

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt and a red shawl, is seen from the back, holding a large flag. The flag is white with the word 'DREAM' written in large, bold, black letters. The background is a bright, slightly blurred outdoor setting.

Linguistic Representations of Immigrants in the DREAM Act and Implications for Family Impact Analysis

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Rationale

Arguments for immigration reform center around issues regarding the economy, national security, and law

NOT

Family development and well-being

Rationale

- Any consideration of families is usually still within the realm of economics and national security

“There is broad support in our country today for fair and balanced immigration reforms that will benefit both immigrant workers and their families, and their employers as well” (Sen. Ted Kennedy)

“Illegal immigration is symptomatic of a system that fails to reunify families and address the economic needs in the United States” (Sen. Sam Brownback)

Rationale

- Bogenschneider and colleagues (2012) recognize the disconnect between family rhetoric and implementation of family-oriented policies
- Analyzing policy with a Family Impact lens can help uncover other potential intended or unintended consequences for families
- The DREAM Act has bipartisan support, but has not yet been enacted

Background

Political Context

- 2001: First introduced as amendment to Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996
- Reintroduced in 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011
- June 2012: Deferred Action from Obama Administration



DREAM Act

Main Goals:

- Eliminate federal provisions that penalize states from allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition
- Provide a specific group of undocumented individuals a path toward conditional permanent residency

Approach: Family Impact Analysis



Approach: Family Impact Analysis

Principle 1: Family Involvement & Interdependence	Does the policy assess and balance the competing needs, rights, and interests of various family members?
Principle 2: Family Support & Responsibility	Does the policy support and supplement parents' and other family members' ability to carry out their responsibilities?
Principle 3: Family Membership & Stability	Does the policy encourage or discourage marital, parental, and family commitment and stability, especially when children are involved?
Principle 4: Family Partnership & Empowerment	In what ways does the policy respect family autonomy and allow families to make their own decisions?
Principle 5: Family Diversity	In what ways does the policy acknowledge all family forms and identify and respect different values, attitudes, and behaviors of families from various backgrounds?
Principle 6: Support for Vulnerable Families	Does the policy give support to families who are most vulnerable to breakdown and have the fewest resources?

Findings

How the DREAM Act Acknowledges Family Well-Being

- Principle 1:

Family Involvement & Interdependence

- Principle 6:

Support for Vulnerable Families

Findings

Family Involvement & Interdependence

- Does the policy assess and balance the competing needs, rights, and interests of various family members? YES
 - “It is wrong to punish children for the actions of their parents” (S. Rep. NO. 112-5938, 6855, 7058)
 - Increases the resources of young adult child, but considers extreme hardship for his/her immediate family

Findings

Support of Vulnerable Families

- Does the policy give support to families who are most vulnerable to breakdown and have the fewest resources? YES
- Undocumented families as an at-risk group
 - Fear of deportation
 - Lower education levels
 - 76% live between 100-200% of the poverty level
 - Suffered more severe economic changes following the recession
- Provides young adult family members access to higher education and employment

Findings

How the DREAM Act Undermines Family Well-Being

- Principle 2: Family Support & Responsibility
- Principle 3: Family Membership & Stability
- Principle 4: Family Partnership & Empowerment
- Principle 5: Family Diversity

Findings

Family Support & Responsibility

- Does the policy support and supplement parents' and other family members' ability to carry out their responsibilities?
 - Only provides support for the young adult child
 - No benefits extended to parents or other family members
- “Individualism is pervasive in American policies and programs” (Bogenschneider, 2006)

Findings

Family Membership & Stability

- Does the policy encourage or discourage marital, parental, and family commitment and stability, especially when children are involved?
 - Discourages family unity and stability
 - Creates families as a cite of conflict and unequal resources
- “You do not impost a penalty on children because of the wrongdoing of their parents” (S. 7058)

Findings

Family Partnership & Empowerment

- In what ways does the policy respect family autonomy and allow families to make their own decisions?
 - Decision-makers are limited to those eligible to receive benefits - young adult children
 - Strict federal requirements to determine “good moral character”

Findings

Family Diversity

- In what ways does the policy acknowledge all family forms and identify and respect different values, attitudes, and behaviors of families from various backgrounds?
- Characteristics of immigrant families
 - Larger households than native-born
 - More likely to be married than native-born
 - 2X as likely to be multigenerational
 - 2.3 million mixed status families

Verdict

- Increases the well-being of the young adult child, not necessarily his/her family members
- Assumes narrow definition of family structure and that family is a site of conflict
- Fails to outline provisions related to functional definitions of family

Possible Criticisms

- Is it appropriate to use a Family Impact Analysis on the DREAM Act?
- In what ways does the Family Impact Analysis neglect economic and national security issues?
- How does the standpoint of scholars and policymakers privilege our analysis of the DREAM Act?

Conclusions

- The DREAM Act is not inherently about the family, but analyzing the policy using a Family Impact lens can help policymakers understand how macro-level decisions influence family life in intentional or unintentional ways
- How will success be measured?