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## Explaining Scholarship Addressing Hispanic Children's Issues

Adolfo G. Santos

*University of Houston - Downtown*, santosa@uhd.edu

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## Introduction

The impact of the growing Latino population on the United States is only now being studied closely.\* While the growth of the Latino population will help the U.S. remain competitive globally, the Latino population is not without its deficits. Nowhere is that more apparent than among Latino children.

The educational, health, economic and social dynamics affecting Latino children are finally being studied. Certain issues, such as a high dropout rate, language barriers, drug use, poverty rates, obesity and juvenile diabetes disproportionately affect the Latino community and will have long-term detrimental effects on the Latino population, and on the United States.

There is a dearth of scholarship addressing issues unique to Latino children. The existing literature has been written by Hispanic scholars and the federal government to analyze issues facing the Hispanic community. As more Hispanics have become professors, their research has become more sophisticated. As the Hispanic population has grown, the issues it faces have begun to be recognized by the federal government. The government, in response, has increased spending on research, and created institutions to improve the lives of the Hispanic population.

Simply put, the lack of research regarding Hispanic children is a function of *interest* in Hispanic children. This paper begins with a brief definition of *interest*, as that term is used in the article. The article then describes the research design and identifies the hypotheses to be tested. The findings section will describe how the growing number of Hispanic scholars affects the number of articles published on Hispanic children's issues and will discuss the various investments that the federal government has made on behalf of Hispanic children.

## “Interest” Defined

This paper addresses the question of why there is so little scholarship on Hispanic and Latino children in the United States. As the data will show, although there has been an increase in the amount of scholarship about this population, the vast majority of research is new. Given the complexity of the issues facing Hispanics, and the implications of these challenges on the United States, much more research is required.

From 1970 to the present, 1,640 articles have been published addressing Latino and Hispanic children. During that same time period, there were 8,552 articles that mentioned “black children,” 2,470 that

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\* The term Hispanic and Latino will be used interchangeably.

mentioned “African American children,” 1,343 articles that mentioned “Jewish children,” 4,499 articles that mentioned “poor children,” and 2,195 articles that mentioned “immigrant children.” The relatively small number of articles on Hispanic children indicates a lack of interest.

There are two types of “interest” defined by Suzanne Hidi that are applicable in this context. “Individual interest” develops slowly over time and tends to have long-lasting effects on a person’s knowledge and values. “Situational interest,” on the other hand, tends to be evoked more suddenly by something in the environment and may have only a short-term effect, marginally influencing an individual’s knowledge and values. While the focus of individual interest is the person and the focus of situational interest is the environment, person/environment interactions are a crucial aspect of both.<sup>1</sup>

In either case, the environment has an impact on an individual’s interest in the subject matter at hand. For the purpose of this study, we assume that both types of interest are motivating factors driving researchers.

### **Research Design**

This study tests several hypotheses to explain the amount of scholarship on Latino children. Individual interest is affective; it comes from the intrinsic affinity that one has for a group to which one belongs. Given that scholarship is produced by academics, an increase in the number of Latino scholars will lead to an increase in the amount of scholarship with a focus on Latino issues.

Situational interest is a function of cognitive deliberation; it is temporal and stimulated by one’s environment. Individuals develop interest in a topic either because the issue is sufficiently salient, or because some other type of stimulant stirs interest in the scholar. Interest in Latino children may be a function of the size of the Latino population – a sufficiently salient stimulus. As the Latino population grows, the population has its own set of issues to address. Interest in Latino children may also be a function of pecuniary benefits.

As the federal government has created Hispanic Serving Institutions, and funded programs to understand the Latino population, scholars have developed an interest in understanding Latino children. Now that there is financial gain from graduating Latino college students, it becomes important to scholars to understand Latino children before they arrive to university.

A dataset was created by counting the number of articles written in academic journals with the subject headings of “Latino children” and

“Hispanic children”. These articles were then coded for the year they were published, the subject of the article, the subject of the journal, the ethnicity of the authors, the number of authors, and the state where the authors resided. Ethnicity of the authors was determined by surname. Spanish surname has been used as a proxy measure for Hispanic/Latino ethnicity in numerous other studies when self-report or other measures of ethnicity are not available.<sup>2, 3</sup> While using surname as a measure of ethnicity is not without its limitations, in particular due to exogamy,<sup>2</sup> it was determined to be an adequate measure for the present inquiry.

The journal data is then tracked over time to show the amount of scholarship being produced with the terms “Hispanic children” and “Latino children” in the text of the article.<sup>†</sup> These are then compared to other data points that gauge the size of the Latino population, the percentage of scholars who are Latinos, and the percentage of Latinos with advanced degrees. These data points are also compared to the increase in federal spending and the creation of Hispanic Serving Institutions.

In gathering the data, 502 articles addressing “Latino children” were found from 1974 to the present. For purposes of this analysis, the last year included is 2007. This is because not all articles have been archived with the search engine jstor.org within the last three to five years. There were many more articles that used the more common “Hispanic children” in the articles. A total of 1,138 articles on “Hispanic children” were found between 1972 and the present. As with the term “Latino children” the period studied excludes the years 2008 through the present.

## Findings

The analysis is presented in three parts: 1) a description of the amount of scholarship using the terms “Latino children” and “Hispanic children,” 2) the effect of “individual interest” i.e. whether scholarship about Hispanic children is produced by Hispanic scholars 3) the effect of situational interest” i.e. whether pecuniary stimuli contributed to the creation of interest in studying Hispanic children.

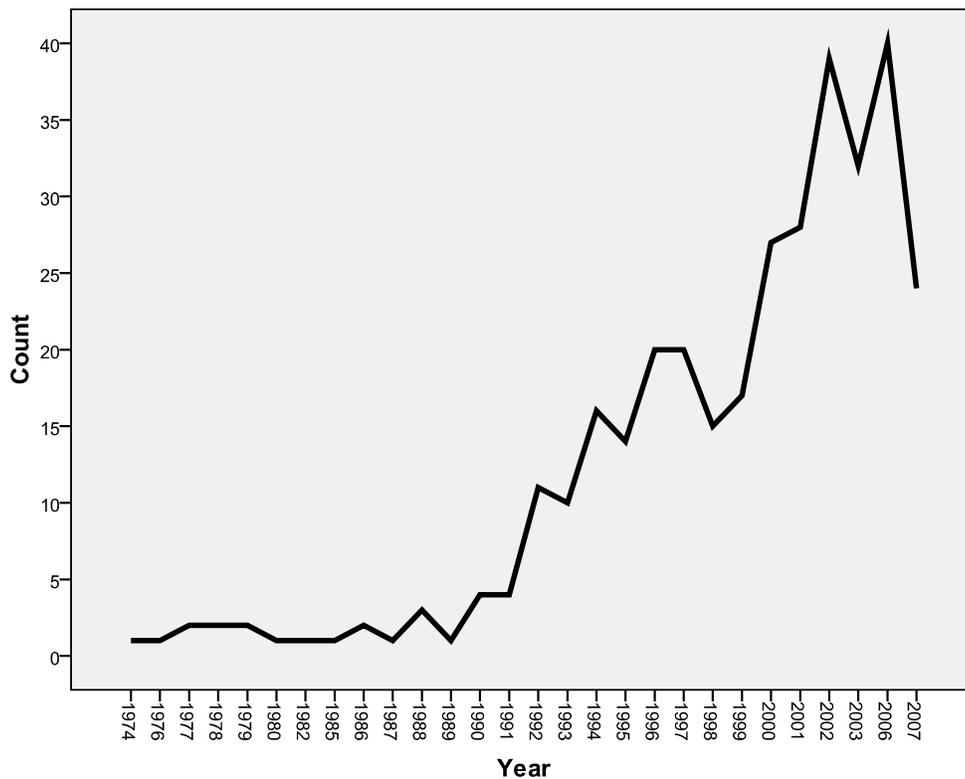
The data shows that the number of published articles addressing “Latino children” (Figure 1) or “Hispanic children” (Figure 2) has steadily increased since the 1970s. From 1974 until the late 1980s there were

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<sup>†</sup> These articles were counted by looking at the number of articles that mentioned the words “Latino children” or “Hispanic children” in the scholarly search engine www.jstor.org. This search engine has archived over one-thousand academic journals. It should also be noted that while the quantity of scholarship is measured in this endeavor, the quality is not. Some articles, for instance, mention “Latino children” tangentially, while others make Latino children the focus of the article.

virtually no such articles. Please note that the trend is flat until 1980 which is the first time that Census respondents could choose “Hispanic” to designate their ethnicity. After that time, demographers and other researchers had a major national source of data through which children of Hispanic descent could be counted and analyzed. At the end of the 1980s the data shows an increase in articles addressing “Latino children” (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Number of scholarly articles addressing “Latino children” (1974-2007)**



The term “Hispanic children”, by contrast, was already more popular with scholars because it carried fewer connotations. There was a small but growing body of literature addressing “Hispanic children” throughout the 1980s. Then, in the 1990s, the number of articles leveled off. After 2000 there was another increase in published articles discussing “Hispanic children”. In 2004, the year of the greatest number of scholarly articles, there were only 77 articles addressing Hispanic children’s issues.

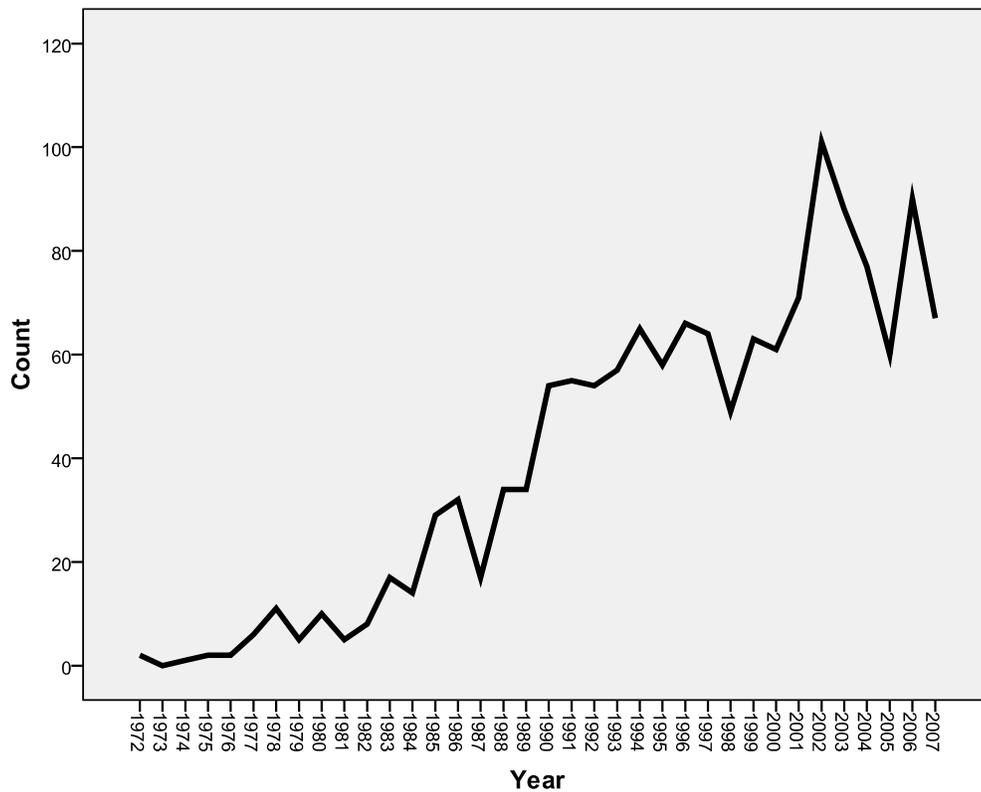
**Figure 2: Number of scholarly articles addressing “Hispanic children” (1972-2007)**

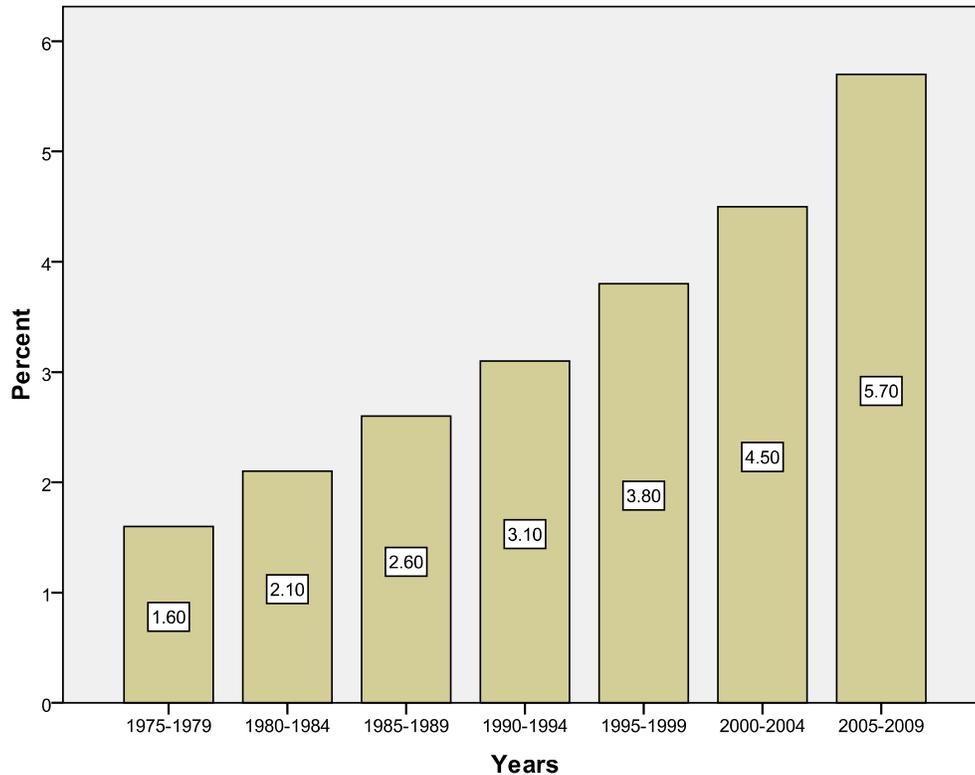
Given that the terms Latino and Hispanic can be used interchangeably, they have been combined in the figure below. When the terms are combined the data shows there has been a more steady increase in the scholarship addressing Hispanic and Latino children (Figure 3).

The increases in Latino and Hispanic children's research coincide with the entrance of Hispanics into academia. The data indicates that, to the extent that research and scholarship on Latino and Hispanic children has been produced, it is partly driven by the interest that Latino scholars have in the subject of Latino and Hispanic children. Since the mid 1970s, Latinos have been earning PhDs in record numbers. Figure 4 shows the percentage of all doctorates being awarded to Latino citizens. In the late 1970s, Latinos earned 1.6 percent of all doctorates awarded in that time period. By 2005-2009, 5.7 percent of all doctorates were earned by Latinos. For the first four time periods presented in the figure, the growth in Latino doctorates was about half of one percentage point or less. From 1990-1994 to 1995-1999, and then again from 1995-1999 to 2000-2004

Latinos experienced an increase of 0.7 percentage points in the share of doctorates awarded. That share increased even more from 2000-2004 to 2005-2009, rising by 1.2 percentage points. As more and more Latinos have earned doctorates, there has been an increase in the number of scholarly articles that address Latino issues.

**Figure 3: Count of articles addressing “Hispanic children” and “Latino children” combined (1972-2007)**



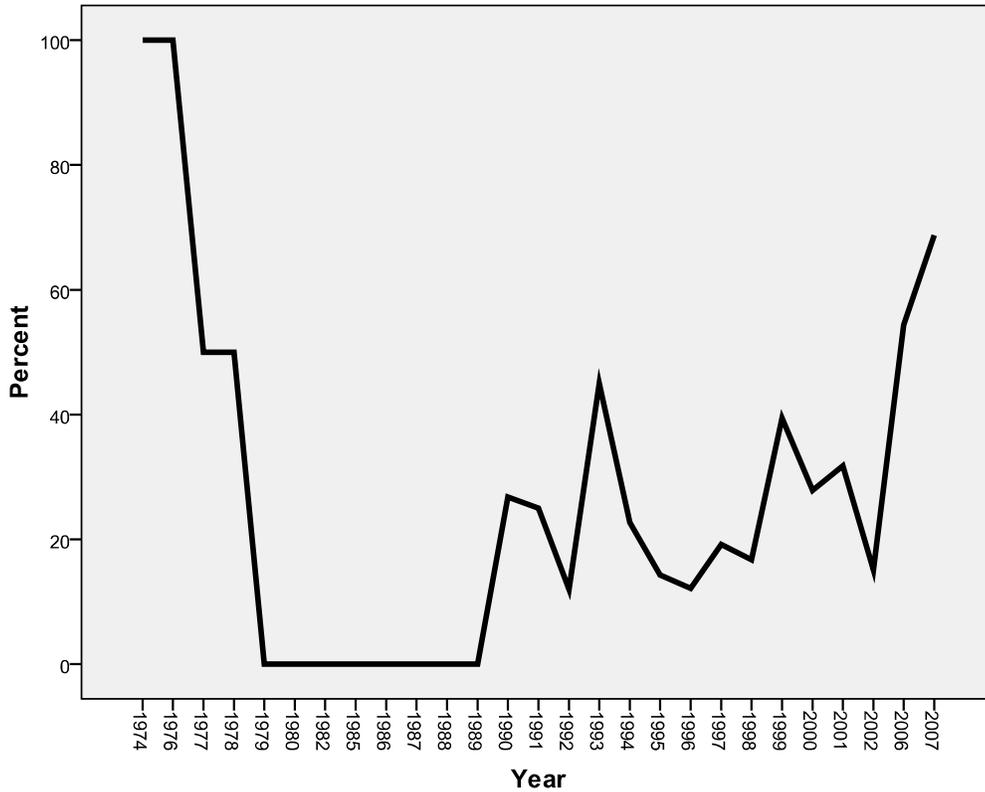
**Figure 4: Percent of PhDs earned by Hispanic individuals (1975-2009)**

Source: Survey of Earned Doctorates and Doctorate Records File

The figure below (Figure 5) shows the average percentage of Latinos authoring or co-authoring articles addressing “Latino” children’s issues.<sup>‡</sup> During the 1970s there were very few articles written on the subject and most were single-authored. By the late 1980s Latino scholars began publishing articles addressing issues facing Latino children. Hispanic scholars are beginning to co-author pieces with other academics as more Hispanic scholars join the field. By the 1990s and into the present decade, the average percentage of Hispanics authoring or co-authoring scholarship was on the rise.

<sup>‡</sup> This average percent is determined this way: First, calculate the percentage of the articles’ authors who are Hispanic. Then, create the average after summing the percents and dividing them by the number of articles produced during that year. Note that the measure of Hispanic authors was calculated only for scholarship addressing “Latino children.”

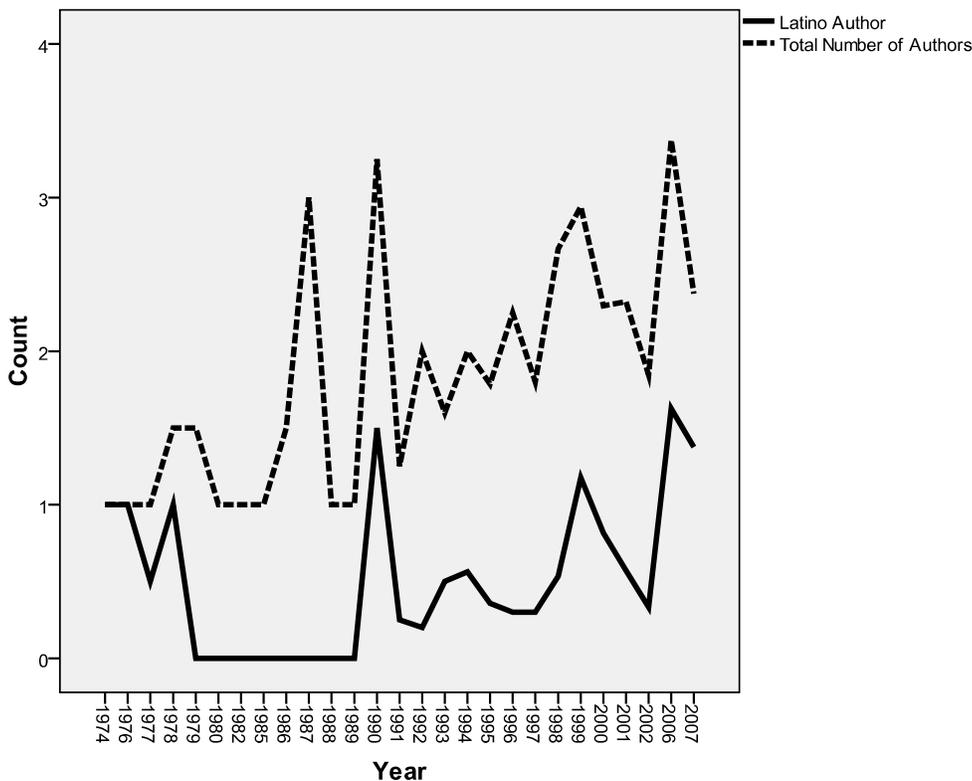
**Figure 5: Number of Latino author/co-authors compared to the total number of authors/co-authors over time (1974-2007)**



When comparing the average number of all authors writing on Latino children to the average number of Hispanic authors and co-authors (Figure 6), the data shows that from the 1990s to the present the average number of Hispanic scholars has risen steadily. We find that one-third of the authors during the period under investigation were Hispanic. While Hispanics account for a very small fraction of all doctoral grantees, they make up one-third of the scholars conducting scholarship on Latino children. As of 2007, 3.8 percent, or 51,660 of the 1.37 million university faculty were Hispanic.<sup>4</sup> The rather limited number of Hispanic professors is producing much of the scholarship on Hispanic children’s issues. The fact that Hispanics are authors or co-authors of a significant portion of the scholarship on Latino issues is consistent with the concept of “individual interest.” Hispanic scholars, having been socialized in the Latino community, have developed an affinity for members of their community. They understand the unique problems facing Latinos firsthand. Furthermore, their position as scholars gives them an important

responsibility in helping to resolve the problems and challenges facing Latino children.

**Figure 6: Average number of authors who are Hispanic compared to the average of all authors (1974-2007)**



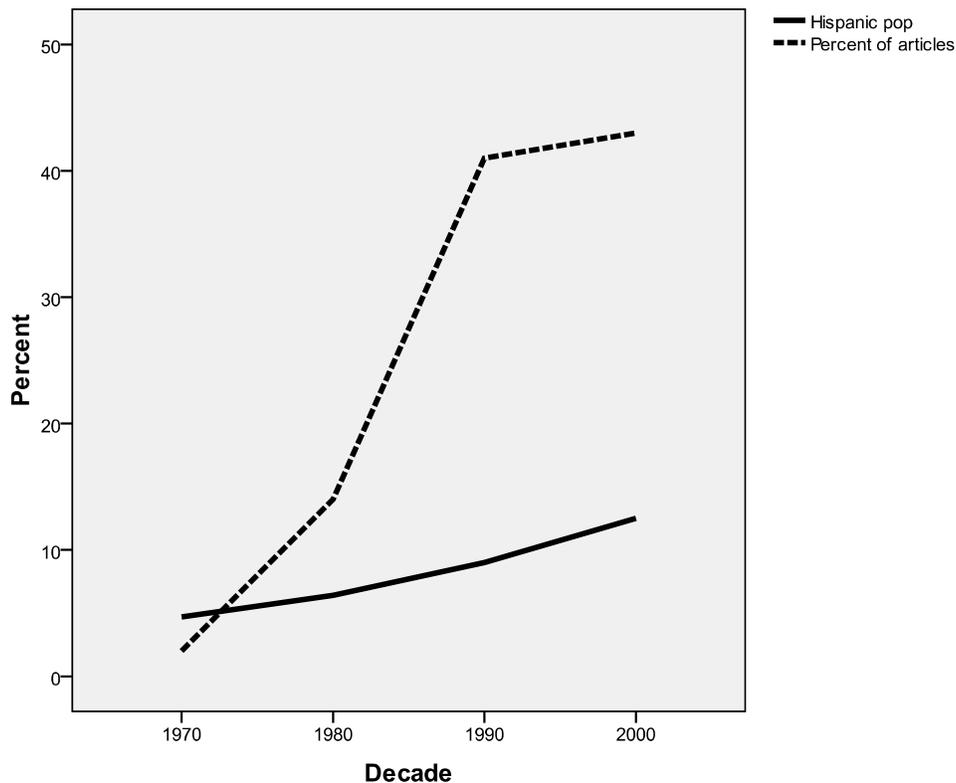
Articles analyzing issues affecting Hispanic children can be broken down into the following topics: 40 percent address education, 10 percent focus on health, 5 percent are written about family issues and another five percent discuss race.

As the Hispanic population has grown, so has the interest in Hispanic children. Figure 7 shows the percentage of all articles published during each decade from 1970 to 2000 that addresses Hispanic and Latino children's issues. In the 1970s, when the Hispanic population accounted for 4.7 percent of the US population, only 2 percent of all scholarship pertained to that subject. In the 1980s, the Hispanic population accounted for 6.4 percent of the total population and 14 percent of the scholarship pertained to Hispanic children. In the 1990s, as the Hispanic population increased to 9 percent the percentage of such articles rose to 41 percent. The 2.6 percentage point increase in the

Hispanic population contributed to a 66 percent increase in the amount of scholarship produced from 1980 to 1990. By 2000, Hispanics accounted for 12.5 percent of the total U.S. population and 43 percent of the scholarship measured for this study; the data for this decade is still incomplete.

The data reveals that the Hispanic population will continue to grow. As a result, more research will be required. The Latino and Hispanic community is a relatively young population. The challenges unique to Hispanic and Latino children will become national challenges and must be addressed in order to maintain the economic, social and political viability of the United States.

**Figure 7: Percentage of Hispanic population and percentage of all scholarship produced during decade addressing Hispanic and Latino children (1974-2007)**



Hispanic high school graduation rates have lagged behind those of other groups for decades. In the 1980s, scholars began researching this concern. Michael Olivas' 1982 piece, "Federal Higher Education Policy: The Case of Hispanics,"<sup>5</sup> and Gary Orfield's 1986 work "Hispanic

Education: Challenges, Research, and Policies,”<sup>6</sup> are examples of articles published to attract federal attention to the problem, and make a case for increased funding for research to address it. As a result, the federal government took a more active role in the elementary and secondary education of Hispanics.

Figure 8 shows the amount of federal spending in 2008. The federal government increased spending on research at educational institutions. By the 1990s, the scholarship was broadening its scope, looking for factors affecting Hispanics’ behavior,<sup>7</sup> parenting,<sup>8</sup> socialization,<sup>9</sup> and health,<sup>10</sup> to name a few. As a result of the increasing sophistication of the research, the federal government enacted the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, and created the Institute of Education Sciences in 2002.

The federal government is able to focus the attention of researchers on specific issues by offering research money to academics to address the nation’s concerns. In addition, Congress provided incentives by creating *Hispanic Serving Institutions* – universities with a Hispanic enrollment of 25 percent or more, whose researchers apply for federal grants. There are approximately 260 Hispanic Serving Institutions<sup>11</sup> and they are eligible for millions of dollars.<sup>§</sup> By creating Hispanic Serving Institutions, the federal government has successfully created laboratories where scholars are rewarded for learning more about Hispanic students.<sup>\*\*</sup> Of the scholars producing research specific to Hispanic children’s issues, 28 percent come from California. California, with the largest Hispanic population, claims 52 of the 260 Hispanic Serving Institutions.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

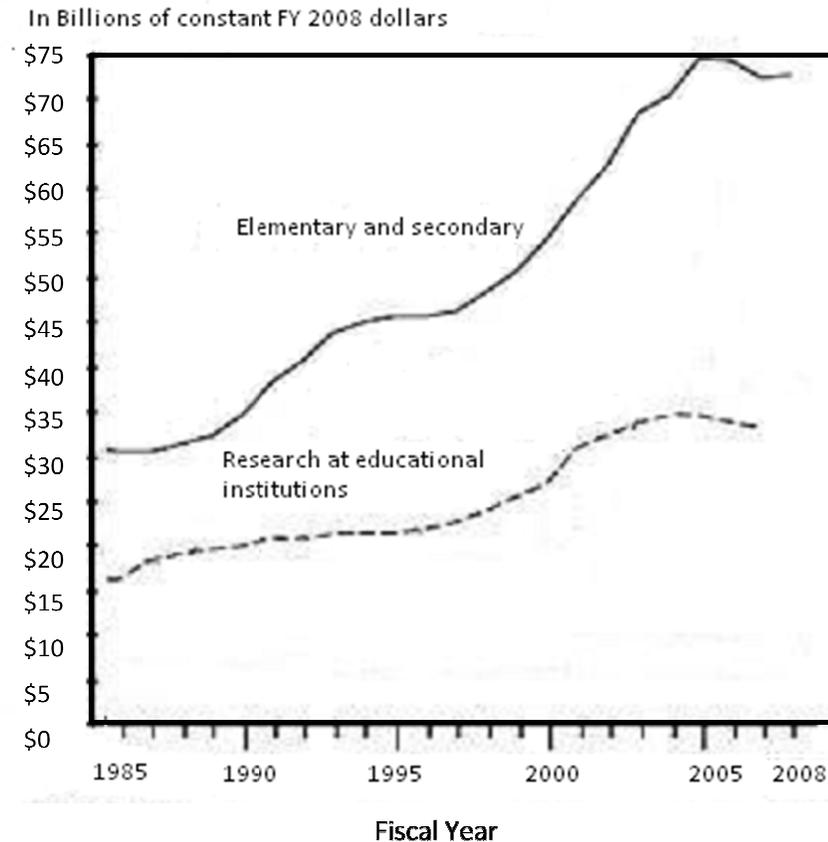
This article explains why so little scholarship has been produced addressing Hispanic and Latino children’s issues. For some, research on Hispanic children is driven by their personal connection to the population. Much of the literature on Hispanic children is created by Hispanic scholars. While Hispanic academics account for a small fraction of total

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<sup>§</sup>In 2009, Hispanic Serving Institutions were provided more than 16 million dollars as part of the Title V, Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions Program accessed May 31, 2010 <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/dueshsi/awards.html>.

<sup>\*\*</sup> As an example, the federal government has funded Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs that are often geared at attracting more minority and female students into Science, Technology, Engineering and Math careers.

**Figure 8: Federal on-budget funds for elementary and secondary education and for research at educational institutions.**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics: Digest of Education Statistics: 2008. Figure 18. Accessed May 31, 2010  
[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/figures/fig\\_18.asp?referrer=list](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/figures/fig_18.asp?referrer=list).

academics, they produce a third of the scholarship. Another strong motivation for scholars is monetary. As research dollars are aimed at addressing the issues facing Hispanic children, scholars' research is becoming more sophisticated. The increase in federal spending to remedy the problems facing education, combined with the creation of Hispanic Serving Institutions has successfully led to the increase in research and scholarship. Further diversifying faculties with Hispanic faculty will lead to a deeper understanding of the issues facing Hispanic children and how to craft remedies for them. Continued growth in the population, combined with further federal investments in research, will add the much needed stimulus to encourage others to study this population.

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