Toward an Early Care and Education Agenda for Hispanic Children

Ray Collins & Rose Ribeiro
National Child Care Information Center

Abstract

The age distribution and growth of the Latino population have critical implications for the present and future of social and economic policy, with particular emphasis on early care and education. Following a discussion of the demographic trends involving Latino children and families, this paper discusses the child care and early education needs of Latinos, including workforce issues, immigration, educational challenges, and English-language learners. The paper then discusses how Latinos are served by early care and education programs, including Head Start, prekindergarten, and child care, concluding that Latinos are underserved. The last section addresses possible actions that might be taken to improve early care and education services for Latinos.

Introduction

Dramatic growth of the Hispanic population in the United States has begun to alter the landscape for state and local policy makers and administrators. We are witnessing a demographic seismic shift that is transforming U.S. society during the first half of the 21st century. These changes are manifested first among children, especially young children from birth through age 5. In that age range, Hispanics are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group. This trend has profound implications for President Bush's blueprint to strengthen early childhood programs-including Head Start, prekindergarten, and child care-which is outlined in *Good Start, Grow Smart*(White House, 2002). This article provides an overview of these demographic changes and highlights the significance for early care and education programs.

What Are the Major Demographic Trends Involving Latino Children and Families?

Largest and Fastest Growing Minority

Hispanics[1] have become the largest and fastest-growing racial/ethnic minority in the United States. From July 2000 to July 2003, the number of Hispanics increased by 4.6 million to 39.9 million, surpassing African Americans (who numbered 38.7 million) as the largest minority community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Hispanics accounted for about one-half of the net population growth of 9.4 million over the period and represented more than one out of eight of the 290.8 million people in the nation.

Young Hispanic Children-the Fastest Growing Population Group

The age distribution and growth of the Latino population have critical implications for the present and future of social and economic policy, with particular emphasis on early care and education. In general, the number of Hispanic children as a proportion of all children has been increasing more rapidly than the number of non-Hispanic White and Black children for all age groups. These trends are accounted for by immigration and by the large proportion of Latinas of child-bearing age.

Hispanics and Blacks under age 5 will outnumber non-Hispanic Whites by 2050 (see Table 1). Census projections for the youngest children suggest that by 2050 Hispanics and Blacks under the age of 5 will number 8.6 million and 4 million, respectively, compared with non-Hispanic Whites, who will number 12.3 million. In the second half of the 21st century, minorities of all racial/ethnic groups will become the majority in the United States across the age span, if current trends continue.

Table 1
Number of Children under Age 5 for Hispanics, Blacks, and Non-Hispanic Whites: Years 2000, 2025, and 2050*

Children under Age 5	Year 2000 Actual	Year 2025 Projected	Year 2050 Projected
Hispanics	3,668,905	5,862,000	8,551,000
Blacks	2,744,783	3,345,000	3,982,000

Non-Hispanic Whites	11,171,157	12,024,000	12,287,000
Total (All Children under Age 5)	19,175,798	22,551,000	26,914,000

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000).

In July 2003, Hispanic children under age 5 amounted to 4.2 million or 21% of the total of 19.8 million children in that age range (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Poor Economic Circumstances

The economic conditions of Hispanics tend to be less favorable than those of most other racial/ethnic groups in the nation. According to the March 2002 Current Population Survey (CPS), Hispanics experienced high rates of unemployment, earned less, and were more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic Whites (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003). In the civilian labor force ages 16 and older, 8.1% of Hispanics were unemployed (vs. 5.1% of non-Hispanic Whites). Among full-time, year-round workers, 26.3% of Hispanics earned $35,000 or more (vs. 53.8% of non-Hispanic Whites). In 2002, 21.4% of Hispanics were living in poverty (vs. 7.8% of non-Hispanic Whites). In addition, Hispanic children under age 18 represented 17.7% of all children in the nation but constituted 30.4% of children in poverty.

Geographic Concentration of Hispanics

Although Latinos are widely dispersed throughout the nation, the vast majority live in a few states. According to Census 2000, 82% of Hispanics resided in 10 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas). These states are depicted in Table 2 in rank order of Hispanic population.

Table 2
States with a Large Hispanic Population*

State	Total State Population	Hispanic Population	Hispanic Population as Percent of Total State Population
California	33,871,648	10,966,556	32.4
Texas	20,851,820	6,669,666	32.0
New York	18,976,457	2,867,583	15.1
Florida	15,982,378	2,682,715	16.8
Illinois	12,419,293	1,530,262	12.3
Arizona	5,130,632	1,295,617	25.3
New Jersey	8,414,350	1,117,191	13.3
New Mexico	1,819,046	765,386	42.1
Colorado	4,301,261	735,601	17.1
Georgia	8,186,453	435,277	5.3
Total 10 States	129,953,338	29,065,854	22.4
Total United States	281,421,906	35,305,818	12.6

*Including Total Population and Percent Hispanic. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000).

Although 8 out of 10 Hispanics live in just 10 states, they have become widely dispersed throughout the United States. Census 2000 results included several indications of the nationwide presence of Hispanics:

- Hispanics constituted more than 6% of the population in 21 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming).

- Hispanics accounted for more than half the population growth in nine states (in descending order: Rhode Island, North Dakota, Connecticut, California, New York, Illinois, New Mexico, Texas, and New Jersey).

- The largest percentage increases in Latinos occurred in the South (top southern states by Hispanic percent change: North Carolina, 394%; Arkansas, 337%; Georgia, 300%; Tennessee, 278%; South Carolina, 211%; Alabama, 208%; and Kentucky, 173%).

- Hispanics were the majority of the population in 19 communities of 100,000 or more.

- Hispanics constituted more than 6% of the population in one out of five counties nationwide (694 out of 3,141 counties). In 50 counties, Latinos were the majority of the population (Guzman, 2001).

This combination of geographic concentration in areas traditionally associated with Hispanic populations and nationwide dispersion into states and communities not familiar with Hispanics poses a twofold challenge for policy makers and administrators. First, states and counties with the largest concentration of Hispanics need to gear up to address the needs of much larger numbers of Latinos than in the past. Second, all states and localities need to include Hispanics in their plans for early care and education and related services because this racial/ethnic "minority" is coming to live virtually everywhere.

What Are the Child Care and Early Education Needs of Hispanics?

Four primary issues influence the early care and education needs of Latino children and families. The first centers on workforce issues and the demand for child care to support working parents, including those who are moving off welfare. The second grows out of the confluence of immigration, workforce status of immigrant families, and the economic hardships faced by children of immigrants. The third stems from the educational challenges facing Latinos throughout their life span. And the fourth relates to difficulties faced by English-language learners whose native or dominant language is other than English.

Workforce Issues

Hispanic families face the same challenges in finding high-quality child care as non-Hispanic families with comparable socioeconomic characteristics (e.g., high incidence of poverty; low-wage jobs; and jobs with inflexible work schedules and nontraditional hours, including nights and weekends) and family composition (e.g., large numbers of children, particularly children from birth to age 5). In addition, Hispanic families struggle to find child care that is linguistically and culturally compatible. However, little research has focused on documenting the workforce issues and child care needs of Latinos.

In November 1999, the Child Care Bureau sponsored a National Leadership Forum on Child Care Issues of the Hispanic Community. Participants in the Forum came to a consensus that "The Hispanic population is among the fastest growing and youngest segments of American society, yet families confront lower quality and lower supply of available child care in relation to the general public" (Child Care Bureau, 2001, p. 1).

One of the characteristics of Hispanic families commonly cited is the apparent preference for "informal" child care arrangements in contrast to organized care (defined in the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation as including child care centers, nurseries or preschools, federal Head Start programs, and kindergartens or other schools). As noted in Table 3, in 1999, 232,000 Hispanic children of employed mothers (15.5%) were in organized care compared with 596,000 Black children of employed mothers (34.4%) and 1,874,000 non-Hispanic White children of employed mothers (26.7%). This situation has led some administrators and policy makers to assume that "informal" child care settings-including family, friend, and neighbor care-are strongly preferred by Latinos over child care centers. This may well be the case; however, these statistics may not tell the whole story.

It is also possible that the apparent reluctance of Latino families to place their children in center-based care may be, at least in part, an artifact of available choices of child care arrangements. For example, nearly one-third (31%) of the nation's Hispanic children under age 5 reside in California, the state with the smallest proportion (19%) of center-based care of all states with high concentrations of Hispanics; nationally, center-based care accounted for 32% of primary child care arrangements for children under age 5 with employed mothers (Capizzano, Adams, & Sonenstein, 2000). A different scenario prevails in Texas where, based on 1997 data, center-based care accounted for 78% of child care arrangements, and where Hispanics constituted 39% of all children served (Schexnayder, Schroeder, Faliski, & McCoy, 1999).

Table 3

Primary Child Care Arrangements for Preschoolers of Employed Mothers by Race/Ethnicity: Spring 1999*

Employed Mothers	Number of Children	Relatives	Organized Care	Family Day Care	Other Non-Relatives	No Regular Arrangement
All	10,587	5,559	2,735	1,209	1,031	509
White, Non-Hispanic	7,020	3,423	1,874	996	678	349
Hispanic	1,498	932	232	114	187	89
Black	1,735	930	596	90	141	49

*Numbers in thousands. Because of multiple arrangements, numbers may exceed the total number of children. Organized Care includes child care centers, nursery or preschools, federal Head Start programs, or kindergarten/grade school. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2003).

A study of Latino families and child care preferences in Chicago, where Latinos constitute 26% of the total city population, suggests that availability may be a key factor. "Latina mothers needing child care generally viewed child care centers favorably; the fact that few Latinos use child care centers is because affordable center care is not available in their neighborhoods" (Illinois Facilities Fund, 2003, p. 4). To the extent that the uneven availability of child care arrangements among states is a determining consideration, the demand among Latinos for center-based child care may have been underestimated.

Immigration

Data are becoming available that provide important insights into the demographic implications of immigration for child care and related issues. The National Center for Children in Poverty recently completed a comprehensive analysis of the children of immigrants, two-thirds of whom are Latinos, focused on data from Census 2000 and subsequent CPS survey data (Elmelech, McCaskie, Lennon, & Lu, 2002). The demographic and economic data provide some illuminating insights into the lives of immigrants, particularly with respect to child poverty, workforce status, and family composition.

For example, one in four poor children have at least one foreign-born parent, and approximately two-thirds of first-generation poor children are Hispanics. Although non-Hispanic White children of immigrants are less likely to be poor than either Hispanic or Black children, first-generation children of Hispanic origin are the most likely to live in poverty (nearly 45%).[2]

Another nationally representative study examined child care arrangements of preschool children in immigrant families, focusing on the 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1996 panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) (Brandon, 2002). Hispanic children (described as Mexican) constituted 27% of the sample of preschool children in immigrant families. The primary child care arrangements for preschoolers were relative (36.6%), non-relative (27%), parent (22.8%), and center-based (18.2%). Child care preferences tended to change dramatically for immigrant families, including Hispanics, as they remained in the United States, with families gravitating toward center-based arrangements. For third-generation children (i.e., those who are U.S.-born with both parents born in the United States), use of center-based care in states with the largest concentrations of children in immigrant families was as follows: Texas (49.2%), Florida (48.4%), California (37.8%), Illinois (30.7%), and New York (28%).

Immigrants, the overwhelming majority of whom are Hispanic, pose a major challenge for administrators and policy makers addressing early care and education issues. On the one hand, they are the wellspring of population growth and represent a major component of the labor force of the future at a time when the baby boom generation is reaching retirement age. On the other hand, they are underserved by child care and other early education programs, with a profound need for services stemming from high levels of workforce participation, prevalence of poverty, educational deprivation, and a preponderance of English-language learners.

Educational Challenges

There is ample evidence concerning the educational gap between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites; similarly, in many key areas, Hispanics continue to perform behind African Americans. A recent comprehensive study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the status and trends in the education of Latinos spells out the disparities spanning early childhood, elementary and secondary education, and higher education (Llagas, 2003). Several findings stand out:

Family Literacy. Hispanic children were less likely than non-Hispanic White or Black children to be read to or to visit a library. In 1999, 61% of Hispanic children had been read to three or more times in the past week;

40% were told a story by a family member in the past week; and 25% had visited a library within the past month.

Reading. Hispanic 9-year-olds' scores on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading tests were 13% behind scores of non-Hispanic Whites (a gap of 28 points), and the gap did not decrease over the testing periods between 1975 and 1999. Reading scores of Hispanics and Blacks were statistically the same; however, the gap in scores between non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks had decreased over time.[3]

Grade Retention, Suspension, and Expulsion. Latino students have higher retention and suspension/expulsion rates than non-Hispanic Whites. In 1999, 20% of Hispanic students in grades 7 through 12 had been suspended or expelled (non-Hispanic Whites, 15%; Blacks, 35%).

Dropout Rate. Hispanic students have the highest high school dropout rates (28%), more than double those of Black students and four times the dropout rate of non-Hispanic White students in 2000.

Higher Education. Latinos fell even further behind at the higher education level between 1980 and 2000. Only 22% of Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in colleges and universities (including 2-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions) in 2000 compared with 39% of White non-Hispanics and 31% of Blacks. Comparable figures for 1980 were 16%, 27%, and 19%, respectively. The picture improves considerably for those who complete high school-36% of Hispanics enrolled in colleges and universities in 2000, compared with 44% of White non-Hispanics and 39% of Blacks. However, it should be kept in mind that the high school dropout rate for Hispanics is four times that of non-Hispanic Whites and more than double that of Black students, which greatly constricts the pool of Latinos who potentially may attend college.

English-Language Learners

A central issue in providing early care and education services to Latino children from birth through age 5 is the high proportion of English-language learners, children whose home or dominant language is other than English, sometimes termed limited English proficient (LEP).[4] Extrapolating from Head Start data, Spanish is the dominant language of an estimated three-fourths of preschool children in low-income Hispanic families.

The child entering kindergarten most at risk for academic failure and school dropout is the child not able to speak English. English-language fluency serves as a strong predictor of later school performance.

Although there is considerable controversy about how best to serve English-language learners during the K-12 period of formal schooling, particularly regarding whether and how to use bilingual curricular strategies, there is a greater degree of agreement about culturally and linguistically appropriate early education strategies for children from birth to age 5. In particular, a growing body of evidence suggests that preschool Hispanic children are more likely to become fluent and to acquire literacy skills in English if they have a strong foundation in their home language (Espinosa, 2003).

How Are Latinos Served by Early Care and Education Programs?

Research has demonstrated that high-quality child care and other early education programs can contribute to later educational attainment and life success, with related economic and social benefits to the individual and the larger society (Barnett, 1995). Early education research also suggests that those children in greatest need (including Latinos) tend to make the greatest gains (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001). Early care and education programs have the potential to begin to address the needs of Latino children and families summarized above. This section of the article addresses the extent to which this potential is being realized in practice and provides an overview of the extent to which Hispanic children birth to age 5 have been served by early care and education programs, with specific information about Head Start, prekindergarten, and child care programs.

Head Start

In fiscal year 2002, Head Start enrolled approximately 912,000 children, of whom 29.8% were Hispanic. The racial/ethnic composition of Head Start participants is indicated in Figure 1 (Head Start Bureau, 2003).

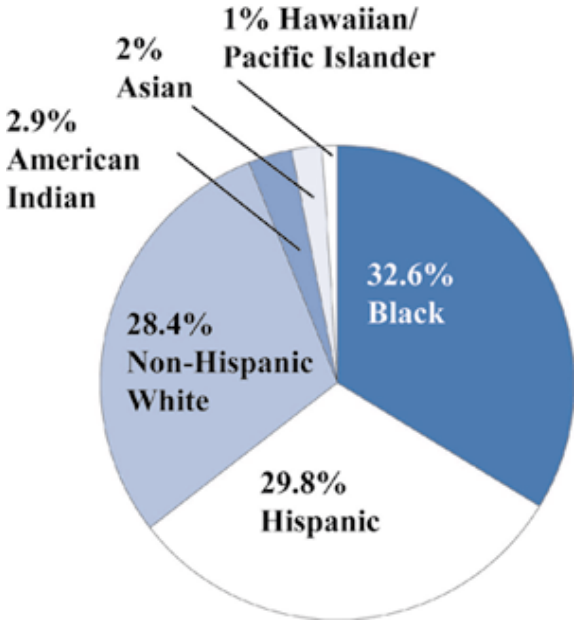

Figure 1. Racial/ethnic composition of Head Start participants. Data based on 912,345 children, ages birth-5, primarily 3- and 4-year-olds; data include Early Head Start. Pie chart does not include children reported as biracial/multiracial, other, and unspecified.

A more detailed analysis of Head Start participants based upon 2000-2001 data reported a similar racial/ethnic composition (Schumacher & Rakpraja, 2003). Of the approximately 950,000 children who were served at any time during the year (greater than the number of children enrolled), Spanish was the dominant language for 22% of the children.

In keeping with demographic trends, Latino enrollment in Head Start increased far more than any other ethnic group between 1994 and 1999. A special analysis of the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) data provides additional information about Latino children in Head Start (Garcia & Levin, 2001). (Although this analysis of FACES data included Head Start children living in Puerto Rico, these findings are not included in our paper.) The following were principal conclusions of the study:

- Latino enrollment increased 19.8% during this five-year period of robust Head Start expansion compared with a 2.9% increase in non-Hispanic White enrollment and an 8.2% increase in the enrollment of Black children.
- Overall, Latino families reported more barriers to Head Start participation than other parents. Child care needs, language/cultural differences, concern for safety, and a lack of support from their spouses/partners were frequently cited barriers.
- Notwithstanding these barriers, Latino parents were as likely to report satisfaction with the Head Start program as non-Latino parents; the percentage of "maximum" satisfaction rated by Latinos was 94.8% and 91.9% by non-Latinos.
- Among all Latino families, teacher education and training, as well as academic activities in classrooms, were associated with greater involvement in Head Start program activities, greater satisfaction with the program, and larger increases in family-child activities during the Head Start year.

RAND researchers conducted an in-depth analysis of the benefits of Head Start for Hispanic children living in the United States utilizing data for the period 1979-1992 from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) combined with National Longitudinal Survey Child-Mother (NLSCM) files (Currie & Thomas, 2000). These researchers found large positive effects of participation in Head Start on test scores, including language and literacy, and on school attainment of Hispanic children. The researchers estimated that Head Start closes "at least one quarter of the gap" in test scores between Hispanic children and non-Hispanic White children as well as "two-thirds of the gap" in the probability of grade repetition. There were important differences in the gains for Hispanic subgroups, with Mexican-origin children appearing to reap the largest gains from Head Start. The findings suggested to the researchers that one of the benefits of Head Start for children of foreign-born mothers is to provide "compensatory exposure" for limited exposure to English during early childhood.

In addition to the regular Head Start program that focuses on services to children ages 3-5, information has

recently become available about the Early Head Start program, which serves children from birth to age 3 and pregnant women (Irish, Schumacher, & Lombardi, 2003). Over the course of the 2002 program year, 60,663 young children were served by Early Head Start, with racial/ethnic diversity similar to Head Start (e.g., 25% Hispanic). Spanish was the primary language for 17% of the children.

The study provided information about the racial/ethnic background of Early Head Start staff, 21% of whom were Latino. Twenty-three percent of Early Head Start staff spoke a primary language other than English, generally Spanish (although specific information about particular languages was not available). These data suggest a reasonable balance between Latino staff (including facility in Spanish) and the profile of Latino children served by Early Head Start.

Prekindergarten

In October 2000, approximately 822,000 children ages 3-5 were enrolled in public elementary school prekindergarten classes according to a nationwide survey by NCES (Smith, Kleiner, Parsad, & Farris, 2003). About one-fourth of the prekindergarten children were Hispanic (compared with all public school students, 17% of whom are Hispanic). The racial/ethnic backgrounds of prekindergarten participants are indicated in Figure 2. Forty-nine percent of prekindergarten children were non-Hispanic White, 24% were Hispanic, and 23% were Black, with Asian and American Indian/Alaska Native children constituting 3% and 2%, respectively.

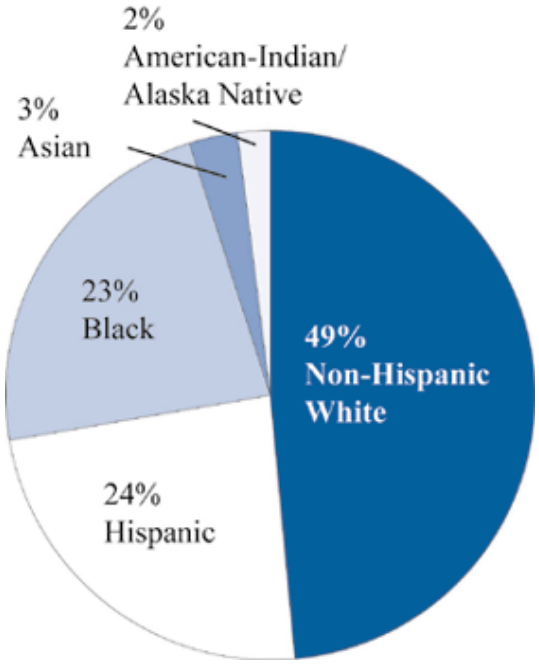

Figure 2. Racial/ethnic background of prekindergarten participants.

In prekindergarten classes within schools with the highest concentration of poverty, Hispanic and Black children constituted 39% and 36%, respectively, compared with 22% non-Hispanic White prekindergarten children.

Although most of the data in the NCES report did not highlight Latinos or other specific racial/ethnic groups, several critical data variables contrasted minorities and non-Hispanic Whites. Class size, which research shows to be one of the critical quality variables influencing child outcomes, is a prime example. On average, 14 children were in each prekindergarten class (17 children in general education classes compared with 9 children in special education classes). However prekindergarten class sizes tended to be larger in public schools with greater poverty concentrations and a higher percentage of minority enrollment. In schools with 50% or more minority children, the average prekindergarten class size was 15 compared with 12 children in a typical class in schools with low minority enrollment (i.e., 6% to 20%).

There were also important differences in the length of the school day and the number of days per week that prekindergarten classes met. This indicator has high relevance for the ability of public school administered prekindergarten programs to respond to the child care needs of working families, or to partner with other community-based Head Start and child care providers to more fully respond to family needs. Full-day prekindergarten was provided in 32% of the classes, and 68% were part-day classes.[5] Most full-day classes

(84%) met five days per week. The likelihood that the public schools would provide full-day classes tended to be greater in schools with higher poverty concentrations and a higher percentage of minority enrollment. In schools with a majority minority enrollment (50% or more), 40% of prekindergarten classes were full-day.

The sources of funds for prekindergarten classes varied only slightly by the proportion of minority children in the classes. Overall, 80% of the schools that administered prekindergarten classes received state or local education funds-the dominant source of financing, although this funding was frequently supplemented by other sources. Federal or local programs for children with disabilities supported 51%; Title I, Part A, 25%; Head Start, 13%; child care funds through a state or local agency, 11%; and Even Start, 4%. Only Title I funding increased appreciably in schools with 50% or more minority enrollment (with 39% of such schools receiving Title I, Part A, funding and 8% receiving Even Start funding).

The dramatic increases in state funding support for prekindergarten programs were reflected in the NCES report. The estimated numbers of Hispanic children served (197,000) at a point in time are nearly three-fourths of those served by Head Start (271,000), taking into account the fact that prekindergarten services are less comprehensive than those provided by Head Start.

No research studies assess the general impact of prekindergarten programs on Hispanic children.

Child Care

Approximately 15% of children receiving child care subsidies under age 5 are Hispanic, according to reports of state administrators of the Child Care and Development Fund (see Figure 3). The monthly average number of children served from birth to age 5 was approximately 974,000, of whom approximately 150,000 are conservatively estimated to be Hispanic. No research studies address the quality of child care services for Hispanics.

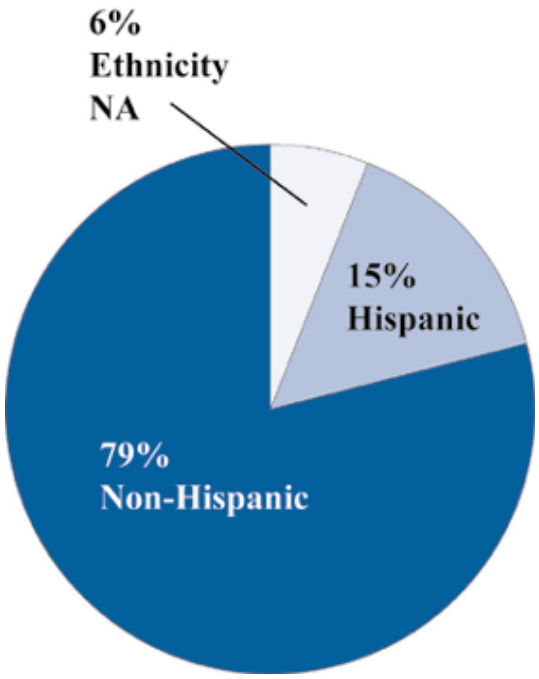

Figure 3. Percentage of children receiving child care subsidies by ethnicity. There were a total of 974,013 children reported for All Race and Ethnicity Combos; 149,803 children reported for All Hispanic/Latino; and 53,956 children with Ethnicity Invalid/Not Reported. Ethnicity NA means Ethnicity Invalid/Not Reported. Many states are still reporting Hispanic as a race in all or nearly all their data in accordance with the FY 1999 reporting standards, which accounts for a large percentage of the counts in the invalid race categories. Source: Child Care Bureau (2003).

Underserved Hispanics

Hispanic children under age 5 are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood programs than other major racial/ethnic groups, although 4-year-olds are better served than 3-year-olds. As shown in Figure 4, in 1998,

fewer than half as many Hispanic 3-year-olds (20%) were enrolled in early childhood programs compared with non-Hispanic Whites (42%) and Blacks (44%), according to a report from the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (1999). Of 4-year-olds, fewer than 60% of Hispanics were enrolled compared with 67% of non-Hispanic Whites and 73% of Blacks.

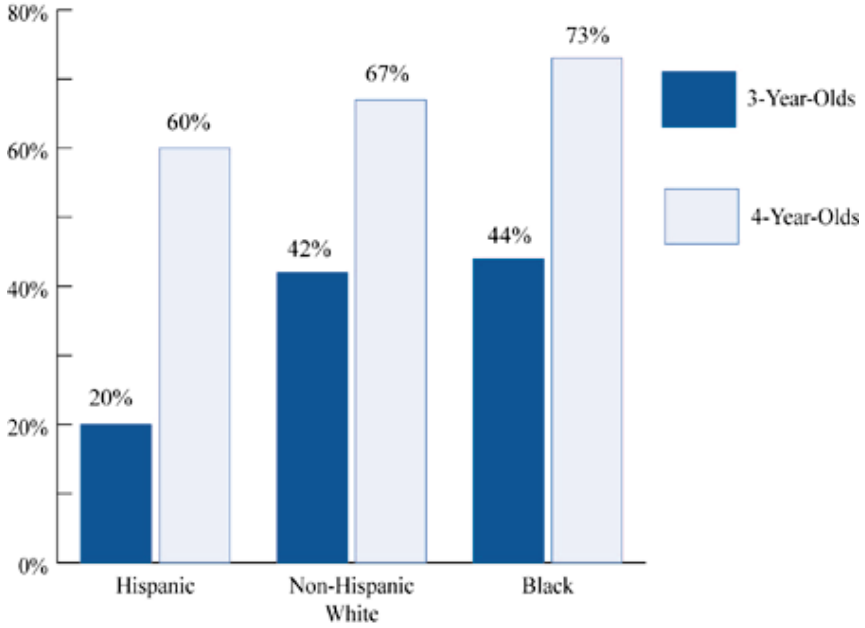

Figure 4. Percentage of 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds enrolled in early childhood programs in 1998 by race and ethnicity. Source: White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (1999); ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education (2001).

Although there has been progress since the White House conference in 1998, Hispanics are still underserved in Head Start, child care, and prekindergarten programs-taking into account the numbers of Hispanic children from birth to age 5, high incidence of poverty, language barriers, and other risk factors.

A national survey of state administrators of early care and education programs found "the lack of Latino or bilingual professionals and the lack of sufficient staff preparation and training as the most urgent challenges in serving the Latino population " (Buysse, Castro, West, & Skinner, 2004, p. 2). Additional barriers include communication difficulties with Latino families and families' lack of information about early childhood services.

What Are Ways to Improve Services for Hispanics through Child Care and Other Early Childhood Programs?

This section addresses possible actions that might be taken to improve early care and education services for Latinos. The basic facts are now known about the current status and future trends affecting child care and the early education of Latino children. The numbers of Hispanics from birth to age 5 are large and growing rapidly, particularly in states and localities with high concentrations of Hispanics. Over the next half century, Latino children will be the spearhead of net population increase and the dominant component of the future labor force in the nation.

Despite impressive growth in the numbers of Hispanic children in early care and education programs-especially Head Start and prekindergarten-over the past decade, Hispanics remain the largest underserved group, with serious questions regarding the quality of services provided. This service and outcome gap highlights issues of equity and equal access to educational opportunity. In addition, opportunity costs are levied on children, families, and society when the benefits of child care and early childhood services are not available for working parents and children from birth to age 5. Finding ways to improve these benefits is the principal focus of *Good Start, Grow Smart* (White House, 2002).

The following chart highlights 10 points to include in action plans to improve early care and education services to ensure that they are responsive to the needs of young Hispanic children and their families. The left column of the chart proposes 10 generic action steps that would include all children, with the expectation that even-handed implementation will have the net effect of helping to close the gap for Hispanics and to reduce the

extent to which they are underserved. The right column gives specific examples of how the general action step might be targeted more directly on Hispanics.

10 Action Steps	Examples of Targeting Hispanic Children
1. Strategic assessments of child care and early education at the state and community levels should take into account both the need for and the availability of services for children of all major racial/ethnic groups, with particular attention to special needs (e.g., disabilities and limited English proficiency).	• Ensure that needs assessments take into account current demographic data on Hispanic children, since the landscape is changing so rapidly. • Involve Hispanic families and community groups in preparing and reviewing state and community assessments.
2. Parent outreach and involvement efforts should be expanded to include the use of culturally appropriate messages and the involvement of community religious, social, and economic institutions; and they should be targeted to reach families of all racial/ethnic groups, including families who speak languages other than English.	• Ensure that child care, prekindergarten, Head Start, and other early childhood programs have telephone, Internet, and other contact access for persons who speak Spanish. • Prepare outreach and informational publications in Spanish as well as English.
3. Early learning guidelines for child care and other education programs should be respectful of children's home languages and cultures and give priority to language-rich learning environments that take into account the language(s) spoken by the children.	• Early learning guidelines for children from birth to age 5 should include guidance focused on children whose home language is Spanish. • Brochures and booklets that provide guidance for teachers, caregivers, and parents in how to implement early learning guidelines should be in Spanish as well as English.
4. Training and professional development of teachers should give priority to research-based strategies for enhancing the language, literacy, and school readiness of all children, including children with limited English proficiency.	• Training in Spanish should be available for Spanish-speaking teachers and caregivers. • Training materials should provide guidance on how to teach children whose home language is Spanish.
5. Early childhood workforce recruitment measures should focus on attracting linguistic and cultural minorities to assure that the professionals working with children are as diverse as the children they serve.	• Recruitment materials should be available in Spanish. • Outreach and recruitment efforts should be conducted in communities with high concentrations of Hispanics.
6. Early education partnerships among child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten programs should be encouraged to improve services to underserved populations, including Hispanics.	• An example of an effective partnership would be collaboration between groups that represent Latinos or have been successful in serving Hispanic children and programs that are seeking to improve services.
7. Program quality in centers and other settings should be monitored regularly using research-based assessment instruments that give priority to caregiver-child interaction, language and literacy (including English-language learners), cultural diversity, parent involvement, and developmental and educational appropriateness of the environment and curriculum (e.g., Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-ECERS-R).	• When available, assessment instruments should be used that are appropriate for program settings that include children who speak Spanish. • When instruments are used that have not been developed and standardized on settings that include sufficient numbers of Hispanic children, Hispanic experts should be consulted on interpretation of the results.
8. Child assessment and evaluation outcome measures should be linguistically and culturally appropriate, as well as developmentally appropriate, for all children, including English-language learners.	• Child assessment instruments should not be used to evaluate the language and literacy functioning of a child whose home language is Spanish unless a version is developed for use with such children.

9. Reviews of policies and procedures should include assessment of the impact of such guidelines on the program participation of all families, including Latinos.	• Groups that represent Latinos or have been successful in serving Hispanic children should be consulted in such reviews.
10. Research should address the scope and quality of services for Hispanics and other underserved populations of vulnerable children and families, including the special needs of English-language learners.	• A high priority for research is how to promote early literacy and learning for children from birth to age 5 whose home language is Spanish.

Notes

1. The terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably in this paper, following current U.S. Census Bureau practice. According to the more detailed data breakdown in the March 2002 Current Population Survey (CPS), of the 37.4 million Latinos estimated in the CPS at that time, 66.9% were of Mexican origin, 14.3% were Central or South American, 8.6% were Puerto Rican, 3.7% were Cuban, and the remaining 6.5% were of other Hispanic origin (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003). Hispanic groups in the United States have many distinct characteristics, even though they share a common language and culture. [Back to text.]

2. First-generation children are those born in a country other than the United States; second-generation children refer to those born in the United States to at least one foreign-born parent. [Back to text.]

3. Recent data on NAEP writing scores for 2002 paint a similar picture for 4th-graders, as do the reading scores for 9-year-olds cited above (Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003). Writing test scores of Hispanics in 2002 were 14% behind the scores of non-Hispanic Whites (a gap of 20 points) and were statistically the same as writing scores for Blacks. [Back to text.]

4. In a comprehensive survey of public schools with prekindergarten classes (an estimated 19,900 classes in the 2000-2001 school year), NCES reported that 15% of all prekindergarten children were limited English proficient (Smith, Kleiner, Parsad, & Farris, 2003). Limited English proficient (LEP) children were defined by NCES as those "whose native or dominant language is other than English, and whose skills in listening to, speaking, reading, or writing English are such that he/she derives little benefit from school instruction in English" (p. 21). Although NCES did not report the racial/ethnic background of LEP children, the overwhelming majority are Hispanic. [Back to text.]

5. Full-day classes were defined by NCES as lasting for four hours or more; half-day classes last for less than four hours. "To calculate hours per day, count from the first bell to the last, including recess time, naptime, etc., but excluding time spent in before- and after-school child care" (Smith, Kleiner, Parsad, & Farris, 2003, p. C5). [Back to text.]

Acknowledgments

This article is based on the report *Hispanics and Child Care: The Changing Landscape* by Ray Collins and Angela Willson-Quayle for the Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which was released September 2004.

References

Barnett, W. Steven. (1995). Long-term effects of early childhood programs on cognitive and school outcomes.*Future of Children, 5*(1), 25-50. EJ 523 962.

Bowman, Barbara T.; Donovan, M. Suzanne; & Burns, M. Susan (Eds.). (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. ED 447 963.

Brandon, Peter D. (2002, April). *The child care arrangements of preschool children in immigrant families in the United States* (Working Paper Series). New York: Foundation for Child Development. ED 473 708.

Buysse, Virginia; Castro, Dina C.; West, Tracey; & Skinner, Martie L. (2004). *Addressing the needs of Latino children: A national survey of state administrators of early childhood programs. Executive summary.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.

Capizzano, Jeffrey; Adams, Gina; & Sonenstein, Freya L. (2000, March). Child care arrangements for children under five: Variation across states. *New Federalism: National Survey of American Families* [Online]. Available:~~http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/anf_b7.pdf~~ [2003, July 22].

Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). (2001). National leadership forum on child care issues of the Hispanic community. Child Care Bulletin, 24 [Online]. Available: ~~http://nccic.org/ccb/issue24.html~~ [2004, July 30].

Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). (2003). *Child care and development fund monthly average adjusted number of children from birth to age 5.* Unpublished data analysis based on ACF-801 reports for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2001.

Currie, Janet, & Thomas, Duncan. (2000). Does Head Start help Hispanic children? (RAND Labor and Population Reprint Series 00-03). Washington, DC: RAND. (Reprinted from *Journal of Public Economics, 74*(1999), 235-263)

Elmelech, Yuval; McCaskie, Katie; Lennon, Mary Clare; & Lu, Hsien-Hen. (2002). *Children of immigrants: A*

statistical profile. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty. ED 472 352.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. (2001). *Latinos in school: Some facts and findings.* (ERIC Digest 162). New York: Author. ED 449 288.

Espinosa, Linda M. (2003, August). *Meeting the needs of diverse children, families, and providers*. Presentation at the State Child Care Administrators Meeting, Washington, DC.

Garcia, Gabriela, & Levin, Marjorie. (2001). *Latino children in Head Start: Family characteristics, parent involvement, and satisfaction with the Head Start program* [Online]. Available:http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/core/ongoing_research/faces/2001_latino_poster_ppt/2001_latino_poster.htm [2003, July 22].

Guzman, Betsy. (2001). *The Hispanic population: Census 2000 brief.* Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. ED 454 363.

Head Start Bureau (HSB), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). (2003). *2002 Head Start program fact sheet* [Online]. Available:http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/factsheets/02_hsfs.htm [2004, August 4].

Illinois Facilities Fund. (2003). "*We need more day care centers": Latino families and child care preferences in metropolitan Chicago* [Online]. Available: http://iff.org/resources/content/3/6/documents/iff_Latino_study.pdf [2003, August 15].

Irish, Kate; Schumacher, Rachel; & Lombardi, Joan. (2003, June). Serving America's youngest: A snapshot of early Head Start children, families, teachers, and programs in 2002. *Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) Policy Brief* (Head Start Series No. 3) [Online]. Available:http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1056552655.59/HS_brief3.pdf [2004, August 4].

Llagas, Charmaine. (2003). *Status and trends in the education of Hispanics* (NCES 2003-008). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. ED 477 131.

Persky, Hilary R.; Daane, Mary C.; & Jin, Ying. (2003). *The nation's report card: Writing 2002* (NCES 2003-529). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. ED 476 189.

Ramirez, Roberto R., & de la Cruz, Patricia G. (2003). *The Hispanic population in the United States: March 2002.*(Current Population Reports P20-545). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. ED 478 281.

Schexnayder, Deanna T.; Schroeder, Daniel G.; Faliski, Katherine; & McCoy, Jody. (1999). *Texas subsidized child care utilization patterns and outcomes*. Austin, TX: Center for the Study of Human Resources. ED 441 564.

Schumacher, Rachel, & Rakpraja, Tanya. (2003, March). *A snapshot of Head Start children, families, teachers, and programs: 1997 and 2001. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) Policy Brief* (Head Start Series No. 1) [Online]. Available: http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1047305635.76/Head_Start_brief1.pdf [2004, August 4].

Smith, Timothy; Kleiner, Anne; Parsad, Basmat; & Farris, Elizabeth. (2003). *Prekindergarten in U.S. public schools: 2000-2001* (NCES 2003-019). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. ED 473 692.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Census 2000 summary file 3 (SF 3): Tables P145A-P145I* [Online]. Available:http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetTableListServlet?_ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&_type=table&_lang=en&_program=DEC&_ts=7564142654 [2004, August 4].

U.S. Census Bureau. (2003). PPL Table 2A: Primary child care arrangements of preschoolers of employed mothers: Spring 1999 [Online]. In *Survey of income and program participation (SIPP), 1996 panel, wave 10*. Available: http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/child/ppl-168/tab02A.pdf [2004, August 4].

U.S. Census Bureau. (2004). Hispanic and Asian American Americans increasing faster than overall population. United States Department of Commerce News [Online]. Available: http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/race/001839.html [2004, June 14].

White House. (2002). *Good start, grow smart: The Bush administration's early childhood initiative* [Online]. Available: http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/earlychildhood/toc.htm [2003, July 11].

White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. (1999). *Latinos in education: Early childhood, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, graduate*.Washington, DC: Author. .

Author Information

Ray Collins is a senior researcher at the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC). Ray is president of Collins Management Consulting, Inc. (CMC), which has administered NCCIC since its inception in 1994. He received his B.A. from Yale University and M.P.A. and Ph.D. degrees in public policy from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. He holds an adjunct faculty position at the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University. His research interests include child care, Head Start, and other early childhood programs.

Ray Collins
National Child Care Information Center
243 Church Street NW, 2nd Floor
Vienna, VA 22180
Telephone: 800-616-2242
Fax: 800-716-2242
Email: rcollins@nccic.org

Rose Ribeiro is a bilingual information specialist at the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC). She received her B.A. in Latin American and Latino Studies from University of California Santa Cruz and her M.R.P. in City and Regional Planning from Cornell University. Her research interests include early care and education finance and cultural and language diversity.

Rose Ribeiro
National Child Care Information Center
243 Church Street NW, 2nd Floor
Vienna, VA 22180
Telephone: 800-616-2242
Fax: 800-716-2242
Email: rribeiro@nccic.org