The Bienestar (Well-Being) of Texas Hispanic Children
Acknowledgments

Promoviendo Bienestar para Familias y Comunidad con Conocimiento, Confianza y Poder
Promoting Family and Community Well-Being through Knowledge, Trust and Empowerment

Report prepared by La Fe Policy Research and Education Center (La Fe PREC), a component of Centro de Salud Familiar- La Fe, Inc., based in El Paso, Texas. La Fe is a multiple service organization with over 47 years of social justice, and direct service delivery experience in health care, social services, cultural arts, housing, economic development, and education.

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THE BIENESTAR (WELL-BEING) OF HISPANIC CHILDREN IN TEXAS

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FORWARD

Centro de Salud Familiar – La Fe is proud to present “The Bienestar (Well-Being) of Texas Hispanic Children” report. This comprehensive report is long-overdue in speaking to the child development and opportunity risks that our children continue to encounter.

The core message conveyed is that generations of Hispanic families continue to be weakened, in large part by inequitable public policies that marginalize there opportunities for economic mobility. The report challenges us to rethink our approaches in stopping generations of low-income Hispanic families facing limited education, employment, housing, and health improvement opportunities.

Too often, we jump to self-responsibility, dependency, and blame the victim clichés as the causal basis for poverty and its related problems. The reality is that most people work hard, and they would prefer not to just survive day-to-day. They most certainly want a promising future for their children.

It is ironic that we have come full circle to the logical perspective that strong families result in more effective child development and brighter successful futures. Our organization was given birth by mothers advocating against injustices impacting their families. They intuitively understand that a poor education, inadequate employment skills, unsafe neighborhoods, and poor health weakened their families. These issues created barriers and challenges toward assets and wealth creation that further enabled family.

It is our hope the purported ‘Texas Way’ to policy-making gets more concerted and organized advocacy attention. We trust this report will contribute to the discussions, advocacy, and underlying changes needed to achieve more equitable policy approaches. It’s imperative that local and state policies facilitate and not be a detriment to strengthening families, and the future of our children.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The *bienestar* (well-being) of nearly one-half or 2.3 million Hispanic children does not look promising. The children live in families that are not strong measured by educational achievement, economic status, health, family structure and neighborhood environment. They are at risk of becoming another generation of Hispanic adults who will be undereducated, have limited job skills, and lower incomes. They will not achieve ‘real’ middle-class status - a status that would give financial security from income and asset accumulation that provides them with resources and choices in supporting their children’s development.

Research and policy experts agree that effective child development is demonstrated by building a strong physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and emotional, and speech and language foundation in the first 5 to 8 years of life. From here, growing into adolescence and young adulthood, the opportunities are much greater for educational and career success, higher incomes, good health, and wealth accumulation. Conversely, these results will not occur when a child’s development is impeded by poverty, poor neighborhood environment, and stressful family living conditions.

Conditions in which families and their children live have also been adversely impacted by social justice concerns from public or other institutional policies. Unfortunately, for Hispanics in Texas, this is a major concern. The state’s history reflects current concerns that impact child development because of harmful public policies that marginalize Hispanic families. These include policies directed toward education, health, immigration, and civic engagement to name but a few.

Two-thirds of Texas’s recorded history is based on Spanish (Spain and Mexico) influence; as such, Hispanics have a connected native history that predates Anglo immigration influx and ultimate statehood in December 1845. While the population includes several national-origin subgroups, in Texas, 88% are of Mexican-origin. Today, the population is defined by its youthfulness and significant growth.

The Hispanic child population is growing fast and creating a well-documented demographic shift that has implications for their *bienestar* and the state’s future development. They are growing everywhere exceeding the state average growth of 17% across 11 of the states’ 12 economic regions. Of the state’s 6.8 million children under 18 in 2010, Hispanics comprised 49% or 3.3 million representing a 37% increase from 2000.

As noted, researchers and policy experts have made clear the need to understand their family strengths and neighborhood environment and opportunities for successful child development to
flourish. Because it is in the conditions of a child’s family home and neighborhood environment that their development begins, one must determine the resource capacity for parental options and choices in a child’s development. Furthermore, understanding the places and environments where Hispanics grow-up and live, the schooling they complete, the jobs and incomes they hold, their health, and their perspectives and influence on political and policy issues is of increasing significance.

Beginning with the acclaimed study “From Neurons to Neighborhoods”, brain research has clearly established the causal relationship of a strong family and effective child development. Five indicators that are major determinants of a strong family include family structure, education and economic status, health status, and neighborhood environment. The indicators are interrelated, with each affecting the family structure in enabling or challenging parental capacity to provide a thriving child development support environment.

Findings

Today’s economic environment has increased the challenges for families to build strong foundations for their children’s future. Wages have been stagnating for nearly 2 decades, the gap between the rich and poor have widened, and trending toward low rates of upward mobility is apparent. The economic challenges for families of color are even greater.

The major changes occurring in the American family structure gives impetus to assessing family strength and child development. Marriage and parenting is directly related to a child’s social and cognitive development. Less than two-third of children now live in 2 parent households, compared to nearly 90% in the early 1950’s. The gap is growing, particularly in terms of child-bearing where well over half of births are to unmarried couples, and often unplanned. Further, the gap is growing between poorer communities where marriage is struggling but growing among the well-educated and affluent. Marriage produces more family income and double the opportunity for good parenting.

Like most Texas families, future opportunities and a better life for their children is a driving Hispanic goal. Parents have expectations that their children will enter adulthood with social capital assets evidenced by their achievement of a quality education, a livable and comfortable paying job, good health, and establish strong family and community relationships.

In 2013, Hispanics represented 34% of all Texas families households of 6,322 542. Texas families grew 20% from 2010. From 2010 to 2013 White families decreased by 20%, while Hispanic families grew by 45% - accounting for 64% of all family growth.

As noted below, Hispanic family structures reflect differences and distinctive characteristics exemplified by their disproportionate representation among native and immigrant families, signal
head households, language usage, number of children, and the number of grandparents who are raising grandchildren.

Family structure has a direct relationship to a child’s development; e.g., a well-educated two-parent household will have added resource capacity (knowledge and income) to support their child’s development than a single-parent low-income parent. The resource capacity among Hispanic families is disproportionately low.

The research targeting education, employment occupations, income, home ownership, health, and neighborhood conditions and segregation all contribute to the population of Hispanic ‘underclass’ families. This means limited opportunities for increase economic mobility to develop assets and wealth defined as achieving the ‘American Dream’ or middle-class status. Indeed, 54% of Hispanic families are low-income, and 24% are below poverty. While there are rate variations in their income status among family structures, they are disproportionately lower across all structures when compare to non-Hispanic families.

Hispanic family resource capacity is low because of:

- At-risk family structure, e.g. high number of single-female head of household.
- Low education levels among adult family members.
- Insufficient economic security demonstrated by type of employment, low income, and minimal assets or wealth accumulation.
Neighborhood conditions that impede education, employment, inadequate housing, and economic mobility; as well as contribute to social and family instability, and poor health.

Health-risks and poor health exemplified by low-levels of access to regular preventive health care, incidence and prevalence rates of chronic diseases, and lack of health insurance coverage.

While poverty thresholds set at the national level help determine basic income levels for families to live above economic hardships, they are also recognized as a family’s minimum economic survival measure. Therefore, it’s more policy useful to want families to exceed low-income status or above 200% of the poverty level.

In light of their parent’s human capital capacity to support them, the bienestar and likely opportunities for Hispanic children become more focused. The bienestar and strength-level of Hispanic families indicates that 1 of 2 children are at-risk from developing into productive adulthood. Financial stability to support the costs of child-rearing from infancy through adolescence challenges over half of all Hispanic families. The children are at-risk of not being:

- Emotionally and physically safe,
- Positively stimulated, nurtured and affirmed, and
- Their promotion of learning and development of healthy behaviors weakened.

If viewed as a complete jigsaw puzzle, these requisites represent critical pieces required to achieve effective child development. Among Hispanic children, the data illustrates that the puzzle is incomplete as pieces are damaged or missing. In turn, they have a much higher risk of entering adulthood with disparities that include inadequate education, weak job skills, poverty or low incomes, poor health, or high teen pregnancy and incarceration rates, etc. For them, the ‘reaching for the sky’ has been impeded.

Certainly, all Texas families encounter challenges and most start each day with efforts to lead productive lives. It includes working hard toward maintaining a protective and supportive child development environment that will be the foundation of a secure future for their children. Nonetheless, the reality is that the starting gate is not the same for all families even when they embrace and adhere to expected standards of personal and parental responsibilities.

In 2014, Hispanics represented 51% of all Texas children (7,477,897) ages 0 to 17, while White and Black children represented 31% and 12% respectively. The Chart below illustrates that Hispanic children are the majority among all age groups, particularly ages 0 to 3 (56%), 4 (51%), and 5 (54%).
Hispanic children are leading the state’s population growth and comprise over 51% of all children enrolled in public schools. A descriptive profile of their enrollment is noted below. It's reasonable to expect that Texas’s economic growth and future prosperity will be, in large part, measured by the education and skills strength of the majority Hispanic workforce.

Too many of these children face multiple at-risk characteristics in their development and future opportunities. Research and statistical data provide evidence of their disadvantaged position compared to non-Hispanics across an array of comprehensive indicators relating to:

- **Family Structure**
- **Family Education and Employment Environment**
- **Children in Low and Poverty Income Families**
- **Neighborhood Concentrated Poverty and Immigrant Families**
- **Pre-Kindergarten Education**
- **Academic Achievement from 4th Grade to College Readiness**
- **Public School and College Education Completion**
Certainly, parents have the primary responsibility for assuring the safety and ongoing developmental foundation of their children for productive adulthood. Because of the diversity in the children's family environment it is important to give considerable assessment to how English/Spanish bilingualism, culture nuance, and immigrant status affect their development. Evidence indicates that their positive contribution to child development have often been excluded. While strong parenting and family values are demonstrated by most Hispanic parents, many have limited resources that reduce their capacity to further create and identify opportunities for their children.

Public Policies Matter

The family’s social and economic environment and associated risk factors are extensive, and the notion that the parents and their children can simply pull themselves up from their ‘bootstraps’ is both impractical and unrealistic. The bootstrap cliché must be further denounced given that public and private institutions have contributed to marginalizing families through inequitable policies and minimal human capital investments; be it under-funded public schools, unsafe and sparse neighborhood infrastructure development, discriminatory lending practices, poor healthcare access, etc..

Irrespective of disadvantaged family and neighborhoods environments, most children will persevere and some will overcome risks and barriers; but many will still be lost to lower education levels, low-paying jobs, risk of poor health, and limited opportunities to earn sufficient wealth to achieve financial security. Most will enter adulthood as hardworking individuals and become parents who will struggle to maintain their own families with limited options to strengthen their resource capacity.

One can argue a lack of intent to marginalize Hispanic families; that the state simply has a policy-making approach underlined by a philosophy of small government, business friendly, and conservative investments in human capital areas such as education, and health and human services. Whatever the underlying intent may be, this approach helps produce inequalities that place children at-risk and impede their ability to develop a strong foundation for future success.

Inadequate investments in education and health and human services are not by themselves the only contributors to family marginalization. Regressive tax policies, unbalanced tax credits to business interests, inadequate job trainings, voter suppression, and immigration policies are related key factors. In short, these economic and social policies do not provide support for the adage, “equality of opportunity’ to all Texas citizens. While the state’s employment and economic performance are among the best in the nation, their benefits are not wide-spread and
appear to be adding to the state’s growing income inequalities, particularly among Hispanic families. In fact, Hispanic bienstar measured by 16 education, income, health and other social indicators in two-third of all other states is better than that of Texas Hispanics.

Could it be that the state ‘way’ or approach to policy-making is simply so culturally and ideologically ingrained that it has been unable to critically and creatively develop even ‘conservative’ policies that help strengthen families? There is significant policy research and economist perspectives that the state’s own economic future is at-risk in its continuing refusal to change its policy-making approach. Maintaining a growing and cheap Hispanic labor force will perpetuate another generation of low income Hispanic families, and diminish economic prosperity for the state.

**Recommendations: Increase Civic Engagement and Public Policy Influence**

The strong work ethic and resiliency of Hispanics, civil rights progress in eliminating overt racial policy barriers, and increasing access to education have resulted in economic and health improvements. However, policy and institutional barriers still persist along with a weakened family support structure among a large number of Hispanic families. Yet, Hispanics continue to persevere and achieve educational and economic milestones beyond expectations. Their population growth and corresponding youthfulness, and increasing majority representation in public schools, higher education, and the labor force are contributing factors. There are challenges to Hispanics breaking the generational production of weak families that limit their children’s development and future. Hispanics must:

- Increase their political influence to achieve substantive policy change successes.
- Take into account the state’s response to economic globalization and often corrosive relationship with federal initiatives. The state’s policy responses to date measured by economic, educational and job training investments; and state-rights partisanship positions with federal initiatives have expanded inequalities and collateral damage for families.
- Minimize one-issue centered advocacy approaches. There is a need to develop more comprehensive partnership approaches that target issues impacted by underlying ‘ideological and structural’ revenue and budgeting doctrines that impede policy change.
- Develop more sustaining ‘resource capacity’ to respond to and proactively lead with policy ideas and strategies. This means expanded statewide partners, stronger statewide communications structure (supports community awareness as well as organizing and advocacy), and policy research support.

Across the state’s 12 economic regions, Hispanics and their collaborative partners are civically involved in helping to improve their schools, neighborhoods, and family livelihoods. Arguably, their advocacy is more local than statewide policy-making. Existing statewide civic engagement, leadership and power must also increase to influence substantive policy changes. Otherwise, the
state will continue with its minimalist or purported unique ‘Texas Way’ approach to policy-making that is more harmful to their families. Public policies matter – they can help strengthen families, thereby, expanding opportunities for their children.

The following report provides a descriptive framework of Hispanic children in Texas who are projected to be the dominant primary labor force that will drive the state’s economy. Family strength measured by resource capacity indicators is central to the framework. The report’s purpose is two-fold -- to describe the bienestar of these children through a child development framework, and to contribute to the policy and advocacy discussions regarding their opportunities to grow well-educated, healthy, and motivated to enter the future confidently as productive adults. Opportunities that are not burdened by inequality which the most prominent economists agree hinder economic growth for all of us.
III. Introduction

This report provides a descriptive framework of Hispanic children in Texas who are projected to be the dominant primary labor force that will drive the state’s economy.¹ These children who are often reared in bilingual and bicultural families demonstrate high social skills and bicultural proficiencies; but many also progress with increasing gaps in cognitive education measures beginning as early as age two². These gaps widen in the early and elementary school years and impede their development going forward into the future.

Further, this report’s purpose is two-fold -- to describe the bienestar³ (well-being) of these children through a child development framework and to contribute to the policy and advocacy discussions regarding their opportunities to grow well-educated, healthy, and motivated to enter the future confidently as productive adults. Opportunities that are not burdened by inequality which the most prominent economists agree hinder economic growth for all of us.⁴

While ‘children are the future’ is a common catchphrase, it says little about the necessary foundation that helps children to be prepared. The bienestar of families is impacted by interrelated factors from the level of education, type of jobs, incomes and wealth (assets), health status, cultural affirmation, and the quality of their neighborhoods (housing, schools, and safety). It is here in the conditions of a child’s family home and neighborhood environment that their development begins. Specifically, it’s where the critical physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and emotional, and speech and language development skills arise. Establishing a strong foundation in each of these areas is of upmost importance in the first 5 to 8 years of a child’s life.⁵

Bienestar also echoes social justice concerns given Texas’s history of marginalizing Hispanics through racism, institutionalized biases, and harmful public policies.⁶ In short, these obstacles produce inequalities that place children at-risk and impede their ability to develop a strong foundation for future success.

The strong work ethic of Hispanics, civil rights progress in eliminating obvious racial and policy barriers and increasing access to education have resulted in economic and health improvements. However, some policy and institutional barriers still persist along with weakened family support structure among a large number of Hispanic families. While the persistence of these barriers tires the Hispanic family and stifles effective child development, Hispanics continue to persevere and achieve educational and economic milestones beyond expectations. Their resiliency perplexes researchers who have been unable to understand ‘scientifically’ the “Hispanic Health Paradox”; i.e., Hispanics have a longer live span than other racial/ethnic groups regardless of their daily living in disproportionately poor economic and health environments.⁷

Effective child development is fostered by a loving and nourishing family environment, a financially stable and minimally stressed home, early education opportunities and preparation, and good physical and mental health as major requisites.⁸ The expected result is entering adulthood with social capital assets evidenced by development of strong family and community networks, achieving a quality education and good health that are central to self-sufficiency and independence.
If viewed as a complete jigsaw puzzle, these requisites represent critical pieces required to achieve effective child development. For many Hispanic children, the puzzle is incomplete as the requisite pieces are damaged or missing. The result has been entering adulthood with an inadequate education, weak job skills, poverty, poor health, high teen pregnancy, incarceration, etc. Therefore, families and children are being marginalized, and the economy of our state is also being diminished. These issues are amplified by their convergence with growing income inequalities and the state’s rapid racial and ethnic demographic changes giving urgency for priority attention and solutions.

Four major areas that can help us understand the overall state of Hispanic child bienestar and help us strengthen and expand opportunities for optimal child development are:

- The Hispanic demographic majority shift.
- The strength level of Hispanic families.
- The current state of Hispanic child well-being.
- The state of family and child relevant public policies and programs.

As a puzzle, each areas must be understood in relationship to one-another and used as guidance to form a complete picture. A picture which helps promote and guide human capital investments that target family strengthening and child development support priorities.
IV. Demographic Growth: A Human Capital Development Opportunity

Understanding the demographics trends of a population is important to help with coherent planning and informed decision-making in both the public and private sectors. They include policy-makers, marketing and business, and decisions relating to human capital investments such as education and health care resources.\textsuperscript{11} For public policy-making, ineffective use or neglecting to consider demographics trends can have negative consequences for a state’s economy, as well as be detrimental to individuals, families, and population groups.\textsuperscript{12}

In Texas, population and economic growth are interconnected and both are outperforming nearly every other state. The population growth between 2000 and 2010 was the largest in the country at nearly 4.3 million. Six of the country’s 20 largest cities are in Texas – Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, Fort Worth, and El Paso.\textsuperscript{13} Economically, the state is held-up as the shining star in both recovering from the great recession of 2008, and demonstrating the highest new job, business, and financial GNP growth in the country.\textsuperscript{14} There are critics who argue that this economic assessment is more rhetoric than reality; or at best, that only a very small percentage of the working population and big business are its primary beneficiaries.\textsuperscript{15}

For Hispanics, the larger and more important questions relate to challenges to continually improve their bienestar, and opportunities available for their children given that they are projected to represent the majority of working adults in the future.\textsuperscript{16} Indeed, state demographers have concluded that Hispanics are driving Texas’s population growth and changes. They are also the reason for the state having the nations’ second highest dependency index (61.4). The index is the ratio of the dependent-age population (young or old) to the working age population (ages 18 – 64). The higher the ratio, the greater is the burden of support on working people.\textsuperscript{17} Children (ages 0 -17) represent 44.9% of the ratio, and it happens that Hispanics represent nearly half of all children.

Two-thirds of Texas’s recorded history is based on Spanish (Spain and Mexico) influence; as such, Hispanics have a welded native demographic history of over 300 years.\textsuperscript{18} Their presence predates Anglo immigration influx and ultimate statehood in December 1845. The terms Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Chicanos, Hispanics, and Latinos have been utilized to give identity and political movement recognition to the state’s Spanish-speaking population. While the population includes several national-origin subgroups with wide variation in their racial and ethnic make-up and settlement patterns in the United States, in Texas, 88% are of Mexican-origin.\textsuperscript{19}

In 2011, there were approximately 10.2 million Hispanics or 38% of the Texas population living in diverse border, urban, and rural geographies. Seventy and thirty percent are native and foreign-born respectively.\textsuperscript{20} Between 2000 and 2010, they comprised 81.5% of the state’s population growth; and projected to be the majority (53%) by 2030.\textsuperscript{21} Age structure, natural increases (fertility minus deaths), and immigration are the major growth influences. Key growth indicators for Hispanics include:

- Young population with a median age of 27 compared to 41 for Whites\textsuperscript{22}. The median age is 19 among native born Hispanics.
In 2010 the crude birth rate was 20.0 compared to 12.0 for Whites. Their general fertility rate was 86.8 and 62.1 respectively.

The child population growth is a significant contributor to the state’s Hispanic majority demographic shift. In fact, population growth in the state’s central-city counties has resulted from natural increases; of which Hispanics were the primary contributor.

The total Texas child population under age 18 was over 6.8 million in 2010. Hispanics comprised 49% or 3.3 million of all children; representing a 37% increase from 2000. During this same period White children decreased by 7%.

The Hispanic child population rate increase between 2000 and 2010 was 114.8% in the combined Metropolitan Central City Counties were 78% (over 2.5 million) lived in 2010.

By 2040, approximately 68% of all children ages 0 - 9 will be Hispanic and 18% White.

Indeed, Hispanic children are growing fast and they are growing everywhere across the state. Their growth exceeded the state average of 17% across 11 of the states’ 12 economic regions (Map 1).

Map 1: Latino Children in Texas, 2010

State Hispanic Child Population: 3,279,079
49% ; +37%

Metroplex has
largest number of
Hispanic children

Upper East, and South
East Regions experienced
the largest percent of
Hispanic child growth
since 2000.

Regions Include: Number and
Percent of Latino children in 2010;
percent increase (+) or decrease (-)
of Latino children since 2000.

Hispanics represent 50%
or more of the child
population in 4 of the
regions and above 40%
in 3 other regions.
The Texas-Mexico Border

The Texas-Mexico Border is recognized as a distinct regional area because of historical, social, cultural, commercial, and political cross-border ties and parallel state and national policy issues. The area, stretching from El Paso in the West to Brownsville in the Southeast makes up 1,254 miles of the 1,933 mile-long U.S.-Mexico border. Twenty Texas border counties are identified in Map 2, have a total child population of 811,028; Hispanics are 754,256 (93%) of the total.

Map 2: Latino Children in Texas Border Counties

Hidalgo, El Paso, Cameron and Webb County contains 90% of all Hispanic children living in Border counties.

Immigrants and Their Children

The continual policy and political debates and decisions regarding immigration and harsh treatment of immigrant families are, at best, ominous for children. Therefore, understanding their demographic presence is important, particularly from a state population growth, human capital, and economic perspective. Characteristics include:

- Texas has a high number of mixed-status families, meaning families with documented immigrants, undocumented immigrants, and native-born U.S. citizens, e.g. 1 out of 10 Texas children have an undocumented parent.
In 2012, the immigrant population was estimated at over 4.2 million or 16.4% of the state’s total residents. Naturalized citizens’ were 34%, 31% lawful permanent residents, and approximately 35% (1.7 million) were unauthorized immigrants. Most immigrants live in the state’s largest urban cities and the border counties.26

The median age among immigrants is 40, and 49.3% and 50.7% was female and male respectively. Over 3 million or 71.5% of the total immigrant population were from Latin American countries, of which, nearly 2.5 million or 58.5% were from Mexico.

Children in families with at least 1 immigrant parent comprised 34.4% (2,278,889) of all children, of which 88% (2,004,619) are US citizens by birth. Approximately 80% of all immigrant parent children are of Hispanic origin.

Of 223,500 non-native immigrant children in 2010-11, nearly 70% (233,000) were Hispanic.

In summary, the Hispanic child population is growing fast and creating a demographic shift that has implications for their bienestar and the state’s future development. Understanding the places and environments where Hispanics grow-up and live, the schooling they complete, the jobs and incomes they hold, their health, and their perspectives and influence on political and policy issues is of increasing significance. For the children who are expected to be the state’s majority labor force, the family and neighborhood environment and opportunities for successful child development to flourish must be a focused goal for policy-makers.
V. Family Strength and Child Development

Before discussing the well-being and future opportunity outlook for Hispanic children, it is first essential to review the strength of their family environment. The resources available to families are central to their capacity for effective child development which helps establish a strong foundation for opportunity and success into adulthood. We know that family economic mobility and money are important for the development of children, but other factors are also of known importance. The social, education, economic, and health status of families are key resource indicators in determining family strength.

The family structure and strength is impacted by levels of education, income, health and neighborhood environment, as well as the context of public and private policies that help or impede opportunities to be successful in each. As such, we are must be careful to not just put the onus of the problem on the poor via their incomes, work ethic, schooling, fertility choices or parenting approaches.

As discussed below, there are social, economic and health disparities among a disproportionately large segment of Hispanic families. The disparities are discussed through:

- Our understanding of the relationship between family environment and child development.
- A focus on five indicators that are major determinants of family strength.
- Data illustrations corresponding to each of the determinants.

The intent is to make clear that any review regarding the well-being and opportunities available to Hispanic children be considered through the lens of their family environment. Said review must further take into account how other intrinsic and external characteristics impact the family’s strength.

A. Family Environment and Child Development

A child’s lifetime opportunities are heavily impacted by the family into which it is born. The evidence is robust that a family’s living environment can impact the physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and emotional, and speech and language development of children. Further, it cannot be overstated that both cognitive and non-cognitive development experiences are critically important to generating productive adult human capital. Their impacts can be long-lasting into adulthood with consequences for a productive future workforce.

In 2013, there were 6,322,542 family households in Texas representing a 20% growth from 2000. Key characteristics of this growth include:
Hispanic families represented 34% of all Texas families.

A 20% decrease in the number of White families – from 3,896,241 in 2000 to 3,128,200 in 2013.

A 45% increase in the number of Hispanic families – from 1,450,289 in 2000 to 2,146,848 in 2013.

Hispanic families accounted for 64% (666,559) of the increase among all (1,039,068) Texas families between 2000 and 2013.

The average family size of Texas families was 3.44, while for Hispanic and White families it was 3.88 and 3.20 respectively.

Hispanics had nearly twice the number of related children under age 18 compared to Whites at 33% and 19% respectively.

As previously noted, the dominant (88%) Hispanic family in Texas is of Mexican origin, i.e., Mexican American. Understanding the bienestar and strength of Hispanic families becomes increasingly significant. Bienestar is a culturally-based holistic view of well-being derived from the interrelationship between familial ties, social and economic condition, spirituality, good health, and community environment. These are influences that directly impact the strength of families while empowering their capacity to provide positive and nourishing parental support, to achieve financial stability, to avert harmful stress, and to maintain good child physical and mental health.

Conversely, a child’s opportunity for effective early development and productive adulthood is at risk if the parents or other caregivers are hampered by poverty, poor housing, limited education, and weak parenting. Additional obstacles include unsafe neighborhoods, inadequate schools or other public or private institutional policies that obstruct family strengthening.

Beginning with the acclaimed study “From Neurons to Neighborhoods”, brain research has clearly established the causal relationship of a strong family and effective child development. Five indicators that are major determinants of a strong family include family structure, education and economic status, health status, and neighborhood environment. The indicators are interrelated, with each affecting the family structure in enabling or challenging parental capacity to provide a thriving child development support environment.

Today’s economic environment increases the challenges for families to build strong foundations for their children’s future because of parallel challenges to achieve middle-class status, i.e., the ‘American Dream’. Wages have been stagnating for nearly 2 decades, the gap between the rich and poor have widened, and the trending toward low rates of upward mobility is apparent. In
In fact, median income earners made $4,500 less in 2014 than 1999, and the middle class share of national income has dropped from 53.2% in 1967 to 45.8 in 2013.\textsuperscript{36}

The economic challenges for families of color are even greater.\textsuperscript{37} Generally, Hispanics felt their children will do better financially than their parents; yet felt their financial mobility was hurt the most by the 2007 recession than any other group.\textsuperscript{38}

The major changes occurring in the \textit{American family structure} is another important issue giving impetus to assessing family strength and child rearing.\textsuperscript{39} The United States is experiencing a ‘marriage gap’ trend which has implication for children and society. Less than two-third of children now live in 2 parent households, compared to nearly 90% in the early 1950’s. The gap is growing, particularly in terms of child-bearing where well over half of births are to unmarried couples, and often unplanned. Further, the gap is growing between poorer communities where marriage is struggling but growing among the well-educated and affluent.\textsuperscript{40}

Marriage and parenting is directly related to a child’s social and cognitive development.\textsuperscript{41} For clarification, it appears being married along is not the central positive factor as is that marriage produces more family income. This appears to also be the case for the quality and impact of good parenting - simply, 2 parent households sharing the parenting duties for the child’s social and cognitive development. The other important factor derived from marriage is the level of parental education which is higher among married versus single head of household, which is trending upwards along with higher incomes.

\section*{B. Family Structure}

From their historical native presence to the current shift toward becoming the state’s majority population, on-going progress toward an improved quality of life has always been a central Hispanic family goal. Like most population groups, future opportunities and a better life for their children is a driving force of this goal. Parents have expectations that their children will enter adulthood with social capital assets evidenced by their achievement of a quality education, a livable and comfortable paying job, good health, and establish strong family and community relationships.

Regrettably, for a disproportionate number of Hispanic parents, their expectations are not met in spite of their apparent nurturing, social guidance, and strong family relationship characteristic’s.\textsuperscript{42} The primary reasons appear two-fold, family-based and institutional. They encompass:

- Economic and social conditions.
- Parent or other primary care-giver capacity to provide effective child development, more so in the area of cognitive-related stimulation.
Institutional public and private policies that marginalize individuals and families through 1) unequal distribution of resources that help build human capital, and 2) undermining value systems that are culturally-based and important to social, motivational, and familial development.

Culture is an integral factor in rearing children. Among Hispanic families, cultural values and Spanish language usage has central significance to their parenting. These not only influence how they may respond to any of the indicators but also affect their child development capacity. As such, families are in continual motion in their adaptation and incorporation into general American society.

The following 5 characteristics reflect this continual motion, and are germane to Hispanic child development.

1. Hispanic immigration and adaptation to the United States have similarities, but are not the same as the immigration and adaptation by European Anglo-Saxon population groups.

2. Most Hispanics are native Texans, and a large number of native children are in families where 1 or both parents are immigrants.

3. Adherence to cultural norms and Spanish language usage vary, often depending on whether they are native first, second and third generation or recent immigrants.

4. Family or ‘familyism’ is a notable cultural value across generations of Hispanics, and important as a model referring to a collective loyalty to extended family that promotes ties, obligations, and interdependence.

5. Strong family cultural norms that provide a nourishing child support environment are often not enough to overcome negative child’s development outcomes from living in a household where poverty, low education attainment, stress, and inequitable public policy perpetuate barriers to opportunities.

The image below illustrates baseline demographic characteristics of the Hispanic family structure. While multifaceted, it’s intended to reflect differences and distinctive characteristics exemplified by their disproportionate representation among native and immigrant families, and the number of grandparents who are raising grandchildren. Therefore, parental resource capacities, along with effective child development opportunities and risks, will vary across these families.
Differences begin to emerge when compared to all Texas and White families; they include:

- The marital status for Texans was 49% married and 32% never married. Among Hispanic it was 47% and 37% respectively, compared to 55% and 25% for Whites.

- Hispanic separated and divorced couple rates were 3.9 and 8.5 respectively compared to 1.6 and 12.7 for Whites respectively.

- Approximately 20% of Texas families were headed by a female with no husband present compared to 25% and 14% for Hispanics and Whites respectively.

- Texas grandparents wholly responsible for raising grandchildren totaled 319,514, of which 46% (146,894) were Hispanic.

- The Texas foreign-born immigrant population was 16% (4,269,693), of which, Hispanics comprised 70% (2,981,202).

- Among the total (9,960,910) Hispanic population, 30% were foreign-born.

- An estimated 35% or 1.7 million of the state’s total foreign-born were unauthorized or undocumented citizens.

- Unlike native born Texans, family characteristics of the state’s foreign-born include:
  - Adults age 18 and over comprised 92.8% of the total foreign-born population
  - Median Age of 41
  - Family size of 4
- Married Rate of 62%
- Never Married Rate of 23%

From this baseline family structure we begin connecting the four keys influencing family strength indicators.

C. Education

A well-educated workforce is centrally important to a state’s prosperity. States must bear the responsibility that its education opportunities and economic growth approaches benefit all of its residents. The evidence is clear that shortfalls in academic achievement often impose negative consequences via lower earnings, poorer health, and higher rates of incarceration. There is no doubt that college graduates are much more likely to climb the economic ladder versus those who don’t, and mostly end up in the bottom 47% with the lowest incomes.

The negative outcomes resulting from a low education for families are clear – their social and financial stability are weakened. Chart 1 reflects the lower educational attainment of Hispanics compared to Whites and Blacks.

Chart 1: Texas Education Completion Level by Race and Ethnicity, Ages 25 and Above, 2013

- Hispanics have the highest percent of individuals with less than a high school education at 39% compared to 7% and 13% for Whites and Blacks respectively.
- Whites have an Associate or higher degree at a rate 3 times greater than Hispanics, 43% compared to 18%.

Among Texas families, recent American Population Survey data indicate educational achievement of husband-wife and single female-head of households ages 16 and above as follows:
 Hispanichusband-wife and single female-head of households’ families are over-represented as non-high school graduates at 43% and 37% compared to Whites at 11% and 7% respectively.

 Hispanic families have the lowest rates of bachelor’s degree attainment at 10% for both family types compared to Whites at 38% and 24% respectively.

D. Employment

In 2000, the Hispanic share of the Texas labor force was 28% compared to 58% for Whites.\textsuperscript{51} Consistent with their population growth, the Hispanic labor force has grown significantly over the past decade. Hispanics accounted for 76% of the state’s labor force growth between 1994 and 2008.\textsuperscript{52} By 2013, the Hispanic labor force share for ages 16 – 64 increased to 39%, while the White share decreased to 49% (Chart 2). A key contributing factor to this growth was the participation of immigrants, the majority whom are Hispanic.\textsuperscript{53}

Unemployment was highest among Blacks at 12%, followed by Hispanics at 9%, and 6% for Whites.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Chart 2: Texas Labor Force Participation and Employment Status}
\textbf{For Ages 16-64 by Race and Ethnicity, 2013}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart2}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

Nationally, Texas ranked 16\textsuperscript{th} in 2014 with the lowest overall unemployment rate of 5.2\% compared to the highest in Georgia and Mississippi at 7.7\%.\textsuperscript{54} Hispanic unemployment in Texas was lower than the national average:

 Hispanic unemployment was 6.9 nationally, and 6.1\% in Texas.\textsuperscript{55} Pennsylvania had the highest unemployment rate for Hispanics at 12.3\%, and Colorado the lowest at 4.4\%.

Chart 3 indicates that Whites in the labor force have a bachelor or higher degree at a rate 3 times greater than Hispanics, 41\% compared to 12\%. At 31\%, Hispanics have the highest percent in the labor force with less than a high school education compared to 6\% for both Whites and Blacks.
Chart 4 illustrates the occupations among the Texas labor force.

- Nearly 50% of Hispanic participation in the labor force is in 2 occupations. These include service, and sales and office occupations. Both of these occupations require the least education and pay the lowest hourly wages.

- Their employment in natural resources construction and maintenance, and production transportation and materials moving occupations is twice and three times that of Whites.
and Black respectively. The majority are employed in construction and maintenance occupations.

- Hispanics have the lowest rates of representation in the occupations requiring college and more advanced education; i.e., health practitioners and technical services (3%); and computer, engineering, and the sciences (2%); and management, business, and financial services (8%). These occupations normally command the higher wages and salaries.

Labor force and educational attainment are also reflected in the employment status difference among Hispanics, Whites and Blacks.

- Sixty percent of employed Hispanics have a high school or less education compared to 30% and 24% for Whites.
- Only 13% of employed Hispanics have a bachelor or higher degree compared to 41% Whites.
- Among the unemployed, 69% of Hispanics have a high school or less education compared to 48% Whites.
- Only 5% of unemployed Hispanics have a bachelor or higher degree compared to 24% Whites.

The employment and educational attainment differences noted above are further reflected in the employment status of Texas families. Chart 5 and 6 highlight the rate differences in the employed and unemployed status of families.

- Blacks have the highest rate (37%) of employed male only-head of household families followed by Hispanics and Whites at 24% and 16% respectively.

Chart 5: Texas Employed Families by Type and by Race and Ethnicity, 2014

Source: American Population Survey, 2014
Blacks and Hispanics have the smallest rates of employed husband-wife families at 42% and 55% compared to Whites at 64%.

Hispanics have the highest rate (56%) of unemployed husband-wife families compared to Black and Whites at 20% and 46% respectively.

Hispanics have the lowest rate of unemployment for both male and female-head of households at 29% and 15% respectively.

The employment status of Texas families by educational attainment demonstrated the same continuum of disproportionate differences among racial and ethnic groups.67

Sixty and 56 percent of employed Hispanic husband-wife and single-head of households have a high school or less education compared to 30% Whites.

Conversely, only 13% and 12% of employed Hispanics husband-wife and single-head of households have a bachelors or higher degree compared to 41% and 43% of Whites.

Among the unemployed, 73% and 67% of Hispanics husband-wife and signal-head of households have a high school or less education compared to 48% and 37% Whites.

Conversely, only 5% of both unemployed Hispanics husband-wife and single-head of household families have a bachelor or higher degree compared to 18% and 32% of Whites.

The preceding education and employment status of Texas families, particularly among Hispanics have obvious consequences for family incomes and opportunities to create wealth.
E. Income

Parent income can affect a child’s education, employment, and income opportunities; in turn, impacting their health condition over a lifetime.\textsuperscript{58} The question becomes, what is an adequate income to maintain a modest family living standard that supports opportunities?

Poverty thresholds set at the national level help to determine basic income levels for families to live above economic hardships. Nonetheless, these thresholds are recognized for not being adequate other than possibly as a family’s minimum economic survival measure. More representatives ‘Family Budget Calculators’ have been developed with measured considerations given to geographical differences in incomes, cost-of-living and family size. Family fundamental needs typically include housing, food, child care, transportation, health care, taxes, and other necessities.\textsuperscript{59} Indeed, a family’s ability to build sufficient income for a comfortable middle-class living has become increasingly more difficult.

It’s important to note that income alone does not result in family economic security. Throughout life, economic security is linked to both income and asset ownership.\textsuperscript{60} Assets are accumulated and held over time, and are sources of security against emergencies and provide for future use. They are means for investments to improve opportunities and increase the family’s bienestar. Therefore, the measurements of poverty and its distribution and impact become significantly different when approached from an assets perspective, as opposed to just an income perspective.

Income inequality has steadily increased and has become a major concern, particularly for its negative effects on building family economic security, their children’s future, and prosperity for communities and nation as a whole.\textsuperscript{61} Wealth - what we own minus what we owe - provides a better measure of opportunities for a family to improve their choices regarding a home and neighborhood choices, their children’s development needs, retirement, and so forth. In short, building assets is central to building wealth.

A PEW Research Center study noted that, from 2005 to 2009, the inflation-adjusted median wealth fell by 66% among Hispanic households compared to 16% among White households. The result left a typical Hispanic household with $6,325 in wealth compared to $113,149 for White.\textsuperscript{62} Another study noted the average wealth of White families was $230,000 higher than the average wealth of Hispanic families in 1983; by 2010, the average wealth was $632,000 versus $110,000, respectively.\textsuperscript{63}

According to the Federal Reserve, from 2010 to 2013, White families experienced a modest 1 and 2 percent increase in their mean and median net worth reaching $142,000 and $705,900 respectively. However, the median net worth of Hispanic families fell 17 percent to $18,100, and mean net worth fell 2 percent to $183,900.\textsuperscript{64}

Nationally, the poverty rate among Hispanics has remained largely unchanged since the 1970’s, while it has declined among Whites and Blacks.\textsuperscript{65} Texas ranked 7\textsuperscript{th} in income inequality, \textsuperscript{66}and

"For the past decade and a half Hispanic weekly wages have been 46% lower on average than wages of Whites."\textsuperscript{61}
also had a Gini Index of .469 for income inequality in 2010. Economic mobility in Texas appears worse than the national average. Hispanic wages and income are among the lowest in the country, compared to both Whites and Hispanics in other states. Also, the state ranks 1st in the number and percent of workers earning at minimum and below wages. Texas poverty comparisons between Hispanics and Whites indicated that:

- 25% are below poverty compared to 8%, and
- 54% are below 200% of FPL compared to 19%.
- Among Texas families, 24% (501,031) of Hispanic families are below poverty compared to 6% (189,843) White families – in inflation adjusted dollars.

Chart 7 illustrates poverty status rates for Texas married-couple, and female and male-head of household families.

- Hispanics represent 65% and 52% of married-couple and female single-head of household families who are below poverty compared to 23% and 20% among Whites, respectively.
- Conversely, Hispanics represent 27% and 35% of married-couple and female single-head of household families who are above poverty compared to 59% and 39% among Whites, respectively.
- Hispanic male-head of household families also represent the highest poverty rate at 54% compared to Blacks and Whites at 20% and 23%, respectively.

Chart 7: Texas Family Types and Poverty Status by Race and Ethnicity, 2010-2113

Source: American Community Survey 3yr Estimate, 2011-2013
The disproportionate representation of Hispanics below poverty (100% of FPL) and low income (below 200% of FPL) is also reflected in overall family household incomes.\textsuperscript{73}

- The median family income gap between Hispanics and White families is nearly double, $41,343 versus $80,220.
- Fifty-nine percent of Hispanic families have family incomes (Inflation Adjusted Dollars) below $50,000 compared to 39% of Whites.

Finally, the social and economic importance accruing from the significant increases in female education and labor force representation have significant consequences for strengthening Hispanic families. The challenges are formidable for Hispanic women who are paid 45 cents for every dollar paid to a White male, which is double (80 cents) that of the typical full-time working woman in the State.\textsuperscript{74}

Chart 8 indicates the wide differences in poverty and low-income status among Texas employed and unemployed females. Hispanic women are severely over-represented among the poor and low income compared to White women:

- Forty-one percent of the unemployed are below poverty compared to 19%,
- Seventy percent of the unemployed are below 200% of FPL compared to 42%,
- Among the employed, it’s 17% and 44% compared to 4% and 14% for Whites who are below 100% and 200% of FPL respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Group</th>
<th>Below 100%</th>
<th>100% to Below 150%</th>
<th>150% to Below 200%</th>
<th>200% to Below 300%</th>
<th>300% to Below 400%</th>
<th>400% and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Its apparent Texas women face significant economic disparity issues affecting their opportunities to gain financial security both statewide and in local communities.\textsuperscript{75} The salient fact that 56% of Texas women in poverty are Hispanics exacerbates their challenges to achieve economic mobility.

As previously noted, building assets and, thereby, wealth are key to providing families a financial cushion and to facilitating their ability to respond to unexpected events, as well as to taking advantage of opportunities. It is essential to buying a home, starting a business or going to college, and having an adequate retirement later in life.

For many Hispanics, their level of education, jobs held, and incomes put them at a disadvantage to building assets and wealth evidenced by attaining a home, being adequately banked, enrolling in IRA’s or other retirement plans.\textsuperscript{76} Nonetheless, they continue to experience increased participation in the labor force with the desire to build financial security and opportunities for their families.

\textbf{F. Neighborhoods}

As discussed above, Hispanic income and wealth are disproportionately low, thereby, they have a greater likelihood of living in neighborhoods which have higher risks and challenges to improve their living environment. The quality contexts of neighborhoods as measured by income and housing conditions, public safety in terms of safe streets and low crime, accessibility to high performance public schools, and recreational amenities are factors that contribute to strong families. Data suggest that quality living conditions as measured by these indicators are weakened or lacking in neighborhoods where Hispanic families live.

According to an American Community Project study, Hispanic households live in neighborhoods with more than one and a half times the poverty rate of neighborhoods where the average Non-Hispanic White lives. Nationally, ten of the 50 metropolitan areas with the largest Hispanic populations and highest disparity in exposure to poverty are in Texas. In addition, in all but three of them, affluent Hispanics also live in poorer neighborhoods than do the average Whites.\textsuperscript{77}

Other notable examples include:

- San Antonio-New Braunfels, Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, and Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington are the metropolitan areas with the highest residential segregation by income among the 30 most populated metropolitan areas in the U.S. The level of income segregation has steadily increased during the past three decades – 89%, 96% and 102% respectively.\textsuperscript{78}

- Dallas, Tarrant, Harris, and Bexar County were in the top 25 counties with the highest Gini Index of income inequality of .492, .448, .488, and .463, respectively.\textsuperscript{79}

Regardless of the income disparity environment, home ownership continues as the primary contributing factor to income and asset building toward middle-class economic status. It
provides first-time homeowners with important added capacity to become more economically secure, to prosper and to pass on assets to succeeding generations that could further build on this wealth. The country’s 20th century success was built on it - enable working families to begin owning homes and, thereby, build assets over time. 80

The Hispanic family’s ability to own a home has been seriously threatened in multiple ways that include:

- Hispanics were hardest hit by the housing boom and bust of 2007-2009. In communities where they comprised the majority of the population, they experienced falling home values by 46.2% from the height of the bubble to the bottom. 81

- The housing crisis was devastating for Hispanic families; their inflation adjusted median wealth fell by 66% between 2007 and 2009. 82

- As with many other families who lost their homes, Hispanics experienced family instabilities resulting from depression, resentment, foregoing of medical care, and problematic academic performance and behaviors among their children. 83

- Even before the housing bubble and bust of 2007-2009, Texas had the 6th highest foreclosures in the country, and the foreclosures statewide were greater in SMSA’s with the highest concentration of minority census tracts. 84

Hispanics families strive to own a home in spite of predatory lending abuses and often having a relatively higher burden of first mortgage debt encompassing a housing-cost-to-income ratio that exceeds 32 percent. 85 Texas home ownership rates are shown in Chart 9.

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“Publicly reported mortgage data have long shown that Black and Hispanic borrowers were more likely than their White peers to receive high-cost and high-risk loans even after controlling for key risk factors.” 84
57% of Hispanics own a home compared to 71% of Whites. Home ownership is lowest among Black families at 43%.

Blacks and Hispanics are home renters at twice that of Whites.

Mortgage status and monthly owners’ costs characteristics of Texas homeowners include:

- 64% of Hispanics have a mortgage, contract to purchase, or similar debt compared to 62% of Whites.
- 7% of Hispanics have a second mortgage or a home equity loan compared to 13% of Whites.
- The average Texas home owners (with mortgage) monthly costs were $1,028 compared to $1,401 for Whites and $1,178 for Hispanics.

Chart 10 demonstrates the home values among Texas home owners. It appears the dollar asset value for Hispanic home owners is significantly less than that of Whites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than $49,999</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Than $124,999</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000 and Over</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimate, 2006-2010

- 21% and 71% of Hispanic homes are valued less than $49,999 and $124,999 compared to 10% and 43% for Whites respectively.
- 57% Whites own homes valued at $125,000 and over which is nearly twice that of Hispanics at 29%.

Chart 11 indicates that 32% of Hispanics families are paying a larger share of their household income toward maintaining of their home compared to Whites at 19%.
While some Texas metropolitan areas (El Paso, Dallas and Houston) experienced some increases in Hispanic home ownership between 2000 and 2010, disparities remain significant. In fact, a 2014 published survey from the National Realtors Association indicated that only 14% of Texas home buyer in 2013 ‘identified’ as Hispanic. 

Research supports the understanding that expected housing demand is closely linked to projected changes in population characteristics. Nationally, Hispanic homebuyers accounted for 51% (355,000) of the total net increase of 693,000 owner households. It could well be Hispanics may also be driving housing growth in Texas because of its rapid population growth as some have stated. However, such comments are often about ‘projections’, as opposed to providing supportive evidence of its actual occurrence.

No doubt, the Hispanic population ‘shift’ has significant implications for the Texas housing future. However, if the Hispanic family household income disparities continue or increase real progress in home ownership and overall housing economy improvements can be impeded.

In summary, Hispanic families face four major home ownership challenges; 1) predatory lending practices, 2) discriminatory or inadequate state and local housing policies, 2) increasing their incomes, and 3) increasing their home value to create better opportunities for asset and wealth creation.
G. Health

Neighborhood conditions matter to health. The negative relationships between poor health and low education and poverty are extensively documented. Other physical and social conditions such as high levels of uninsured, crime, aggressive alcohol and tobacco advertising, poor access to fresh foods, polluted or hazardous street conditions, or lack of recreational facilities are harmful to the health of families. Hispanic families disproportionately live in these high health risk environments. They have been linked with elevated health risk and poor health. They included disability, birth outcomes, chronic conditions, health behaviors and other risk factors for chronic disease, injuries, and mental health to name a few.

The complexity and politics of our health care system are both contributors to the widespread health inequalities and disparities which have been prominent in low-income and minority population across the U.S. Hispanic adults have health disparities with incidences and prevalence rates of low health insurance coverage, diabetes, kidney disease, obesity, breast and cervical cancer, mental health, lower prenatal care access, and alcohol and substance abuse.

In Texas, they have experienced decades of unequal health care access such as high uninsured rates, unsatisfactory access to prenatal care and family planning services, and less access to health resource because they disproportionately live in medically and health professions underserved areas. Children are at greater risk for poor health and overall development when parents are faced with these barriers to health care resources.

More specifically, not having health insurance leads to poor health and to premature death; negatively impacts education and employment opportunities; and contributes to poverty and puts families at financial risk. Not having health insurance, therefore, is counter-productive to opportunities to learn, work, and earn a living wage and creating asset and wealth. Indeed, good health is a significant empowering commodity because it provides both health and financial security for families to thrive.

- In 2011, 37% of Latinos were without health insurance compared to 14% among Whites. Uninsured Latinos represent 58% (3,434,629) of all uninsured Texans (5,875,474).

- The uninsured rate for Latinos ages 18 to 64 was 39%, while for children ages 0 to 17, it was 18% compared to 18% and 11%, respectively for Whites.

- Undocumented immigrants have an uninsured rate of 69%; the rate is 60% for children age 17 and under and 71% for adults age 18 to 64, respectively.

- Private Employer Sponsored Insurance (ESI) has decreased from 54% in 2002 to 49% in 2010. Among Latinos, ESI coverage decreased from 43% to 35% compared to non-Hispanics from 65% to 49%.

- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) is the major safety-net for uninsured/underinsured and low-come Latinos to have regular access to quality primary health care in Texas. Approximately 70% of the 1.1 million patients served by the state’s 71 FQHCs are Hispanic.
Finally, researchers have provided evidence that even if Hispanics maintained the current rates of chronic health illnesses whether cancers, diabetes, heart disease, etc., they will surpass all other groups with these illnesses in the near future. Charts 12 and 13 illustrate the projections for disease/disorders, and disabilities among Texas racial and ethnic populations. Hispanics will surpass Whites by 2040 across these major health problems impacting Texans.

* Produced by Steve Murdock, Director, Hobby Center for the Study of Texas using Texas State Data Center population projections 1.0 scenario for 2000-2040: November 14, 2011.

It's doubtful Hispanic families want to achieve the preceding 2040 health problems projections, most of which are preventable. Having health insurance coverage is a human capital investment that would help minimize these projections because it facilitates regular access to primary preventable health care. Indeed, health insurance is a human capital investment and a major part of 4 interrelated investments necessary to continually improve the bienestar or well-being of our families – education, employment and income, housing and health.
H. Summary

Hispanic families represent 34% (2,146,848) of all Texas families. They accounted for 64% of the state’s total family growth between 2000 and 2013. The preceding data suggest that nearly one-half of these families have limited resource capacity, whereby, effective child development is at-risk. The limited resources result from:

- At-risk family structure, e.g. female head of household.
- Low education levels among adult family members.
- Insufficient economic security demonstrated by type of employment, low income, and minimal assets or wealth accumulation.
- Neighborhood conditions that impede education, employment, inadequate housing, and economic mobility; as well as contribute to social and family instability, and poor health.
- Health-risks and poor health exemplified by low-levels of access to regular preventive health care, incidence and prevalence rates of chronic diseases, and lack of health insurance coverage.

Evidence-based research indicates that such conditions weaken families, and challenge their capacity to assist their children in having a strong foundation for future success – education, good job, health, etc. Specifically, children are in a family environment that can hinder their physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and emotional, and speech and language development.

Well documented changes to the traditional American family structure of married household family, and the widening income and wealth-gap that is hindering economic mobility intensifies the challenges to build strong families. Hispanic families were hit particularly hard by the economic recession of 2007-2009, from which they have been steadily recovering but still far from achieving reasonable levels of economic equality.

Certainly, all Texas families encounter challenges and most start each day with efforts to lead productive lives. It includes working hard toward maintaining a protective and supportive child development environment that will be the foundation of a secure future for their children. Nonetheless, the reality is that the starting gate is not the same for all families even when they embrace and adhere to expected standards of personal and parental responsibilities. Neighborhood conditions, along with detrimental public and private policies can simply exacerbate the challenges.

If disparities and inequality are part of the challenges that Hispanic parents must ‘deal with’, what are the implications for the future of their children? It’s important we assess the current well-being and likely opportunities for Hispanic children in light of their parent’s human capital capacity to support them. Further, it can help us to explore approaches that facilitate strengthening Hispanic families, and the future of their children.
VI. Child Bienestar

As previously noted, the Hispanic children population is growing fast across the state’s economic regions. Their growth exceeded the state average of 17% across 11 of the states’ 12 economic regions between 2000 and 2010. The median growth rate over the decade was 27% across all 12 regions. Their youthful and rapid population growth leaves little doubt that they will continue to be the primary source for Texas’s labor force needs.

In 2014, Hispanics represented 51% of all Texas children (7,477,897) ages 0 to 17, while White and Black children represented 31% and 12% respectively. Chart 14 illustrates that Hispanic children are the majority among all age groups, particularly ages 0 to 3 (56%), 4 (51%), and 5 (54%).

![Chart 14: Texas Children by Age and Race and Ethnicity, 2014](image)

For Texas to take economic advantage of this Hispanic child population growth, their child development environment must improve. The goal is to increase the likelihood of entering adulthood with social capital assets evidenced by achieving a quality education and good health. Most Hispanic children are raised in a bilingual bicultural environment which must be affirmed. It is a significant child development component which contributes to strengthening families and is central to developing self-sufficiency and independence.\(^{97,98}\)

It’s well established that the family environment is where a child’s physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and emotional, and speech and language development skills arise.\(^{99}\) Establishing a strong foundation in each of these areas is of upmost importance in the first 5 to 8 years of a child’s life.\(^{100}\) The evidence demonstrates that problems relating to family structure, education level, employment and income, neighborhood conditions, and health status have negative child development effects.

The bienestar and strength-level of Hispanic families indicates that 1 of 2 children are at-risk from developing into productive adulthood defined by education, health, employment and income achievements. A disproportionate number of Hispanic families continue to experience limited family ‘resource capacity’. This means parental or other care-giver resource capacity support where the child’s environment is:
Emotionally and physically safe,

Positively stimulating, nurturing, and affirming,

Promotes learning and healthy behaviors, and

There exists financial stability to support the costs of child-rearing from infancy through adolescence.

The outcome is to enter adulthood with a good education and health foundation to self-assuredly take advantage of opportunities for economic mobility and productive citizenry. If resource capacity is weak, family strength is weakened. The result is progressive at-risk factors that weaken requisites for effective child development, and creates barriers to reach their highest potential.

If viewed as a complete jigsaw puzzle, these requisites represent critical pieces required to achieve effective child development. Among Hispanic children, is the puzzle complete or are there pieces that are damaged or missing? If incomplete, are Hispanic children entering adulthood with disparities that include inadequate education, weak job skills, poverty or low incomes, poor health, or high teen pregnancy and incarceration rates, etc.? Finally, where disparities are identified, to what should we attribute cause so that we might identify solutions?

A. Child/Family Income Profile

The resource capacity that contributes too effective child development is inadequate among many Texas families. One should not assume that just because Texas is a ‘low’ cost-of-living state, there must be a standard of living where children’s futures are not negatively impacted by high rates of poverty. A child’s brain development and learning opportunities are negatively impacted by persistent poverty. The challenges for low-income and poor families to create a ‘level’ opportunity playing field for their children are significant.

Children in Low and Poverty Income Families

The number and percent of children in families who are below poverty and low-income (below 200% of federal poverty level) are noted in Chart 15.

Among Hispanic children, 64% are in low-income families and 34% are in families below the poverty level.

Hispanics account for 71% (1,213,949) of all Texas children in poverty.

Only 36% (1,287,674) of Hispanic children lived in families with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level compared to 41% and 78% of Blacks and Whites in 2014.
In 2013, Hispanic children in poverty were 36% (425,000) among ages 0 to 5 compared to 33% (733,000) among ages 6 to 17 (Chart 16). Black families in poverty had the largest percent of children ages 0 to 5 at 38% (103,000), while for White children it was 10% and 12% for ages 0 to 5 and 6 to 17 respectively.

**Family Structure and Economic Condition**

The percent of children who are in poverty and low-income households varies among family structures, and race and ethnicity. Chart 17 indicates that:

- Female head of households have highest rate of poverty (58%) and low income (84%) status.

- Blacks and Hispanics have 2 to 5 times the rate of poverty and low-income status compared to Whites among Married, Female, and Male head of household families.
The rate of poverty (22%) and low-income (54%) status among married Hispanic families is significantly higher compared to Whites, 4% and 16% respectively.

Chart 17: Percent of Poor and Low-Income Texas Children by Family Type and Race and Ethnicity, 2013

Children’s at-risk developmental status is worsened by the housing cost-burdens and lower education economic conditions of Texas families (Chart 18).

Texas has over 2.2 million (32%) children living in households with high housing cost-burdens.

Hispanic comprise 56% (1,267,000) of all children in high housing cost-burden households.

Among the children groups, Blacks have the highest housing cost-burden of 44% compared to Hispanics and Whites at 37% and 22% respectively.

Chart 18: Texas Children Living in Households with High Housing Cost-Burden by Race and Ethnicity, 2013

Neighborhood Concentrated Poverty and Immigrant Family Incomes
Social and economic features of neighborhoods including racial or ethnic segregation can influence living conditions in multiple ways. They include poor health, poor quality of public schools, employment opportunities, housing quality, municipal services, pollution, and crime.102.
Therefore, child development risks increase when living in areas of concentrated poverty. There are over 1.3 million (19%) children living in areas of concentrated poverty (Charts 19).

- Hispanics represent 77% (1,020,000) of all children living in concentrated areas of poverty (Chart 19).

- Among Hispanics, 30% are in concentrated poverty areas, and 46% in low poverty areas respectively compared to 23% and 56% among Blacks, and 4% and 86% among White children (Charts 19 and 20).

- Nearly 4.3 million (63%) Texas children are living in areas with less than 20% of poverty (Chart 20).

Chart 19: Texas Children Living in Areas of Concentrated Poverty by Race and Ethnicity, 2009-13

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Chart 20: Texas Children Who Live in Low Poverty Areas (<20%) Poverty by Race and Ethnicity, 2007-2011

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Texas has a high number of children in mixed-status immigrant families, of which approximately 80% are of Hispanic origin. Chart 21 indicates employment, income and labor force characteristics among immigrant and U.S. native-born families.

- Nearly 50% (1,037,000) of all children who are in low income families live in mix-status immigrant households.
The population rate of U.S. born children living in working families with incomes at 200% below the federal poverty level is twice that of children in immigrant families.

Children live in immigrant families who have a larger labor force (70%) participation and secure employment (31%) rate than U.S. born families; 54% and 26% respectfully.


Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation

B. Family Education and Employment Environment

Children in families where parents have a low education are reflected in Chart 22.

Over 1.5 million (22%) of Texas children live in families where the head householder lacks a high school education, of which 84% (1,279,000) are Hispanic.

Comparatively, 5% of White households are without a high school education as opposed to 37% and 10% for Hispanic and Black households respectively.

Chart 22: Texas Children in Families Where Household Head Lacks a High School Diploma, 2013

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Texas has over 2 million (29%) children living in families where no parent has a year-round full-time job (Chart 23).
Hispanics represent 55% (1,150,000) of these children.

The lack of adequate year-round full-time employment is highest among Black families at 42% (353,000), compared to 33% and 21% among Hispanics and Whites respectively.

Chart 23: Texas Children Living in Family Where No Parent Has a Year-Round Full-Time Job by Race and Ethnicity, 2013

C. Education Pipeline and Achievement

Public School College Education Profile
A strong early education foundation is fundamental to advancing a young adults future opportunities. The returns from investment in education are irrefutable for families and communities. The image below illustrates Hispanic enrollment representation in public school, and provides a baseline to review the education experience and challenges of Hispanic children.

Hispanic Public School Characteristics: Total Enrollment, 2,668,315: 2013-14
Title 1 Students: 2,087,187 (63%)*

Graduation Rate 69% * (139,491)
Attrition Rate 31% * (62,990)

Economically Disadvantaged: 2,073,605 (67 %)*
Career and Technical 250,282 (49%)*
Gifted and Talented 160,592 (41%)*
Bilingual/ESL: 791,345 (90%)*
Special Ed: 219,373 (49%) *
Immigrant: 4,382 (60%) *
Migrant: 32,787 (98%)*

*The percent of Hispanic representation of total program enrollment.

Differences begin to emerge when comparing Hispanics to all Texas and Black and White children in public school; some highlights include:
Hispanics comprise 52% (2,668,315) of the state’s public school total (5,151,925) enrollment in 2013-14.

Economically disadvantaged student enrollment increased by 36% between 2003-04 and 2013-14. Hispanic experienced an increase of 42% compared to Blacks and Whites at 18% and 15% respectively.

In 2013-14, 67% of all economically disadvantaged students were Hispanic. Among Hispanics, 78% were economically disadvantaged compared to 73% and 15% for Blacks and Whites respectively.

Hispanics have a high school completion rate of 69% and an attrition rate of 31% compared to Blacks at 75% and 25% and Whites at 87% and 13% respectively.

Among Hispanics, 6% and 9% are enrolled in the Gifted and Talented, and Career and Technical program respectively compared to 11% for Whites in each program.

It’s apparent that Hispanic students are the most educationally at-risk based on their disproportionately high economic disadvantage status. They also have the highest representation in the programs with the largest percentage of economically disadvantaged students, i.e., Title I, Migrant, Immigrant, Bilingual ESL, and Special Education.

The representation of Hispanic student in public schools is 50% and more across all grades levels (Chart 24). Their highest representation is 65% in early education and pre-kinder, followed by elementary (54%) and middle school (52%).

Chart 24: Texas Public School Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, 2013-14

![Bar Chart]

Source: Texas Education Agency, November 2014

It should be noted that 9% or 133,000 teens ages 16 to 17 were not attending school nor working as indicated in Chart 25. Hispanics comprised 51% (68,000) of these teens. However, Blacks have the large disproportionate representation at 12%.
Pre-Kindergarten Education

Studies suggest that there are long-term increased learning and positive education outcomes resulting from pre-kindergarten education. They include improved academic performance, grade retention, and successful completion of high school. Charts 26 and 27 illustrate children’s enrollment in early education, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten by race and ethnicity.

- Hispanic children represent the highest percent of enrollment across all levels at 46%, 66%, and 53% respectively. Compared to their percent representation in each age group, they are underrepresented in early education (56% vs. 46%), and overrepresented in pre-kindergarten (51% vs. 66%).

- Black children are represented at 12%, 15%, and 12%; which are above their percent representation among all children who are ages 3 (9%), 4 (9%) and 5 (8%) years old.

White children are represented at 36%, 15%, and 29%; of which ages 3 (25%) and 4 (33%) are above and below their percent representation among all children respectively.
Hispanics had the lowest percent representation of children enrolled in public school pre-kindergarten program in 2012-13. Of age eligible children, 34% were attending pre-kinder compared to 56% and 53% for Blacks and Whites respectively.

Chart 27: Texas Pre-Kinder Enrollment Status by Race and Ethnicity: 2012-13

Academic Achievement from 4th Grade to College Readiness
Hispanic children enter school emotionally and social well-developed and eager to learn according to research evidence.105,106 Paradoxically, academic performance gaps begin to develop in kindergarten and elementary education. Chart 28 indicates the average proficiency scores and gaps in reading, math, and science among 4th and 8th grade students.

The average gap between Hispanic and White students is approximately 24 points across all subject areas and grade levels. Since the early 1990’s the performance gap in all subjects between Hispanics and White students has not significantly changed, except for 8th grade math where the gap was reduced from 28 points in 1990 to 19 points in 2013.

Students eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch also had an average score that was approximately 24 points below those not eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch (data not shown).

Chart 28: Texas Reading, Math, and Science Average Proficiency Scores for 4th and 8th Grade Students by Race and Ethnicity, 2011-13

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011-2013

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Assessment Education Program
According to the “Kids Count” 2013 analysis, Hispanic 4th and 8th graders had significantly lower proficiency scores in reading (83%) and math (71%) respectively compared to 54% and 47% among White children.107

The low-income status of Hispanic families is exemplified by their children’s disproportionate representation as economically disadvantaged among high school graduate and college entry rates. Chart 29 and 30 illustrates that:

- Black and Hispanic high school graduates are 2 times greater than White students to be economically disadvantaged.
- Hispanics have a college entry rate of 45% after graduation compared to Blacks and Whites at 48% and 55% respectively.
- Forty-nine percent of Hispanics who entered college were economically disadvantaged compared to Blacks and Whites at 43% and 38% respectively.

Chart 29: Texas High School Graduate Students by Economic Status and Race and Ethnicity, 2012-13

Source: State of Student Aid and Higher Education in Texas, TG Research and Analytical Services, January 2015

Chart 30: Texas Student Entering College by Economic Status and Race and Ethnicity, Fall 2013

Source: State of Student Aid and Higher Education in Texas, TG Research and Analytical Services, January 2015
The college-readiness of Texas high school students is reflected in Chart 31. Overall, Texas students have a college-readiness rate (39.42%). Among Texas students, Blacks have the lowest overall rate of 27.3%, followed by Hispanics and Whites at 32.8% and 48.85% respectively.

**Chart 31: College-Readiness Rates of Blacks, Hispanics, and White High School Graduates in Texas for the 2008-2009 School Year**

Chart 32 illustrates the rates for Texas students who graduate from high school on time, were in school or working after high school (ages 19-26), and had completed an associate or higher degree (ages 25 to 29).

- White young adults were over 2 times (45%) more likely to have completed a college degree than Hispanics at 18%.

- Blacks were least likely to be in school or working (75%), and had the lowest rate (69%) of on-time high school completion compared to Hispanics (both at 77%) and Whites (86% and 83%) respectively.

**Chart 32: Texas Education Status of Young Adults Ages 19 to 29 by Race and Ethnicity: 2013**

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015
Chart 33 illustrates an educational pipeline for 7th grade student and their rate in achieving a certificate or college degree. The Hispanics certificate or degree achievement rate was 11%, Blacks 10% and White 19%.

Chart 33: Texas Student Pipeline by Race and Ethnicity: Transition Rates from 7th Grade to College Completion

The College Pool versus Enrollment Trend
It’s evident that Hispanic will continue to represent the growing pool of potential young adults for college entry. Whereas, the White young adults pool is decreasing and the Black pool has remain relatively the same. Chart 34 illustrate that Hispanic college student ages 18 to 25 increased from 45% to 48% between 2003 and 2013.

Chart 34: Percent of Texas Population Ages 18-25 for 2003 and 2013 by Race and Ethnicity

Texas college and university enrollment for 2003 and 2013 indicates an increase in enrollment for Hispanic and Black students, and a significant decrease in White students (Chart 34).

- Hispanics and Black students experienced growth of 24% and 21% respectively, compared to White students who experienced a 33% decrease in enrollment.

- While ‘Other’ students had the smallest percent of young adults ages 18 to 25, they experience the largest growth of enrollment at 29%. 

51
Hispanic enrollment in 2003 (25%) and 2013 (33%) was significantly below their representation among young adults ages 18 to 25 which was 45% and 48% respectively (Chart 35), compared to Blacks and Whites who equaled or exceeded their representation.

Table 35: Percent of Texas College and University Fall Enrollment for 2003 and 2013 by Race and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Percent Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>-33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

D. Health and Social Affects

The evidence is significant that low levels of education and poverty negatively impact health from infancy to adulthood; often resulting in both risky behaviors and poor health. In turn, health and social problems such as no health insurance coverage, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and child abandonment and abuse further challenge effective child development.

The population growth of Hispanic children to parents who experience lower education and income also has direct impacts on their health status, and social risks factors. As shown, Hispanics children are disproportionately affected by these issues.

Chart 36 is baseline projected changes in the prevalence of diseases and disorders impacting Texas children between 2000 and 2040 under existing rates. The Hispanic prevalence rate will represent the vast majority of all child diseases and disorders, doubling to 62.8% by 2040.

Chart 36: Project Percent Prevalence of Diseases/Disorders for Children by Race and Ethnicity in Texas 2000 and 2040

Source: Texas Data Center Projections - Scenario for 2000-2040
**Health Insurance Coverage**

Having health insurance coverage significantly helps minimize a child’s risk for poor health. Uninsured Texas children (Chart 37) are less likely to effectively receive their immunizations, not have a regular source of health care, access less preventive care, have more emergency room visits, and miss more days of school due to illness than insured children.\(^{110}\)

**Chart 37: Texas Uninsured Children Ages 0 - 17 by Nativity by Race and Ethnicity, 2013**

- In 2013, 10% (731,850) of Texas children were uninsured, of which, 14% (105,634) were undocumented children.
- Hispanic children comprise 68% (514,684) of the state’s uninsured children
- Native and undocumented Hispanic children had an uninsured rate of 12% and 54% compared to Blacks (8% and 43%), and Whites (5% and 24%) respectively.

**Food Insecurity, Nutrition and Obesity**

Food is fuel (nutrients). Therefore, young children who lack the right nutrients while they are still developing can lead to delays in physical, intellectual and emotional growth.\(^{111, 112}\) Food insecurity is a major cause and consequence of poor nutrient health among children. Further, hungry children have a harder time focusing in school and are more likely to have social and behavioral problems. It has long-term negative outcomes including lower educational outcomes, reduced productivity and the costs of treating chronic illness.

Nationally, Texas ranked 7\(^{th}\) highest in child food security, i.e., 27% or 1.9 million live in households where access to food is limited.\(^{113}\) As illustrated above:

- Hispanic child poverty and low income data in Texas contribute to their large percentage (67%) who qualify for free and reduced lunch in public schools. These children rely on the school breakfast, after-school, and summer meal programs to meet their nutritional needs.
It’s estimated that 1 of 4 or 30% of Hispanic children live in food insecure households compared to 1 in 7 among White children. Overweight and obese children are related to food insecurity and health concerns. Hispanic children experience the greater double burden of malnutrition and obesity. Obesity has immediate and long-term negative effects on physical and emotional health. The problem has raised significant national attention because of the associated health care costs, and negative impact on labor productivity.

Nationally, Texas has the 15th highest rate of adult obesity at 30.9%, 10th for ages 10-17 at 19.1%, and 5th for high school students at 15.7%.

According to the 2007 National Survey Children’s Health, ages 10-17, Texas Hispanics had an overweight and obese rate of 46.8% compared to Blacks and Whites at 26.3% and 22.9% respectively.

These high rates were also demonstrated in a more recent 2013 School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) study of 4th grade students; where 51.3%, 45.5% and 26.9% of Hispanics, Blacks and Whites respectively were overweight and obese (Chart 38).

Chart 38: Frequencies and weight percentages for BMI category by Race/Ethnicity and Gender for Texas 4th Grade SPAN Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Underweight/Healthy/Normal Weight</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
<th>Obese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>73.10%</td>
<td>12.70%</td>
<td>14.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>55.50%</td>
<td>19.60%</td>
<td>24.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>48.70%</td>
<td>21.00%</td>
<td>30.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The simple fact that these children will become adults gives increased urgency to finding solutions to the problem. Being overweight or obese, and eating the wrong food puts you at significant risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Four out of five people with type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese.

The Office of the State Demographer projects that by 2040, nearly 8 million adult Texans will have diabetes costing Texas businesses 32 billion annually. Over 59% (4.7 million) of the diabetics will be Hispanic.
Texas Hispanics have an 87% higher risk of diagnosed diabetes than Whites with 45% of the boys and 52% of girls developing diabetes during their lifetimes.\textsuperscript{121} The overall cost of diabetes among Hispanics, including medical expenses and lost productivity, was $10.7 billion in 2010.\textsuperscript{122}

**Special Health Care Needs and Education**

Children under age 18 who are at increased risk of a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition, and who require health and related services beyond those required by children generally are considered to have special health care needs.\textsuperscript{123} Public schools are required to offer instructional and related services for eligible students with cognitive, physical, and/or emotional disabilities. In 2012, 1,141,616 children or 20% of Texas children had a special health care need.

Many of these children are enrolled in public school Special Education programs.

- Data estimates from 2009/10 indicated that the prevalence rate of White children with a special health care need was 16.5%, compared to Blacks 13.4% and Hispanics at 10.7%.\textsuperscript{124}

- In 2013-14, 8.6% or 443,834 public school students were enrolled in Special Education. Of these students, 48.9% were Hispanic compared to 30% White, and 16.2% Black.\textsuperscript{125}

- The percentage of students served in Special Education program’s decreased from 11.8 percent in 2003-04 to 8.6 percent in 2013-14. However, Hispanics experienced an 11% increase from 38.9% in 2003-04 compared to a decrease of 1.2% and 10.8% for Black and White children respectively.

There is evidence that part of this increase is a result of inappropriate placement of Hispanics with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in Special Education programs; i.e., LEPs represented 14.7% of Texas’ student population enrolled in Special Education programs compared to the 9% of the general student population enrolled in Special Education.\textsuperscript{126}

**Child Abuse and Neglect and Foster Care**

It is clear that a child’s brain is rapidly developing and more sensitive to stimuli, which also means they are more vulnerable to the trauma of abuse and neglect. As such, the effects from abuse and neglect have devastating results on cognitive, physical and emotion development.

Protecting children should be absolute. Unfortunately, Texas policy and program attention to its high rates of child abuse and neglect have been weak.\textsuperscript{127, 128} An issue further worsened by the fact that children taken from an abusive home environment and placed in the state’s foster care system; have too often continued to experience abuse.\textsuperscript{129} While Hispanics are the majority most affected, Black children are the most disproportionately impacted, i.e., exceed their child population representation of 13%.
More children die from child abuse and neglect in Texas than any other state. More than 3 children die from abuse or neglect on average every week, 182 children are confirmed victims daily, and more than 7 children are maltreated every hour.

Chart 39 indicates that 47% (28,935) of all confirmed cases of abuse were Hispanic children.

**Chart 39: Children Who Are Confirmed by Child Protective Services as Victims of Maltreatment by Race and Ethnicity: 2013**

![Chart 39: Children Who Are Confirmed by Child Protective Services as Victims of Maltreatment by Race and Ethnicity: 2013](chart39.png)

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015

Hispanics represent 42% (12,492) of all children in Texas’s foster care system (Chart 40).

**Chart 40: Children in Foster Care by Race and Ethnicity: 2013**

![Chart 40: Children in Foster Care by Race and Ethnicity: 2013](chart40.png)

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015

**Behavioral Risks**

The evidence is significant that children living in poor economic and social conditions have greater risks of displaying or acting-out behaviors that produce a range of problems; these include violence, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy. These problems are contributors to immediate and long-term negative lifespan results such as lower levels of educations, poverty, poor health, unstable families, and incarceration.
Table 1 indicates that overall, Hispanics high school youth, followed by Blacks, demonstrate greater risk behaviors than White youth. The greater risks are reflected in unintentional injuries and violence, alcohol use while driving, and drug use, and sexual behaviors.

- Attempted suicides (11.4%), marijuana (21.5%)/inhalants (10.2%)/and cocaine use (10.2%), and non-use of a pregnancy prevention method (25.5%) are particularly salient among Hispanic youth.

- White children demonstrate greater risks for carrying a weapon (26%), more regular alcohol (43.3%) and tobacco (17.8%) use.

Table 1: Texas, High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey by Race and Ethnicity, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>Black %</th>
<th>Hispanic %</th>
<th>White %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unintentional Injuries and Violence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drove when drinking alcohol</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried a weapon</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were injured in a physical fight</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were ever physically forced to have sexual intercourse</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tobacco Use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently smoked cigarettes</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently used tobacco</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently drank alcohol (1 drink/1 day during 30 days)</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had 5 or + drinks in a row (within couple of hours/at least 1 day during 30 days)</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alcohol and Other Drug Use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently used marijuana</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever used cocaine</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever used inhalants</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever used ecstasy</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever used methamphetamines</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever had sexual intercourse</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were currently sexually active</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not use any method to prevent pregnancy</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Center for Disease Control, Youth Risks Surveillance System, 2013

**Teen Pregnancy**

Teen pregnancy is a major obstacle to a promising future across education, income and health, including higher risks of inadequate parenting. It’s a significant contributor to continuing high
poverty rates and costly to the state’s Medicaid budgets. Texas is also among the top-ranked states where schools are not required to teach sex education, and has the highest rate of repeat births among teenagers ages 15 to 19.\textsuperscript{132}

Despite recent decreases in national and state teen pregnancy rates, Texas still ranks 3\textsuperscript{rd} in birth rate among teenagers.\textsuperscript{133}

- In 2012, the state’s pregnancy rate was 16.6%, 15.7% and 8.10% among Hispanic, Black, and White teens respectively.

- Chart 41 illustrates the number of teen births per 1000 teens. Hispanic teens experienced 62 births per 1000 compared to Blacks and Whites at 45 and 25 respectively.

- The total number of teen births was 40,451 of which Hispanics accounted for 64\% of all teen births.

**Chart 41: Texas Total Number and Rate per 1000 Teen Births for Ages 15 to 19 by Race and Ethnicity, 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Rate per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>40,451</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>8,716</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5,905</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>25,982</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation

**Children and the Juvenile Justice System**

Poverty, low education, and growing-up in poor neighborhood conditions are characteristics of the majority of individuals in both the juvenile and adult criminal justice system. Nationally, Texas has the highest number of adult prison incarcerations totaling 166,372 in 2013, while the rate of incarceration is the fifth highest in the country at 601 per 100,000.\textsuperscript{134} Blacks and Hispanics represent nearly 7 of 10 incarcerations.

The pathway risks to incarceration for Hispanic and Black children are high. The risks are aggravated in Texas because of its discriminatory criminal justice system history and tough-on-crime practices.\textsuperscript{135, 136} An additional contributing (to incarceration) factor has been the continued national and Texas trend of criminalizing youth misbehavior in public schools. The following are striking issues for Hispanic children.
Blacks and Hispanics youth and adults are incarcerated at 3 and 1.5 times the rate of Whites respectively.

An estimated 250,000 children have at least 1 parent who is incarcerated, the overwhelming majority of whom are Hispanic and Black children.\(^\text{137}\)

In 2012, the total number of Texas juvenile arrests was 91,873. On average 70,000 youth are referred to the juvenile justice system of which 48% are Hispanic, 23% Black, and 27% White.\(^\text{138}\)

Of youth referred to the juvenile justice system, 72% were male and 62% were ages 15 – 17.

Hispanics comprise the largest percentage (48%) of juveniles committed to Residential Placement (secure and non-secure facilities) in 2011. However, Blacks were the most over-represented at 32% compared to their 13% youth population representation (Chart 42).

Chart 42: Texas Juveniles in Residential Placement by Race and Ethnicity: 2011

Criminalizing kids for minor misbehavior in public schools has surfaced as a major national and state problem which has been documented as unnecessarily exposing children to our justice system.\(^\text{139}\) The label, “school-to-prison” pipeline amply captures this problem. Research suggests that it increases the likelihood they will drop out of school and face later incarceration.

In Texas, the youth disciplinary actions include referral of students to:

- Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs),
- Out-of-School Suspension (OSS),
- In-School Suspension (ISS), and
- Truancy charges that may be filed in juvenile court as a “Conduct in Need of Supervision” (CINS) offense, or in Justice of the Peace or municipal courts “Failure to Attend School” (FTAS).
A large majority of these disciplinary referrals (except truancy) are not mandated by law, but authorized at the discretion of school districts. Tens of thousands of students and their parents have been negatively impacted by these actions, particularly children of color, disadvantaged, and disabled youth. Regarding truancy alone, Texas prosecutes more than twice the number of cases prosecuted in all other states combined.

E. Summary

Hispanic children are leading the state’s population growth and comprise over 51% of all children enrolled in public schools. It's reasonable to expect that Texas’s economic growth and future prosperity will be, in large part, measured by the education and skills strength of the developing majority Hispanic workforce.

Hispanic children enter their first day of school with strong social skills and an eagerness to learn. Unfortunately, one-half or approximately 2.3 million children are at risk from entering adulthood without a foundation that provides opportunities toward a promising future. The risks indicators include poverty, neighborhood and housing environment, family structure, immigrant status, and low education. These risk factors are impediments to affective child development. The areas of development that can be affected include physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and emotional, and speech and language development skills. Areas which if not positively developed and influenced have been proven to contribute to low educational achievement, social and behavioral, and health related problems.

Certainly, parents have the primary responsibility for assuring the safety and ongoing development foundation of their children for productive adulthood. The diversity in the children's family environment that includes English/Spanish bilingualism, culture nuances, and immigrant status are important considerations in their development. While strong parenting and family values are demonstrated by most Hispanic parents, many have limited resources that reduce their capacity to further enable opportunities for their children.

As described previously, the family’s social and economic environment and associated risk factors are extensive, and the notion that the parents and their children can simply pull themselves up from their ‘bootstraps’ is both impractical and unrealistic. The bootstrap cliché must be further denounced given that public and private institutions have contributed to marginalizing families through inequitable policies and minimal human capital investments; be it under-funded public schools, unsafe and sparse neighborhood infrastructure development, discriminatory lending practices, poor healthcare access, etc..

Regardless of disadvantaged family and neighborhoods environments, most children will persevere and some will overcome risks and barriers; but many will still be lost to lower education levels, low-paying jobs, risk of poor health, and limited opportunities to earn sufficient wealth to achieve financial security. Most will enter adulthood as hardworking individuals and become parents who will struggle to maintain their own families with limited options to strengthen their resource capacity.
Among Hispanics, there appears to be continuing generations of families experiencing poor social and economic mobility. How can we break this generational cycle of low income families and prevent the next generation of children from the same experience? Also, what role or engagement has Texas policy-making had toward it cause and prevention?
VII. Texas Policy Making: Impact on Families and Children

A. Public Policies Matter

Public policies have significances for individuals, families, and whole communities. They must meet basic state infrastructure need, contribute to a safe living environment, and insure fair application of individual civil rights. They should also be equitably responsive to human capital investment that build social and economic opportunities and prosperity for its citizens. The investments include education and job training, economic development, health care and human services. These investments contribute to strengthening families. They are economic win-wins for families, their children’s future, and the state’s prosperity.

Economically, Texas is lauded as the shining star in recovering from the great recession of 2007-2009, as demonstrated by the highest number of new job and GDP growth in the country. Low taxes, smart regulation and strong pro-business incentives, small government, diverse economy, and embracing globalization are the main reasons for this bolstering. Indeed, this is reflected in the numerous business incentive funds established by former Governor Perry, and a host of recent state ‘business’ friendly tax policies established by the legislature.

Unfortunately, Texas has demonstrated that its public policies are far from ideal in providing a level opportunity playing field for many of its families. The preceding social-economic weaknesses of Hispanic families and their children, and how Texas Hispanics fare in comparison to their Hispanic counter-parts across the country seriously questions the state’s purported success. Collateral damage to effective child development and limiting future opportunities for succeeding generations have been the result.

Overall, Hispanics in Texas fare worse than their Hispanic counterparts in nearly three-fifths of the U.S. states and the District of Columbia, ranking, on average, 30th across the 16 variables of interest. The 16 measures of analysis tapped six dimensions including educational attainment, employment, poverty, earnings, the prevalence of disabilities, and insurance. Hispanics (native and immigrant) in Texas are particularly disadvantaged relative to Hispanics in other states:

- Incidence of disabilities (45th),
- Median wage of full-time year-round female workers who are not high school graduates (42nd),
- Insurance coverage (41st),
- College graduates (38th),
- High school graduates (37th),
- Median wage of full-time year-round male workers who are not high school graduates (35th), and
- Child poverty (31st).

Native-born Hispanics fare worst relative to native-born Hispanics in other states:
Insurance coverage (50th),
High school graduation (45th),
Median wage of full-time year-round workers without a high school diploma (both males and females ranked 42nd),
Disabilities (42nd), and
College graduation (41st).

In comparing the relative standing of Hispanics to Whites and Blacks in Texas, Hispanics on average also rank 30th. Whites and blacks rank 21st. In turn, Whites and Blacks in Texas fare better than their racial counterparts in three-fifths of the U.S. states and the District of Colombia.

Indeed, the American Dream continues to elude many Hispanic families and for their children tomorrow. Texas Hispanics face significant barriers to building wealth and future opportunities for their children. As a result, over half (2.3 million) of Hispanic children is at risk of facing the same disadvantaged position or worse than their parents when they are adults.147

Wealth means making a living wage or better, and having assets (home, saving, retirement fund, etc.) that create more choices and resources for one’s children. The intent is to make clear that any review regarding the well-being and opportunities available to Hispanic children be considered through the lens of their family environment. The risks are cumulative in that they begin in infancy and can continue to grow in each stage of child development.148, 149 Public policies have demonstrated impacts on family environment and child development opportunities.

B. Minimal and Inequitable Human Capital Policies

As previously stated, five major determinant areas of a strong family include family structure, education and economic status, health status, and neighborhood environment. These areas and their respective indicators (e.g. safety, good housing, college achievement, income, and health status) are interrelated, with each affecting the family structure in enabling or challenging parental capacity to provide a thriving child development support environment.

Solutions for strengthening Hispanic families are also impacted by other relevant public policy issues as civic/voter suppression, immigration, and criminal justice.150,151,152 Why do we continue to have these perennial inequities negatively impacting the bienestar of Hispanics generation after generation?

Underlying factors contributing to these continuing inequities point to:
1. Historical discrimination and inequitable state/local policy and regulatory practices.

2. State’s conservative philosophy that minimizes human capital investments

3. State’s response to economic globalization and new federalism relationships that are often corrosive over policy and program decisions.

4. Weak Hispanic political voting power and policy influence.

Together, these factors intensify challenges to solutions that help strengthen families by creating opportunities to build assets/wealth over-time, increase economic mobility, and reduce poverty.

**Inequitable State Policies**

The history of Texas’s discriminatory practices toward Hispanics are well-documented.\(^{153, 154}\) The state’s history and future are also immersed with the “Tejano” presence and contributions. Improvements in the quality of life of Hispanics would not have occurred without the significant labor movements of the 1920s, post-World War II Mexican American civic organizing and advocacy of the 40s and 50s, and civil rights/Chicano engagement of the 1960s and 70s. Today, Texas Hispanic leadership, organizations and network allies are involved in major legislative and legal battles, particularly in education, legislative representation, voter suppression, health, and immigration issues.\(^{155}\)

Progress has been achieved since one can point to less overt discrimination, lower rates of poverty, higher rates of high school graduation and college achievement, and larger incomes. However, state policies continue to negatively impact the social and economic mobility of Hispanic families, and jeopardize their children’s future. They experience firsthand Texas’s approach to public policy-making which often obstructs ideas and change to equitable opportunities and security for all citizens. Whether intended or not, the result are discriminatory and their marginalizing impact perpetuate inequities and disparities.

We know that policy-making occurs on many levels in both the public and private institutional levels. Policy-making is a political process, particularly at the public level where those in power drive the process and influence the legislative decision outcomes. Further, it’s understood that policy-making can have a myriad of intentions regarding issues and populations they are directed to impact.

As indicated, Texas policies directed towards education, health, immigration, and barriers to civic engagement have a disproportionate marginalizing effect on Hispanics. Education, which is recognized as the foundation for a families social and economic mobility and likelihood for good health is a primary example. Since 1968, seven lawsuits have been filed challenging the state’s school financing system.\(^{156}\) The most recent lawsuit is under review at the state’s Supreme Court level.
Prior to moving to the Texas Supreme Court, a Texas District Court ruled the current system of education funding was constitutionally inadequate, unsuitable and financially inefficient. One cited example of the case found that the funding system is inequitable and fails to provide adequate funding for the education of low-income students and English Language Learners. Research has amplified this problem from a lack of inadequate funding.

Inherent in the discussion is to what extent we make policy making connections between improvements in bienestar (well-being) indicators among Hispanics families. Of particular concern are impacts on families who are at-risk for social and economic mobility or currently in poverty, less educated, unemployed, or in poor health.

In more overt ‘racists’ times, the intent was to keep ‘Mexicans’ in their marginalized place among the citizenry. Today, the state’s policy approach which advocates less taxing revenues, budget austerity, limited human capital investment, and ‘boot-strap’ ideology for upward mobility appears to give the same results. In short, the starting gate for many Hispanics to gain social and economic mobility have never been equal each succeeding generation.

**Political Ideology and Human Capital Investment Policies**

Texas has a well-known history as a ‘red’ conservative state with a governance and public policy-making philosophy weighted heavily toward minimizing human capital investments. Underlying this philosophy is the major premise that it prevents dependency on welfare related social support programs. Therefore, the state takes a ‘minimalist’ approach to legislative policy-making. The minimal approach to human capital investments is demonstrated in education, health care, human services, and state budgeting approach.

As a result, the state consistently ranks among the top ten states with the highest rates of poverty and minimum wage earnings, income inequality, without health insurance, teen birth rates and poor access to quality healthcare, food insecurity, and high rate of sub-prime mortgage home loans. In addition, ranking among the ten states with the lowest rates of state aid per public and funding for early childhood education, low-income population covered by Medicaid, and family economic assets and home ownership.

The impact of these human capital deficits continues to hit hardest on low income populations and people of color; and has reduced or obstructed middle income population growth. Their impact on Hispanic have been particularly striking, and only worsen with their significant population growth. Unfair and regressive tax policies that structurally limits meeting state revenue needs, coupled with large budget cuts are causal factors for these poor performance measures.

Texas history and abundant research documentation indicates the injustice that these policies have had. First, it has produced numerous legal actions against the state for the discriminatory impacts resulting from these policies. The list is long - education, Medicaid, foster care, mental health, criminal and juvenile justice, family planning services, immigrant rights, and voter suppression. Second, it marginalizes populations by limiting opportunities to a living wage,
prevent and reduce poverty, graduate from high school or complete a college degree, improve their health, and creates barriers to economic mobility.

The consequences from this minimalist approach to legislative policy-making become obvious given they are counterproductive to strengthening families and supporting future opportunities for their children. Texas ranks 43rd nationally on overall family well-being. Numerous reports provide strong evidence how the state’s overall weak investments in families and children are perpetuating continued inequalities and poorer quality of life. Policy research also demonstrate how the state is losing billions in economic growth and long-term prosperity.

It appears that the state’s policy strategy is to ‘starve’ the state budget by cutting taxes (heavily weighted toward business), and cutting education and health and human services costs. While this is occurring, the state’s population growth and increasing number of high low-income families will continue to strain education and health and human service budgets.

The strain will come predominantly from people of color with Hispanics as the overwhelming majority. As previously noted, they represent 51% of public school enrollment of which nearly two-thirds are economically disadvantaged. They also comprise the majority participants in the state’s social welfare and health programs. In the big 4 federal-state programs of Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women Infant and Children (WIC), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) they represent 56.9%, 57.3%, 70.8%, and 62.1% respectfully.

These programs assist ‘qualifying’ individuals and families to meet basic needs, provide support for health maintenance, and help prevent worst income conditions. However, they are not by themselves the solution to poverty and it negative costs. Creating opportunities for increasing economic mobility requires equitable investments in education and job training opportunities, progressive tax policies, raising the minimum wage, and child and family strengthening policies. Such policy would also contribute to reducing the family economic wealth gap for low-income and racial/ethnic populations.

**Globalization and Federal-State Relations Challenge Hispanic Progress**

There are critics who argue that Texas’s glowing economic assessment is more rhetoric than reality, or, at best, that only a small percentage of the working population and big business are its primary beneficiaries. They note that our state ranks seventh in income inequality, third with respect to worst taxes for average Americans, and also had a Gini Index of .48 for income inequality, and 39th in education. Also, the state ranks first in the number and percent of workers earning at minimum and below wages.

These related issues further challenge Hispanic advocacy in influencing policy due to 1) globalization’s added impact on economic, education, and job disparities; and 2) corrosive new
federalisms (federal-state relations). Both are contributing to intense partisan policy conflicts on policy controls and approaches.

Globalization is the increased worldwide movement of goods, ideas, capital and people which has impacted the state economy, education, labor, wages, income inequalities, and people’s migration patterns.\textsuperscript{196, 197, 198} New federalism represents the increasing decentralization of policy authority to states over certain governmental functions. Examples include federal-state policy conflicts and approaches to social welfare programs, education, healthcare, immigration, and environmental protection.\textsuperscript{199, 200, 201}

Texas amplifies the historical documented relationship of federal, state and local laws and policy rules which created or facilitated discriminatory impacts and social inequalities in education, employment, housing, health, and voting rights for racial and ethnic minorities.\textsuperscript{202} While Texas Hispanics are engaged in advocacy and civic efforts to address the above inequities, unlike before, they are occurring under an era of globalization and new federalism.

The position, here, is not for or against globalization and new federalism. It is about Texas’s policy and program response. Do they take into account current inequality in order to equitably expand and strengthen access to opportunities for all Texans? Can we demonstrate the creation of opportunities targeted to significantly reduce what one researcher called ‘capability deprivation’, where poverty is not simply a low income level?\textsuperscript{203} It’s about lost economic power and the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations to prosperity.

It’s arguable that Texas has increased its policy importance and influence because of federalism and globalization, including greater flexibility to address inequalities. However, the state has largely remained idle in terms of seriously addressing inequality issues. It is not that policymakers are unaware of existing inequalities, the loss of thousands of middle-class jobs, and increasing demand for advanced education and training in a globalized economy.\textsuperscript{204}

As noted above, inadequate and inequitable investments in education are particularly salient for Hispanic.\textsuperscript{205, 206} Nonetheless, the state continues decade after decade, with the same basic conservative political and policy agenda combined with its often obstructive approach to federal initiatives – the ‘Texas Way’.\textsuperscript{207} The result is the same, a minimalist approach to policy-making in human capital investments which perpetually keep Hispanic in an ‘unequal and unfair’ opportunity playing field.

Texas’ population and economic growth are interconnected and both are outperforming nearly every other state. The population growth between 2000 and 2010 was the largest in the country at nearly 4.3 million. Six of the country’s 20 largest cities are in Texas – Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, Fort Worth, and El Paso. The implications for Hispanic families and Texas’s on-going prosperity are significant, particularly given:
They’re projected to be the majority population within a decade and the children already represent 51% of public school total enrollment.

They’re becoming the state’s majority labor force, accounting for 76% of the state’s labor force growth between 1994 and 2008. In 2013, they represented 39% of the labor force, up from 28% in 2000.

Because Hispanics are driving the growth, the state has the nation’s second highest dependency index (61.4), e.g., the number of dependents (0-14 and 65 and older) per 100 persons in the working-age population (15-64). The higher the ratio, the greater is the burden of support on working people.

Could it also be, as some research has suggested, that the state’s population diversity/majority is defaulted to racialized policy-making as well - more population diversity and high immigrant in-flow yields more restrictions and less human capital investment? It could well-be that Hispanics are the driving force for maintaining the status quo in public policy-making. They provide the state with a significant and growing supply of cheap labor.

C. Hispanic Policy Influence

These demographic and labor force indicators position Hispanics to influence policy-making more align with their particular concerns. This result has not happened. Over the last 3 decades, Texas Hispanic gains have stagnated at best, and the future is not promising for their families, particularly their children. Regardless of the ongoing Hispanic demographics, concerted efforts of exclusion are occurring through policy action and inaction, whether intentional or consequential.

As noted, Hispanics are involved in major legislative policy issues. They are also engaged in efforts to increase voter participation which continues to be low and disadvantageous to their capacity to influence policies favorable to their needs and concerns. Arguably, their civic engagement may be more local where they feel they carry greater currency for change in their daily lives. Also, the number of Hispanic elected officials is greatest locally, i.e., city councils, county commissioners, school boards, etc.

However, invariably Hispanic advocates also continue to turn to nationally guided federalism to pressure state and local governments to abide to ‘rules of law’ equally, and too equitably and responsibly implement federal initiatives. As noted, education, health and human service, housing, civic engagement, immigration are exemplar. The degree to which Hispanics have directed their energies toward federal versus state-local policies are often dictated by the barriers and intransigency of state and local governments.

Several important questions emerge regarding the capacity of Texas Hispanics to influence the state minimalist policy-making approach and apparent negative impacts on their bienestar.
• Are Hispanics in an organized pro-active or reactive position in their policy involvement?

• Does their involvement address structural problems that underlie most issues; e.g., policy-making that limit human capital investments, regressive tax laws, or revenue and budget approaches that undercut equity and prosperity?

• Is there applied policy research targeting analysis of legislation and regulatory rule-making impacts on Hispanics, and pro-active legislative policy development congruent with their concerns?

• Is there a statewide Hispanic policy strategy that builds both ‘resource and political capacity’ to influence policy making, and involves on-going assessment of progress?

It’s ironic that most of nation’s largest Hispanic advocacy organizations began in Texas, yet the state of Hispanic bienestar is near the worst in the country. Without the necessary ‘political power’ to achieve meaningful policy changes Hispanic labor will continue to be ‘On the Cheap’, and another generation of children will not achieve economic prosperity.

D. Summary

State policies matter in their impact on family well-being. They can impact areas such as school access and educational success, family economic mobility, healthy families, youth development, family relationships, and child safety. Texas policy-making falls short in most of these areas, particularly for Hispanic families.

Hispanics families are not strong resulting from the significant barriers to building wealth and future opportunities for their children. Nearly 2.3 million Hispanic children are at risk of facing the same disadvantaged position or worse than their parents when they are adults. Therefore, another generation of their children are at risk from achieving a comfortable middle-class status and greater economic mobility. Not surprisingly, they represent the majority of client recipients of most of the state’s chronically underfunded and often restrictive social welfare and health programs.

It’s well documented that family structure and strength is impacted by levels of education, income, health and neighborhood environment, as well as the context of public and private policies that help or impede opportunities to be successful in each. State policies can make significant contributions to strengthening families by increasing opportunities to build assets and wealth both directly and indirectly. It can begin with creating an ‘opportunity and equity’ policy approach that assesses and targets human capital investments in areas such as education, child and family welfare, job training, health care, and progressive tax changes. In addition, it must include promotion of and not barriers to civic engagement, and fair immigration policies which
to date continue to be disadvantageous to Hispanic policy involvement and family strengthening solutions.

Unfortunately, Texas’s political and policy progress to address disparities and inequalities is slow at-best. It is apparent that new paradigms, policies, and program approaches are needed to address the disproportionate inequalities Hispanics families continue to experience from state policy making. For Hispanics who are projected to be the state’s majority population by 2030, Texas’s minimalist approach to policy-making inherently limits human capital investments. As such, they help perpetuate inequities and marginalizing families over generations.

The shift to a Hispanic majority state has not translated into political power and influence on state policies. Hispanics are engaged across a multitude of issues in efforts which more often are to deter deleterious policies. It’s evident they must develop political power to proactively target changes to the states minimalist and structural deficits in the states policy making approach – the Texas Way.

Aggressive and proactive policy development efforts are needed that focus their intended impact on strengthening families and demonstrate a ‘return on investment’ to reduce poverty, provide a foothold for family economic mobility, and contribute to the state’s overall economic progress. Further, private sector and community advocates’ should be engaged as partners in these efforts.

Like most families, Hispanics would prefer not to merely survive on limited social and health welfare programs. Instead, they want to work in building their resource capacity to enable their children in economically successful families; live in supportive communities; and meet developmental, health and educational milestones. These are the successes leading to a productive next generation of adults and stronger families.
VIII. CONCLUSION

The bienestar of nearly one-half of 2.1 million Hispanic children does not look promising. The children live in families that are not strong measured by educational achievement, economic status, health, family structure and neighborhood environment. They are at risk of becoming another generation of Hispanic adults who will be undereducated, have limited job skills, and lower incomes. They will not achieve ‘real’ middle-class status - a status that would give financial security from income and asset accumulation that provides them with resources and choices in supporting their children’s development.

The research and most people agree that effective child development is demonstrated by building a strong physical, cognitive and intellectual, social and emotional, and speech and language foundation in the first 5 to 8 years of life. From here, growing into adolescence and young adulthood, the opportunities are much greater for educational and career success, higher incomes, good health, and wealth accumulation. Conversely, these results will not occur when a child’s development is impeded by poverty, poor neighborhood environment, and stressful family living conditions.

It also assumes that families and their children are not adversely impacted by social justice concerns from public or other institutional policies. Unfortunately, for Hispanics in Texas, this is a major concern. The state’s history reflects current concerns that impact child development because of harmful public policies that marginalize Hispanic families. These include policies directed toward education, health, immigration, and civic engagement to name but a few.

One can argue a lack of intent to marginalize Hispanic families; that the state simply has a policy-making approach underlined by a philosophy of small government and conservative investments in human capital areas such as education, and health and human services. Nonetheless, this approach helps produce inequalities that place children at-risk and impede their ability to develop a strong foundation for future success.

Inadequate investments in education and health and human services are not by themselves the only contributor to family marginalization. Regressive tax policies, unbalanced tax credits to business interests, inadequate job trainings, voter suppression, and immigration policies are related key factors. In short, these economic and social policies do not provide support for the adage, “equality of opportunity’ to all Texas citizens. While the state’s employment and economic performances are among the best in the nation, its benefits are not wide-spread and appear to be adding to the growing income inequalities, particularly among Hispanic families. In fact, Hispanic bienestar measured by 16 education, income, health and other social indicators in two-thirds of all other states is better than that of Texas Hispanics.

Could it be that the state policy-making approach is simply so ideologically ingrained that it has been unable to critically and creatively develop even ‘conservative’ policies that help strengthen families? There is significant policy research and economist perspectives that the state’s own economic future is at-risk in its continuing refusal to change its policy-making approach. Maintaining a growing and cheap Hispanic labor force will perpetuate another generation of low income Hispanic families, and diminish economic prosperity for the state.
The strong work ethic and resiliency of Hispanics, civil rights progress in eliminating overt racial policy barriers, and increasing access to education have resulted in economic and health improvements. However, as illustrated, policy and institutional barriers still persist along with a weakened family support structure among a large number of Hispanic families. Yet, Hispanics continue to persevere and achieve educational and economic milestones beyond expectations. Their population growth and corresponding youthfulness, and increasing majority representation in public schools, higher education, and the labor force are contributing factors.

Key challenges to Hispanics breaking the generational production of weak families that limit their children’s development and future include.

- Increase their political influence to achieve substantive policy change successes.
- Take into account the state’s response to economic globalization and often corrosive relationship with federal initiatives. The state’s policy responses to date measured by economic, educational and job training investments; and state-rights partisanship positions with federal initiatives have expanded inequalities and collateral damage for families.
- Minimize one-issue centered advocacy approaches. Develop more comprehensive partnership approaches that targets issues impacted by underlying ‘ideological and structural’ revenue and budgeting doctrines that impede policy change.
- Develop more sustaining ‘resource capacity’ to response too and proactively lead with policy ideas and strategies. This means expanded statewide partners, stronger statewide communications structure (supports community awareness as well as organizing and advocacy), and policy research support.

Across the state’s 12 economic regions, Hispanics and their collaborative partners are civically involved in helping to improve their schools, neighborhoods, and family livelihoods. Arguably, their advocacy is more local than statewide policy-making. Existing statewide civic engagement, leadership and power must also increase to influence substantive policy changes. Otherwise, the state will continue with its minimalist approach to policy-making that is more harmful to their families.

In summary, effective child development is fostered by a loving and nourishing family environment, a financially stable and minimally stressed home, early education opportunities and preparation, and good physical and mental health as major requisites. If viewed as a complete jigsaw puzzle, these requisites represent critical pieces required to achieve effective child development. For many Hispanic children, the puzzle is incomplete as the requisite pieces are damaged or missing. Public policies matter – they can help strengthen families, thereby, expanding opportunities for their children.
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