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HISPANIC CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES *A Resource Guide*

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A Historical and Demographic Overview of Hispanic Children and Youth in the United States

Hispanic children in the United States represent an amalgamation of cultures, religions and races fragmented by various histories. The word *Hispanics* covers a wide spectrum of these ethnic and cultural groups. The word *Hispanic* is derived from the name of the Iberian peninsula, Hispania. The term is used mostly in the United States to identify the Spanish-speaking people of Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain. The United States Bureau of the Census identifies as Hispanics persons of Spanish origin or descent who designate themselves as being Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban or of other Spanish/Hispanic origin. By *other Hispanic origin* is meant those whose origins are from the Dominican Republic, South and Central America or Spain. These are Hispanic persons identifying themselves generally as Hispanic, Spanish American, *hispano* or *latino* (Bureau of the Census, 1988d). Not everyone accepts the adjective Hispanic favorably. Objection comes mostly from individuals who indicate that the word makes reference only to Spanish ancestry, specifically that of Spain, ignoring the African American and Indian ancestry of Spanish surnames in the United States. Those who oppose the term prefer to be called *latinos*. In this book, the word Hispanic is used mainly for convenience. The word Hispanic is used in most of the extant literature, specially in statistical data and government reports. It is also the term known best by non-Hispanic groups.

This chapter presents an overview of the historical and demographic characteristics of the Hispanic groups in the United States

with the purpose of presenting a profile of the Hispanic presence in the mainland United States. The chapter is divided into five general sections: (a) the historical significance of the Hispanic presence in the United States; (b) characteristics of Hispanic migration and special cultural patterns in the United States; (c) size, growth and distribution of the Hispanic population; (d) socioeconomic status of the parents of Hispanic children and youth and (e) status of Hispanic children and youth.

The Historical Significance of the Hispanic Presence in the United States

The influx of Hispanics into the United States has by no means been a homogeneous process. Different groups of Hispanics arrived in America at different times and for different reasons. Each group typically settled in a different region of the country (Jenkins, Sauber & Friedlander, 1985; Natural Hispanic Center for Advanced Studies & Policy Analysis, 1982; Sutton & Chaney, 1987; Weyer, 1988). In general, Mexicans settled in the southwest, the Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the northeast, the Cubans in the southeast and northeast, the South and Central Americans have spread out in the United States, with large numbers found in the west and south (Nicaraguans) and in the northeast (Colombians, Peruvians and Ecuadoreans) of the United States.

Although Hispanics' presence in United States has been accounted only for since the second part of the nineteenth century, and their number in this country has grown noticeably since 1920, Hispanics have been living in North America even before the formation of what is today the United States of America. The first Hispanic presence in the United States is that of Mexicans. The roots of many Hispanics in the United States are as old as those of the Native Americans. When the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock, many regions in the southwest had already been established by Mexicans. However, historically the Mexican's presence is greatly noticed by 1846, when the United States invaded what is today Texas (which at that time was part of Mexico) resulting in the acquisition of the modern day states of Texas, New Mexico and California. The Mexicans who were already living in these territories remained in this newly acquired American land. Other

Mexicans also migrated and suddenly Mexicans were found in what is today Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona and part of Colorado. Immigration from Mexico increased tremendously since 1920 when a socially disruptive revolution in Mexico and the agricultural development of the southwest United States caused the immediate and subsequent need for labor.

Puerto Ricans, the second largest Hispanic group in the United States, came later than Mexicans. By the end of the nineteenth century their presence was evident, especially in the northeast part of the country. In 1898, Puerto Rico became part of the United States. For the first time, Puerto Ricans were able to travel freely to the United States. At the beginning, few Puerto Ricans moved to the mainland. However, during the economic depression of 1920-1930 Puerto Ricans began moving to the United States in search of a better life. Puerto Rican presence in the United States increased greatly during the 1940's and 1950's, making them the largest Hispanic group in the Northeast, which they remain until today.

Cuban presence in the United States has been felt since the beginning of the twentieth century. Cuba was part of the United States for three years, after the Hispano-American War brought a small group of Cubans to the United States. After three years, Cuba became independent, but Cubans continued to move to the United States, especially to work for the cigar manufacturing companies. The largest influx of Cubans came in the 1960's when a significant group of Cubans left Cuba fleeing from the Castro regime and the communists. The *Maríel* group that came to the United States led the way for the millions of Cubans now living in this country.

In addition to the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban presence in the United States other Hispanic groups have immigrated here in large numbers, especially from the Dominican Republic and South and Central America. Dominicans began migrating to the United States in large numbers after the 1965 change in the immigration laws. The change also coincided with the American invasion of the island and the establishment of the Balaguer government. During this period of economic difficulty, many Dominicans migrated to New York City looking for a better way of life. Still in 1990, Dominicans were immigrating in large numbers to the United States.

A large number of Hispanic immigrants are from Central and South America. From Central America, three countries are noticeable for the large number of emigres to the United States: El Salvador,

Guatemala and Honduras. Central American immigrants include a refugee group (a professional class and a large majority of children sent alone by their parents), professionals in search of a better economic way of life and mainly poor, undocumented individuals (Chaney, 1985; Suarez-Orozco, 1989). The experience of recent Central American immigrants appears to be related to their fears and dissatisfactions with their homeland in the context of increasing political violence and economic crisis. Immigrants from South America come from all countries, with the largest groups coming from Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The unique historical, social and demographic characteristics of each of these groups are further discussed in Chapter Two.

The Hispanic population represents a significant group in the United States. The most recent data from the Bureau of the Census (1988d) indicate that:

1. The Hispanic population in the United States totaled 19.4 million and represented 8.1 percent of the total United States population. Additionally, there are three million persons who reside in Puerto Rico. Since the 1980 Census, the Hispanic population has increased by 34 percent or about 4.8 million persons.
2. The Hispanic population in the United States is represented by the following groups:
 - Mexican origin, 12.1 million (62.3 percent).
 - Puerto Rican origin, 2.5 million (12.7 percent)
 - Cuban origin, 1.0 million (5.3 percent)
 - Central and South American origin, 2.2 million (11.5 percent)
 - Other Hispanic origin, 1.6 million (8.1 percent)
3. The United States is currently one of the countries with the largest Hispanic concentration in the world. Hispanic growth resulted from net migration and natural increase (births minus deaths).
4. Hispanics are a youthful population with a median age of 25.5 years. Because of their younger age, Hispanics constitute a great share of American school children.
5. By the year 2000, one in three American residents of all ages will be African American, Asian American or Hispanic, with the number of Hispanics approaching the number of African Americans (Oxford-Carpenter, Pol, Lopez, Stupp & Gendell, 1984; Sanderfur & Tienda, 1988; United States Bureau of the Census, 1986).

The following sections of this chapter describe the historical and demographic factors that explain the above facts.

Geographical Distribution of Hispanic Children and Youth

Children of Hispanic parents reside in every state of the union. However, they are concentrated in the greatest numbers in nine states: California (33.9 percent), Texas (21.3 percent), New York (10.9 percent), Florida (7.6 percent), Illinois (4.1 percent), Arizona (3.3 percent), New Jersey (3.3 percent), New Mexico (2.8 percent) and Colorado (1.9 percent) (Bureau of the Census, 1988d). A large percentage of the Hispanic population is concentrated in five southwestern states (California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado) representing about 63 percent of the total Hispanic population in the United States. Fifty-five percent of all Hispanics in the nation reside in California and Texas. Four states outside the southwest accounted for 26 percent of the Hispanic population: New York, Florida, Illinois and New Jersey. The remainder of the country accounted for only 11 percent of the Hispanic population (Bureau of the Census, 1988d). These states contain almost three-quarters of all Hispanics in the United States. In 1988, Hispanics of Mexican ancestry represented the largest Hispanic group in United States, 62 percent of the Hispanic population. These are interesting geographic characteristics that need to be mentioned since they have had an impact on the development of Hispanic children and youth in terms of family structure, employment, education, health and social services provided in these nine states.

The port of entry for each Hispanic group has largely determined its current geographical distribution. Mexican Americans are concentrated in the southwest, particularly in California and Texas; Puerto Ricans are clustered in the northeastern section, especially in the New York metropolitan area. The Cuban migration stream has flowed primarily into Florida, the point of entry for Cuban refugees. Remarkably, Dade County, Florida, still contains about one-half of the 1.2 million Cuban Americans (Bureau of the Census, 1988d; Valdivieso & Davis, 1988).

Geographical characteristics indicate that:

1. Hispanic children and youth concentrate in particular areas, especially in large urban centers. In California, most Hispanics live in the southern part of the state; in Texas, they are concentrated in the south (Rio Grande, El Paso); in New York they are concentrated in New York City; in Illinois they reside in Chicago; in Florida, their greatest numbers are in Miami; in New Jersey, they are concentrated in Newark and Jersey City (Bureau of the Census, 1988d; Moore & Pachon, 1985).
2. Hispanic children and youth are highly urbanized and contrary to widespread belief Hispanics are not all farm workers. In 1980, one-half of all Hispanics resided in the central cities of metropolitan areas compared with slightly less than one-third of non-Hispanics (Bureau of the Census, 1988d; Moore & Pachon, 1985). This pattern is in contrast with whites who are moving out of the cities to rural and suburban communities.
3. In general, Hispanics are mainly segregated in their own communities or *barrios*. In New York City, Dominicans are concentrated in Washington Heights; Puerto Ricans in Spanish Harlem, the South Bronx or the Lower East Side; in Los Angeles, Mexicans are concentrated in the eastern part of the city. Linguistically and culturally these *barrios* give cohesion and security to Hispanic immigrants who keep residing in the *barrio* mainly for economic and psychological reasons.
4. In states such as California and Texas, Hispanic children and youth are the largest minority population and Hispanics outnumber African Americans, traditionally the largest minority group in the United States. In California, for example, Hispanics (mostly Mexican Americans) constitute about 19 percent of the population, while African Americans make up about 12 percent of the population. In Texas, African Americans are about 12 percent while Hispanics are about 21 percent. These population patterns are a reflection of the history of these states where Mexicans were the first settlers and have emigrated in large numbers.
5. Larger proportions of Hispanics are leaving their traditional areas of settlement. Mexican Americans are making changes in residential preferences; there is a shift from Texas and Arizona to California and the Middle West, especially Illinois. A recent phenomenon is the move of Mexican Americans to small towns in the northeast,

especially in New York State. Puerto Ricans are showing shifts from New York to New Jersey, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Florida. Orlando, Florida, for example is receiving a significant group of young professionals from Puerto Rico. Cubans, however, have remained concentrated primarily in Florida, although there is a noticeable small concentration in New Jersey and New York.

Size, Growth and Distribution of the Hispanic Population

Estimates of the number of Hispanics in the United States vary. Difficulties arise from the failure of earlier censuses to make a full count of Spanish-surnamed residents and the impossibility of knowing how many undocumented people of Hispanic origin are in the United States at any given time. However, in spite of this problem, there exists a fairly accurate count of legal Hispanics in the United States conducted by the United States Bureau of the Census of the Department of Commerce. Census information indicates that the legal Hispanic population grew from 4 million in 1950, when they were 2.7 percent of the total population, to 14.6 million in 1980 when they were 6.4 percent of the total population, to 19.4 million in 1988 accounting for 8.1 percent of the total population (Bureau of the Census, 1988d). Since the 1980 census, the Hispanic population has increased by 34 percent or about five million persons while the comparable increase for the total United States population has been only eight percent (Bureau of the Census, 1988d).

The above data are conservative figures: there are more Hispanics in the United States than are counted in the census. Other sources estimate that there may be as many as 3 million additional Hispanics not counted by the census. This estimate is based on some approximations of the number of uncounted, undocumented persons and the number of legal residents missed by the census (Moore & Pachon, 1985). Total undocumented immigration to the United States is estimated to account for an annual inflow of half a million aliens, the majority of whom are from Mexico, the Caribbean and Central America. When these estimates are added, the total number of persons of Hispanic background on the mainland is probably around 21 million. The 1990 census results will reveal the demographic changes that

occurred during the 1980's. Recent projections show a Hispanic population of 23 million in the early 1990's and nearly 29 million by the year 2000 (Oxford-Carpenter et al., 1984; Sandefur & Tienda, 1988; Valdivieso & Davis, 1988). By the end of the century, Hispanics will comprise over 10 percent of the projected United States population, and about 16 percent of both school-aged children and persons 18 to 24 years old (Valdivieso & Davis, 1988).

The two key factors responsible for the increase of the Hispanic population in the United States are heavy migration to the United States and relative high birth rates among United States Hispanic residents. These two factors contributed equally to the 4.6 percent increase in the United States Hispanic population between 1980 and 1988 (Bureau of the Census, 1988d). Hispanic women tend to have more children than other Americans. This is particularly true of recent immigrants who may be reflecting the large size family norms of their native countries. The total fertility rate (average life time births per woman) for foreign-born Hispanics in 1980 was 2.9, one child greater than the 1.8 rate for non-Hispanics. Throughout the 1980's, Hispanic birth rates have been about 50 percent higher than those of other Americans (Bureau of the Census, 1988a; Valdivieso & Davis, 1988). The Census Bureau indicated that over 400,000 births to Hispanics occurred in 1987, accounting for 11 percent of all United States births (Bureau of the Census, 1988d).

Immigration and fertility, the two main factors responsible for the rapid increase of the Hispanic population, do not show any sign of levelling off in the near future. Immigrants will continue to arrive in the United States, in ever greater numbers, due to the escalating violence in South and Central America, the economic instability in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and high unemployment in Puerto Rico (United States Bureau of the Census, 1988a). Hispanic families will continue to experience their high fertility, especially when many of them are Catholic and comply with the recent emphasis of the Catholic church against birth control and abortion. Immigration of Hispanics to the United States will remain high due to the high international debt and economic disarray in many Latin American countries in addition to unstable political trends in countries such as El Salvador and Peru.

The high growth rate of the nation's Hispanic population has led some to suggest that it may surpass African Americans and become the country's largest minority group in the decade from 1990-2000. If the population continues its growth, it is estimated that the population of

Hispanic children and youth will grow at a very high rate, perhaps 16 percent by the year 2000. The 1988 Census Bureau data indicated that of all Hispanics in the United States: (a) Children under five represent 10.7 percent of the Hispanic population, (b) Children between five and nine represent 10.2 percent, (c) Children 10-14 represent 9.1 percent, and (d) Children between the ages of 15 and 19 represent 8.7 percent. Thirty-nine percent of the Hispanic population in the United States is under nineteen years old. This is a very conservative figure since it does not include many of the illegal children living in the United States. These data indicate that there will continue to be growth of the Hispanic school-age population in places where Hispanics are geographically concentrated.

Hispanics are a young population. The high fertility rate keeps the population young because of the continuously increasing numbers of births. Immigrants tend to keep the average age low because migrants are likely to be young adults, just at the age for starting a family (Valdivieso & Davis, 1988). In 1988, almost one-third of the Hispanic population (30.3 percent) was under the age of fifteen. In 1988, the median age in the United States was 32.2 years compared to only 25.5 years of age among Hispanics. Only 4.7 percent of Hispanics are 65 or older (Bureau for the Census, 1988d). Puerto Ricans (23.9 percent) and Mexican Americans (24.9 percent), with a median age of about 24.4 years, constitute the youngest Hispanic groups. Because many Hispanic women are now entering their childbearing years, and because Hispanic women tend to bear more children at younger ages than other women in the United States, the Hispanic population will remain young for some time. The Hispanic population still contains a high percentage of youth yet to reach child-bearing age. Valdivieso & Davis (1988), posing the question of the significance of a young age structure, answered by saying:

... [the] young population will require day care, education, and jobs, for example, rather than pensions, retirement, planning and geriatric health care.

From a strictly demographic perspective, the Hispanic's young age structure means that Latino youth form a greater proportion of the United States young people. Latinos accounted for 8 percent of the total United States population in 1988, but 11 percent of these were under age 15. Society's effort to educate and nurture the next generation will be directed increasingly at a Hispanic audience (p. 3).

Hispanic Migration and Social and Cultural Patterns

Hispanics share a broad sense of ethnic identity based on allegiance to a shared mother language and culture. This sense of Hispanic identity is constantly being reinvigorated with persistent high rates of immigration and by the continual circular migration of Hispanics. The United States is the destination of about half the world's immigrants who seek permanent resettlement and has been so continuously year after year. Family reunification accounts for 90 percent of new admissions since legal immigrants living in the United States can apply to bring other family members to the United States. Hispanic groups became United States citizens or residents in different ways and at different times. Those immigrants who are already in the United States inform families living in their native country of their socioeconomic advancement in the United States. Most of the immigrants come for economic reasons, although there is another group coming for political reasons. When these immigrants arrive, they first live in their relatives' homes. This pattern has reinforced the tendency for immigrants to cluster in high concentrations in a limited number of areas.

The decade of the 1980's was one with the highest levels of immigration. In 1989, about 2,000 Central Americans arrived in south Texas each week, especially Nicaraguans, claiming to be refugees. They almost automatically received permission to work in the United States while their applications for asylum were being considered, a process which could last a year or more. Most of these asylum applicants entered through Texas and went to Los Angeles, Florida or New York to settle.

Premigration and religious patterns also have had an impact on Hispanics in maintaining their ethnic and cultural patterns of origin after they move to the United States. Family and religion contributed to the tendency of Hispanic immigrants to feel new needs and acquire new meanings and significance in their living styles due to: (a) a constant circulation of Hispanics to and from their not-too-distant homelands; (b) continuous high rates of new immigrants and visitors from home who help to maintain ties to the original customs; (c) Hispanics living in concentrated areas, helping to preserve their native culture. New immigrants bring their beliefs and social institutions, which, in general, stay with them, although they undergo changes in living patterns and

adopt new customs. These premigration values, attitudes and customs do not simply fade away; rather they shape, often in a complex fashion, the way individuals in each group adjust to and develop new cultural and social patterns (Foner, 1987). For example, it is a yearly tradition in New York City to present musical shows composed of primarily famous Puerto Rican singers from the 1940's and 1960's: These performers can relate to old Puerto Rican immigrants and can help them to remember the Puerto Rico that they left many years ago. Traditional beliefs such as *bautismos* (baptisms), *bodas* (weddings), *confirmaciones* (confirmations) are opportunities to revitalize cultural and ethnic customs and beliefs.

The cultural and social values new immigrants bring serve as a generating force for those that have been living in United States. Thus, all immigrants continue making use of these cultural and social patterns which they pass on to new generations. Both groups merge helping to maintain these values and ideas. Perhaps, this is a unique characteristic among Hispanic immigrants and since immigrants are constantly arriving, these cause those already living in the United States to remember and practice their unique customs and traditions.

The United States government, aware of this major immigration flow, has taken measures to control massive immigration to the United States through a new immigration law, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). It is not clear yet what—if any—will be the repercussions of the new immigration law for Hispanics. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), the Simpson-Rodino bill, became law in 1986 after five years of debate and compromise. The law has two phases: amnesty programs for the legalization of illegal residents and farm workers, and an employer sanctions program which makes it illegal for employers to hire illegal immigrants. The bill provides amnesty or legalization for a large group of persons. Undocumented individuals who have resided in the United States by January 2, 1982, may be eligible for the legalization program if they can demonstrate, among other things, continuous residence and the ability to support themselves. The employer's sanctions apply only to persons hired after November 6, 1986, the date on which the IRCA legislation was signed into law. Persons who were already employed as of that date are *grandfathered* under the bill and need not produce proof of legal immigration status.

Hispanics in the United States keep their original identities and cultural patterns of living, making Hispanics a distinctive and

unique ethnic group in the United States and, although they may adopt other cultural and linguistic characteristics, in their homes or *barrios* they keep practicing those patterns that identify them as Dominicans, Colombians, Mexicans, or Peruvians, and not merely as Hispanics.

Socioeconomic Status of the Parents of Hispanic Children and Youth

In general, Hispanics in the United States are characterized by the following socioeconomic characteristics: poverty, unemployment and lack of educational opportunities. The only group that does not fit these characteristics is the Cubans who immigrated during the decade of the 1960's.

Economic Status

The low-status occupations and high unemployment rates among Hispanics translate into low incomes and high levels of poverty. In 1988, the Bureau of the Census reported that in 1987 the median income of Hispanic families was \$20,310, not significantly different from the 1986 figure. The median for non-Hispanic families, however, grew by about 1 percent to \$31,610. Since the last economic recession in 1982, the real median family income of Hispanic families has risen by 6.9 percent compared with 12.3 percent for non-Hispanic families. Within the Hispanic community, income levels reveal marked differences. By sub-groups, the lowest median income was found among Puerto Rican families at \$15,190, and the highest income was found among Cuban families at \$27,290. In general, the income of Hispanics was only 66 percent of the income of non-Hispanics. One of the key reasons is that Hispanic males and females were less likely than non-Hispanics to hold professional or management jobs in which salaries are commensurate with their job positions. The mothers of Hispanic children, who were employed full time, had the lowest income of any of the major population groups (see Chapter 9). Another significant factor is that Hispanic families are relatively large, and their

incomes support more household members than those of non-Hispanic families.

In 1987, about 26 percent or 1.2 million Hispanic families were living below the poverty level compared with 10 percent of non-Hispanic families (Census Bureau, 1988c; 1988d). The Hispanic poverty level was two and a half times as high as that of non-Hispanic families. Among Hispanic subgroups, Puerto Rican families had the highest poverty rate at 38 percent. Cubans, Central and South American families had the lowest poverty rates at 13.8 percent and 18.9 percent. A disturbing fact is that there has been no significant change in the poverty rate of Hispanic families between 1982 and 1987, although between 1985 and 1987, the poverty rate of non-Hispanic families dropped from 10.4 percent to 9.7 percent (Bureau of the Census, 1988d). A significant number of children and youth live with single parents. In single-parent families headed by a Hispanic female, over half (52 percent) were below the poverty level (Bureau of the Census, 1988c; 1988d).

Hispanics are a population in need of financial resources. They suffer from a variety of economic and social problems such as unemployment, underemployment, poor housing and inadequate health care, among others. However, in March 1988 when analyzing Hispanics as a whole, the Bureau of the Census found one positive socioeconomic development: the March 1988 unemployment rates for Hispanics was 8.5 percent (compared to 5.8 percent for non-Hispanics, age 16 and over) representing their lowest levels for both groups since March 1983. These economic data need to be analyzed carefully since they give the impression that Hispanics are improving their economic status. Divided by Hispanic sub-groups, one notices that while Cuban unemployment was only 3.1 percent, Puerto Rican unemployment was 10.5 percent. Parents of Hispanic children and youth were not able to improve their relative economic standing between 1980 and 1988—the Mexican Americans lost slightly, Puerto Ricans lost considerably, and even the Cubans dropped. These statistics highlight the handicaps faced by many Hispanic children. With large families, low incomes, and a high proportion of single-parent families, the success of a significant proportion of Hispanic children and youth is at risk (Valdivieso & Davis, 1988).

2. Hispanic children and youth are not a homogeneous socioeconomic and educational group.
 - a. Mexican Americans have the lowest educational attainment.
 - b. Puerto Rican children are the poorest.
 - c. Cuban children and some immigrants from South and Central America tend to have the highest educational attainment.
3. Hispanic children and youth suffer economic deprivation.
 - a. About 26 percent of Hispanic families are living below the poverty level.
 - b. The poverty rate among Hispanics is more than double the rates for non-Hispanic groups.
 - c. The poverty rate for white children decreased in the 1980's but increased among Hispanics.
4. Socioeconomic conditions have negatively affected the family of Hispanic children and youth.
 - a. Hispanic children live in poor housing conditions.
 - b. Hispanic housing is likely to be overcrowded.
 - c. A significant group of single-parent Hispanic families is welfare dependent.
5. A significant percentage of Hispanic children and youth shares the Spanish language and Hispanic culture.
 - a. Language, religious beliefs, family structures and general customs are enhanced among Hispanics.
 - b. There is a common denominator of Hispanic culture, especially in the same Hispanic socioeconomic class.
 - c. Hispanic children have a broad range of language characteristics and needs that impact upon their development.
6. Parents of Hispanic children and youth are marginally employed, underemployed or unemployed.
 - a. Hispanics tend to enter poorly paid, semi-skilled jobs with little chance of advancement.
 - b. In 1988, unemployment for Hispanics was 8.5 percent, compared to 5.8 percent for non-Hispanics.
 - c. Hispanic women, especially Puerto Ricans, are less likely to be working than other women.
 - d. Low status occupations and high unemployment among Hispanics translate into low incomes and high poverty rates.
 - e. The income gap between Hispanics and other Americans grew between 1978 and 1990.

7. Hispanic children and youth lag far behind the majority population in any array of standard educational measurements.
 - a. Hispanic children and youth enroll in schools at rates lower than those for non-Hispanic groups.
 - b. Hispanic children and youth fall behind their classmates in progressing through school.
 - c. Attrition rates of Hispanic children and youth are higher than those of non-Hispanic students.
 - d. The gap between Hispanic children and youth and their white counterparts tends to increase with age.
 - e. Hispanic youth are twice as likely as whites not to have completed high school.
8. Hispanic youth represent a significant percentage of the inmate/offender population.
 - a. Hispanic youth represent a high percent of juvenile criminals.
 - b. Hispanic youth are overrepresented in clinical centers.
 - c. Hispanic youth are also victims of crimes.
9. Hispanic children and youth suffer from poor health and limited prevention and health related services.
 - a. Parents of Hispanic children are much less likely than whites to have health insurance and are less aware of preventive health practices.
 - b. Poverty and poor pre-natal care lead to disproportionate numbers of Hispanic children who are sick or undernourished from birth.
 - c. Hispanic children and youth are at greater risk for predictable problems such as substance abuse and AIDS.
10. Hispanic youth are not well represented in institutions of higher education.
 - a. Although Hispanics have increased their participation in higher education, few Hispanics are entering and graduating from college.
 - b. Hispanics are not entering the same kinds of colleges as whites.
 - c. The majority of Hispanic youth attend two-year colleges.

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter indicate that, in general, Hispanic children and youth have less education, lower incomes, and higher rates of unemployment and poverty than the general population. They share many characteristics that set them apart from other American children and youth, but which are also common to other low socioeconomic minorities and to earlier immigrant groups. Hispanic parents have not made significant progress in their socioeconomic and educational development.

The history of immigrant groups to the United States shows that Hispanics, in a way, are following the trend of many other immigrant groups in the United States. Minority groups have always been seen as responsible for the problems of the city where they settled. A significant proportion of immigrant children never enrolled in school. Many schools enrolling immigrant children had higher truancy and dropout rates, lower achievement levels and greater instances of grade repetition than schools with non-immigrant populations. The abundance of manual labor jobs which required no reading or writing skills in any language absorbed many dropouts. Efforts have been made to try to *melt* Hispanic immigrants into the American society by having them acquire American values and customs and teaching them English at the expense of their own culture and language. Since Hispanics are presently a young immigrant group, and their population shows many of the normal characteristics of immigrant populations, in many instances they reflect abnormal socio-demographic characteristics.

Presently, the presence of large numbers of new immigrants, many of whom are undocumented and thus highly vulnerable to employer manipulation, represents yet another arena of conflict and competition in which Hispanics in the United States must function. Indeed, American society has been enriched by immigration, although society in general has looked negatively at cultural differences and placed an emphasis on assimilation, causing ethnic groups to compete among themselves. This situation will not change until the United States society recognizes that cultural pluralism is and should be a fundamentally positive element in which every citizen works together to establish reciprocal relationships and trust.

The Hispanic community is a young, diverse and dynamic population that is experiencing rapid growth. During the last decade,

the Hispanic population saw progress in only some social and economic areas. A profile of Hispanic youth revealed the similarities and differences they share among themselves and with the youth of other races. Most youth were raised in households where Spanish was spoken; their socioeconomic level was generally between that of African Americans and whites and their educational level is generally below that of the average white population. The challenges and opportunities that such a youthful, growing and diverse population pose to the United States are profound. Hispanic children will play an important role in the country's future economic social, political and educational life. Every social, political and educational institution should contribute to create constructive and positive changes in the lives of Hispanic children and youth. These changes are urgently needed.