action, identify the specific agency or official responsible and describe what that agency or individual should do to fix the problem.
- ▶ Submit more commentary. Op-eds, columns, and blog entries that reinforce the above recommendations would help to overcome the imbalance in how the media depicts immigrant women and LGBT immigrants.
- ▶ Take advantage of new and social media, not just traditional media, to tell stories. Seek out venues that especially appeal to women, progressives, and Millennials.

Media Analysis

Introduction

As a group, women who have immigrated here face challenges that are commonly overlooked in public discourse around other immigration concerns. Women often find themselves at the intersection of matters related to work, immigration status, family, and gender, affected by each of these in ways that are often ignored in the policy arena. To ensure that women's concerns are included in conversations around immigration, we need to know how current discourse treats immigrant women and how we can leverage existing opportunities, improve coverage, and shape discussions. We can then better draw attention to the specific issues faced by those who are both women and immigrants, and the solutions needed to address these concerns.

Our goal in conducting this analysis is to understand how the media, both mainstream and niche, are depicting the lives of immigrant women in the United States today. What overarching story are the media telling about these women? And does that story help or hinder the mobilization of public opinion behind pro-immigrant policies that can pave the way for the full integration of immigrant women into American society?

Immigrant Women in Context

There were 18.9 million immigrant women living in the United States in 2008, comprising 50 percent of all immigrants, and 12 percent of all the women in the country.² Immigrant women come to the United States from all over the globe. Mexico is the single largest country of origin for female immigrants in the United States—accounting for more than one-quarter of all foreign-born females—followed by the Philippines, China, and India.³ Approximately 4.1 million, or approximately 20 percent, of all immigrant women in the country are undocumented.⁴ According to the Immigrant Policy Center, both the labor-force participation rates and the educational attainment of immigrant women in the United States have increased markedly from 2000 to 2008 *for the top ten countries of origin*, and immigrant women play a diverse array of roles in the U.S. economy and society.⁵

Immigrants in general and immigrant women in particular are an indispensable part of America's economic engine. In New York State, for example, immigrants comprise 27 percent of the workforce⁶ and are responsible for \$229 billion in economic output, or 22.4 percent of the state's gross domestic product (GDP).⁷ According to one study, if all "unauthorized" immigrants were removed from New York, the state would lose \$28.7 billion in economic activity.⁸ Comparable figures for California, Illinois,

2 2008 American Community Survey via Jeanne Batalova, "Immigrant Women in the United States," Migration Policy Institute, December 14, 2009. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/print.cfm?ID=763>.

3 Ibid. In 2008, the top countries of origin for women who immigrated to the United States were Mexico (26.7 percent), the Philippines (5.2 percent), India (3.9 percent), China (3.8 percent), Vietnam (3.2 percent), Korea (3.1 percent), El Salvador (2.7 percent), and Cuba (2.6 percent).

4 Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States," Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf>.

5 2008 American Community Survey via "Immigrant Women in the United States: A Portrait of Demographic Diversity," Immigration Policy Center, June 28, 2010. <http://immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/immigrant-women-united-states-portrait-demographic-diversity>.

6 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates) via "New Americans in New York: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Hispanics, and Asians in the Empire State," Immigration Policy Center, January 2012, at http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/New_Americans_in_New_York_2012.pdf.

7 Fiscal Policy Institute, "Working for a Better Life: A Profile of Immigrants in the New York State Economy," November 2007, at http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/publications2007/FPI_ImmReport_WorkingforaBetterLife.pdf via "New Americans in New York: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Empire State," Immigration Policy Center, January 2012, at http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/New_Americans_in_New_York_2012.pdf.

8 "An Essential Resource: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Undocumented Workers on Business Activity in the U.S. with Estimated Effects by State and by Industry," The Perryman Group, April, 2008, at http://americansforimmigrationreform.com/files/Impact_of_the_Undocumented_Workforce.pdf#page=48 via "New Americans in New York: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Empire State," Immigration Policy Center, January 2012, at http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/New_Americans_in_New_York_2012.pdf.

and Georgia are \$301.6 billion,⁹ \$25.6 billion,¹⁰ and \$21.3 billion,¹¹ respectively.

Unauthorized immigrants (both women and men) also contribute by paying taxes. The Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy has estimated the state and local taxes paid in 2010 by households that are headed by unauthorized immigrants. Collectively, these households paid \$11.2 billion in state and local taxes. That included \$1.2 billion in personal income taxes, \$1.6 billion in property taxes, and \$8.4 billion in sales taxes.¹²

Undocumented women typically face significant obstacles to opportunity. Forty-seven percent of undocumented immigrants have less than a high school education, compared to 8 percent of U.S. citizens.¹³ Because of their education and societal status, undocumented immigrants fill the lowest-paying and often toughest jobs in the country including farm laborers; meat, poultry, and fish processing workers; maids and house cleaners; and sewing machine operators.¹⁴ Undocumented women typically earn minimum wage or less, get no sick or vacation days, and receive no health insurance.¹⁵ One in five undocumented adults lives in poverty as compared to one in ten citizen adults.¹⁶

Yet, despite the considerable obstacles they face, immigrant women, including those without documentation, show remarkable resilience and a strong desire to make this country their permanent home. Based on its groundbreaking 2008 poll of immigrant women, New America Media calls them “Stewards of the 21st Century Family”:

Today’s migration, we know, increasingly occurs between city and city. The story that has not been told is the story of the woman immigrant in that stream. This poll is an effort to capture her narrative, and what becomes clear in the responses—many to questions that seemed on their face to have nothing to do with family *per se*—is that the gold thread giving meaning to her life is family stewardship. As the poll demonstrates, **it’s a goal at which she has been remarkably successful.** Some 90 percent of women immigrants interviewed (30 percent of whom are undocumented) report their family units are intact—their husbands live with them, and their children were either born here or have joined them in this country.¹⁷

9 “An Essential Resource: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Undocumented Workers on Business Activity in the U.S. with Estimated Effects by State and by Industry,” The Perryman Group, April, 2008, at http://americansforimmigrationreform.com/files/Impact_of_the_Undocumented_Workforce.pdf#page=48 via “New Americans in California: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Golden State,” Immigration Policy Center, January 2012, at <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-california>.

10 “An Essential Resource: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Undocumented Workers on Business Activity in the U.S. with Estimated Effects by State and by Industry,” The Perryman Group, April, 2008, at http://americansforimmigrationreform.com/files/Impact_of_the_Undocumented_Workforce.pdf#page=48 via “New Americans in Illinois: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Prairie State,” Immigration Policy Center, January 2012, at <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-illinois>.

11 “An Essential Resource: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Undocumented Workers on Business Activity in the U.S. with Estimated Effects by State and by Industry,” The Perryman Group, April, 2008, at http://americansforimmigrationreform.com/files/Impact_of_the_Undocumented_Workforce.pdf#page=48 via “New Americans in Georgia: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Peach State,” Immigration Policy Center, January 2012, at <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-georgia>.

12 Analysis by Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy for Immigration Policy Center. “Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too: Estimates of the State and Local Taxes Paid by Unauthorized Immigrant Households,” Immigration Policy Center, April 2011, at <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/unauthorized-immigrants-pay-taxes-too>.

13 Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, “A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States,” Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009, p. iv. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf>.

14 Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, “A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States,” Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009, Table B3. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf>.

15 Mary Bauer and Monica Ramirez, “Injustice on our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry,” Southern Poverty Law Center, November 2010. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/injustice-on-our-plates>.

16 Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, “A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States,” Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf>.

17 “Women Immigrants: Stewards of the 21st Century Family,” New America Media, February 2009 at <http://media.namx.org/>

The poll also showed that most immigrant women have succeeded in increasing their income levels over time, have become more assertive in both their private and public lives, and are the main drivers in their families when it comes to seeking U.S. citizenship:

It is women who are changing the meaning of migration from economic to civic; women who are the key figures in determining whether or not the new immigrant populations will find themselves (both literally and figuratively) “at home” in the American city in a lasting way.¹⁸

images/communications/immwomenexecsummary.pdf.

18 Ibid.

Methodology

This media analysis is based on an examination of the content of 20 mainstream print news outlets representing every region of the United States, five print or online magazines with politically progressive readerships, seven print or online women’s magazines, and two outlets with a large audience of Millennials (adults born after 1980)¹⁹—an online news aggregator (*Yahoo! News*) and the online platform of a cable television channel (*CNN.com*).²⁰

Mainstream Outlets

The time span for mainstream outlets covers March 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012. Using the Nexis service database we entered the following search terms: wom*n AND immigr! OR mother AND immigr! OR family AND immigr! OR anchor babies OR domestic worker AND immigr! OR lesbian OR transgender AND immigrant OR women AND illegal. A final sample of 51 mainstream media articles was drawn from an overall pool of 741 articles. The sample was selected by applying a random sequence generator to ensure it was representative of all the articles picked up by the scan.

List of outlets	
<i>The Arizona Republic</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>
<i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>The Baltimore Sun</i>	<i>The Oklahoman</i>
<i>Birmingham News</i>	<i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i>
<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	<i>The Post and Courier (Charleston, SC)</i>
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	<i>The San Francisco Chronicle</i>
<i>The Denver Post</i>	<i>U.S. News & World Report</i>
<i>The Houston Chronicle</i>	<i>USA Today</i>
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>
<i>The Miami Herald</i>	<i>The Washington Post</i>

Niche Outlets

We conducted a search of examples of print and online media consumed by women, by progressives, and by Millennials. Women’s outlets have an enormous reach and are an obvious target for improving coverage of immigrant women. A content analysis we previously conducted of popular women’s magazines showed that several with large circulations regularly carry articles with political content.

¹⁹ There is still a debate around the parameters of the Millennial generation, but is generally considered to represent anyone who came of age around the millennium. Pew Research Center considers anyone born after 1980 to be a Millennial, and has not yet determined a cut-off year. See Pew’s Research Methods section from its 2010 study of Millennials, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1501/millennials-new-survey-generational-personality-upbeat-open-new-ideas-technology-bound>.

²⁰ A 2010 survey by the Pew Research Center asked Millennials about their “main source for national and international news.” Sixty-five percent cited TV, 59 percent the internet, 24 percent newspapers, 18 percent radio, and 4 percent other. When asked which sites they go to most often “for news and information,” 20 percent mentioned *Yahoo! News* and 18 percent mentioned *CNN.com*. Only 10 percent mentioned Google and 7 percent MSN. Less than 5 percent got news online from *New York Times*, MSNBC, AOL, or other outlets. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1501/millennials-new-survey-generational-personality-upbeat-open-new-ideas-technology-bound>. A 2012 survey by Pew Research Center confirmed that *Yahoo! News* is still the top destination for online news users, including young people. Pew Research Center, “In Changing News Landscape, Even Television is Vulnerable - Trends in News Consumption: 1991-2012,” September 2012. <http://www.people-press.org/2012/09/27/in-changing-news-landscape-even-television-is-vulnerable/>

These include *Marie Claire* and *Glamour*, which have a combined paid circulation of 4 million.²¹ *Latina*, with a reach of more than 2.7 million U.S. Latinas,²² also carries articles with political content.

Progressive and Millennial outlets were selected based on public opinion research indicating that their audiences were among those most supportive of immigration policy reform and many immigration issues. Original research into the attitudes of white progressive voters conducted for The Opportunity Agenda in 2010 shows near unanimity on the importance of welcoming immigrants into the social fabric.²³ Young people are also more supportive of immigrants’ rights (see Public Opinion Meta-Analysis section of this report for more detail).

The time span for niche outlets was March 2010 to March 2012. Using the Nexis service database, and in a few instances the search engines of specific web outlets, we entered the following search terms: wom*n AND immigr! OR mother AND immigr! OR family AND immigr! OR anchor babies OR domestic worker AND immigr! OR lesbian OR transgender AND immigrant OR women AND illegal. A total of 16 articles were found, all of which were included in the analysis.

Progressive outlets ²³
<i>Mother Jones</i>
<i>The New Republic</i>
<i>The Atlantic</i>
<i>Salon.com</i>
<i>American Prospect</i>

Women’s outlets
<i>Parenting</i>
<i>Self</i>
<i>Vogue</i>
<i>Marie Claire</i>
<i>Glamour</i>
<i>Working Mother</i>
<i>Latina.com</i>

Millennial outlets
<i>Yahoo! News</i>
<i>CNN.com</i>

21 See The Opportunity Agenda, “Reproductive Justice: A Communications Overview,” September 2010, pp. II-1 – II-16, at http://opportunityagenda.org/reproductive_justice/comms_overview.

22 See *Latina.com* at http://www.latina.com/files/pdf/2012/2012_Reach_the_Young_ADULTS.pdf, with data derived from MRI Doublebase 2011. MRI Doublebase is a data product offered by GfK Mediamark Research & Intelligence, LLC, which provides magazine audience data to the advertising and marketing communities.

23 The Opportunity Agenda, “Public Opinion Research: In Play: African American, Hispanic, and Progressive White Voters on Immigration Reform,” September 2010. available at http://opportunityagenda.org/public_opinion_research_immigration_reform_2010.

24 We did not include *The Nation* because the magazine is not in the Nexis database and we felt that the five magazines listed above that appear in the Nexis database were sufficiently representative of progressive outlets.

Findings

Mainstream Media

Our mainstream media analysis, based on the content of articles in 20 national, regional, and local print outlets, exposes a disconnect between how immigrant women, especially undocumented women, are portrayed in the media, and how they themselves define their lives, priorities, and aspirations. Almost without exception, the articles in our scan tell the dark side of the immigrant woman's experience. Although many of the stories do place her in her family, it is usually in the context of impending family separation, not cohesiveness or leadership. In this narrative, instead of exercising stewardship, she is powerless to prevent her family's dissolution, even though she struggles mightily to keep her family together. In her life outside of the family, she is almost always depicted as the victim of exploitation at the hands of employers, traffickers, or violent partners. The immigrant woman's role as the family steward and civic leader is missing from this dominant media narrative.

In these news accounts, the government plays a dual role as both persecutor and protector. In many articles, the government comes across as the greatest challenge to immigrant women in their struggle to keep their families intact and to become integrated into American society. The federal and state governments, whether in the form of faceless bureaucracies or individual actors, are painted as aggressive and hostile forces in the lives of immigrant women. A full half of all the articles are about state and federal policies and practices that negatively affect immigrant families. The record number of deportations under President Obama is frequently noted. Where once the media narrative depicted "waves of illegals" entering the country,²⁵ it now depicts "waves of deportations." The "immigration system" comes across not so much as "broken" but rather as arbitrary and utterly lacking in compassion. In contrast, the articles that describe workplace exploitation, domestic violence, or cases of human trafficking portray the government as the protector of immigrant women and public policies as solutions to some of their most urgent problems.

The stories of individual women caught up in deportation proceedings lead reporters to cover U.S. immigration policies in the bigger picture, and to show how difficult it is to get on the road to citizenship in spite of the enormous efforts women make to do so. Families are cruelly separated. One woman receives an eleventh-hour reprieve from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) while another woman, in very similar circumstances, is shipped back to a country she left at the age of five. An article about the Obama administration's decision to review thousands of deportation cases to find those considered "low priority" notes that information about the review process is not public, and there will be no right of appeal.²⁶ The takeaway for readers is that the most basic due process rights are a casualty of current immigration policy and practice.

Based on our sample of articles, it is fair to say that a positive narrative about the real lived experiences *and contributions* of immigrant women, including those women who are undocumented, is not yet being conveyed in mainstream media. We did not find commentary in the form of op-eds, columns, or letters to the editor that projected a more balanced picture. At the same time, our analysis demonstrates that journalists do consider the impact of immigration policies on women and families newsworthy, and do use these stories to explore and expose the arbitrary and unfair consequences of those policies on a systemic level. Further, reporters are seeking out immigrant women and pro-immigrant advocates as

25 See The Opportunity Agenda, "Immigrant Integration in Public Discourse," 2006.

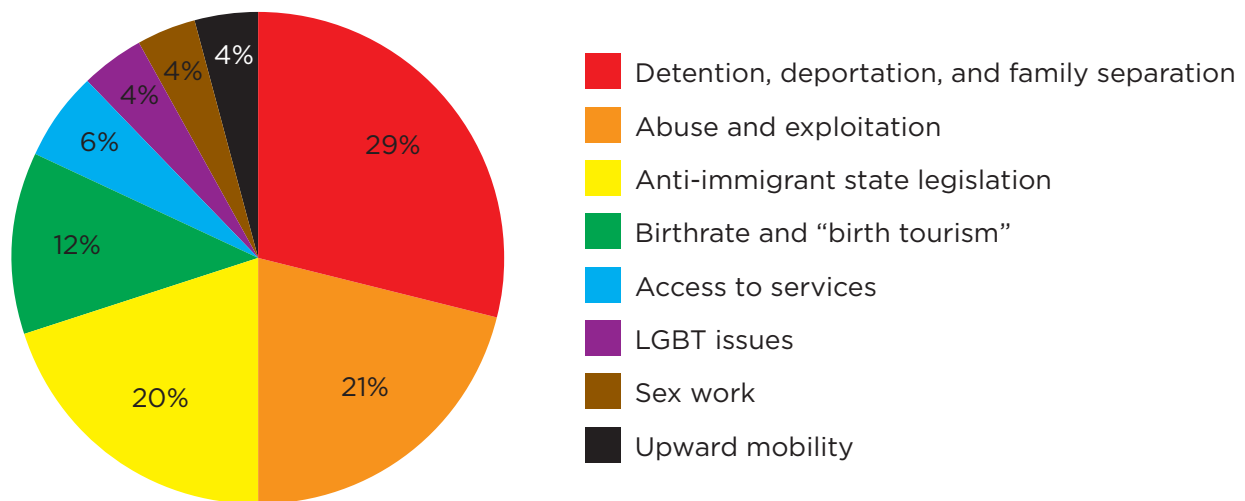
26 Paloma Esquivel, "Hoping they're 'low priority'; Immigrants get their hopes up as U.S. plans to review 300,000 deportation cases," *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 2011.

sources for background and quotes; in fact, quotes from pro-immigrant spokespeople outnumber quotes from anti-immigrant spokespeople by a six-to-one margin.

Storylines

Mainstream print media coverage of immigrant women falls into eight broad categories, with stories about detention, deportation, and family separation receiving the most attention. Also receiving significant media attention are stories about abuse and exploitation, and the impact of repressive state legislation on immigrant families. It is noteworthy that virtually all of the articles that were selected on a random basis, including using neutral search terms such as “women immigrant” and “immigrant mother,” were about undocumented women and not about immigrant women living here with authorization, indicating that today’s media coverage of “immigrant women” is focused on those who are undocumented. The stories in progressive, women’s, and Millennial outlets, though few in number, follow the same general pattern.

FIGURE 1. STORYLINES IN MAINSTREAM PRINT MEDIA



Detention, deportation, and family separation (15)

The impact of the Obama administration’s stepped-up pace of deportations on women and their families, protests against the Secure Communities program,²⁷ and the decision by the Department of Homeland Security to review an estimated 300,000 immigration cases captured the headlines in our sample:

- ▶ “Hoping they’re ‘low priority’; Immigrants get their hopes up as U.S. plans to review 300,000 deportation cases”²⁸
- ▶ “Chester woman, illegally brought to U.S. as child, faces foreign homeland”²⁹
- ▶ “Federal Policy Resulting in Wave of Deportations Draws Protests”³⁰
- ▶ “Immigrants at Pilsen forum seek deportation reprieves; Hundreds attend session on new federal case review”³¹

27 The Secure Communities program allows local authorities to check the immigration status of every person booked into a local jail. The program, which started with President George W. Bush, has expanded under the Obama administration in an effort to target immigrants who have committed crimes.

28 Paloma Esquivel, *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 2011.

29 Michael Matza, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 13, 2011.

30 Julia Preston, *New York Times*, August 17, 2011.

31 Antonio Olivo, *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 2011.

Many of these articles use the circumstances of individual women—those who were brought here by their parents at an early age or the undocumented mothers of American-born children and/or wives of American citizens—to illustrate larger, systemic issues relating to mixed families and the federal government’s deportation policies and practices. The tone of these articles is, without exception, sympathetic. A number of them describe the vagaries of the country’s patchwork of immigration laws in some detail, giving the reader a feel for the catch-22 that undocumented immigrants can find themselves in when they try to “legalize” their status. The articles show that even those who make every effort to get on the road to citizenship are often thwarted. A 1,120-word article in *The New York Times* describing an immigrant woman’s “rare return from deportation” puts it this way:

Her homecoming will culminate a 22-year legal fight in which Mrs. Wasilewski, now 45, lost every battle but the last. Her case has cast light on some of the immigration system’s cul-de-sacs and severe penalties that lawyers say have stopped hundreds of thousands of immigrants who lack legal status as Mrs. Wasilewski did—otherwise law-abiding parents or spouses of American citizens—from finding a way to get right with the law.³²

In another story, a 28-year-old woman who was pregnant with her second child faced imminent deportation to Guatemala, her “foreign homeland.” She came to Chester, Pennsylvania, at the age of 14 to join her “likewise undocumented mother.” Her mother had also been threatened with deportation, “but because of a complex, timing-related quirk in immigration law, her deportation order was cancelled in 2008.” The daughter, however, had asked for asylum in 2006, “arguing that Guatemala’s gang violence put her in jeopardy as a woman. But an immigration judge rejected her argument.” Now faced with deportation she had decided to leave her American-born child behind.³³

A *Miami Herald* story features Daniela Pelaez, a high school student who was the valedictorian of her school and was spared deportation only after the intervention of members of the Florida Congressional delegation (including several Republicans). Again, the reporter uses the student’s backstory to underscore the arbitrariness of U.S. immigration law. At age four, Pelaez arrived in the United States with her family from Columbia. Her brother served in the U.S. Army and became a citizen. Her mother “is stuck in Columbia after returning in 2006 to get successful treatment for colon cancer.” Her father received residency through her brother, but Daniela and another sister fell between the cracks. The reporter noted that 192,000 young people in Florida were in the same straits.³⁴

Still another article describes the plight of Hilda Jauregui, a woman fighting deportation while in immigration detention. According to the report:

Jauregui, her husband and youngest daughter came to the attention of U.S. immigration officials after an advisor convinced them to apply for asylum, a common fraud scheme. Their claim was denied and they were ordered to leave the country more than 10 years ago. The family appealed the order, but this year they were detained by immigration officials at their home in Duarte [California]. Jauregui has six children, four of whom are U.S. citizens, one who is a legal permanent resident and one who is undocumented. She also has a 17-year-old grandchild, also a U.S. citizen, of whom she currently has custody. Jauregui has no criminal record and said there is nothing for her or her family in their home country, Peru.³⁵

32 Julia Preston, “A Family Reunited After a Rare Return from Deportation,” *The New York Times*, August 8, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/08/us/08return.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

33 Michael Matza, “Chester woman, illegally brought to U.S. as child, faces foreign homeland,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 13, 2011.

34 Erika Bolstad, “Daniela Pelaez goes to Washington,” *Miami Herald*, March 7, 2012.

35 Paloma Esquivel, “Hoping they’re ‘low priority’; Immigrants get their hopes up as U.S. plans to review 300,000 deportation cases,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 2011.

Taken as a whole, these articles convey a strong sense of the emotional turmoil experienced by women caught up in the jaws of the deportation process. A young woman snatched off a Greyhound bus in Florida “began crying hysterically on the bus after she handed Border Patrol agents her Mexican passport.”³⁶ Another woman, a nursing mother with two other young children who had only days left before her scheduled deportation, “spent her final week praying for one outcome while preparing for another. ... ‘There’s no time,’ she told her boyfriend. ‘We need a miracle now.’”³⁷

Abuse and exploitation (11)

Immigrant women as victims of violence and exploitation at the hands of individuals or private actors was the second most common storyline. As with the stories about detention, deportation, and family separation, these articles describe abuse in a systemic context, sometimes using individual cases to illustrate a broader impact. Overall, they paint a frightening picture of vulnerable immigrant women suffering at the hands of unscrupulous and predatory human traffickers and violent domestic abusers. In these stories, as a sample of headlines shows, the government is cast in the role of protector rather than persecutor:

- ▶ “U.S. laws a lifeline from abuse”³⁸
- ▶ “Drophouse bill protects women, children”³⁹
- ▶ “Raid exposes street gang’s reach; FBI here says MS-13 ‘hijacks’ illegal immigrants to collect ransom”⁴⁰

Approximately half of the articles in this category are about trafficking in persons. In a 1,700-word piece for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, a reporter wrote: “Human trafficking catches many in its web—from children and adults forced into the sex trade, to people who come to the United States for jobs as nannies or restaurant workers but find themselves trapped. They can be people smuggled from other countries as well as disenfranchised young U.S. citizens.” The article provides a statistical picture of the Justice Department’s human trafficking investigations, which have increased in recent years, and reports that “last year in Atlanta, federal prosecutors using the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 secured guilty pleas, convictions or prison sentences for eight human traffickers. Three of those people were sent to prison for enslaving women from other countries to watch their children or to clean their houses.”⁴¹

An article in the *Chicago Tribune* reports on a federal trafficking trial in which the defendant was “accused of hiring immigrant women to work at massage parlors and then using violence and threats to force them to pay down ‘debt’ he said they had incurred.”⁴² *The Arizona Republic* ran an op-ed, the only piece of commentary found in our scan, by State Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-Phoenix) about her bill, S.B. 1225, which “cracks down on criminal cartels that prey on innocent women and children” who “are kidnapped every day for sex trafficking in Arizona and are raped and assaulted by their captors.”⁴³

36 Sarah Gonzalez, “Undocumented immigrants face checks on Amtrak, Greyhound,” *Miami Herald*, August 14, 2011.

37 Eli Saslow, “The waiting game,” *Washington Post*, September 26, 2011.

38 Pamela Constable, *Washington Post*, February 9, 2012.

39 Kyrsten Sinema, *Arizona Republic*, April 23, 2011.

40 Susan Carroll, *Houston Chronicle*, May 6, 2011.

41 Rhonda Cook, “In Our Community: Focus heightened on human trafficking,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 27, 2012.

42 Annie Sweeney, “Trial rubbed wrong way by massage/Mistrial declared after lawyer is ID’d as masseuse’s client,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 30, 2011.

43 “Drophouse bill protects women, children,” *Arizona Republic*, April 23, 2011.

Two articles in this group focus on immigrant women as victims of domestic violence. A 1,270-word piece in *The Washington Post* provides a fairly in-depth description of “several new laws [that] have allowed abused foreign-born women, including those who entered the United States illegally and those whose immigration status depends on their spouse, to obtain legal residency on their own,”⁴⁴ referring to provisions of the federal Violence Against Women Act. Describing several specific cases of abuse, the reporter notes, “Even when battered immigrant women win full legal protection, painful memories can persist long after the abuse. Each of the 10 women interviewed for this article wept repeatedly as they described the humiliation and helplessness they felt, even years later.”⁴⁵

Anti-immigrant state legislation (10)

Seven out of ten of the articles in this category report on the impact of the anti-immigrant laws passed by Alabama and Georgia,⁴⁶ and most of these reports were published in national and regional, as opposed to local, outlets, underscoring the fact that these events were regarded as national stories.⁴⁷ These articles emphasized a number of themes. Several describe the hardships imposed on both unauthorized immigrants in those states and the mostly agricultural employers who relied upon their labor. In these stories immigrants, including women, are cast as victims fleeing or hiding from repressive government action.

- ▶ Writing from Wray, Georgia, a reporter describes a family farm that was short 100 pickers at the height of blackberry season because the state’s “tough new immigration law was scaring away an illegal immigrant labor force.” Those who remained “stood straddling the bushes, working fast and quietly to harvest berries that will be shipped to Sam’s Clubs, Costcos and other stores on the East Coast. They were young and old, men and women. Some had pulled tube socks over their arms to protect against the sun. Some wrapped their faces in bandanas. They were almost all Mexican or Guatemalan.”⁴⁸
- ▶ From a trailer park outside Birmingham, Alabama, a reporter describes an abandoned trailer: “Inside are a bag of red beans, some pet food, and a pair of high heels. Nothing else. Even the beds are gone. ‘Six people,’ a neighbor says in Spanish, struggling to recall something from the anonymity of immigrant life. ‘Men, women, children. The law came in, and one day they just didn’t come home.’”⁴⁹

Other articles report on the controversies the laws engendered among lawmakers and on mass protests. These stories do not focus on immigrant women, but women and families were explicitly included in the mix, this time as activists and voices to be listened to:

- ▶ “Men, women and children of all ages converged on downtown Atlanta for the march and rally.”⁵⁰
- ▶ In announcing a planned visit to Alabama to protest that state’s law, Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) said, “We want to listen to the mothers who are trying to enroll their kids in school, homeowners

44 Pamela Constable, “For battered immigrant women, fear of deportation becomes abusers’ weapon, but 2 laws can overcome that,” *Washington Post*, February 8, 2012. Available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/for-battered-immigrant-women-fear-of-deportation-becomes-abusers-weapon/2012/01/30/gIQAZCx3zQ_story.html.

45 Pamela Constable, “U.S. laws a lifeline from abuse,” *Washington Post*, February 9, 2012.

46 On April 14, 2011 the Georgia Legislature passed House Bill 87, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011. Alabama HB 56, titled the Hammon-Beason Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act, was signed into law in June 2011.

47 Stories about the Alabama and Georgia laws appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Houston Chronicle*, and the *Birmingham News*.

48 Richard Fausset, “The New Latino South: Fewer hands in the fields,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 2011.

49 Patrick Symmes, “Hunted In Alabama; The state is driving out its illegal immigrants. Businesses want them back,” *Newsweek*, February 13, 2012.

50 AP, “Thousands rally against Georgia’s immigration law,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 2011.

who are trying to get their water turned on, legislators and the people about the impact this law is having on the broader community.”⁵¹

Birthrate and “birth tourism” (6)

The debate over “birth tourism” received relatively little attention in our scan, and the two articles that address the claim that immigrant women were coming here in great numbers to have babies with U.S. citizenship challenge the facts on which the claim was based. Although anti-immigrant policymakers and advocates were actively promoting the notion that “birth tourism” was a looming problem, our sample of articles suggests that the mainstream media were not giving much credence to the issue.

The New York Times Magazine ran a 6,580-word investigative report about “the ties of blood and commerce” between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas. One of the institutions it featured was Casa de Nacimiento, a birthing center in El Paso owned by an American midwife that “catered to a specific subset of border-straddlers.” The reporter points out that “Mexican women had a long tradition of crossing the border to give birth” and that they came with legal visas. “It is relatively easy for a resident of Juarez to obtain a U.S. border-crossing card, which permits short trips for social visits or shopping and there is nothing illegal about crossing while pregnant—at least for now.” But, the article continues, “there were troubling rumblings emanating from Washington and Austin”:

In one of the most extreme expressions of nativist fury, conservative talk-show hosts and Tea Party politicians had taken to fulminating against “anchor babies,” suggesting that a horde of devious Mexican mothers was slipping into the United States to give birth and cheat the system. “They are talking about these anchor babies, illegal immigrants, but these are not illegal immigrants,” Arnold [the midwife] said. “They are legally doing what they can do.”⁵²

A second article in *The Arizona Republic* cites statistics showing that “birth tourism” was a myth: “In 2008, slightly more than 7,400 children were born in the U.S. to non-citizens who said they lived outside the country. ... The number includes children born to women studying at U.S. universities, international visitors as well as so-called birth tourists. Those 7,462 children are just a tiny fraction of the 4,255,256 babies born in the U.S. that year.” A number of people were quoted, including a hospital administrator, the mayor of Nogales, Arizona, and an immigration lawyer, to the effect that “most expectant women who come to the U.S. to have babies come for the superior medical care, not to produce U.S. citizens.”⁵³

Several articles discuss population and immigration/migration trends in both the United States and Mexico and emphasize the fact that both immigration from Mexico and the birthrate among Latinas in the United States actually declined in recent years. A *New York Times* article reported that in 2011, the U.S. population grew at its slowest rate since the 1940s “as the gloomy economy continued to depress births and immigration fell to its lowest level since 1991.” The article observes that in “a particularly striking measure of economic distress, birth rates among Hispanics, who are concentrated in states hardest hit by the economic downturn, like Florida and Arizona, declined by 17 percent from 2007 to 2010.”⁵⁴

51 Mary Orndorff, “House Democrats coming to protest,” *Birmingham News*, November 3, 2011.

52 Andrew Rice, “Life on Line,” *The New York Times Magazine*, July 31, 2011.

53 Daniel Gonzalez, “Births by U.S. visitors: A real issue?” *Arizona Republic*, August 17, 2011.

54 Sabrina Tavernise, “Economy Contributes to Slowest Population Growth Rate Since ‘40s,” *The New York Times*, December 22, 2011. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/22/us/economy-contributes-to-slowest-population-growth-rate-since-1940s.html?_r=1.

Access to services (3)

Women who are immigrants and their children are the focus of several articles about lack of access to essential health, educational, and other social services. One article discusses a new book entitled *Immigrants Raising Citizens*, by Harvard education professor Hirokazu Yoshikawa. “‘The undocumented are viewed in current policy debates as lawbreakers, laborers or victims—seldom as parents raising citizen children,’ wrote the author [of the book].” The article describes the book’s major finding: “Even though the children have citizenship and live in an immigrant-friendly city [New York] that offers them a wide array of services, many are still hobbled by serious developmental and educational deficits resulting from their parents’ lives in the shadows.” The article also quotes one woman who was able to get food stamps, tutoring for her children, and better housing with the help of Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Services.⁵⁵

A piece about a partial victory in the effort to prevent Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta from cutting off uninsured immigrants from dialysis treatments cites the cases of several women patients whose lives were at risk. “Bineet Kaur, an immigrant from India, said she hopes a long-term solution can be worked out. Kaur came to the U.S. in 2000 on a visa and stayed after it expired. The 28-year-old was initially turned away from Grady’s ER but was admitted three days later after fluid building up in her body left her short of breath and with chest pains. ‘We are just stressed out,’ she said. ‘We don’t have any more strength.’”⁵⁶

LGBT issues (2)

LGBT immigrants are the focus of two articles in our scan. One article reports on attacks on gay and transgender immigrants while in federal detention facilities: “Reports of attacks and other abuses against gay and transgender detainees are on the rise around the nation as the number of undocumented immigrants in custody has skyrocketed as part of the federal government’s crackdown on illegal immigration.” The lead paragraph describes an assault against a transgender woman while being held in an Arizona county jail. The article cites an American Civil Liberties Union report based on interviews with detainees and a civil rights complaint filed by the Heartland Alliance National Immigration Justice Center.⁵⁷

The second article is a 2,645-word piece in *The New York Times* about “pumpers”—people who illegally inject silicone to modify clients’ bodies—and their low-income, largely immigrant transgender clientele: “Pumpers and their desperate transgender clients operate in an underground world rarely glimpsed by most New Yorkers. But the practice is commonplace, especially among immigrant and poor women.” The article led with the tragic story of Zaira Quispe, an Ecuadorean immigrant who was assigned a male gender identity at birth but “knew as a child that she was a girl.” In her case, the silicone injected into her body calcified, causing “an endless series of hospitalizations.”⁵⁸

Sex work (2)

Two articles focus on Asian women engaged in sex work in different settings. One reports on an “Asian massage parlor” staffed by “women of Asian descent who appeared reclusive” that had been under surveillance for two years.⁵⁹ The other describes the goings-on at Café Miss Cutie, a Vietnamese café in

55 Kirk Semple, “Illegal Immigrants’ Underground Lives Hobble Their U.S.-Born Children, Study Says,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2011.

56 Misty Williams, “Health Care; Grady, dialysis provider set deal,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 10, 2011.

57 Daniel Gonzalez, “Fears for jail safety of gay migrants,” *Arizona Republic*, June 24, 2011. Available at <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2011/06/24/20110624gay-migrants-jail-assaults-pinal-county.html>.

58 Laura Rena Murray, “The High Price of Looking Like a Woman,” *New York Times*, August 21, 2011.

59 Rebekah Brown, “Asian Massage Parlor In Overlea Raided as a Brothel,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 28, 2011.

Garden Grove, California, where “coffee is served by Asian women often wearing high heels and nothing more than string bikinis or see-through lingerie.”⁶⁰ The café appeared to be tied to gambling operations.

Both articles cover the issue in the context of law enforcement raids. Neither article includes quotes from the immigrant women who are the subjects of the stories.

Upward mobility (2)

Only two articles in our scan depart from relatively bleak portrayals of the lives of immigrant women, to tell upbeat stories of opportunity and success. One tells the story of a group of Latina immigrants who moved from being day laborers to forming their own company, the Apple Eco-Friendly Cleaning cooperative. The article includes a graphic description of the women’s lives as clothing factory workers and then day laborers who congregated on a Brooklyn street corner trying to land jobs cleaning houses. Then, “some of them decided they would take matters into their own hands and start a business.” Their efforts are described in some detail: “The group advertises on recycled paper and makes its own cleaning products, forgoing harsh chemicals for ingredients like lemon juice, glycerin, borax and fruit oils. The women taught themselves to make the cleansers and refined their recipes through a combination of Internet research and trial and error.” They hoped to establish a mobile day labor center for women “where women would be able to receive training and resources about working in the United States.”⁶¹

Another article describes the efforts of volunteers for Domestic Workers United to urge mostly immigrant nannies to hold their employers accountable under New York’s Domestic Workers Bill of Rights (“the nanny law”), enacted in 2010. It featured Patricia Francois, a Trinidadian organizer, and other volunteers who “have been combing the New York region—playgrounds, subway stations, churches and immigrant neighborhoods—finding and educating members of what has largely been an underground economy.” Approaching two West Indian nannies in the Museum of Natural History, Ms. Francois said, “We have to stick together. What we have is people power.”⁶²

Spokespeople

The voices elevated in the news media as sources and commentators play an important role in framing and positioning the way a story is told. Who gets quoted in news reports, and what they say, strongly influences the reader’s perception of an issue. Choice of spokespeople provides insights into the angles journalists choose to champion. Our analysis of spokespeople looks at the types of speakers who were most frequently quoted in news stories and the dominant views reflected in the many opinion pieces in our sample. In measuring spokespeople, we counted the number of articles in which a spokesperson was quoted, irrespective of how many times that individual was quoted in each article.

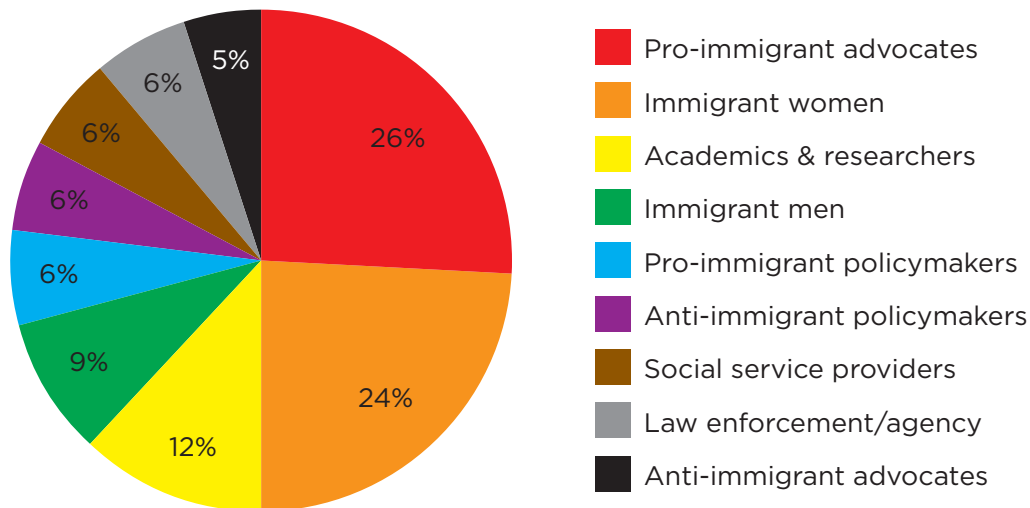
Overall, pro-immigrant voices outnumbered anti-immigrant voices in our sample of articles by a wide margin. Immigrants, pro-immigrant advocates, and pro-immigrant policymakers were 65 percent of those quoted, with immigrant women representing 24 percent of those quoted. Anti-immigrant advocates and policymakers represented only 11 percent. The balance of 24 percent consisted of social service providers, academics and researchers, and law enforcement and federal agency representatives. As previously noted, we found only one op-ed in our scan, by Arizona State Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-Phoenix).

60 Nicole Santa Cruz, “Authorities get a jolt at Vietnamese cafes; Raids target gambling and nudity at coffeehouses,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 2011.

61 Nadia Sussman, “From a Brooklyn Street Corner, a Women’s Cleaning Cooperative Grows,” *The New York Times Blogs* (City Room), October 12, 2011.

62 Kirk Semple, “A Boon for Nannies, If Only They Knew,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 2011.

FIGURE 2. SPOKESPEOPLE



Quotes from pro-immigrant spokespersons tended to reinforce the bleak narrative of lives lived on the margins of society, speaking largely to the women’s powerlessness and vulnerability and not to their strengths and contributions. The exceptions to that general pattern provide some insights into what a more positive story would look like. In an article about the imminent deportation of an immigrant mother who had herself been brought to the U.S. as a small child, a spokesperson for the Hispanic Ministry of Delaware County, Pennsylvania, said, “She did what she was told to do by her parents, and ended up being here illegally. There are so many ways to contribute to a community, a state, a country. To suggest that a minimum-wage worker involved in her church and local community is not making a contribution and has to go troubles me.”⁶³ In an article about domestic abuse, a woman who received a U visa after reporting her husband’s physical abuse and subsequently became a citizen said, “I feel very grateful to this country. I’ve gone to school, I’ve taken English, I’ve learned about self-esteem. I’ve been allowed to be independent, to work and to look for a better future.”⁶⁴ Another immigrant woman from Mexico who founded a business in Brooklyn, New York, is quoted saying, “We will succeed and we will help the girls of Williamsburg, because that’s where we’re from. That’s where we came out of.”⁶⁵

Anti-immigrant spokespersons were quoted far less often, but their quotes were consistent with past messages. They were quoted talking about “immigration-law breakers,” “extended family chain migration,” “illegal immigrants putting strains on the health care system,” and “Washington’s failure to act.” These themes have long been staples of anti-immigrant advocacy.

The following quotes are a selected sample and are intended to give an impressionistic sense of how various voices are represented on the pages of mainstream newspapers.

63 Michael Matza, “Chester woman, illegally brought to U.S. as child, faces foreign homeland,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 13, 2011.

64 Paloma Esquivel, “U-visa program picks up speed; It gives temporary legal status to undocumented victims of abuse,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 2011.

65 Nadia Sussman, “From a Brooklyn Street Corner, a Women’s Cleaning Cooperative Grows,” *The New York Times Blogs* (City Room), October 12, 2011.

The voices of pro-immigrant advocates

“Adelina Nicholls, executive director of the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, said the crowd was sending a message. ‘They are ready to fight,’ Nicholls said. ‘We need immigration reform and no HB 87 is going to stop us. We have earned the right to be here.’”⁶⁶

“Although up nearly 50 percent since 2000, the 7,462 children [born to non-citizens who said they lived outside the country] are just a tiny fraction of the 4.2 million babies born in the U.S. that year. ‘I feel a little like they are chasing the Loch Ness monster,’ said Angela Maria Kelley, vice president for immigration policy and advocacy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal-leaning research group in Washington, D.C. ... She said trying to end birth tourism through federal legislation is overkill. ‘Instead of using a fly swatter, they are using an Uzi,’ she said.”⁶⁷

“‘These abuses [of LGBT immigrants in detention facilities] are happening across the country. And this is really just the tip of the iceberg,’ said Jane Zurnamer, associate director of policy at the National Immigration Justice Center. ... ‘It’s not whether abuse happens more or less in immigration detention,’ Zurnamer said. ‘It’s that there is less accountability if it does happen.’”⁶⁸

The voices of immigrant women

“Elisa, an Orange County woman who received a U-visa after reporting her husband’s physical abuse, became a citizen in May. ‘I feel very grateful to this country,’ she said. ‘I’ve gone to school, I’ve taken English, I’ve learned about self-esteem. I’ve been allowed to be independent, to work and to look for a better future.’”⁶⁹

“‘She [American-born daughter] is my heart,’ Villatoro said in a recent interview, her voice drowned in tears. ‘When I look at her sleeping, I think, what will happen to her? She doesn’t know anything. When she sees me crying, I just tell her I have a headache.’”⁷⁰

“Azucena arrived in the United States at age 9, hiding at the feet of passengers in a truck smuggling her family into a Texas border town. Now, 10 years later, agents were placing her and her two large suitcases in the back of their patrol truck. ‘I felt like I was there for something that someone else made a choice for me. That it was not right, but my parents were just trying to do the best they could.’”⁷¹

The voices of pro-immigrant policymakers

“‘Given that the chief missions of our immigration enforcement are national security, public safety and securing our borders, how is it we have the time and resources to target a high-school honor student like Daniela?’ [Sen. Bill] Nelson (D-Fla.) asked.”⁷²

“‘We want to listen to the mothers who are trying to enroll their kids in school, homeowners who are trying to get their water turned on, legislators and the people about the impact this law is having on the broader community,’ [U.S. Rep. Luis] Gutierrez, D-Ill., said.”⁷³

66 Associated Press, “Thousands rally against Georgia’s immigration law; Protesters decry new restrictions, some of which are also being challenged in court,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 2011.

67 Daniel Gonzalez, “Births by U.S. visitors: A real issue?” *Arizona Republic*, August 17, 2011.

68 Daniel Gonzalez, “Fears for jail safety of gay migrants,” *Arizona Republic*, June 24, 2011.

69 Paloma Esquivel, “U-visa program picks up speed; It gives temporary legal status to undocumented victims of abuse,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 2011.

70 Michael Matza, “Chester woman, illegally brought to U.S. as child, faces foreign homeland,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 13, 2011.

71 Sarah Gonzalez, “Undocumented immigrants face checks on Amtrak, Greyhound,” *Miami Herald*, August 14, 2011.

72 Erika Bolstad, “Daniela Pelaez goes to Washington,” *Miami Herald*, March 7, 2012.

73 Mary Orndorff, “House Democrats coming to protest,” *Birmingham News*, November 3, 2011.

“Every day in Arizona, women, especially Latinas, and children are preyed upon by human traffickers looking to score their next big ransom—or even workers, sex slaves. ... For years, I have worked hard at the state Legislature to stop this kind of violence against women and children. ... My bipartisan bill, SB 1225, which was sent to the governor, cracks down on these criminal cartels that prey on innocent women and children.”⁷⁴

The voices of anti-immigrant policymakers

“Passage of this bill will ensure that immigration-law breakers are not rewarded, will close the door to future waves of extended family chain migration, and will help bring an end to the global ‘birth tourism’ industry,” [U.S. Rep. Steve] King (R-Iowa) said during a news conference to introduce his bill.”⁷⁵

“Blaine Young, president of Frederick County’s board of commissioners, has plans to make Frederick ‘the most unfriendly county in the state of Maryland to illegal aliens.’ And while he says some localities might cringe at such a title, ‘we wear that with a badge of honor.’”⁷⁶

“‘The people in Alabama are doing this to protect their people. I wouldn’t back down,’ [U.S. Rep. Lou] Barletta, R-Pa. said Wednesday night. ‘I know the names they’ll be called and the pressure from the groups and politicians, but the truth of the matter is there is a reason Alabama is doing what it’s doing, because Washington has failed them,’ he said.”⁷⁷

The voices of anti-immigrant advocates

“‘Is this [threatened deportation of a mother of an American-born toddler] a difficult and unpleasant situation? Yeah, of course it is,’ said Mark Krikorian, director of the Center for Immigration Studies. ‘But this happens when you contemptuously ignore the enforcement of immigration law for so long.’”⁷⁸

“Rosemary Jenks, director for government relations for NumbersUSA, a Washington, D.C., group that advocates for lower immigration, said birth tourism, though ‘not overwhelming,’ leads to more immigration down the road. As U.S. citizens, the children of birth tourists, upon turning 21, can sponsor their parents to come to the U.S., she said. ‘The problem is chain migration. That one person turns into a whole bunch more.’”⁷⁹

“Advocates for tougher immigration enforcement say illegal immigration puts more pressure on an already strained health care system. When hospitals have to pay for illegal immigrants, the cost gets shifted to the insured, paying patients, said Bob Dane, a spokesman for the Washington-based Federation for American Immigration Reform. ‘We’re all paying the costs,’ he said.”⁸⁰

Dominant mainstream narrative

What overarching story are the mainstream print media telling about immigrant women in America today? In the dominant narrative, immigrant women are overwhelmingly victims, powerless to find safety and security for themselves and their families because of public policies *and* private exploitation. They are dragged off Greyhound buses or out of their homes by federal agents. They pray for a miracle to prevent imminent deportation. They are imprisoned in “drop houses” by corrupt and violent traffickers.

74 Kyrsten Sinema, “Droptail bill protects women, children,” *Arizona Republic*, April 23, 2011.

75 Daniel Gonzalez, “Births by U.S. visitors: A real issue?” *Arizona Republic*, August 17, 2011.

76 Jessica Anderson, “County taking hard line on illegal aliens; Frederick drafts laws to bar employment and housing,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 14, 2011.

77 Mary Orndorff, “House Democrats coming to protest,” *Birmingham News*, November 3, 2011.

78 Michael Matza, “Chester woman, illegally brought to U.S. as child, faces foreign homeland,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 13, 2011.

79 Daniel Gonzalez, “Births by U.S. visitors: A real issue?” *Arizona Republic*, August 17, 2011.

80 Misty Williams, “Health Care; Grady, dialysis provider set deal,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 10, 2011.

With very few exceptions, the articles in our scan describe an anguished existence in which immigrant women have practically no control over their own lives or the lives of their loved ones. Missing from the narrative are women who have immigrated here and act as family stewards, as anchors, as contributors to American society, or as agents of their own destiny.

According to this narrative, the government and public policy play a dual role. On the one hand, the government is an unauthorized immigrant woman's worst nightmare. The "system is broken" trope has been supplanted by the "government as bully." The federal government—both the executive branch and its administrative apparatus—through its aggressive deportation policy, its federal-state partnerships like the Secure Communities program, and its generally unyielding posture in individual cases, is a very hostile presence in the lives of immigrant women. At the state level, the hostility of anti-immigrant state lawmakers is palpable and is exemplified by this quote from a local elected official: "We want this to be the most unfriendly county in the state...to illegal aliens."⁸¹ Sometimes, however, the government assumes the role of protector. This role is made clear in the articles about private abuse and exploitation in which legislators, U.S. attorneys, and government administrators decry human traffickers and domestic abusers and call for ameliorative policies.

Niche Media

The major finding from our analysis of niche media is that these outlets rarely published stories about immigrant women, their challenges, or their accomplishments. Moreover, the few stories that did appear tended to follow the same pattern we found in the mainstream media: an emphasis on the negative. There were a few bright spots. *Mother Jones* published two strong investigative pieces about labor issues and the impact of Alabama's anti-immigrant law. *Latina.com* briefly explored several issues affecting immigrant Latinas on a systemic level, and *Yahoo! News* reprinted a number of sympathetic stories focusing on reproductive health issues faced by immigrant women.

Progressive magazines

Our scan of progressive magazines yielded only two articles, both in *Mother Jones*, dealing with women who have immigrated to the United States. That magazine ran two 8,000-word articles in which immigrant women workers played a role, although they were not the focus of the stories. The first, published in the July–August 2011 issue, describes the horrendous working conditions and health issues experienced by the mostly immigrant workers on the cut-and-kill floor of Hormel's Quality Pork Processors, Inc. (QPP) in Austin, Minnesota:

Tasks at the head table [the place where pigs' heads are eviscerated] are literally numbing. The steady hum of the automatic Whizard knives gives many workers carpal tunnel syndrome. And all you have to do is wait in the parking lot at shift change to see the shambling gait that comes from standing in one spot all day on the line.

One of the workers interviewed by the reporter was Miriam Angeles, a woman who, like many other cut-and-kill floor workers, suffered from a neurological disorder that medical experts believed was an autoimmune response "triggered by something inside the plant." Angeles, who spoke through an interpreter, reportedly didn't seek out other affected workers:

81 Jessica Anderson, "County taking hard line on illegal aliens; Frederick drafts laws to bar employment and housing," *Baltimore Sun*, November 14, 2011.

She resolved to just do her work and keep quiet. She never complained, she told me, even though she claims that her supervisor never honored her doctor's orders that she sit for 15 minutes every two hours. When the strong medications that had been prescribed for pain in her arms left her with blurred vision, the supervisor still refused to let her take a break. "No," Angeles says she was told, "you have to keep working."

Eventually, the workers who were ill filed workers' compensation claims, but:

Angeles was told to report to human resources where she was informed that there was a problem with her identification. Angeles, who'd been working under another name, knew she was about to be fired. Would she continue to have her health insurance? Would she still qualify for workers' comp? "They said, that's your problem. I feel thrown away. Like a piece of trash. Before, I worked hard and willingly for QPP, but after I got sick and needed restrictions and told them I was in pain, they threw me away like trash and were done with me."⁸²

The second *Mother Jones* article appeared in the March-April 2012 issue and is an in-depth investigation of how Alabama's anti-immigrant law affected immigrant workers and their families as well as the agricultural employers who depended on their labor; however, the article does not focus specifically on women.⁸³

Women's magazines

Our search of women's magazines yielded seven brief articles. A 660-word article in *Working Mother* was an advice column in the magazine's "Family" section geared towards immigrant parents. It urges parents to be sensitive to the challenges their children face in adapting to a new culture.⁸⁴ In one of the few upbeat pieces included in our analysis, a *Glamour* article celebrates the winners of the *Glamour* Top 10 College Women Competition, two of whom were immigrants: a Nigerian student at Yale and an Afghan student at Middlebury College.⁸⁵

We found five original articles on *Latina.com*. One covers Salma Hayek's admission, during an interview with *V Magazine* Spain, that she was once "an illegal immigrant in the United States." In her interview Hayek talked about the racial discrimination she faced in Hollywood when first starting out: "It was inconceivable to American directors and producers that a Mexican woman could have a lead role," she said. The reporter notes, "Her experience goes to show that the immigration issue touches everyone, from powerful celebrities to everyday workers—most are just coming to this country to follow their dreams."⁸⁶ Three other *Latina.com* articles explore the systemic issues of low-wage work, lack of health insurance, and the extreme measures of Sheriff Arpaio:

- Coverage of the Southern Poverty Law Center's report, "Injustice on Our Plates," opened with, "That grilled chicken salad that you ate for lunch? There's a good chance that everything in it, from the tomatoes to the lettuce to the bird itself was picked or processed by a Latina. Some 640,000 women (mostly Latinas) perform farm work and another estimated 63,000 work in poultry farms and processing centers. In both cases, women endure backbreaking work in return for little pay, extreme physical danger, abuse from employers and rampant sexual harassment." The article summarized the report's findings and linked to the full report.⁸⁷

82 Ted Genoways, "Cut and Kill," *Mother Jones*, July 2011–August 2011.

83 Paul Reyes, "Help Not Wanted," *Mother Jones*, March 2012–April 2012.

84 Irene Chang, "Embrace Differences," *Working Mother*, December 2009–January 2010.

85 Jessica Strul, "Ten Amazing Women You Haven't Heard Of, Yet!" *Glamour*, October 2010.

86 Mariela Rosario, "V Spain," *Latina.com*, December 8, 2010. <http://www.latina.com/entertainment/buzz/salma-hayek-i-was-illegal-immigrant-united-states>.

87 Damaris Ocana, "New Report on Immigrant Workers Reveals Rampant Workplace Abuse," *Latina.com*, January 4, 2011.

- ▶ “Latinas Cross the Border for Birth Control” reports on a study in the *American Journal of Public Health* showing that more Latinas are “making their way to Mexico [from the U.S.] where they have easier access to affordable birth control.” It goes on to explain: “Access to contraception is an issue for many, and is especially a problem for women who are uninsured or undocumented. ... Given the continued limits on reproductive health in the U.S., it’s likely this will become an even bigger issue in the future.”⁸⁸
- ▶ An article about the U.S. Department of Justice’s investigation of Maricopa County (AZ) Sheriff Joe Arpaio’s crackdown on undocumented immigrants focuses on his insistence that an undocumented woman be shackled during childbirth. The article linked to a powerful news segment aired by Telemundo 52 that included an emotional interview with the woman who was the subject of that investigation, Alma Minerva Chacon, holding her baby daughter in her lap.⁸⁹

Millennials

A search of *CNN.com* yielded no articles relevant for analysis. The search of *Yahoo! News* yielded six articles. None are original pieces; rather, they came from sources ranging from *Forbes* magazine to the Associated Press and the *Nation*. All of them are sympathetic in tone, and four deal with reproductive health:

- ▶ An AP story about an immigrant woman and mother of three, who, “blinded by postpartum depression,” had killed her seven-month-old baby. The article notes, “Studies suggest that Hispanic women suffer from slightly higher rates of postpartum depression because many are first-generation immigrants and are removed from the social and cultural support systems that surround childbirth in many Latin American cultures. A language barrier also prevents some immigrant women from getting help.”⁹⁰
- ▶ A *HealthDay* story about a new study from the American Association of Cancer Research that shows “foreign-born U.S. women are becoming more likely to undergo mammograms to screen for breast cancer, but native-born women still outpace them.” Researchers found that foreign-born women were less likely to be screened “due to factors such as lack of health insurance and a regular place to get health care” but also noted that a five-point rise in screening over a period of eight years was due to more “culturally and linguistically appropriate subsidized programs.”⁹¹
- ▶ An AP story about the murder prosecution of an abortion clinic operator in Philadelphia for the deaths of a Bhutanese refugee who died of an anesthesia overdose, and her baby who had been born alive. “The grand jury report described filthy, inhumane conditions at the clinic, which served many poor and immigrant women.”⁹²
- ▶ A story published by *The Nation* about the unlikely alliance that formed around a bill in Nebraska that would restore coverage for prenatal services to pregnant women who are ineligible for Medicaid for reasons other than income: “[T]hose are largely undocumented women, though not solely.” The article notes that supporters include both pro- and anti-abortion rights groups as well as immigrant rights groups and quotes an advocate from the Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest: “This is the first time we’ve had a common focus that I can recall, but there’s been a lot of common ground on it from the perspective of protecting health of unborn children. It’s foundational: you have to start with good prenatal care.”⁹³

Available at <http://www.latina.com/lifestyle/our-issues/new-report-immigrant-workers-reveals-rampant-workplace-abuse>.

88 Sally Mercedes, “Latinas Cross the Border for Birth Control,” *Latina.com*, April 5, 2012.

89 Amaris Castillo, “U.S. Justice Department Takes Stand Against Sheriff Joe Arpaio,” *Latina.com*, December 16, 2011.

90 Amy Taxin, “Prosecutor says mom aware when baby pushed to fall,” AP, August 25, 2011.

91 “Foreign-Born U.S. Women Getting Mammograms,” *HealthDay*, September 23, 2011.

92 AP, “Fifth guilty plea entered in Philly abortion case, November 10, 2011.

93 Emily Douglas, “In Nebraska, an Unlikely Alliance Fights for Prenatal Care for Undocumented Women,” April 18, 2012.

Implications and Analysis

Our media analysis illuminates both the challenges and opportunities that advocates and activists face as they seek to influence how the media portrays immigrant women and the public policies that affect them. The most critical challenge is to correct the imbalance in how the media depict the lives of these women. While it is crucial that advocates continue to expose the human rights and due process violations unauthorized immigrant women are exposed to, there is a danger in the media's emphasis on victimhood. The linguistic analysis of the public discourse commissioned by The Opportunity Agenda, a summary of which is included in Appendix A, described the portrayal of immigrant women as always vulnerable and in need of our charity as a double-edged sword:

It's very hard to pivot from victim to valuable members of society. ... All of these things are true and need to be said. But when they're said so much and without mention of the contributions women can and currently do make, it paints a distorted picture.⁹⁴

This “distorted picture” has clear policy implications. The depiction of immigrant women as helpless victims strengthens perceptions of “otherness” and dependency, and tends to reinforce the belief still held by a large percentage of Americans that immigrants are a burden on our country who benefit from various public services but don't pay taxes or contribute to society. This message, while somewhat less resonant with the public today than in the past (see Public Opinion Meta-Analysis on page 26), still plays a pernicious role in whipping up anti-immigrant feeling and suppressing support for meaningful policy reform. It is important to tell stories about the abuses immigrant women experience from both governmental and private sources, but they can also promote the idea that immigrant women do not possess the panoply of characteristics of a whole person with a rich life experience and an ability to engage in self-determination. Absent stories of their achievements, civic participation, and economic contributions, the public is receiving an incomplete and counterproductive picture of immigrant women.

On the favorable side, several observations can be made based on this research. First, coverage in both mainstream and niche media is overwhelmingly sympathetic to immigrant women and their families. Second, immigrant women, and immigrants in general, are being given considerable access to the media. At 24 percent, immigrant women were the second-most quoted sources in the mainstream articles, following close behind pro-immigrant advocates, who were quoted 26 percent of the time. This demonstrates a real interest by journalists in reporting what immigrant women have to say about their own circumstances. Third, reporters are using the stories of individual women to illustrate problems in the immigration system as a whole. By describing the circumstances of mixed status families and how the laws conspire to make one family member eligible for relief but another family member eligible for deportation, the long waits families have to endure while their applications for permanent residency wend their way through the system, and the huge expense of legal representation, readers are being educated about how the system actually works (or doesn't work). The American public's lack of understanding about the workings of the country's immigration system has been a major barrier to winning more support for federal immigration policy reform. The more the public understands about how arbitrary, irrational, and unjust the system is, the better.

94 Anat Shenker-Osorio, “Migrating Our Message: A Language Analysis of Immigration,” ASO Communications, May 2011.

Another observation worth noting is that although several of our search terms were neutral, (wom*n AND immigr! OR mother AND immigr! OR family AND immigr!), the overwhelming majority of articles focused on undocumented immigrant women. This means that the immigrant women in this country who are documented, and their challenges and achievements, are receiving almost no attention at all, at least with respect to their immigrant identities. This creates the impression that all immigrant women are undocumented—again, an incomplete and inaccurate picture.

The research provides some insight into who is writing about immigrant women in the mainstream print media. Although women constitute 37 percent of full-time reporters for daily newspapers,⁹⁵ half of the articles in our scan were written by women. Although Hispanics represent only 2.9 percent of mainstream news reporters,⁹⁶ 11 of the articles in the scan, or 22 percent, were written by reporters with Latino surnames.

The dearth of commentary was also notable. Of the 51 articles analyzed, we found only *one* op-ed. This suggests that although advocates were frequently sought out by reporters for quotes and, most likely, background information, advocates were not submitting commentary that further contextualized and explained the positions they were taking in the news articles. It could also mean that opinion pieces that were being submitted were not being published.

Finally, our scan of media that reach women, progressives, and Millennials showed that immigrant women and their issues were rarely represented in those pages, creating a lack of visibility among target audiences important to the immigrants' rights movement.

95 Sheila Gibbons, "Media Report To Women," updated March 2012 at <http://www.mediareporttowomen.com/statistics.htm>.

96 According to the U.S. Census Bureau, "2,726 news analysts, reporters and correspondents were Hispanic." July 2009. http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb09-ff17.html. See also <http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/10statab/labor.pdf>, Table 603.

Public Opinion Meta-Analysis

Introduction

This study synthesizes and analyzes existing public opinion research on immigration, immigrants, and immigration policy. An important objective of this analysis is to understand the American public's opinion on immigrant women, and on the views immigrant women hold of their lives in the United States. It is important in both immigration discourse and policy to understand these views, because immigrant women are at the heart of both work and family in many American communities. However, there is a dearth of public opinion data relating to immigrant women. With that in mind, our objective in this research was three-fold. First, we were interested in reviewing opinion research conducted since our last meta-analysis focusing on immigrants and immigration policy, contained in The Opportunity Agenda's report, "Public Discourse on Immigration in 2010."⁹⁷ Second, we hoped to learn about the American public's attitudes towards immigrant women and the issues that affect them. And finally, we wanted to understand more about how immigrant women feel about their lives in the United States.

We were able to accomplish the first part of our objective, but accomplishing the next two parts was limited by the lack of existing research. With the exception of some polling that was done on the issue of "birthright citizenship"—the automatic right to citizenship for all people born in this country, guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—we did not find any other research into how the intersection of gender and immigration registers in the minds of Americans. Research into the attitudes of immigrant women themselves is also quite sparse. For this reason, we are recommending that new research be undertaken.

⁹⁷ The Opportunity Agenda, "Public Discourse on Immigration in 2010: An Analysis of Print and Broadcast Media Coverage and Web 2.0 Discourse in 2010; A Meta-Analysis of Public Opinion Research," March 2011 at http://opportunityagenda.org/public_discourse_immigration_2010_public_opinion_and_media_content.

Methodology

This report draws on information from 25 public opinion research studies, most of them conducted between 2010 and 2012 by nationally known and reputable research organizations. The studies referenced in this report meet The Opportunity Agenda’s standards and best practices for high quality and objective public opinion research, including appropriate sample size, a methodologically sound design and research instrument, and a balanced questionnaire. The studies are listed in the Appendix.

The young people we refer to as Millennials are most often defined in quantitative research studies as being 18–29 years of age. In a few studies, young people are defined as 18–34 years old. For the purposes of this report, both age ranges and the term “young people” will be used interchangeably.

This study variously uses different terms to describe the same racial categories in an attempt to be consistent with the terminology used in each study cited. Overall, we use the racial categories applied by the federal government, which have been largely adopted by opinion researchers. The categories are defined as follows:

- ▶ White: any person who self-identifies as white only and non-Hispanic
- ▶ Black: any person who self-identifies as black or African American only
- ▶ Hispanic: any person of any race who self-identifies as Latino or Hispanic
- ▶ Asian: any person who self-identifies as Asian only

Finally, the analysis of the views of different demographic groups was limited to existing public opinion research available for this study.

Surveys of the General Public on Issues Related to Immigration

To synthesize and better understand the public opinion data collected over this two-year period, we grouped our findings into five categories:

- ▶ The Arizona S.B. 1070 law, due process, and law enforcement
- ▶ Immigrants and immigration
- ▶ Immigration policy reform
- ▶ Birthright citizenship
- ▶ The DREAM Act and in-state tuition

If put to a popular vote today, a majority of Americans would support a roadmap to citizenship for the approximately 11 million undocumented people living and working in the United States today. Over the past decade, support for immigration policy reform has crept up inch by inch.

Of interest is polling evidence described below showing that younger people between the ages of 18 and 30 are significantly more supportive of immigrant integration policies than are older people.⁹⁸ What is not known, however, is whether today’s generation of young people will retain their more positive view of immigrants and immigration as they age, or whether their more inclusive attitude is a function of their relative youth.

98 See also The Opportunity Agenda, “Millennials’ Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration Policies,” July 2012.

Offering a different perspective are some surveys showing strong support in favor of ending automatic citizenship for anyone born in the United States. Changing the Constitution is a radical position to advocate, making the fact that so many Americans favor such a move an important finding in thinking about discourse and policy on immigration.

Arizona’s S.B. 1070 and State versus Federal Responsibility for Immigration Enforcement

Surveys conducted between April 12 and June 10, 2012, as the nation waited for the Supreme Court’s decision in *Arizona v. United States*, indicate that a majority continued to support the Arizona law by a wide margin. In the most recent of the surveys conducted just weeks before the Supreme Court’s June 25 decision striking down some, but not all, of the law, 58 percent said they approved of the law and 38 percent disapproved.⁹⁹ That figure was unchanged from the results of polls taken after S.B. 1070 was signed into law by Gov. Jan Brewer on April 23, 2010. At that time, support ranged from 59 percent to 64 percent.¹⁰⁰ The figures are similar when people are asked whether they want their own state to pass a law similar to Arizona’s; in that instance, 56 percent say yes and 39 percent say no.¹⁰¹

However, a survey that considers the Arizona law according to the four provisions argued before the Supreme Court indicated that the least popular parts of the law were those that allowed detention without due process and criminalized looking for or accepting work. Disapproval for police detention increased by 12 points in two years:¹⁰²

As you may know, the Supreme Court recently heard arguments for and against a law passed by the state of Arizona dealing with illegal immigration. As I describe some parts of the law, tell me if you approve or disapprove of each.

	Approve	Disapprove
a. Allowing police to question anyone who they think may be in the country illegally		
May 3–6, 2012	57%	38%
May 6–9, 2010	62%	35%
b. Requiring people to produce documents verifying their legal status if police ask for them		
May 3–6, 2012	68%	28%
May 6–9, 2010	73%	23%
c. Allowing police to detain anyone who cannot verify their legal status		
May 3–6, 2012	53%	41%
May 6–9, 2010	67%	29%
d. Making it a crime for anyone in the country illegally to look for or accept work		
May 3–6, 2012	47%	47%
[not asked in 2010]		

99 Pew Research Center for People & the Press, “Voter Attitudes Survey,” June 7–17, 2012. See also Quinnipiac University Poll, April 11–17, 2012 (68 percent approve, 27 percent disapprove); CNN/ORC Poll, May 29–31, 2012 (75 percent approve, 24 percent oppose).

100 “America’s Voice, Findings from a Survey,” May 13–19, 2010; Pew Research Center for People & the Press, June 16–20, 2010; CBS News Poll, August 20–24, 2010.

101 Quinnipiac University Poll, October 25–31, 2011.

102 Princeton Survey Research Associates International for the *National Journal*, May 3–6, 2012.

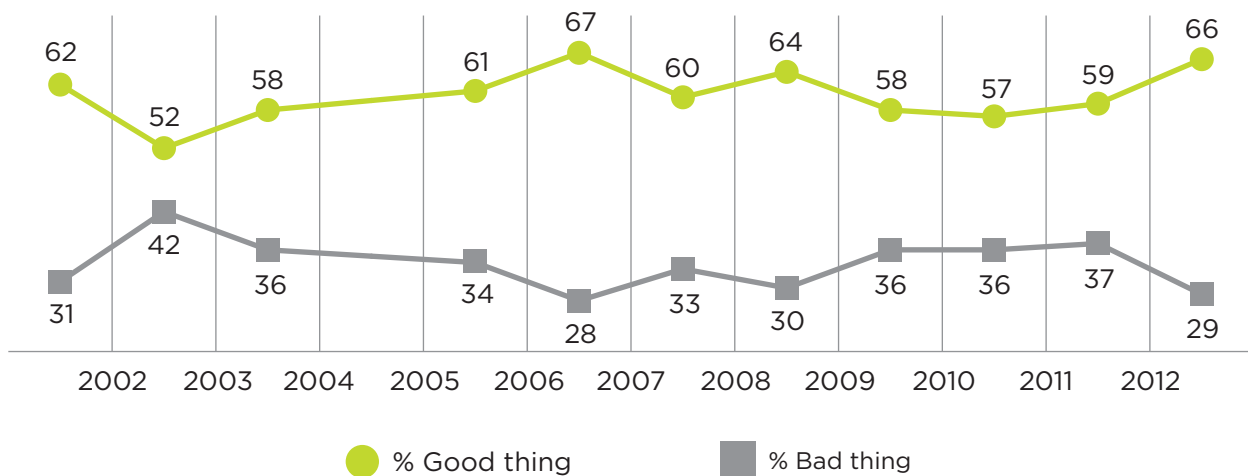
On the issue of whether immigration policy should be a federal and/or state responsibility, two surveys conducted only weeks apart demonstrate the importance of a question’s wording. At the beginning of June 2012 *The New York Times/CBS News* Poll asked, “Do you think laws regarding illegal immigrants should be determined only by the federal government, only by the state government, or should laws regarding illegal immigrants be determined by both the federal government and the state government?” Twenty-five percent responded “only federal,” 11 percent responded “only state,” and 62 percent responded “both.”¹⁰³ Respondents to a Public Religion Research Institute poll were asked, “Do you think immigration policy is something that should be decided at the national level or is it something that each state should decide for itself?” The question does not mention “illegal immigrants” (which the other poll referred to twice), but rather “immigration policy.” A huge majority of 77 percent chose “national level”; only 20 percent chose “state level.”¹⁰⁴

Hispanics stand out with respect to their disapproval of the Arizona law. For example, 71 percent of Hispanics disapprove of the provision allowing the police to detain anyone who cannot verify their legal status, as compared to 40 percent of blacks and 41 percent of the general population. The average difference between Hispanics and the general population with respect to the four components of the law is 21.5 points. African-American opinion is indistinguishable from the general population. Women are more disapproving of the law than men: 45 percent of women disapprove of police detention compared to 38 percent of men.¹⁰⁵ Age is also a factor. Fifty-four percent of younger adults (18–29) approve of the Arizona law compared to 58 percent of those between 30 and 44, 67 percent of those between 45 and 59, and 71 percent of people over 60.¹⁰⁶

Immigrants & Immigration

The American public remains conflicted about whether immigration and immigrants in general are good or bad for the country, but as the graph below shows, the trend is moving toward approval. Sixty-six percent say immigration is a “good thing,” representing a nine-point increase since 2010.

FIGURE 1. ON THE WHOLE, DO YOU THINK IMMIGRATION IS A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING FOR THIS COUNTRY TODAY?



Source: Gallup Politics, “Americans More Positive About Immigration,” June 16, 2012.

103 *The New York Times/CBS News* Poll, May 31–June 3, 2012.

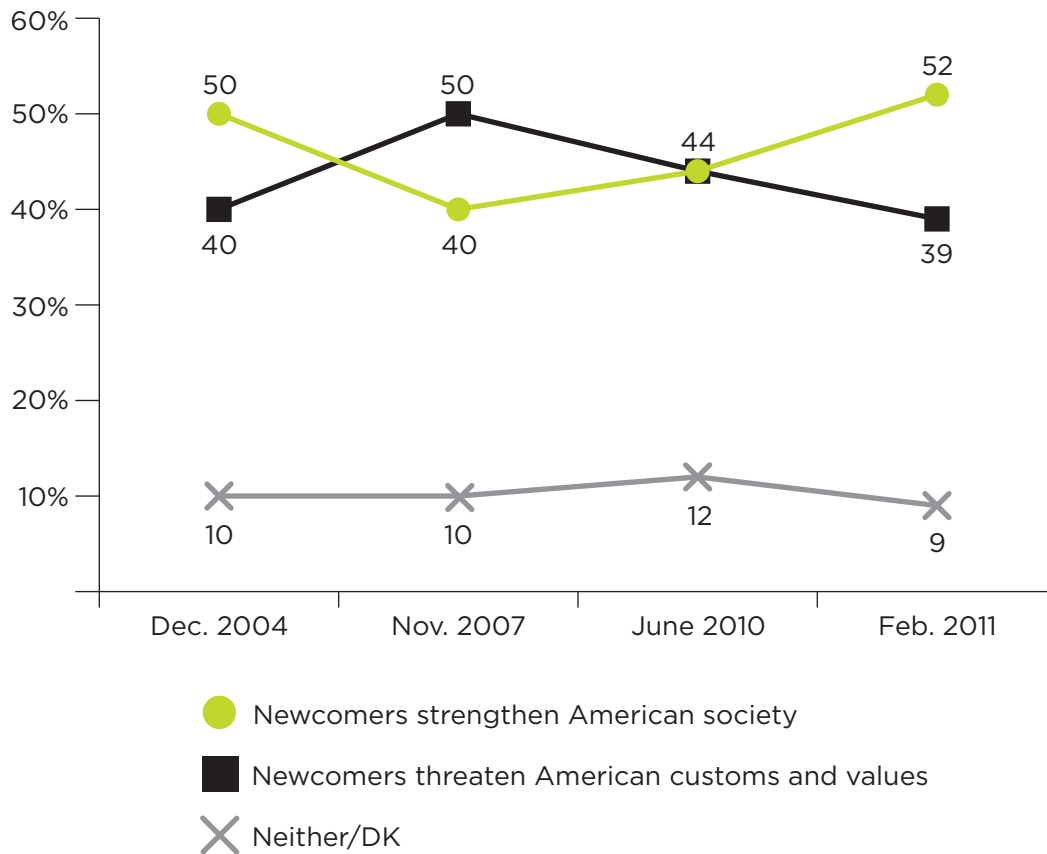
104 Public Religion Research Institute, “Religion & Politics Tracking Survey,” June 20–24, 2012.

105 Princeton Survey Research Associates International for the *National Journal*, May 3–6, 2012.

106 Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center at Hamilton College, “Immigration and Racial Change: Are All Generations On The Same Page?” May 12, 2011 (survey conducted from March 12–21, 2011).

When the question is more specific, the public is evenly split on the role immigrants play in U.S. society, with 45 percent saying, “Immigrants strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents” and 44 percent saying, “Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care.”¹⁰⁷ These figures represent a gradual shift in a positive direction: In 1994, only 31 percent agreed with the first statement and 63 percent agreed with the second.¹⁰⁸ And a majority rejects the assertion that immigrants threaten American values. In November 2007, the share of Americans who felt their customs and values threatened by newcomers reached a peak of 50 percent. As the chart below shows, that level has declined by more than ten points, while the percentage of those who believe newcomers strengthen society has increased to its highest point since 2004.¹⁰⁹

FIGURE 2. OPENNESS TO NEWCOMERS, 2004–2011



Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011 March Political Typology, February 22–March 14, 2011.

When asked specifically about immigrants and jobs, by a two to one margin those surveyed in 2010 believed that immigrants “mostly take jobs Americans don’t want,” (59 percent to 30 percent).¹¹⁰ In comparison, in March 2006, an era of relative prosperity, 24 percent thought immigrants were taking jobs away from Americans and 65 percent disagreed.¹¹¹ It is noteworthy that even at a time of great concern over jobs and the economy, a solid majority do not view themselves as competing with immigrants for jobs.

107 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “2011 March Political Typology,” February 22–March 14, 2011.

108 Ibid.

109 Chart based on Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “2011 March Political Typology,” February 22–March 14, 2011.

110 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “June 2010 Political Survey,” June 16–20, 2010.

111 Ibid.

The terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” are highly associated with the issue of “illegal immigration.” More than 30 percent of non-Hispanic Americans believe a majority of Hispanics are undocumented.¹¹² A national survey of non-Latino respondents by the National Hispanic Media Coalition found that:

News and entertainment media have a strong influence on non-Latino perceptions about Latinos and immigrants. Most people attribute a mix of positive and negative stereotypes to Latinos and immigrants. ... Specifically, non-Latinos report seeing Latinos in stereotypically negative or subordinate roles (gardeners, maids, dropouts, and criminals) most often in television and film.¹¹³

As will be seen throughout this report, Hispanics are by far the most supportive demographic group when it comes to attitudes about immigrants and immigration. Seventy-six percent of Hispanics say immigrants strengthen the country, compared to 45 percent of all Americans.¹¹⁴ Latino support wanes, however, as generations move further away from their immigrant ancestors. By the third generation, they are *less* likely than the general public to say that immigrants strengthen the country.¹¹⁵

	Immigrants strengthen the country	Immigrants are a burden
First generation	63%	26%
Second generation	56%	34%
Third generation	35%	55%

Blacks are less likely than the U.S. public (but more likely than third-generation Hispanics) to see immigrants as strengthening the country, with 39 percent saying immigrants strengthen the country and 50 percent saying they are a burden on the country.¹¹⁶ Blacks are also marginally more likely (34 percent) to believe that immigrants take jobs away from Americans (30 percent of the total think so); 15.8 percent of Hispanics believe that.¹¹⁷ Forty-three percent of men think immigrants are a burden on the country, compared to 45 percent of women, so they essentially hold comparable views on this question.¹¹⁸

On integration of immigrants into American life, younger adults display more inclusive attitudes than older adults. When asked whether the United States “should focus more on integrating illegal immigrants into American society or should it do more to enforce the laws against illegal immigration,” 48 percent of those 18–29 chose integration as compared to 25 percent of those 45–59.¹¹⁹

Immigration Policy & Reform

There is evidence that opinions about immigration policy priorities are shifting away from an emphasis on border control and enforcement. Just in the past year, “dealing with illegal immigrants already in the U.S.” became the majority choice for the first time since the question was originally asked by Gallup in 2006, as illustrated in Figure 3.

112 National Hispanic Media Coalition, “The Impact of Media Stereotypes on Opinions and Attitudes towards Latinos,” September 2012.

113 Ibid.

114 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “2011 Political Typology,” February 22–March 14, 2011.

115 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “June 2010 Political Survey,” June 16–20, 2010. See also Pew Hispanic Center, 2010 National Survey of Hispanics, August 17–September 19, 2010.

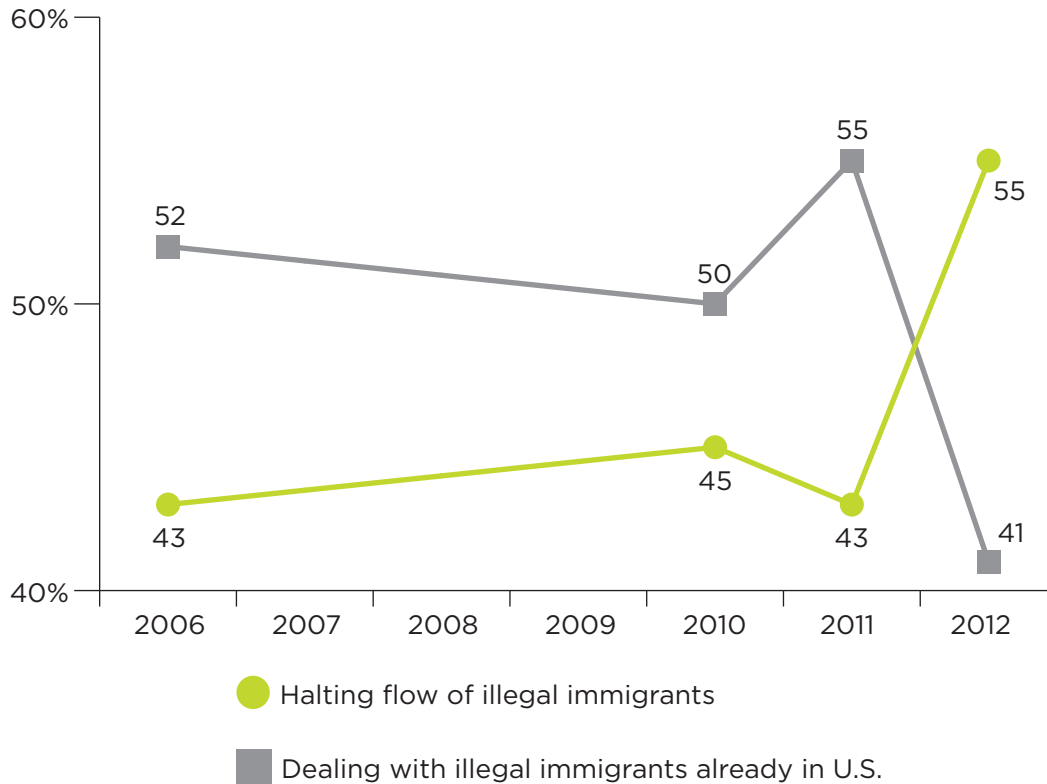
116 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “2011 Political Typology,” February 22–March 14, 2011.

117 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “June 2010 Political Survey,” June 16–20, 2010.

118 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “2011 Political Typology,” February 22–March 14, 2011.

119 Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center at Hamilton College, “Immigration and Racial Change: Are All Generations On The Same Page?” May 12, 2011 (survey conducted from March 12–21, 2011).

FIGURE 3. IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE, WHAT SHOULD BE THE MAIN FOCUS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION?



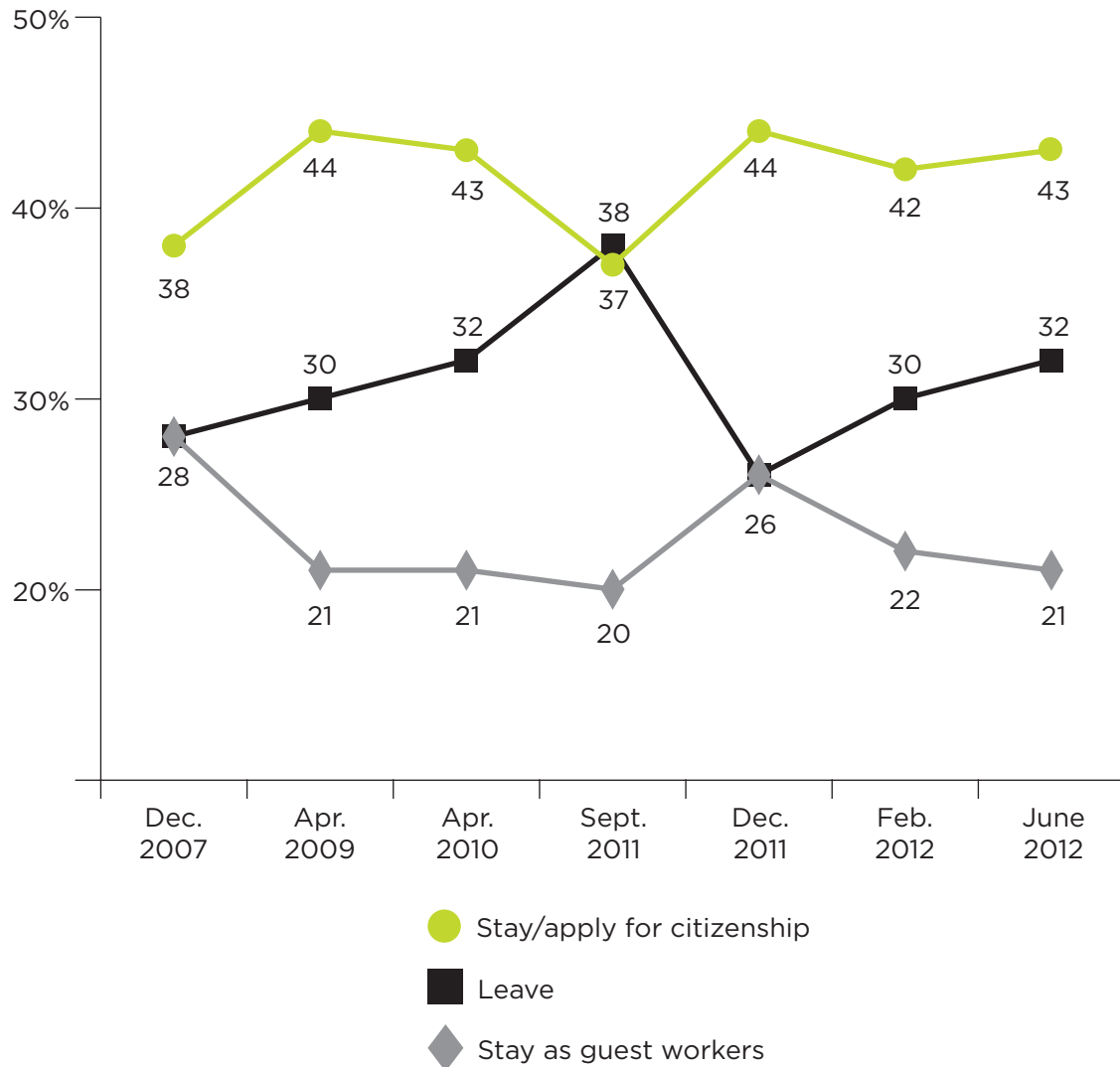
Source: Gallup Politics, “Americans More Positive About Immigration,” June 16, 2012.

“Deal with illegal immigrants already in the U.S.” is an ambiguous phrase and could mean anything from promoting integration for immigrants to mass deportation. However, surveys also show that the percentage of Americans who favor “providing a way for illegal immigrants currently in the country to gain legal citizenship if they pass background checks, pay fines and have jobs” continues its upward trajectory. Support for a roadmap to citizenship increased by nine percentage points between 2007 and 2011, from 63 percent to 72 percent, and opposition declined from 30 percent to 24 percent.¹²⁰

Since 2007, a *New York Times/CBS NEWS* Poll has been asking the public to choose between three policy alternatives: Illegal immigrants (1) should be allowed to stay in their jobs and apply for U.S. citizenship; (2) should be allowed to stay in their jobs but only as temporary guest workers; or (3) should be required to leave their jobs and leave the United States. The roadmap to citizenship option has consistently enjoyed the support of the plurality, and as the following graph shows, that support has gradually increased over the past five years.

120 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “2011 Political Typology,” February 22–March 14, 2011.

FIGURE 4. POLICY ALTERNATIVES: ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS SHOULD...



Source: *The New York Times*/CBS News poll, May 31–June 3, 2012.

A different May 2012 survey, by United Technologies/*National Journal*, poses three other alternatives, none of which explicitly mention citizenship. Again, the “deport all” option was clearly the outlier position, garnering only 17 percent support. Forty-four percent chose “deport some, but allow those who have been here for many years and have broken no other laws to stay here legally,” and 33 percent chose “allow all illegal immigrants to stay, provided they have broken no other laws and commit to learning English and U.S. history.”¹²¹ In other words, a majority of 77 percent supported an integration-oriented policy involving limited or no deportation.

Support for a roadmap to citizenship with conditions (pass background checks, pay fines, and have jobs) cuts across gender, race, and ethnicity. It is supported by 69 percent of men, 76 percent of women, 73 percent of blacks, and 91 percent of Hispanics. At the same time, most respondents (except Hispanics) also support “stronger enforcement of immigration laws and border security,” with 82 percent of men,

121 United Technologies/*National Journal* Congressional Connection Poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, May 3–6, 2012.

76 percent of women, and 71 percent of blacks, but only 57 percent of Hispanics in favor.¹²² Age also appears to be a factor. Given the choice between two policy priorities—“The U.S. should do more to help illegal immigrants integrate into American society,” or “The U.S. should do more to enforce laws against illegal immigration,” those between the ages of 18 and 29 were much more likely to choose the former option than older cohorts: 48 percent, as compared to 37 percent of 30- to 44-year-olds; 25 percent of 45- to 59-year-olds; and 23 percent of those over the age of 60.¹²³

Birthright Citizenship

Surveys conducted since 2010 show strong support for the notion that the Constitutional right to birthright citizenship should be changed to exclude those born to “illegal immigrants.” The most recent poll, conducted in October 2011, showed that when asked whether we should “keep or change the law granting citizenship to American born children on immigrants,” 48 percent favored “keeping the law,” and 46 percent favored “changing the law.”¹²⁴ However, in 2010 the Pew Research Center got a different result when the question did not use the term “illegal immigrant” and did use the term “newborn child,” and also referred to the Constitution rather than the less resonant term, “the law.” In response to the question, “Would you favor changing the Constitution so that the parents must be legal residents of the U.S. in order for their newborn child to be a citizen, or should the Constitution be left as it is?” only 41 percent favored changing the Constitution and 56 percent favored leaving it “as is.”¹²⁵

None of these surveys show significant differences between men and women, but they consistently show that blacks are much less in favor of changing the Constitution than are whites. In a 2011 poll, 63 percent of blacks favored granting citizenship as compared to 41 percent of whites and 48 percent of the total.¹²⁶ In another recent survey, 70 percent of blacks favored continuing to grant automatic citizenship, compared to 50 percent of the total.¹²⁷

Hispanics are champions on this issue, with support for birthright citizenship ranging from 75 percent¹²⁸ to 79 percent.¹²⁹ Latinas are especially supportive: 87 percent believe that “a child born in the U.S. should be a citizen regardless of the parents’ immigration status.”¹³⁰ Age is also a significant factor: young adults are far more in favor of protecting birthright citizenship than older Americans. Sixty-three percent of those 18–34 favor birthright citizenship compared to 49 percent of 35- to 49-year-olds and 46 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds.¹³¹

Immigrants Brought to the United States as Children

Polling on the DREAM Act¹³² over the past several years has shown increasing support for giving some form of legal status to undocumented immigrants under the age of 30 who came to the United States before age 16, had lived in the country for at least five years, had no criminal record, and either were in

122 Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “2011 Political Typology,” February 22–March 14, 2011.

123 Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center at Hamilton College, “Immigration and Racial Change: Are All Generations On The Same Page,” May 12, 2011 (survey conducted from March 12–21, 2011).

124 Quinnipiac University Poll, October 25–31, 2011. See also, *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey* by Hart/McInturff, January 13–17, 2011 showing that 50 percent favored continuing to grant automatic citizenship with 47 percent opposed.

125 Pew Research Center for People & the Press, “June 2010 Political Survey,” June 16–20, 2010.

126 Quinnipiac University Poll, October 25–31, 2011.

127 *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey* by Hart/McInturff, January 13–17, 2011.

128 Quinnipiac University Poll, October 25–31, 2011.

129 *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey* by Hart/McInturff, January 13–17, 2011.

130 National Survey of Hispanics on Abortion, Lake Research Partners for the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, September 9–21, 2010.

131 *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey* by Hart/McInturff, January 13–17, 2011. See also Quinnipiac University Poll, October 25–31, 2011 in which the figures were 64 percent (18- to 34-year-olds), 48 percent (35- to 54-year-olds) and 41 percent (55+).

132 The DREAM Act (the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) is supported by a majority of voters. If passed, undocumented students would be eligible to earn legal status if they came to America when they were very young, lived here for at least five years, stayed out of trouble, earned a high school diploma or GED, and completed at least two years of college or military service. Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2011, S. 952, 112th Cong. 1st Sess. (2011).

school, were high school graduates, or were military veterans. In 2010, 54 percent favored support of such a law.¹³³ By the spring of 2012 support had increased by 8 points, to 62 percent.¹³⁴

On June 15, 2012, President Obama announced his decision, by directive, to implement aspects of the DREAM Act,¹³⁵ and this generated new polling on the issue. All showed majority support for the Obama policy. In a poll taken immediately after the June 15 announcement, 64 percent of likely voters said they agreed with the policy, while 30 percent disagreed. Significantly, independents backed the decision by a 2-1 margin.¹³⁶ Other polls showed a similar spread of between 12 and 18 points.¹³⁷ Blacks were also more supportive of the decision by Obama (66 percent approved compared to 55 percent of the total), and women were somewhat more supportive than men (58 percent compared to 51 percent).¹³⁸

On the issue of allowing “children of illegal immigrants to attend state college at the lower tuition rate of state residents” the showing of support is more complex. An October 2011 survey showed 52 percent opposed and 44 percent in favor of offering in-state tuition to this group.¹³⁹ But race, ethnicity, and age are all significant factors when it comes to support for in-state tuition. When asked, “Should an illegal immigrant who graduated from a high school in your state and is accepted to a state public college qualify for the in-state college tuition?” 66 percent of blacks said yes, as did 71 percent of Hispanics, and 57 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 34, compared to 44 percent of the total. Women were somewhat more likely to support in-state tuition than men (47 percent of women said yes, compared to 40 percent of men).¹⁴⁰

Surveys of Immigrants: Living in the United States

Few surveys have been conducted on the attitudes or opinions of immigrants living in the United States, and fewer still of immigrant women. However, some recent research begins to paint a picture of how immigrants feel about their lives in the United States. The sketch that emerges is one of hope and struggle. On the one hand, immigrants in general and immigrant women in particular believe that their circumstances in the United States are more favorable than they were in their countries of origin. And women indicate that in adapting to a new culture they have become more assertive in both their public and private lives, and are eager to become American citizens not only to prevent the possibility of separation from their U.S.-born children, but also to be able to vote in American elections. On the other hand, they are well aware of the obstacles they face to full integration, including discrimination and language barriers. Latino immigrants in particular worry that discrimination based on real or perceived immigration status is preventing them from succeeding in America.

In 2008, New America Media sponsored a groundbreaking survey of 1,000 foreign-born women from Africa, Latin America, Korea, the Philippines, China, Vietnam, South Asia, and the Middle East.¹⁴¹ The sample included naturalized citizens, legal residents, and undocumented immigrants, and the questionnaire was administered in each respondent’s language of choice. The survey’s findings provide us with insights into the most common reasons for migration, the women’s hopes and desires for the

133 Gallup Politics, “Slim Majority of Americans Would Vote for DREAM Act Law,” December 10, 2010.

134 Latino Decisions survey, May 24–June 4, 2012.

135 See *Memorandum on Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion with Respect to Individuals Who Came to the United States as Children*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, June 15, 2012, available at <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/pdf/s1-certain-young-people.pdf>.

136 Bloomberg National Poll by Selzer & Co., June 15–18, 2012.

137 Fox News Poll by Anderson Robbins Research and Shaw & Co., June 24–26, 2012 (54% in favor; 36% opposed); Public Religion Research Institute, June 20–24, 2012 (55% in favor; 41% opposed).

138 Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Politics Tracking Survey, June 20–24, 2012.

139 Quinnipiac University Poll, October 25–31, 2011.

140 Ibid..

141 New America Media, “Women Immigrants: Stewards of the 21st Century Family,” February 2009, available at <http://media.namx.org/images/communications/immwomenexecsummary.pdf>.

future, their accomplishments, and their concerns. Unless otherwise noted, the findings summarized here are from this work.

A plurality of the women (38 percent) came to the United States to join family members who were already here. The next most common reason given (22 percent) was “to make a better life for my children.” Some, but not many, differences were based on nationality. For example, Latinas were more likely than others to say they came to the United States “to get a job and make money” (23 percent compared to 17 percent of the total), and African women were much more likely to respond “to pursue a higher education” (33 percent compared to 7 percent of the total).¹⁴²

Although immigrants’ average salary from their first job in this country was only \$500 per month, when asked to name the biggest challenge they faced, they did not cite economic issues. Instead, the most common response by far (at 50 percent) was “helping my children achieve success” and that response was the most common across all ethnicities. Only 17 percent said their biggest challenge was “making enough money to take care of my family.”¹⁴³

There were significant differences based on nationality when it came to the women’s occupations before coming to the United States. A majority of immigrant women from Korea, the Philippines, India, and African and Arabic countries described their last job in their home country as “professional,” while most Vietnamese and Latin American women had held non-professional jobs. Chinese women were as likely to be professionals as not.¹⁴⁴ However, only 13 percent of the respondents held professional jobs in the United States at the time of the survey, as compared to 40.6 percent of U.S. women overall.^{145, 146} However, the survey also showed that most immigrant women had doubled their salary since arriving here. (Note that the great majority of the respondents had been living in the United States for 10 years or more).

Immigrant women identified a number of problems they face in this country:¹⁴⁷

- ▶ **Language barrier:** Women from Latin America, China, Korea, and Vietnam reported that their English proficiency was very limited.
- ▶ **Access to quality health care:** A survey conducted in 2010 by Lake Research Partners for the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health showed that 51 percent of all Latinas had no health insurance, and that a larger percentage of Latinas between the ages of 18 and 29 did not have insurance (66 percent).¹⁴⁸ The New America Media survey found that 30 percent of the immigrant women they surveyed, and 40 percent of Latinas in this group, had no insurance. New America Media also found that a majority of 62 percent were not aware of public health programs that could benefit their children.
- ▶ **Discrimination:** Sixty-three percent of the 1,000 women surveyed reported that discrimination against immigrants had increased since their arrival in the United States, and an overwhelming majority of Latinas thought so (86 percent). Latinas were far more likely than women from other nationalities to say that discrimination was “a major problem” for their family (82 percent of Latinas as compared to 17 percent of both African and Middle Eastern women, and far fewer for the other nationalities).

142 Ibid., p. 14.

143 Ibid., pp. 15, 16. Eighteen percent said “being able to hold my family together” and 15 percent said they didn’t know or had no answer.

144 Ibid., p. 17.

145 Ibid.

146 U.S. Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau, “Women in the Labor Force at 2010” at <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/Qf-laborforce-10.htm>.

147 New America Media, “Women Immigrants: Stewards of the 21st Century Family,” pp. 18–21.

148 National Survey of Hispanics on Abortion, Lake Research Partners for the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, September 9–21, 2010.

A large majority of immigrant women across all nationalities said that they had “become more assertive at home and in public” since coming to the United States (73 percent), and although a majority of married women said their husbands were “the head of the household,” most also said that when it came to making personal decisions about finances or family size, decisions were made “together.”¹⁴⁹

If they have their way, immigrant women are here to stay; 84 percent would like to become U.S. citizens and most said they feel stronger about obtaining citizenship than other members of their family. The most common reasons cited for wanting to become citizens were “to make sure I’m never separated from my children” (24 percent) and “to be able to vote in American elections” (21 percent).¹⁵⁰

A national survey of Hispanics, both native- and foreign-born, reflects similar attitudes and did not reveal significant differences between men and women. Most rated their “overall quality of life” as excellent or good (69 percent), although those numbers diminished with immigration status. Eighty-three percent of native-born Hispanics rated their lives as good or excellent, compared to 58 percent of foreign-born, and only 48 percent of undocumented Hispanics.¹⁵¹

Both native- and foreign-born Hispanics believe discrimination to be a problem “in preventing Hispanics in general from succeeding in America,” with 78 percent of native-born Hispanics and 89 percent of immigrants feeling that way. A plurality of all Hispanics believe that immigration status was the biggest cause of discrimination against Hispanics (followed by skin color, language skills, and income levels and education).¹⁵²

Hispanics overall share the belief that “the opportunity to get ahead is better in the United States” than in the country they or their ancestors came from. Seventy-nine percent of undocumented immigrants feel that way, compared to 81 percent of survey respondents. But they also believe that people in the United States are less accepting of immigrants now than they were five years earlier.¹⁵³

149 New America Media, “Women Immigrants: Stewards of the 21st Century Family,” pp. 28-29.

150 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

151 Pew Hispanic Center, “2010 National Survey of Hispanics,” August 17-19, 2010.

152 *Ibid.*

153 *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Americans' opinions of immigrants and their effect on the nation continue to evolve. Even while we have seen an increase in anti-immigrant legislation in certain states, support for immigration policy reform that would provide a roadmap to citizenship remains high. It is critical that we harness and direct this support, with a strategic eye for audiences. We need to activate Latinos and young people who are already supportive of most progressive immigration policies, and bring more securely into the fold African Americans and white audiences. These trends show that we are for the most part moving in the right direction.

Recommendations

While there is a positive level of support for several key policies, our findings around media coverage and continued public support for laws like Arizona’s S.B. 1070 show that Americans are not yet receiving a balanced picture of the lives, contributions, aspirations, and challenges of immigrant women living in the United States. Advocates, policymakers, journalists, and others can promote a better-balanced public discourse that builds support for policies encouraging the full integration of this important constituency into U.S. society.

- ▶ **Conduct new public opinion research.** As this report demonstrates, gender-based research on immigration-related issues is scant, both with respect to the general public’s attitudes and the attitudes of immigrant women themselves. More research is needed to get a better understanding of how immigrant women are perceived in order to identify challenges to and openings for improving the public discourse and increasing support for policies relating to integration, due process, and abuse or exploitation.
- ▶ **Emphasize how basic due process rights are threatened** by current immigration policy and practices. Important segments of the American public are troubled by the government’s draconian deportation practices, racial and ethnic profiling, and other due process violations. Our media analysis shows that mainstream journalists are interested in writing about these issues. An effort should be made to encourage women’s and progressive media outlets and outlets favored by young people to cover stories about the unfair, discriminatory, and arbitrary nature of U.S. immigration policy.
- ▶ **Highlight positive examples** of immigrant women as agents of change and of the contributions they are making to their own communities and to American society overall. Include the voices of women from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and showcase entrepreneurs and leaders. Underscore their desire to be a part of the fabric of American society and their quest for citizenship.
- ▶ **Project a more full and diverse picture of who immigrant women are.** Many immigrant women have achieved success in a variety of professions and occupations. Their stories, and the pride they have in their immigrant identities, need to be told. Similarly, while millions of newcomers are mothers and “stewards of their families,” they are also workers who contribute to the country’s economic engine.
- ▶ **Encourage more coverage of LGBT immigrant issues,** including uplifting stories of achievement, integration, and contribution, not just stories of victimization.
- ▶ **Emphasize systemic problems and solutions.** Stories about individual women can be powerful hooks to engage reporters and the public, but those individual stories should whenever possible be linked to the need for systemic solutions.
- ▶ **Promote government as a solution, not just as the problem,** and avoid perpetuating the idea that the government as a whole is always ineffective. When criticizing a government policy or action, identify the specific agency or official responsible and describe what that agency or individual should do to fix the problem.
- ▶ **Submit more commentary.** Op-eds, columns, and blog entries that reinforce the above recommendations would help to overcome the imbalance in how the media depicts immigrant

women and LGBT immigrants.

- ▶ **Take advantage of new and social media** to tell stories, not just traditional media. Seek out venues that especially appeal to women, progressives, and Millennials.

Public Opinion Sources

America's Voice, Findings from a Survey, May 13–19, 2010

Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center at Hamilton College, "Immigration and Racial Change: Are All Generations On The Same Page?" May 12, 2011 (survey conducted from March 12–21, 2011)

The New York Times/CBS News Poll, May 31–June 3, 2012

Bloomberg National Poll by Selzer & Co., June 15–18, 2012

CBS News Poll, August 20–24, 2010

CBS News Poll, September 28–October 2, 2011

CNN/ORC Poll, May 29–31, 2012

Fox News Poll by Anderson Robbins Research and Shaw & Co., June 24–26, 2012

Gallup Poll, longitudinal data based on nationwide surveys

Latino Decisions survey, May 24–June 4, 2012

National Hispanic Media Coalition, "The Impact of Media Stereotypes on Opinions and Attitudes towards Latinos," September 2012

National Survey of Hispanics on Abortion, Lake Research Partners for the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, September 9–21, 2010

NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* Survey by Hart/McInturff, January 13–17, 2011

New America Media, "Women Immigrants: Stewards of the 21st Century Family," February 2009

Pew Hispanic Center, "2010 National Survey of Hispanics," August 17–September 19, 2010

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "June 2010 Political Survey," June 16–20, 2010

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "2011 March Political Typology," February 22–March 14, 2011

Pew Research Center for People & the Press, "Voter Attitudes Survey," June 7–17, 2012

Princeton Survey Research Associates International for the *National Journal*, May 3–6, 2012

Public Religion Research Institute, Religion & Politics Tracking Survey, June 20–24, 2012

Quinnipiac University Poll, October 25–31, 2011

Quinnipiac University Poll, April 11–17, 2012

The New York Times/CBS News Poll, May 31–June 3, 2012

United Technologies/*National Journal* Congressional Connection Poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, May 3–6, 2012

Appendix A

Communication Challenge in Focus: Women Immigrants

Discourse about women immigrating here brings into focus the communication problems just described. If we're having a hard time conveying the problems of immigration writ large, these same concerns are magnified when applied to women.

The most succinct statement about how women are described within the context of immigration is—they're not. Outside of reproductive justice groups, immigration is not seen as a women's issue. Mainstream media, blogs, and think tanks on both sides don't generally parse the particular issues women face when moving or living here without documentation.

This lack of attention applies even when conversation turns to issues of child-bearing. Where we'd expect direct references to women, we see generalities:

There can be little doubt that illegal aliens giving birth to children in the United States is a frequent occurrence and is not a new phenomenon.¹⁵⁴

People come here to have babies...they come here to drop a child. It's called, "drop and leave." To have a child in America, they cross the border, they go to the emergency room, have a child, and that child's automatically an American citizen. ... That attracts people here for all the wrong reasons.¹⁵⁵

You've got the other problem where thousands of people are coming across the Arizona/Texas border for the express purpose of having a child.¹⁵⁶

This concept is certainly, I think, literally quite foreign to many Americans because they—someone who comes to this country illegally, they wonder why should they be rewarded by having their child be a citizen? And the numbers are not insignificant. There are about four million children who are citizens born here of undocumented aliens.¹⁵⁷

Opponents don't want to humanize immigrants by mentioning their gender. This gets too close to helping audiences imagine them as individuals—a precursor to empathy. Even this pro-immigrant reporter, however, leaves women out:

Why are all these undocumented foreigners producing offspring on U.S. soil if not because of birthright citizenship? Some obvious explanations: because they live here, and because they tend to be of childbearing age, since older folks are less likely to trek through the desert for the privilege of harvesting watermelons.

But the chief reason is that having kids is what human beings do, wherever they are and whatever their immigration status. The odd thing would be if these newcomers were not reproducing. Changing the citizenship rule would have little or no effect on the fertility of illegal immigrants. ... We would all do well to remember again that people come to America to work, not to have babies.¹⁵⁸

154 W.D. Reasoner, Birthright Citizenship for the Children of Aliens, Center for Immigration Studies.

155 E.J. Dionne, Is the GOP Shedding a Birthright, *Washington Post*, August 5, 2010.

156 Alexander Mooney, White House: 14th Amendment Change 'just wrong', August 13, 2010. <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/08/13/white-house-14th-amendment-change-just-wrong>.

157 The Debate over 'anchor babies' and citizenship, NPR, August 18, 2010.

158 Steve Chapman, Giving Birth to Fears, *Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 2010.

And the lack of direct mention continues when we examine other advocacy on behalf of immigrant women. The life that gets referenced is the baby-to-be, not the mother:

The bill's supporters called the approach short-sighted, saying babies who don't receive prenatal care may require expensive healthcare later on.¹⁵⁹

Granted, the first quotation comes from an anti-abortion source. But these are also strategic choices, putting the more sympathetic figure in the frame. Consider the title of an article from an immigrant rights group: "Nebraska's Efforts to Punish Undocumented Women are Killing Babies." Perhaps if the public will not favor helping the woman, they will at least feel sorry for the child.

This logic is sound, as one commenter among many shows, "I admit that I am torn about what to do with children, who thru (sic) no fault of their own are law breakers, but any adult who is here illegally should have stayed home and rallied for change within their own country, instead of taking the easy way out and coming here."¹⁶⁰

This leads to a challenging language obstacle. In advancing the rights of children born to immigrant parents, we must take care not to vilify the adults involved. While the "it's not their fault" line of reasoning seems sound advocacy on behalf of these babies, it's a subtle form of impugning the parents:

We believe in a clean slate principle. ... [W]hatever questions there are about the legitimacy of parents or grandparents, in our country you get a clean slate. Every new child who is born here is simply and indisputably an American. And that is part of our almost unique national identity.¹⁶¹

A lovely sentiment—but one that asks us to believe the parents of this new child have sullied things. Otherwise, there's no need to clean the slate.

At times women are mentioned, but most often as vessels, not active players in society:

I am certain that such highly motivated mothers will produce children who become outstanding American citizens. We should even encourage more such undertakings.¹⁶²

This anchor baby phenomenon whether undertaken by rich Chinese women or poor Mexican ones is a slap in the face to every American citizen.¹⁶³

Gutierrez said talk of holding hearings on the amendment was an effort to "demonize children in the wombs of their mothers."¹⁶⁴

Generally in such discourse, women aren't considered women—they're just mothers. That's what is expressed as relevant and worth mentioning about them. On the one hand, this allows opponents to focus on and dramatize concerns about yet more immigrants on our shores. On the other hand, it's a challenge for opponents because mothers are revered—if not respected—figures.

Advocates on behalf of women, immigrants, and reproductive rights are having a hard time finding their balance on this. Describing the special needs and important roles of mothers seems a promising way to activate public sympathy. However, it may also reinforce the women-as-mothers-and-nothing-else notion. In an otherwise compelling piece, we see one author give in to this:

159 Dee Dee Correll, "In Nebraska Issues of Abortion and Immigration Collide," *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 2011.

160 Irasema Graza, "Comment on Arizona Law Compounds Immigrant Women's Vulnerability," *Huffington Post*, May 9, 2010.

161 Walter Dellinger, interview by Neil Conan, "The Debate Over 'Anchor Babies' And Citizenship," Talk of the Nation, NPR, August 18, 2010, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129279863>.

162 Comment on "Coming As Tourists, Leaving with American Babies," Jennifer Medina, *The New York Times*, March 29, 2011.

163 Ibid.

164 Bridget Johnson, "Gutierrez: Republicans Attacking Unborn with Citizenship Concerns," *The Hill*, August 7, 2010.

Women play a central and overlooked role in today's immigration story. Even when not directly highlighted, women often bear the weight of keeping families together and helping them grow stronger. ... Immigrants are not a threat to our nation, but in fact, a crucial and needed part of our way of life. Without them, we fall apart. This is what happens when you remove a mother from a family. This is what happens when you remove a workforce from a factory in Postville, Iowa. And this is what will happen if we continue to punish or forcibly remove immigrants from our nation.¹⁶⁵

While making the critical point about paying attention to women, the author notes their role in family unity, but not, for example, economic ingenuity. Further, in detailing bad policy, the sex-specific reference is to mother, not woman. The sex-neutral reference is to workers. There's a second tightrope to walk here. Besides the women-exclusively-as-mothers problem, there's the women-as-victims trope. And there are good reasons to talk about motherhood and also about oppression, not least because they're critically prevalent factors in female immigrants' lives. Further, they do afford some humanity or at least some sympathy for these individuals.

However, just as it's problematic to portray immigrants overall as helpless and in need of our charity, it's a double-edged sword to do this for women in particular. It's very hard to pivot from victim to valuable member of society. Examples of women-as-vulnerable abound, some of which also reinforce the woman-equals-mother idea:

It's about the fact that a woman is exposed to vastly different, dangerous scenarios because of her sex. And it's about telling the stories of individual women who may not only encounter threatening situations and barriers to health care for themselves, but are in unique positions as caretakers and protectors of their children's lives and health as well.¹⁶⁶

[Women] endure abuse and exploitation at the hands of violent partners or opportunistic employers, with sometimes fatal results, in order to stay with their children, and near the only support networks they know.¹⁶⁷

All of these things are true and need to be said. But when they're said so much and without mention of the contributions women can and do currently make, it paints a distorted picture. And it may backfire, even in the evoking-sympathy department. This commenter clearly isn't feeling a tugging on any heartstrings:

Tough cookies. They shouldn't even be here depending on anyone in the first place. The woman card, the poverty card, the victim card, the race card, etc. All these cards and the open border types still aren't playing with a full deck. Send the illegals home.¹⁶⁸

Alternatively, statements like those below provide great templates for how to both convey problems and portray the full range of women's experiences and abilities:

Immigrant women are the ones who make health care and child care decisions in their families—this law is cutting off communities at the knees.¹⁶⁹

Over the last decade, the number of women migrating to the United States has not only increased dramatically, women now make up more than half of all immigrants coming to

165 Nezu, "Weekly Immigration Wire: Women Central to Immigration Story," *America's Voice*, May 22, 2009.

166 Amie Newman, "Why Is Arizona's Immigration Law a 'Women's Issue?'" *RH Reality Check*, May 14, 2010. <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/node/13456>.

167 Irasema Garza.

168 Comment on "Arizona Law Compounds Immigrant Women's Vulnerability".

169 Amie Newman, "Why Is Arizona's Immigration Law a 'Women's Issue?'" *RH Reality Check*, May 14, 2010. <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/node/13456>.

this country. ... These are young women seeking opportunities for their families, to improve their lives and the lives of their current or future children.¹⁷⁰

There are special challenges in highlighting women immigrants, a double handicap in many respects. Triple when you include the race issue. Conveying the whole picture of women as both “strong, capable, equals” and “exploited, vulnerable, mothers” is tough. This challenge highlights the need to balance between immigration as a social issue and immigration as a personal journey. Too much talk of social concerns can lead to apprehensions about overpopulation, buoyed by the assumed super-fertility of foreign females—especially those from poorer parts of the world. Instead, we should consider turning attention to the more individual reasons behind and experiences of immigrating.

170 Ibid.

MIGRATING OUR MESSAGE • THE LANGUAGE OF IMMIGRATION ADVOCACY

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

How do immigration advocates put forth a compelling narrative about who new immigrants are and how best to treat them? How do we establish a popular agenda for shared prosperity that includes all? In the face of slurs like *illegal* and real economic peril, how do we get off defense and persuade the public that equitable treatment is long overdue?

To answer these questions, The Opportunity Agenda partnered with ASO Communications. The language recommendations that follow emerge from analysis of over 1200 data points from current language about immigrants and immigration. The data included consist of (1) The Opportunity Agenda and allies' collateral materials (2) popular discussion of this topic (blogs, chat rooms) (3) media coverage (4) the same from the opposition.

Beyond views of immigrants and immigration, we explored beliefs and assumptions about sub-topics including women immigrants and due process.

METHODOLOGY

Using a variety of techniques from *cognitive linguistics*, a field dedicated to how people process information and communicate, we set forth to examine how people reason, formulate judgments and come to conclusions about immigrants and immigration.

Principally, these conclusions emerge from *metaphor analysis*. This involves cataloging the commonplace non-literal phrases in all speech. Noting patterns in these expressions reveals how people automatically and unconsciously

make sense of complexity. Each metaphor brings with it *entailments*, or a set of notions it highlights as "true" about a concept. Priming people with varying metaphors has been shown to alter not just how they speak but the ways they decide, unconsciously, what "ought" to be done about a given topic. We judge a metaphor's efficacy on how well it advances and amplifies what advocates wish the public got about an issue.

For example, researchers at Stanford showed that groups primed with a metaphor of CRIME AS DISEASE (*plaguing* our communities, *spreading* around) came up with entirely preventative solutions for crime such as after school programs and preschool for all. Conversely, subjects exposed to the metaphor of CRIME AS OPPONENT (*fight* crime, *beat back* homicide) thought harsher punishments were the answer. If you're working for prevention, it's clear you should liken crime to DISEASE and avoid OPPONENT evocations. A 3-strikes advocate would want to do the opposite.

You know wording matters: you rightly shun *illegal*, which turns activity (crossing a border without permission) into a person's very essence, their identity. Individual words, especially labels for people, matter immensely as researchers on voting behavior discovered.

In another study, investigators asked respondents whether they'd *vote* in an upcoming election and others whether they'd *be a voter*. The difference is stunning. Where just over half of those asked about voting intended to do so, 87.5% of

those asked about being a voter desired to get to the polls. Post-election, voting records showed 96% of those surveyed about being a voter actually pulled the lever.

A simple word difference, from "will you vote" to "will you be a voter" is also a conceptual shift from action to identity, from what you do to who you are. The words we use shape what's true for our audiences. This is as true in ideas about handling crime as it is for voting behavior. If theory holds, it should prove effective to unpack and then alter perceptions of immigrants and immigration.

WHAT THIS WORK ISN'T

Applying the findings of this method of analysis to assess and, hopefully, shape advocacy discourse can ensure you're saying what you actually think. It helps you say today what you'll still believe and mean tomorrow.

However, this assumes a focus on the long-term: an attempt to shape how the public understands and comes to judgments about immigration over time. This is not traditional political research designed to win the next election.

As such the analysis and recommendations here may challenge conventional wisdom about what the public is ready to hear. The premise here is to find the range of ways people *can*, if supported by our messaging, come to terms with immigration—in other words where they are capable of going and how to lead them there.

Finally, as with all such approaches, things like messenger, timing, context and repetition matter immensely.

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describing immigrants

Stress contribution, not plight

In an earnest desire to garner attention to and sympathy for immigrants, at times you portray them as helpless victims. Or problems to be *addressed* or *coped with*. And while this surely means the rules regarding immigrants are the problem, sometimes the language implies it's the people themselves:

Avoid: implying immigrants are the problem

"we must **address** the more than 12 million immigrants"
"force officials to **cope** with a flood of immigrants"

Avoid: immigrants as animals

"**round up** and bus immigrants"
"people we **lured** here"
"police are on the **hunt** for immigrants"

Use sparingly: immigrants as victims or shadowy characters

"bills **targeting** undocumented immigrants"
"the **plight** of migrants"
immigrants "live in the shadows" and "are **prey** to employers"

Use sparingly: immigrants as needy

"people **trying to get** into this country"
"immigrants want to improve **their** lives"

Embrace: immigrants as able contributors

immigrants live here with friends and relatives
immigrants improve the economic fortunes of our nation
a newcomer who contributes richly
gardeners, farmers, caretakers, builders...

A word of caution: **conveying** immigrants are people is not the same as **stating** it. When we assert something, "immigrants are human beings!" it can sound like protesting too much. If immigrants are people, why would we need to state this case?

"Undocumented": effective or evasive?

You've rightly banished "illegal alien" and "illegal". Seeking a neutral label, advocates use "undocumented immigrant." But opponents hear this as a mere evasion. No one label can do the job.

▶ Mix and match names so none is overused:

- new Americans
- hardworking people
- people who are not citizens
- people living within our borders
- undocumented resident

▶ Consider the singular, it humanizes and brings issue down to size:

- an immigrant
- an undocumented worker

This may sound awkward. It's new and will take time to make this the norm.

IMMIGRANTS CAN AND WANT TO DO IT RIGHT

Sometimes, we paint immigrants as unruly children or even intractable miscreants. It does them and the cause a disservice to imply they don't want to become authorized or learn English:

No: "we should **require** them to come out of the shadows" "submission to background checks"
Yes: we must **enable** we must **allow** **immigrants undergo** background checks

Similarly, it doesn't aid advocacy to convey immigrants don't yet contribute:

No: path to residency "if they contribute" "are more likely to contribute"
Yes: **because** they contribute so they can **continue to contribute**

MIGRATING OUR MESSAGE

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describing immigration

Naming an aspirational goal

The default objective is *comprehensive immigration reform*. The public doesn't seem to know what this entails. Further, it reinforces the idea of "immigration as problem", just as "welfare reform" helped vilify public assistance. Finally, it's a call to eliminate a bad without hope of building or creating a good.

- ▶ Signal that people created current conditions and could alter them, things didn't just happen:
 - No: "border build up has blocked"
 - Yes: the borders [NAME] put up
 - No: "families are separated"
 - Yes: [NAME] are tearing families apart
 - No: "SB 1070 invites racial profiling"
 - Yes: AZ lawmakers opened door to racism
 - Yes: certain politicians cast aside protections
- ▶ Consider aspirational names for goal:
 - Responsible Immigration Policy
 - Families First
 - Honoring Initiative
 - Restoring (American) Responsibility

Prevailing message: immigration as problem

The dominant message you're sending (with opponents' help) is: immigration is a problem.

Painting so bleak a picture risks making it hard to believe fixes exist.

- ▶ Balance "problem" with hope of solution:
 - No: "fix America's broken immigration system"
 - No: "immigration system is creaking"
 - Yes: restore order to immigration rules
 - Yes: rework the rules to embrace what immigrants **offer**
- ▶ Use immigration to mean movement of people; use immigration policy for the rules/practices. Interchanging these implies people coming here is the problem.
 - No: "take up the immigration problem"
 - Yes: take up the immigration **policy** problem
- ▶ Bring "the problem" down to size:
 - failed immigration policy exacerbates existing problems
 - the immigration rules we set contribute to our insecurity

WHERE'S THE IMMIGRATING IN IMMIGRATION?

For all the talk about *immigration*, you say remarkably little about *immigrating*—the movement of people across borders. While it may seem focusing on border crossing draws unwanted attention to the scene of transgression, people are thinking of it anyway—and it may serve to put faces and ambitions on immigrants' actions. Further, it reinforces the contention that immigrants are capable contributors—entrepreneurs who embody much of what's best of America.

- ▶ Try and separate action from issue by saying *immigration* less and **coming here, moving here, relocating** more.
- ▶ Use the admittedly clunkier **U.S.-Mexico** border to drive home that it's not just all about us, other nations exist and have people with needs.
- ▶ Consider experimenting with **migrating** instead of immigrating. Caution is in order as it may evoke job migration but may also serve to bring down the temperature and make movement seem natural and inevitable.

MIGRATING OUR MESSAGE

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women immigrants

Competing goals: sympathy for women that avoids implying all women are or should be mothers

Women rarely get the spotlight, but when they do it's as **mothers**:

- ▶ “highly motivated mothers will **produce children...**”
- ▶ “an effort to demonize babies in the **wombs of their mothers**”
- ▶ giving birth in the U.S. “whether **undertaken by** rich Chinese women or poor Mexican ones is a slap in the face...”

Even beyond birth, women's roles as mothers dominate what limited conversation occurs about women immigrants. Family responsibility gets gendered while work doesn't:

- ▶ “women often bear the weight of keeping families together”
- ▶ “this is what happens when you remove a **mother from a family...**when you remove a **workforce from a factory**”

Women are subject to the “immigrants as victims” portrayal, making it hard to show them as capable fellow Americans:

- ▶ “women are putting themselves at risk...for their children”
- ▶ “a woman is exposed to...dangerous scenarios because of her sex”
- ▶ “women endure abuse and exploitation”

The triple handicap—immigrant, woman and non-white—makes messaging hard. Make women **active as people** and mothers:

- women come here for their families and themselves, contributing American ingenuity and real ‘family values’
- immigrant women manage households and workplaces
- immigrant women lead in multiple arenas: work and home

As usual, women largely invisible

Where we'd expect to see references to gender, generalities prevail:

- ▶ “undocumented **foreigners** producing offspring”
- ▶ “**people** come here to have babies”
- ▶ “**they** give birth”

Specifying gender puts a human face on immigrants, but may trigger “all women are or want to be mothers”. Still, given these competing problems, it's best to force opponents to see and discuss that this issue is about real people—and **specifying gender** as well as **using the singular** are ways to do this.

THE CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

“Anchor baby” emerges from a metaphor of IMMIGRATION AS MOVEMENT OF WATER—heard in expressions like “immigrants **flooding** in” and “**wave** of immigrants.” Ships move from place to place, as do migrants. Water carries ships, economic “currents” carry people. Ships drop anchor and we're meant to think immigrant women “drop” children. This suggests immigrant parents, and mothers in particular, are not normal. They do not see motherhood in the ways you and I do. It's not a loving, self-less bond—it's a one-way transaction for the adults' benefit. When you repeat this phrase, in an earnest desire to combat it, you give it more air time. Consider excising “anchor baby” from your vocabulary and instead point out what opponents who use it have in mind:

- No: “the hideous term ‘anchor baby’”
 Yes: people who insult mothers to further their own aims
 Yes: opponents vilify new mothers to serve their objectives

MIGRATING OUR MESSAGE

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government and law

What *are* immigrants under the law?

Frequent calls for *legalization* and reference to *legal status* undo what *undocumented* attempts. While *undocumented* is clearly meant to sound benign, *legalization* is the opposite. If you say we need to make folks legal, that must mean they are not legal now. *Path to citizenship* may be the new terminology, but *legalize* is the far more common:

- ▶ “legalization best balances the equities involved”
- ▶ “we set up a legalization system”
- ▶ “DREAM Act sought to legalize some people”

You use “legal status” as proxy for “immigration status”. This implies, not being from America and having entered without papers puts you in a different standing with respect to the law. You may mean immigration law—but such a distinction may not occur to the average listener.

- ▶ “the law required police determine someone’s legal status”

This brings us to the heart of one of the most troubling aspects of what immigrants face today: due process violations. But it’s hard to expect audiences to consider the right to a speedy and fair trial, adequate detention facilities and so forth when you imply that immigrants fit inside some other category with respect to the law than “Americans” do.

There’s no easy answer but for now we should

- ▶ Say **immigration status** and not legal status
- ▶ Say **path to citizenship** or **dignity and security**, not legal status to describe what immigrants want
- ▶ Speak about immigrants as part of whole: people residing here

Government: the problem and the solution

Government is behind prolonged detention, inadequate visas, slow processing and so on. It’s also who we charge with fixing all this. To bolster the claim that government can and must do better, you must name bad actors in your critiques instead of using the passive. Or it’s hard to believe anyone (let alone the perpetrator) can “fix” the problems:

- | | |
|------|--|
| No: | “immigration detention system has ballooned” |
| Yes: | X poured funds into detention |
| No: | “immigration enforcement is plagued by...” |
| Yes: | enforcement officials ignore human rights law... |
| No: | “deportation has been deferred” |
| Yes: | practical policy makers defer deportation |
| No: | “detainees are transported” |
| Yes: | X forcibly separate families |

WHAT DETERMINES CITIZENSHIP?

Some immigration opponents seek to undo long-time practice and have citizenship no longer granted by birth on American soil. This is another technical legal question, this time Constitutional. And since most Americans don’t see distinctions in kinds of laws, they may be led to assume breaking immigration law negates the guarantees of any law.

In fact, the discussion now underway about whether the 14th Amendment covers children born to parents here without documentation hinges around the “subject to U.S. laws” question. This should lend further caution to you against using “legal status” so indiscriminately. By calling into question immigrants’ standing in the eyes of the law, you may lend credence to opponents’ reading of the 14th Amendment.

MIGRATING OUR MESSAGE



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