

Production Transcript for Panel 3.mp4

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>> Raphael Bostic: I want to, at this point, now turn to panel number 3 and introduce Erika Poethig who is the-- an Institute Fellow and the Director of Urban Policy Initiatives at the Urban Institute. Erika is one of my favorite people. She worked for me, we were a dynamic duo at HUD and really helped to transform an Office of Policy Development and Research into again, it's a leader in issues around housing and urban development. And it wouldn't happen without her, you know, as usual, this often happens, I just get up and talk and she does-- my staff does all the work. So Erika, it's great to see you, great to have you on the West Coast.

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>> Erika Poethig: Good.

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>> Raphael Bostic: And the panel is yours.

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>> Erika Poethig: Thank you. Also, as Raphael alluded to, I had the honor of calling him boss but now I get to call him friend and it's really a pleasure to be here at USC and thank you to Dean Knott and everybody else at the Price School who've extended such a warm welcome to all of us here today. So, we have the joy and opportunity to be the post-lunch panel, so I'm expecting that you all got your-- your blood sugar will not dive because we will provide such wonderful food for thought that will really engage in a lively conversation. So, this panel is focused on the intersection of how household formation is changing and what are some of the other kinds of things that we're learning from research about development that can be really influential in thinking about the kinds of policies that will be successful, even as we think about how household structure will and will not be the same going forward.

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And to stimulate this conversation, we're joined on this panel by Dr. Manuel Pastor, and who is here at USC and his bio is in your booklet, as well as LaDonna Pavetti who comes to us from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities in DC. And then we're going to have-- so they'll present their research and we'll have an opportunity to hear from two very thoughtful practitioners in policy voices, Zachary Hoover from LA Voice in PICO, as well as Martin Friedman from YWCA Passage Point will provide some of their own thoughts and reaction to the research presented today. So like the other panels, I'm going to invite Manuel to kick us off and then followed by LaDonna and then well have the two respondents, so.

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>> Manuel Pastor: The last time I saw Erika was in Chicago during the polar vortex--

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>> Erika Poethig: Yup.

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>> Manuel Pastor: -- when it was negative 16 degrees and as I was leaving that meeting, my plane, I don't know whether I told you this, actually got delayed because the toilets froze, which almost led me to tweet, now that is some cold shit. But I decided it wouldn't be good. So what the-- those things last forever. So what I'm going to talk a little bit about is immigrants, poverty, and the future of metropolitan American, five minutes, and really the key thing is whether or not the current condition of immigrants being poor is a stepping stone to something else or is it a sinkhole and what data tell about that. So, these are the points that I'll make. I'm actually going to make them with the graphs instead. So, the first thing to realize that immigrants are an increasing share of the poor. If you go back to 1970, immigrants as a percent of the poor were, you know, roughly immigrants as a percent of the population. But now, immigrants are a much larger percent of the poor than they were before.

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And in particular, non-naturalized immigrants, that is the combination of people might be lawful permanent residents and undocumented, and I'll tease that out in just a few minutes. So, this is a big problem. When people think about poverty, the image they often don't have is this immigrant population. Many people say we shouldn't worry about it because over time, immigrant progress will take place. But one thing to realize is that we have an increasingly settled immigrant population, that is the share that have been in the country for a long time, has gone up. And when you look at a kind of measure of progress, and these are poverty rates and the one in 1970, you can see that people who had recently arrived, their poverty rates were only slightly higher than people that arrived a long time before. In the 1980s, you see a very steep curve, which means long-term immigrants were falling out of poverty, but recent immigrants were really poor and you can see what the most recent data from 2009 that even immigrants who've been in the country for 20 years, 30 years are still at very high levels of poverty.

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So most of the work that's been saying that mobility will continue to occur for immigrants has been looking at what's been happening with past cohorts, but then maybe that something is changing now in terms of the economy. The other thing that's really important, I know this ties into some stuff that Alan Berube will be talking about and maybe others as well, is that the geography of immigration has changed. We tended to think about immigration as a sort of central city phenomena, that is immigrants arrive in the central city and either that's where they stay or as they become assimilated, they'll move to suburbs. What is interesting, this is a map of Los Angeles. And you can see the kind of concentration of immigrants in the central core of the city in 1980. But this is what it looks like in the most recent census year. That is the immigration is now in the San Fernando Valley. Here is like-- it's no longer a valley girl, it's now la muchacha del valle. And into the San Gabriel Valley. Koreatown is not Korean, but Rowland Heights is. So what that-- why that's important is because these areas are not used to dealing with immigrant needs, immigrant services or immigrant organizing to make sure that their voices get heard.

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I just have two minutes left. So one of the things I want to say is that education explains part of this, of the fact that immigrants are lower educated. Lack of documentation plays a role in this. This shows you for California, where we're able to pull out the undocumented population, that in particular look at the last bars from 2009. Both U.S. born and long-term immigrants, the percent of Latinos below poverty, it's there and high, but it gets much higher if you're either a lawful permanent resident but much, much higher if you're undocumented. So what are the policy directions? This is supposed to be a conference about what we can do. The first really key thing to realize is that this is not the poverty of being jobless.

This is the poverty of having bad jobs. And number two, data point I didn't talk about. Immigrants are much more likely to be in two-parent households with children.

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So it's not as though the family formation issues are ones that are going to explain this either. So what are the strategies that need to take place? One is to make work pay, that means the minimum wage, preventing wage theft, labor rights, et cetera, make mobility possible. The key thing for immigrants to move to the labor market is English as a second language. It's a huge boost to your income and it gives you access to other things as well, but it also means rethinking things like community colleges and job training, serve the new geography, expand to the suburbs and most important, comprehensive immigration reform with the path to citizenship which would have multiple benefits. My last point 'cause I know it says end there. And I should pay attention to you, but I'll ignore you right now. Is that while we tend to think that the good ideas we have in the academy are somehow what's going to be moving the day or we know we'll ultimately move the day is power. And that's going to require organizing, and we've seen the whole conversation on immigration change because of the immigrant rights organizing that's begun to pull people around to the idea that comprehensive immigration reform is something that's popular with 70 percent of the U.S. public and 60 percent of republicans, although it hasn't seem to move the house yet because that's where all good ideas go to die.

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That we can see that really what's going to need to move these agendas around poverty is the kind of community organizing that I'm sure Zach Hoover will talk about. Thank you.

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[Applause]

[00:08:50]

>> LaDonna Pavetti: So before I start, I want to just-- how many people know what executive function is, or have heard of it? So a few, but not many, so I'm going to spend just a minute and just sort of-- and I'm going to give you the brief, brief, brief version since I only have five minutes. And it's on page 106 in your booklet. You can get all the details. So what is executive function? Executive function is really-- it's a set of skills that really help-- help people to orchestrate their life. It's often referred to as the air traffic controller, really helps people to think about, there's a lot of management involved in executive function. It's also the functions that help people to achieve goals, solve problems, assess results, and change strategy when they need to. It's also-- part of it is inhibitory control. It's being able to think before you act. So there's lots of different pieces of what executive function is and there isn't agreement, to be honest, on exactly how to define it. But if you just sort of think about it as problem solving, goal setting, that really sort of I think are key concepts that really are important in it.

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So what I would like to do is to talk first about why should we care about it in the context of a conversation about poverty? 'Cause I don't think it's immediately obvious. And so, I have three reasons why I think it's an important part of this conversation. One is that we have learned a lot from brain science about executive function and its important role that it plays both in kids and also on adult life and success in life. So we have this information and we have a lot of science behind this that really I think says that if we took the science seriously, we would have very different programs and we would organize them and implement them very differently than we do now. So that's one of it, is just there is this science I think that is waiting for us to use and to think about what it means. The second is, is that if

you look at the performance of many of our human service programs, we really have mediocre performance. Even in the programs that have the best results we've ever seen, those results are not that great and they leave many people left behind.

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So there is an incredible amount of room to do better in the programs that we operate. And in an era of shrinking resources, I think it's really critical that we really think about what can we do and can we think about things differently that allow us to do what we're doing in a very different way and to really improve our outcomes from that. And the third is that whether we have a lot of sort of focus on really trying to intervene early in kids' lives 'cause we know that early childhood interventions make a difference not only in our early childhood, but there's evidence that also carries over into adulthood. But I believe that there also is that early childhood interventions are necessary but not sufficient, and that kids grow up in families and they grow up with adults who are caring for them either in their homes or during the day. And that we need to think about our ways in which we can also improve the capability of adults to actually care for kids and to help improve those. And I believe that if we focused on adults and kids, we should see even bigger out-- bigger impacts of the interventions that we have for kids.

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So that's sort of another sort of reason. The next point that I would like to make is, so what should we be doing if we were going to put this into practice? And I think there are three different things that this science points to. One is increasing income. And the reason why increasing income is important is because there are only so many cognitive resources available for people to use and if you use all of your cognitive resources to be able to figure out how you get through the day, you have less resources left to figure out how do you take the next steps on life. So the more we can do minimum wage or we can do subsidized employment, anything, training that increases income, it should help. It should free up people to be more successful. The other is reducing the burden for applying for benefits or to taking part in programs. For some of the same reasons, that if you're using all your cognitive resources to be able to access those programs, you have less left to be able to achieve your goals to be able to problem solve and do what you need to do. And the other is, is the third, is really thinking about this redesign, which I think is a much harder challenge, and one that we're just starting to think about and learn and part of I'm doing some work to say what are the principles that we would do-- use if we were going to use executive function in terms of how we would redesign programs.

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So there's a sort of network of people who are trying to think about that. But I don't think we're there yet. So I think there's this opportunity that is waiting to sort of be thought through. So what I'm going to do is I wanted to just sort of give you why I believe this will make a difference. There's one program, and I'm willing to hang my hat at least at this stage, given how mediocre our programs are, on one program. But there's a program called Building Nebraska Families, which was basically a home visiting program which was targeted to adults, not kids. And what that program did was to teach life skills, which are very much what executive function skills are. That program had the most significant impacts we've seen in programs for single parents in terms of employment, even though they weren't focused on employment. They were focused on goal setting and helping people to achieve those goals on time management, on helping their kids. I think that gives us evidence that if we think about building those skills, we can do differently. I need to end, but what I want to do is just very quickly just give you some examples from this morning on what I think we would do differently on examples people gave if we were going to use executive function principles.

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One is that Heather Schwartz gave the example of using-- of developing a program to help people-- to give people more information about school choice and how to make those choices. If you're going to think about what-- how you would do that differently rather than just giving information if you're thinking about executive function, what you would do is think about it's not just about giving people information. It's about helping people to figure out what it takes for them to use that information. So you have to think about the time management involved. How do you get your kids, and is it reasonable for you to get your kids from point A to point B, even if it's a much better school. That's a skill that's really executive function. Is it reasonable to pay the cost of whatever it is? All of those things, so not just giving the information, but thinking about how do you use the information. The other reason, Harry talked about, you know, how we have this problem of very low completion rates. One of the executive function skills is goal directive persistence. Really dissecting what's going on there.

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What would we do, what are the pieces that are missing to help people meet those goals? And a gentleman from IBM talked about failure and how we need to let failure happen. From an executive function lens, what you would say about that failure is not as just letting failure happen but it's helping people to think about the failure, it's called metacognition. Thinking about the failure, what does it tell me and what does it tell me about what I should do next and how I should adjust what I do. So it's not just letting it happen, but it's using it and helping people to think of those next steps. So with that, I'm going to stop. I have lots more examples that I can give people if they're interested as we have the discussion. Thanks.

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[Applause]

[00:16:07]

>> Martin Friedman: Before I start, is the guy from IBM, gentleman from IBM still here? No. Oh, there he is over there. I'm thinking about a career change. I know nothing about technology and I fail constantly. So I'll be giving you my resume before we're over. And occasionally, I learn from that failure too, so I'll be contacting you. I also want to thank a couple people, definitely want to thank the organizers of the conference, especially Professor Bostic, who continued to extend me the invitation even after we spoke on the phone. So I appreciated that. And I really want to thank a couple of people. I want to thank Ron Sims and I want to thank Sheryl Whitney who, at the time that Passage Point was developed in King County, were that King County executive and King County deputy executive. Without their advocacy, Passage Point wouldn't exist. So I work for the YWCA Seattle-King-Snohomish County, the two largest counties in Western Washington.

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Our agency will see 50,000 people from the briefest of services, through permanent housing, over the course of a year. We were asked by King County some years back to develop a reentry reunification program designed specifically for women because as YWCA, that's who we serve and that's the fastest growing prison population in the state of Washington and most states actually, right? So, it's not a women-only facility, but it is-- it does have a focus on women. And then the other program that I manage is a Parent-Child Home Visit Program. So really I'm going to focus mostly on the executive function piece as I talk about my programs. I will say this, in terms of the immigrant piece, that Parent-Child Home Visit Program, the majority of the families that we work with are-- if they're not coming out of homelessness, they are coming from immigrant families. And so, both of these programs are really

designed-- that program is designed to break cycles of multigenerational cycles of poverty, multigenerational cycles of negative experiences with systems and institutions.

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The way that executive function works for our Parent-Child Home Visit Program is essentially we're working to help exercise the brains of the children to grow that cognitive piece, to grow that executive function. I'm sure all of you have probably seen the research. And if you haven't, you should look it up, but literally abuse and neglect and extreme poverty causes brain damage. The cognitive parts of your brain shrink and the reactive parts of your brain grow. And so, literally the Parent-Child Home Visit Program is designed to get kids reading 30 minutes every day, which actually exercises that brain-- that part of that brain and will actually really focus on them being better at executive functions as they get older. And then part of Parent-Child Home Visit Program is also helping the mother, who also has had issues with executive function, who also has gone through multigenerational cycles of poverty and abuse and neglect, to be able to bridge that gap with, you know, teaching their child and giving their child to not have the same experiences that they had.

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In terms of Passage Point. Passage Point is a reentry, reunification facility, as I said, primarily for women. Do folks know what the number one-- what is the number one-- already? Dang. Shouldn't have joked around at the beginning. What is the number one thing that will lower the recidivism rate for women? Does anybody know? Any thoughts? Reunifying with their child, right? That's the number one thing that will keep somebody from-- a woman from going to back prison will be reunification or prevention of the loss of her child. So that's the number one thing that we do. We incorporate-- We have a trauma-informed approach to our case management, but we'll also now with our new program manager, we're also doing an executive function informed approach to our case management. So in addition to understanding the trauma that people come from, we are doing things to help them really increase that neuroelasticity of their brain so that they can be better at executive function, be better mothers and fathers, we have a few fathers too, and break those cycles. I want to talk a little bit about-- I was thinking I was sitting here this morning saying what can I bring that might be just be a little bit different to this conversation?

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Now, YWCA has a tag line that says eliminating racism and empowering women, not sure if you're all familiar with that or not. What that allows us to do is not only focus our programming on the individual, but it also allows us to look at the effects of racism, classism, and sexism on the people that we serve. Our profile for the person that we serve is 60-- about 65 percent of the people we serve are poor women of color and their families. So, we have to look at that intersection. So it allows us the opportunity to look at all this work through the lens of historical institutional oppression. So, what we have to understand in addition to creating these great programs, why-- first of all, who defines when a family is broken, right? Who gets to say a family is broken? And once we say that family is broken, do we ask why is that family broken? Is that family broken because there's something wrong with the individual or is that family broken because of systems and institutions have failed them, right? In this country, we have to acknowledge the fact that every institution and system in this country had racism built in, constructed into it, right?

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So if we do our work without that knowledge, without that lens of how racism, classism and gender were constructed into our institutions and systems, we can design the most brilliant beautiful programs

in the world, but all we're doing is pulling babies out of the water, right? We're not going upstream and asking why is it that people-- why do we have multi-generations of families that are struggling in the same way? Have most people in the room read Malcolm Gladwell "Outliers", you know about 10,000 hours? We've been working on poverty for 40, 50 years, right? How many 10,000 hours have we put in to poverty, yet we're not good at eliminating it. We're not good at ending it, right? Racism is what holds that in place. Racism was designed to keep people of color poor. Racism was designed to keep a certain segment of white people poor. Racism was designed to keep poor white people and poor people of color from ever getting together and really changing systems, right? When I got my job, when I were interviewed from my job, they asked me why are people poor and I was really excited to answer that question.

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A lot of us that work in sort of the poverty field, we are never asked that question, which is crazy. Would you take your car to somebody who had never been asked how does the car work, how do brakes work, how does an engine work. Would you go to a doctor 'cause you have problems with your kidney and thinking that that doctor had never been asked how does the kidney work, right? You would assume that had been asked, but yet we're allowed to work and make a lot of money off of people that are poor and never being asked why people are poor. I want to make sure that as we continue this discussion, we're looking at the systemic and the institutional and not just on the-- on fixing the individual 'cause that's what most of our programs ultimately will do. We have to be able to do both. That's what we're trying to do at Passage Point. We try to politicize the people that we're with, we try to give them the context. Yes, you've done these things. Yes, you're in this situation, but a lot of people that didn't grow up in poverty did the same things that you did and they never went to jail, right? So we've got to think about that context. I had a whole bunch more to say, but I've-- and I talk fast so I, you know. I'm Jewish and I'm from Cleveland so I do have that ability.

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I just want to end with a quote from Paulo Freire. Paulo Freire said, "An educator in a system of oppression is either a revolutionary or an oppressor." All of us are that. We're all educators in the system of oppression. So are we going to be revolutionary, are we going to liberate people out of their poverty, or are we going to just have them be more comfortable in their oppression? Thank you.

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[Applause]

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>> Zachary Hoover: I'm all fired up now. So I'm Zach Hoover and it's a pleasure to be here. Really appreciate, you know, hearing the three of you speak and share your thoughts and your research and appreciate the opportunity to be here. I'm the executive director of LA Voice. Very briefly I'll tell you what we do, which is that we do community organizing. So we are about power, we are about race. We do multifaith, multiracial community organizing through congregations. LA Voice, we do that here in Los Angeles County and we train people in the skills of community organizing. So how do you build power together with people that you're in relationship with in order to change systems that aren't working for you, right? And then, we're also part of PICO National Network. How many have heard of PICO? Raise your hand. OK. Now you have. Now everybody has heard of PICO so you can go check it out later. PICO National Network and we're the largest faith-based grassroots organization in the country, doing this work in I believe 22 or 23 states at this point. As-- oh before I start also, Greg Pettis is here, who I want to thank because when I was an organizer in Coachella Valley, some of you who are familiar with

some of the work that has been done around immigrants and driver's license and impound, unfair predatory impound policies that have-- that has taken place all across our state, Greg was a council member in Cathedral City when I was in my second year of organizing, and he met with me and a group of community leaders and helped us figure out how to navigate with the police chief there in Cathedral City and we were one of the first cities in the state to end 30-day impounds for folks who couldn't get a license in our state because they were undocumented.

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So, thank you very much. I'd actually like to ask an applause for that.

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[Applause] The thing that came to mind as I was hearing you finish Martin was John Powell's saying that racist actors are not required to produce racialized outcomes, right? So--

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>> Martin Friedman: That's correct.

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>> Zachary Hoover: -- people don't have to be racist for us to have racialized outcomes. I think we all know that and I think that I hear that in a lot of what has been shared today. I'm also really glad that Manuel started or in the middle brought up a word that not many people have talked about today, which is power. And we have a poverty problem because we have a power problem. We have a poverty problem, I believe, because we have a power problem. And the question that I would ask about the ideas that we're sharing today is how do those ideas, how do those policies, how do those programs get the folks who are closest to the problem closer to power? My experience in organizing over the last nine years is that when the folks who are closest to the pain, who are closest to the problem, people who are living in poverty, when they have an opportunity to exercise consequential agency with other people who are in the situation like them, not only does it actually aid their executive function. It's funny, we were in a meeting last night with Catholic Campaign for Human Development, which is a funding arm of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and their whole goal is to end poverty.

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And one of our grassroots leaders who lives in Ramona Gardens Housing Project, I'd be really curious to hear what she thinks about the proposal we heard earlier about vouchers for housing projects. She said-- no, I mean that seriously, I'm not trying to be-- she said that over the last four years in organizing, she's become more patient, better at evaluating her actions and basically what she's saying was, "I've got better executive functioning because I've been part of a program organizing that constantly asks me to evaluate the situation I'm in, the people I need to be in relationship with to change the situation that I'm living in and that I actually have to be patient, I have to evaluate the circumstances," and it's totally driven by her self-interest. So it's driven by her desire to have better access to groceries. It's driven by her desire to have a granddaughter who goes to a great school. It's driven by her desire to have a neighbor who is not afraid that she's going to get deported and be separated from her children, right? OK, five minutes. Coming back to the power problem, the example that you gave, LaDonna, of the work in Nebraska, right?

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Nebraska, the other piece of the paper is that that program no longer exists, is that correct?

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>> Ladonna Pavetti: That's correct.

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>> Zachary Hoover: OK, so this is an amazing program that no longer exists, that you're willing to hang your hat on, so it's not the lack of ideas in this room. There are brilliant ideas in this room, however, if we don't have the power together collectively to make that program continue to exist because we know it works, then all the great ideas in the world are not going to get us out of this poverty disease that we have. Manuel and LaDonna also both talk about money, the importance of money. And if we're talking about poverty, we're talking about people who don't have money. And in both of their presentations, what I appreciated was just poor people need more money. And there's a lot of work happening right now in many states around minimum wages, there is actually some work going on right in Los Angeles that would directly impact a lot of immigrants to raise the minimum wage for hotel workers. And I would just encourage us to continue to look at ways to increase minimum wage and access to capital, whether it's wage increases or LaDonna mentioned other options in her paper, that would just give folks the-- more financial resources and the differences that that makes in their executive functioning as well as what it means for their children.

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Another question that I would ask about all of our policies and our ideas is what stories does it allow us to tell? So, race is so deep inside all of us that a lot of it happens outside of the realm of our conscience and John Powell talks about this a lot. It's implicit bias, it's not explicit racism. And so it's very important that we think about what's the story we're telling and who's telling that story. How is it that the work we're doing around a program in King County creates an opportunity for people of color and people in poverty to tell their story and for them to tell their story as a human being and to continue to humanize the folks that mostly are not seen as fully human within our society. So when Manuel talks about the problem of racialization and immigration and what immigrants look like now, their phenotype as opposed to what they looked like, you know, 50 years ago, that's a problem of are we seeing people as human beings. So I would ask this, as we think about our policy solutions, as we think about our proposals, also what kinds of stories does it allow us to tell?

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And you all have, like one story in an awesome research paper makes a huge difference. So, I just want to encourage you to think about doing that. The last thing I'll say is about relationships. So one of the themes that I've heard over the course of the morning, whether it's a home visit program or a coach or a number of different ideas that have been talked about, the program that LaDonna spoke about, is that there's face-to-face relational work that's happening, and it's also the entire basis of community organizing. So, people have also talked about the resiliency that relationships in a community create. So, it costs a lot of money to create programs where you're putting people in front of other people, and I would submit that we have to make the choices about where we're putting our money into programs that are relational. Yes, of course they need to be measurable and have the outcomes that we want, like the program in Nebraska or like the work that Martin is doing.

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I believe that relational work at the heart of that stuff is a key factor to success and I think we see that every day in our organizing. This is my final two comments. One is there's redistricting in 2020, OK. So there's a lot of conversation in this room about how much money we don't have and about how we don't yet have federal immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship. So if we're really serious about

that question and I think we have to be asking ourselves, all of us, what are we doing between now and 2020 and this is not-- I don't care which party, right? This is not partisan on my behalf, but what are we doing between now and 2020 so that redistricting serves the needs of the people who are living in poverty if we deeply care about that. And I think there's some things that you can do in your community. I'm sure there's great grassroots organizations or neighborhood organizations or organization and work happening within your own university settings, nonprofit settings that you can connect to.

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For those of you who are familiar with Ron Heifetz, you've heard him talk about the difference probably between a technical challenge and adaptive challenge. And adapt-- technical challenges are challenges for which we have the answers, we know how to implement it, it does take resources but we can do it. And adaptive challenges are ones where the people with the problem have to become different in order for the problem to be solved. So the question is how do all of us in this room-- and only you can answer this question for you. How do you have to be different in order for poverty to be different, right? And there's technical answers to this that are really important, some of the technical work we're hearing about today and I think there's also adaptive work that people are talking about today. So, that's what I'll close with is, how you have to be different in order for poverty to be different or nonexistent.

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>> Erika Poethig: Thank you. I'm completely impressed with how everybody really wove in those themes so nicely. So thank you to our respondents in particular. I want to invite Manuel or LaDonna to offer any initial responses to what Zach and Martin offered, in terms of reflections.

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>> LaDonna Pavetti: One thing I would say is that-- one thing that I think is important about executive function is that, you know, I think that there are different ways to think about it. But executive functioning-- building executive function skills is really about giving people opportunities to build them and I think that's what you both talked about, is giving people opportunities that really allow them to build that. So, executive function skills are often built by practice and I think that a lot of our programs are about giving people information and not helping them or giving them opportunities to practice those skills that really will make a huge difference in what happens in their lives. And I loved your sort of comment at the end about saying about-- thinking about of what it means about being different to be able to change poverty. Because I think that is really, for me, what executive function really is a call to, is to think about what we do and to think about how we can do it differently to do it better.

[00:34:51]

And again, I don't think we have the answers, but that's what I think the call is, is to take a step back and say how can we do this differently, given new information and new knowledge.

[00:35:03]

>> Manuel Pastor: Just a couple of thoughts I guess. One is I think sometimes when we hear executive function is certainly not what you're saying, that we tend to think that what it is that the poor person has to do in terms of changing their behavior and I think the call that Zach is making is for those of us who are not poor to change our behavior, in terms of caring about this issue and acting on this issue. And I just want to expand on-- expand-- I kind of ran over at the end, which I think is important, which is how much xenophobia and racism get in the way of clear policy thinking. And the example that I lift up in the paper didn't have a chance to hear is the denial of access to the exchanges for undocumented

residents. Here, you've got one of the healthiest populations that's young and they can't even buy a full price into the health exchanges, right? So, what are they going to wind up doing? Go into the, you know, hospital ER and costing all of us much more money in terms of taxes.

[00:36:03]

Driver's licenses, what sense does it make to create a population that's going to permanently drive without insurance and flee the law at modest infractions. And all of that really is creating bad public policy, and I think unless we deal with some of those underlying emotions and political challenges, we can't get the clearer heads we need to think about what would be really good policy.

[00:36:31]

>> Erika Poethig: So, one of the sets of policies I've been giving a lot of thought to recently is the set of opportunities that may be created through the President's My Brother's Keeper initiative. So about 30 days ago, the President signed an executive order creating an interagency task force that has a 90-day timetable to come back with recommendations on federal policies that can improve life outcomes for boys and young men of color. I think one of the things is think it's-- in the public discourse, we think that that just means African-American boys, but it really is the full expanse of, and inclusive of, Latinos and Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, et cetera. And so, that's one. So, we have this timetable and this opportunity to think about what the federal government could do differently. And then the other side of this is, philanthropy stepped up and said it was going to invest 200 million dollars in a set of approaches intervention strategies to align up with that effort.

[00:37:38]

So I want to invite the panel, given what you reflected on to think about what would-- what advice would you give to the interagency task force and what advice would you give to the 10 foundations that are thinking about how to invest their resources to improve the life outcomes for boys and young men of color. Start. Let me start with you.

[00:37:58]

>> Martin Friedman: Well, I guess what I would say, first off just kind of echoing how I ended what I was talking about. Let's make sure that it's not just about fixing individuals, right? Obviously, there's got to be that element and I think that the executive function piece is interesting because a lot of the young men of color that we've worked with in various capacities actually have great executive function, but they have a really hard time doing it in legitimate ways, right? So, and then also there's this really strong connection. I just want to say really briefly, I used to be an Upward Bound counselor. So I worked with African-American and Latino males during the day and they had a really hard time staying in an Upward Bound program 'cause you had to have Cs or higher in all your classes, and they struggled doing that in the education system. Then I've been a 12-year volunteer at a prison in Upstate Washington and I would go there and I'd see African-American and Latino men realizing academic and intellectual potential in prison that they couldn't do in school. So, we can focus on the individual and we're going to have modest success.

[00:39:02]

But my advice to them would be how do you make sure that a large percentage of that money and that energy goes to fixing systems.

[00:39:09]

>> Erika Poethig: Great. Yeah.

[00:39:11]

>> Zachary Hoover: So, one thing I got from my friend Aaron Dorfman at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy is that-- so the Gates Foundation gives away about three billion dollars. The total foundation giving in our country is about 50 billion dollars and the California education budget by itself is 70 billion dollars. So, in terms of the levers, I think that, you know, the foundations need to fund community organizing. And honestly though, I mean, it's an important initiative. I think it's-- in part it's important because of what I'd said about stories and it creates a frame for us to tell stories about what's really going on and that young boys and men of color can tell stories about their own lives. So I appreciate it as a frame, I appreciate it as an initiative in the alignment that it may create and also, you know, just want to say that I think that, you know, we are nowhere near the level of community organizing we need in our country to get where we want to go and that needs to be by the-- directed by the folks who are, you know, really closest to all these overlapping issues that impact them.

[00:40:16]

>> Erika Poethig: So, systems organizing. LaDonna?

[00:40:19]

>> LaDonna Pavetti: You know, I'm not sure exactly how I frame this, but I actually think what we need more of is completely thinking outside of the box. And I'll give you an example, this is not for young men, it's for mothers, but it is so out of the box and I think it is so much more of what we need to do. So there's a project in New Haven called the New Haven Moms Partnership and it's basically a mental health intervention. They actually reach out to moms wherever they are. So they are doing recruitment at laundromats, banks, grocery store. They are right now in the process of building out a mental health and an employment center at the grocery store in the neighborhood. They are trying to reduce the burden. They are trying to get people to be able to provide services where they are. They are providing incentives to people and they have sort of-- they've asked people what they need and they-- you can see and throughout their design we're they've actually listened to people and designed things around it. On their mental health intervention, the standard on the evaluation is that often we see is that about 35 percent are compliant with whatever the plan is.

[00:41:21]

They have achieved 95 percent. We don't see that in programs. They have an app that they've done to keep mothers engaged with after the program ends. So they have just done these things that are completely outside of what we usually do. And so I think we need to think about how can we do more of that and the really creative thinking about what people say they need and responding to it and helping to create those systems. Because I think the reality is, is we don't have a lot of evidence of things that we know will work. So I'd sort of split it with taking some evidence-- some things and funding things that we know have an impact and having some set of resources that really allow people to be creative to hear people's voices and to respond in a way that just creates a different set of assistance than what we have now.

[00:42:12]

>> Manuel Pastor: So I have two comments and I actually looked up some numbers because I love numbers. But get the numbers in a second, I actually have a lot of hope for that initiative because I think it's combining both to look at the structural impediments facing young men and boys of color with a focus on individual change and behavior, and I think putting those two together instead of thinking that those are separate worlds is important. And I think one of the connective tissues in it is about youth organizing. Because one of the things that seems to be emerging from the research is that youth

who become involved in community organizing develop themselves more resilience and also more of a story to make sense of their lives, right, that allows them, if they kind of run into a roadblock or a failure, to see this part as a structural condition that's facing them and not simply their own individual failure. So I think there's a lot of hope that this initiative will bring this together. One thing I think is going to be necessary to pay attention to is the following. Over the next 27 years, the number of young white men between the age of 10 and 24 is actually going to fall by 2.6 million.

[00:43:21]

Now that does not mean that 2.6 million young white men will die, that would be focused on by Fox News and blamed on Obamacare. But what's interesting is the demographic change following. The number of young Latino men that same age, 10 to 24, is going to grow by 3.7 million, the number of young African-American men by 70,000. So this phase is changing dramatically and one of the things I think is that we face a particular crisis for young black men that needs tremendous attention right now. But if we're looking forward, we have to make sure that that's thought of in terms of this emerging Latino population as well, and again immigration is going to be an important part of it. In our state, California, one-sixth of the children have at least one undocumented parent. If you regularize the situation of those parents, you are transforming the next California and it's particularly acute in this state but it's happening all over.

[00:44:26]

So I think it's a good initiative. We need to complicate what the strategy will be for the different populations.

[00:44:32]

>> Sheena Moran: Hi, my name is Sheena Moran [assumed spelling]. I'm a graduate student of Pepperdine University and I actually have a question for LaDonna about executive function and especially when we're talking about instilling that type of skills in an individual. I think there's a stigma against people over a certain age about their ability to learn new skills and kind of adapt to situations, and I think that's why we tend to focus on early intervention trying to catch people before they experience these harsh conditions, get involved in institutional injustice or anything similar to that. So I was wondering if you have any research that talks about, especially for us as like policy individuals, you know, how the amount of time a person would need to practice those skills would lead to costs endured by either the state, the nation or local entities.

[00:45:18]

>> LaDonna Pavetti: I think the one thing we know is that interventions that work often don't come cheap. And the Building Nebraska Families was not a cheap intervention. It was about 7,500 dollars per family. But the interesting thing it wasn't that it was-- it wasn't-- I mean, the average time that people spent in that program was eight or nine months. So we aren't talking about five years or 10 years. So they were able to achieve those. A lot of the cost of that program came from two aspects, one-- three actually. One is it was rural, so there was a lot of driving time, so there was a lot of sort of cost, staff cost. And so if you did it in an urban area, you could potentially reduce that. The other it was done in people's homes and I think that it's waiting for a test to say, "Can we do some of the things-- same things not in people's homes," so that you change the way you interact with people and you help people to set goals and to help them to meet those goals in whatever setting you're in. It doesn't have to be in the home. The other is, is that they were much more highly skilled staff than we often see in programs and they were educators who were able to actually-- who had skills on how to work with people on teaching skills and working with them in building their own skills.

[00:46:27]

So I think that-- I think that it would be wrong to assume that we can make major changes without investing resources. And I think it's a tradeoff of thinking of where do we best invest those. Because I think the other thing is that I think we need to do much more around subsidized employment that really gives people opportunities to work because that is a way to practice skills and I think to do that with some regularity. Under the TANF Emergency Fund, which was funded as a part of the stimulus, we had-- the states didn't have to scrounge up. They had lots of people who wanted to work, who came begging for those positions and so I think there are opportunities to create those jobs as well but those also don't come cheap.

[00:47:15]

>> Erika Poethig: I'm sure there must be other-- yes. I'm sorry. Ed Olson and then we'll go over to you.

[00:47:21]

>> Ed Olson: Ed Olson, University of Virginia. So, a number of the panelists, not only in this session but earlier, have suggested interventions, small programs that they thought were particularly cost effective, and the problem seems to be getting those to be adopted more broadly. So, you know, the question is how we could do that and I just have a suggestion I'd be interested in feedback on that. But what about a large research fund which would look at these promising interventions that people suggested and then we then do like random assignment experiments to determine which of these are cost effective, both as a way of determining whether it really is true, that there-- you get a lot of bang for the buck. But also to give them more publicity so that they might be as adopted more broadly.

[00:48:06]

>> Erika Poethig: Yeah.

[00:48:07]

>> LaDonna Pavetti: Well, just my response would be I think we would do better if we looked at all of our programs and try to sort of think about are there particular things that we're doing or not doing that could improve them across the board. Because we're never going to-- we're never going to get everybody to agree to create-- to adopt this program versus that program. So my goal in sort of being a part of this whole movement to try and think about ways to use executive function is to say can we take whatever program it is and rethink it and possibly improve it. Because I think we have a much greater chance of having some change in that way than to try and get everybody who's doing something to all of a sudden do something different.

[00:48:54]

>> Erika Poethig: I wonder if Martin or Zach have any thoughts about the role of evidence-based type programs in-- you know, in a context of actually implementing them in practice.

[00:49:05]

>> Martin Friedman: I have thoughts about evidence-based programs. Whose evidence? What defines evidence-based and I really appreciate what you said. I think I would differ on where I'd take all that money instead of a research, big project, research project, I think I would really try to take a program that works in a school system or a reentry program that works and then just give that money to expand it and let it work. I really struggle with evidence-based-- the idea of evidence-based because there's a cultural norm, there's cultural imposition that says that only certain things can be proved in certain ways, right? A plus B, I can't do all that but just, you know, that there's this logical progression, whereas

for a lot of people the proof that it works is seeing that it works in anecdotal evidence. Relationship based, not always evidence-based.

[00:50:01]

>> Erika Poethig: Do-- Do--

[00:50:02]

>> Zachary Hoover: I mean it makes me think about the Affordable Care Act Massachusetts. It makes me think about there's a story about farming practices that I don't know well enough to retell. But farming practices in the south that the federal government was trying to get farmers to do different things around-- irrigation not immigration. And that ultimately the strategy that worked was building out a pilot some place that was very successful and where farmers spoke to other farmers about why it was working. So, I mean, to the extent that like money to do work that we think is going to work could be increased and might increase visibility for those programs that are working, I think we see that in a lot of ways-- in a lot of different places, even in organizing. We'll take the Cathedral City example on towing and called somebody in Central Valley and say, "Hey, try this. We just did this over here." So to the extent that it can create visibility, because cutting through the noise with all the ideas and all the models and everything, I think is a-- I mean, it's a huge challenge.

[00:51:03]

>> LaDonna Pavetti: And I do think we need to do evidence-based practices when we have evidence, but I think if you look at the-- all the experiments that have been done, we've had a lot failures as well. So I think there's still a lot of room to build new evidence. So there's this balance between expanding and doing more of what we know works and creating sort of new evidence, of new approaches that we know will work.

[00:51:26]

>> Erika Poethig: Did you--

[00:51:28]

>> Manuel Pastor: Yeah, but this is probably coming from a very different place because of working in the immigration field where economists from the left to the right agree that comprehensive immigration reform would be good for the economy, as well as good for the undocumented folks in the country. And it remains stymied in a Congress in which the party in power got one million less votes than a party not in power. So I'd invest in redistricting if I have a lot of money because then you would get a more representative Congress, hopefully one that would actually make a different set of decisions and I think actually it's very interesting to look at the California experiment to think many people were concerned about with the Citizens Redistricting Commission, which I think actually wound up producing a much more competitive state, probably moved the Democrats more to the middle, right? What did wind up isolating the Republican party unless they can regret their brand, right? But it's definitely more representative.

[00:52:27]

>> Erika Poethig: Great.

[00:52:27]

>> Martin Friedman: Just really, really quickly. I-- my question to be with the policy folks and you identified yourselves as policy person, how do you take the elements of a successful program and

internalize that into policy? That's my question. That's what I want to start seeing 'cause we know what works, how do we get that out of small programs and into large public policy? You know, if that thing works, if focusing on executive function works in a small program, then it should be at the basis of policy too, right?

[00:52:54]

[Inaudible Remark] That's your policy people's jobs, just get to it.

[00:52:58]

>> Erika Poethig: So we have another question. This is-- it's a good-- this is a good conversation, but I want to make sure we have room for others, yeah.

[00:53:06]

>> Daphna Oyserman: So connecting-- Daphna Oyserman at USC. You know, executive function, developmentally, people talk about as three very simple things, can you focus your attention, can you shift your attention when you need to, and can you inhibit so that you're not only looking at the thing that's fun but the other thing too. So William James says, "No one needs to have will power to pay attention to a lion that walked in the room." OK. So, you don't need executive function for that. You need executive function to focus on your schoolwork 'cause it's not that fun, OK? So, that's the sort of the core, you're inhibiting so that you're doing the thing you need to do, not the thing that seems more fun. Are you able to shift when the rules change to the new set of rules? And are you able to hold in working memory, which is seven plus or minus two bits of information? Are you able to practice that up so there is more, so that you can think of more things at the same time when you're trying to make a decision? And that was often studied as if it happened young and never happened again later.

[00:54:08]

And I think what's really important is there's no closed window, first. Second, there's no one way to do it. And I think rather than saying, "What's the program that worked and let's do that program." I think saying, "What are the active ingredients that works?"

[00:54:25]

>> Martin Friedman: That right.

[00:54:25]

>> Daphna Oyserman: And what are the ways to do it in your community, your setting, your situation? And I think that's often where policy is too vague because we rush quickly to say, "Oh, everyone do their own thing." But that really shouldn't be what we mean. If we actually know what the active ingredients are, we should be asking ourselves, can you demonstrate the thing you're doing is yielding those active ingredients, then go for it. But if you're doing some other things that seems kind of fun, that's probably not a good use of public money. And it may feel good, right? It's not that all relationships are good, right? But relationships are necessary for a lot of things to be activated. So it's not only that there's a relationship. It's the relationship that yields something that is really important. So I just want to say it, to sort of throw that in, and at the same times to say, what's really interesting about this conversation is as we're thinking about it, are we talking-- we were mixing-- and I'm not sure if it's a good idea.

[00:55:29]

We're mixing the long-term poverty and the corrosive effects of long-term poverty on your sense that if I invest now, that something will happen later and poverty of recent immigrants who have little

opportunity and so forth but have more opportunity than they had before and it may be experientially different. And so I think the issue that you're raising is-- are we seeing it-- are we seeing the emergence of a generational shift from what we used to think about poverty and immigration which is they're really two different things to them converging? And I think that's an important conversation to keep on hand.

[00:56:06]

>> Erika Poethig: Right, thank you. Any thoughts, responses? OK. We've got-- before I-- 'cause I-- 'cause you've had enough, I just want to make sure that we don't have anybody who hasn't had an opportunity to talk. OK. Can we-- yeah. Thank you.

[00:56:22]

>> I ask a lot of questions and I apologize for that in advance. I'm just finding this so fascinating. I just have a question for the audience. How many of you here before you came here knew more than one other person at this group? So, 40 percent, 50 percent or so. How many of you here work with other people in your field on a regular basis in the room? Right. That's a pretty small number. So the question I have for you guys is, why aren't you coordinating your activities more effectively together?

[00:57:00]

[Multiple Speakers]

[00:57:06]

>> Manuel Pastor: Because we're academics.

[00:57:07]

>> Erika Poethig: So that's-- OK.

[00:57:09]

>> Martin Friedman: Systems were designed-- I mean, everything has been designed to keep us separate and keep us compartmentalized and keep us siloed and that's what keeps us going.

[00:57:16]

[Inaudible Remark]

[00:57:17]

>> Raphael Bostic: No. So, I'm going to take organizers' prerogative on this.

[00:57:21]

>> Martin Friedman: I'm withdrawing my resume, by the way.

[00:57:25]

>> Raphael Bostic: I would say a couple of things on that. First, I think that's one of the reasons why we're having a conference, that we have a propensity to specialize in a very specific way in a specific field and that specialization can lead us to silo ourselves. And many of us say we have problems that require us to be unsiloed and it takes effort and impetus and some kind of spark to get that process going differently. A second thing, though, I think which is important to acknowledge and, you know, we were talking about this at lunch, is about we respond to incentives as well. The systems that we live in rewards certain types of activities more than others and to the extent that our systems reward us staying in our lane and emphasizing the things that we do and being really, really good at that and not

having as broad a peripheral vision as we might have, and that's what we're going to do because, you know, as has been said, we're all people.

[00:58:29]

We all have the same motivations, the same goals, the same objectives and response to the world in largely similar ways. Now, what's been interesting in why we wanted-- why I wanted to have this panel, is that there's an overlay of stress and desperation and hopelessness that can shape the types of things and reorient what we respond to more to and what we respond to less to. And that's kind of what we're trying to talk about here and I think we've heard a lot of interesting ways to conceive of this to make it-- to make us acknowledge that it's people, yes, but it's systems as well and we need to have solutions to both. But I think all of us, you know, this was Zach's point, what we have to do differently, you know, we have to think about how we change our systems as well and it's not just—it's an us problem, it's not a them problem and that's an important thing to keep in mind.

[00:59:29]

>> Erika Poethig: Thank you, Raphael.

[00:59:30]

>> Raphael Bostic: Now, we turn to the panel.

[00:59:33]

>> Erika Poethig: I'm glad you put your two cents in. We have time for maybe one more comment or question and we've got-- OK. Let's do two. So it's-- let's each of maybe each state your question and then we'll have-- turn it back to the panel. So we'll start over here and then come over here.

[00:59:52]

>> Vanessa Martin: It's just really a comment and piggybacking on the gentleman from IBM. Just so people are aware here, there is a major evaluation-- randomized evaluation going on of subsidized employment program with the Department of Public Social Services and the Work Source centers. So, we're in the infancy stages at this point, but everybody should be in kind of on the lookout for that so that kind of piggybacks on this comment and, you know, addresses some of the issues we're talking about here in subsidized employment and more rigorous evidence and so this-- you know, this evaluation should be very meaningful, particularly to people in Southern California and Los Angeles in particular.

[01:00:30]

>> What's your name?

[01:00:31]

>> Vanessa Martin: Oh Vanessa Martin from MDRC.

[01:00:33]

>> Erika Poethig: Thanks for sharing.

[01:00:34]

>> Vanessa Martin: So it's a plug for our organization.

[01:00:36]

>> Erika Poethig: It's OK. Thank you. Yes? And please introduce yourself.

[01:00:40]

>> Marianne Haver Hill: OK. I'm Marianne Haver Hill. I'm the CEO of MEND, Meet Each Need with Dignity. We're a multi-service poverty relief agency out in Pacoima. We serve the San Fernando Valley. And by the way, we partner with about 300 universities, colleges, schools, other nonprofits, governmental-- every year so, we do a lot of that but not with people in other parts of LA 'cause it's not-- because of the way LA is. It's too spread out. Anyway, I guess a couple of things about programs that are evidence-based is successful, I have worked at MEND, which is-- our clientele is 91 percent Latino, mostly immigrants for most of my career. And I think the experience of poverty for people who are immigrants is very different than the experience of people in poverty, for example in an African-American community or, you know, largely African-- that. And so, what might work well in one community may not work well in another community and I think that-- so sometimes, you know, that one size fits all approach doesn't really work.

[01:01:43]

But I guess my question specifically had to do with executive functioning and thinking about, you know, we're a very multi-service in our organization so we give out emergency food and clothing. We have a clinic for those who are uninsured. We have education and training programs. And throughout my tenure at MEND, those people that walk in the door for emergency food baskets, even though we promote our English classes and our job training and so on, they're not the ones that actually sign up. And if-- you know, my way of thinking it has always been Maslow's hierarchy of needs and you think, you know, people are just struggling day-to-day just to get food in the table are, you know-- they're not even-- they're not thinking about the future that-- they're living today, really today. And so I guess my question is if the people in our English program actually their income might be really low, but it's steady, they are surviving. So my question is where does the executive functioning part of that come in to it? It's hard for me to imagine that working with our food clients, but I could really see it working with our English clients I guess.

[01:02:39]

>> Erika Poethig: So-- and if you could it do it briefly, LaDonna.

[01:02:42]

>> LaDonna Pavetti: So, I think that, you know, I do think it is different depending on what your entry point is and it probably is more relevant for your English-speaking clients and there, I think it is really much-- it is a lot about setting goals and then figuring out what kind of scaffolding can you prove it. What kind of coaching? Coaching is a very important part of building executive function skills around helping people not just to complete the English class, but to see it as a part of something bigger. So that they stay with it and they have a next step when it ends. So I think it was really trying to build around it.

[01:03:18]

>> Erika Poethig: So, Manuel wants to add one piece here and then we'll wrap up the panel.

[01:03:21]

>> Manuel Pastor: So one additional group you can work with is Centro Latino for Literacy that's-- and you probably do already. But just for folks to understand, a lot of immigrants didn't make it past sixth grade in their home country. So, they're not actually literate in Spanish and a matter of fact, there's

been a big burst of indigenous immigrants whose Spanish is often their second language. As a result, there's a really innovative program, Centro Latino for Literacy Leamos, "We Read," which is partly in person and mostly online, teaching people to read and write in Spanish as a way of getting them ready to do English. And so, things like that can be good entry points for immigrants, but it speaks to your general point that for this immigrant community, there are different kind of interventions that need to be made and they need to be made now because I think what's going on is that the sense of hopelessness is beginning to creep in as well, particularly when you're on your two millionth deportation in the last five years, particularly when what looked like the promise of immigration reform has been stymied, there is a sense of hopelessness out there that can really infect the next generation.

[01:04:27]

>> Erika Poethig: With that, thank you and please join me in thanking the panel.

[01:04:33]

[Applause]