# NEXO

The Official Newsletter of **The Julian Samora Research Institute**
The Midwest's Premier Latino Research Center

## In This Issue

**Race/Ethnicity, Immigrant Status, and Household Poverty: The Effects of Local Opportunity Structures**
PAGE 8



**Melvindale Street Renamed in Honor of Michigan Conjunto Pioneer Martin H. Solis Jr.**
PAGE 16

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Julian Samora Research Institute
University Outreach and Engagement

# NEXO

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**MICHIGAN STATE**
U N I V E R S I T Y

# Letter from the Director

by Kwesi Brookins, Ph.D.

T his November, we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University. Named for pioneering Mexican-American sociologist Dr. Julian Samora, Ph.D., for the past three and a half decades the institute has been committed to Dr. Samora's vision of conducting and disseminating research that betters the lives of Latinx communities.

Establishing a research institute dedicated to the needs of midwestern Latinx communities began in 1988, when then-Provost David Scott appointed five MSU deans to the "Task Force on the Hispanic American Institute." When, in November of 1988, the Task Force officially recommended the creation of a Hispanic research center at MSU, they also identified five focus areas: employment development, education, political empowerment, health and family welfare, and cultural awareness and enrichment. The institute was officially established on February 7, 1989, and held its inaugural event in November.

In the years since, JSRI has collaborated with community, state, and nonprofit organizations in Michigan and the Midwest and has established academic partnerships regionally and nationally. It has done so under the leadership of Richard Navarro (Founding Director, 1989-1993), the late Joseph Spielberg Benitez (1993-1995), Refugio I. Rochin (1995-1998), the late Jorge Chapa (1998-1999), René Hinojosa (1999-2002), the late Israel Cuéllar (2002-2004), Dionicio Valdes (2004-2005), Francisco Villarruel (2006-2007, 2021-2023), and Rubén O. Martinez (2007-2021).

As we enter our 35th year, we are in the process of identifying JSRI's next leader, who will carry on our mission of generating, disseminating, and applying knowledge to serve the needs of Latinx communities in the Midwest and nationally. I cannot express how excited I am about JSRI's future.



Kwesi Brookins, Ph.D., is acting director of the Julian Samora Research Institute and vice provost for University Outreach and Engagement.
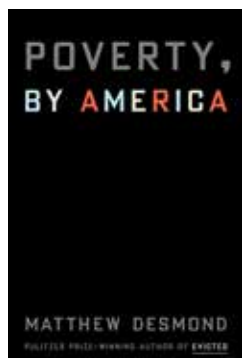
# Poverty, By America

by By Matthew Desmond (2023)
New York: Crown Publishers

Reviewed by
Jean Kayitsinga, Ph.D.

Matthew Desmond's *Poverty, By America* is another excellent book by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* that highlights why poverty in America persists and remains higher than in any other advanced countries. In the first chapter, "The Kind of Problem Poverty Is," Desmond writes, "We can't hope to understand why there is so much poverty in America solely by considering the lives of the poor. But we need to start there, to better understand the kind of problem poverty is—and grasp the stakes—because poverty is not simply a matter of small incomes" (pp. 10–11). He writes, "Poverty is about money, of course, but is also a relentless piling on of problems" (p. 13). He highlights various problems associated with poverty, including physical pain, poor living conditions that cause asthma, mold, cockroaches, and allergens, health issues such as cancer and dental problems, violence, sexual abuse, trauma, drug use, housing evictions, loss of liberty, feelings that your government is against you, being embarrassed and shameful, economic instability and hardships, evictions, and constant fear associated with economic insecurity.

One of the key factors associated with poverty has been economic restructuring. The ongoing restructuring of economies has not only created new structures of work but has also constrained choices available to workers in different labor markets and at home. Desmond indicates that "half of all new positions are eliminated within the first year. Jobs that used to come with some guarantees, even union membership, have been transformed into gigs. Temp workers are not just found driving Ubers, they are in hospitals and universities and insurance companies. Manufacturing jobs—still widely mistaken as the fount of good, sturdy, hard-hat jobs—now employ more than a million temp workers" (p. 16). He adds that "America has welcomed the rise of bad jobs at the bottom of the market—jobs offering low pay, no benefits, and few guarantees. Some industries such as retail, leisure and hospitality, and construction see more than half of their workforce turn over each year" (p. 16).

Poverty remains at the root of social inequality. Desmond writes, "Poverty is no equalizer. It can be intensified by racial disadvantages or eased by racial privileges" (p. 22). "Black and Hispanic Americans are twice as likely to be poor, compared to white Americans, owing not only to the country's racial legacies, but also to present-day discrimination" (p. 22). According to Desmond, many poor Black and Hispanic families live in neighborhoods with high concentration of poverty (i.e., over 40%) whereas poor white families tend to live in communities with lower poverty levels. The implication for that is that "most poor white children attend better-resourced schools, live in safer communities, experience lower rates of police violence, and sleep in more dignified homes compared to their poor Black and Hispanic peers" (p. 22). Desmond indicates that the wealth gap between Black and white families persists. He writes, "[The gap] is as large as it was in the 1960s. Our legacy of systematically denying Black people access to the nation's land and riches has been passed from generation to generation" (p. 23).

In Chapter 2, "Why Haven't We Made More Progress?", Desmond states that "America's efforts to reduce poverty had stalled because we had stopped trying to solve the problem" (p. 26). Despite increases in poverty spending from previous administrations, poverty rates haven't been reduced. Desmond writes, "Decade after decade, the poverty rate has remained flat even as federal relief has surged" (p. 28). He argues, "Government aid earmarked for the poor never reaches them." The 1996 Welfare Reform by President Bill Clinton replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Desmond writes, "Nationwide, for every dollar budgeted for TANF in 2020, poor families directly received just 22 cents" (p. 28). He further indicates that the rest of TANF dollars went to help families in other ways such as job training, childcare, juvenile justice administration, financial literacy, and other activities that "had little or nothing to do with reducing poverty" (pp. 28–29). Desmond puts it this way: "If we have more than doubled government spending on poverty and achieved so little, one reason is because the American welfare state is a leaky bucket. A dollar allocated to an antipoverty program does not mean a dollar will ultimately reach a needy family" (p. 32).

Desmond debunks poverty myths and political ideologies behind policy choices. One of the often-cited myths of poverty is immigration. Immigrants have historically served as a scapegoat for why poverty persists. Desmond illustrates that with the following examples: 1) "The Chinese as a class are a detriment and a curse to our country. They have supplanted white labor and taken the bread out of the mouths of the white men and their families;" 2) "In the early 1900s, native-born white Americans lashed out at Italian immigrants for landing jobs and working hard in them, even resorting to mob violence and lynching to drive then out of town;" and 3) "Conservatives today cast blame on immigrants for dragging down wages and displacing native workers" (p. 33).

Desmond debunks the assertion that immigration is the reason why the poverty rate hasn't decreased even as antipoverty aid has increased. He writes that states that have taken in the most immigrants over the past half century, such as Texas and Florida, have not grown poorer. "Instead, they have grown more prosperous" (p. 34). He indicates that "immigrants have some of the highest rates of economic mobility in this country. This is especially true for children of immigrants" (p. 34). He adds, "The long-term impact of immigration on wages is quite small, and its impact on employment is even smaller" (p. 34). Desmond argues, "Immigrants could make a country poorer by relying heavily

on welfare benefits. But the poorest immigrants are undocumented, which makes them ineligible for many federal programs, including food stamps, non-emergency Medicaid, and Social Security. Over a typical lifetime, an immigrant will give more to the U.S. government in taxes than he or she will receive in federal welfare benefits" (p. 35).

The other often-cited myth is that single parenthood is a major cause of poverty in America. That is mostly because statistically, single mother-headed families are more likely to be in poverty than married families. Desmond debunks this assertion by showing that single mothers in eight rich democracies were not poor as compared to the general population. He indicates, "Countries that make the deepest investments in their people, particularly through universal programs that benefit citizens, have the lowest rates of poverty, including among households headed by single mothers" (p. 36). He further argues, "The real question about single-parent families isn't why so many poor parents are single, but why we allow so many of them to remain poor" (p. 40). According to Desmond, "Millions of Americans do not end up poor by a mistake of history or personal conduct. Poverty persists because some wish and will it to" (p. 40).

In Chapter 3, "How We Undercut Workers," Desmond indicates that more often the poor are blamed for being poor. Desmond argues, "Structural explanations are more in fashion these days, explanations that trace widespread poverty to broken institutions or seismic economic transformations" (p. 41). He writes, "One popular theory of American poverty is deindustrialization, which caused the shuttering of factories and the hollowing out of communities that had sprung up around them" (p. 41).

Another theory of poverty is exploitation. Desmond recalls the history of the world by indicating that "clans, families, tribes, and nation-states collide, and one side is annihilated or enslaved or colonized or dispossessed to enrich the other. One side ascends to a higher place on the backs of the vanquished" (p. 42). Desmond argues, "Our vulnerability to exploitation grows as our liberty shrinks" (p. 43).

Another misconception of poverty is that poor-paying jobs are simply the result of people not getting enough education. Desmond writes, "It's true that workers with college degrees fare much better in today's economy than those without. But the spread of bad jobs in America is not primarily the result of a so-called skills mismatch involving too many people lacking the right credentials or training for good jobs" (p. 51). He adds: "We can't reduce our country's economic problems to a matter of education, and we can't chalk up today's brutal job market to globalization and technological change, either." He argues, "Economic forces . . . like the acceleration of global trade, are often the result of policy decisions such as the 1994 North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which made it easier for companies to move their factories to Mexico and contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of American jobs" (p. 52).

Desmond further argues, "With unions largely out of the picture, corporations have chipped away at the conventional mid-century work arrangement, which involved steady employment, opportunities for advancement and raises, and decent pay with some benefits" (p. 53). He adds, "As corporations have amassed more market power, they have made every effort to keep wages low and productivity high. Increasingly, workers are providing far more value to their company than their pay reflects, and employers are constantly finding new avenues to squeeze their labor force" (p. 56).

Desmond argues that work is not what keeps scores of low-paid Americans from plunging into deep poverty. The government is. Desmond indicates that "it's the government that helps these families access to healthcare (through Medicaid), that helps them eat (food stamps), and that boosts their incomes (the Earned Income Tax Credit)" (p. 57). He adds, "When poor workers receive a pay raise, their health improves dramatically. . . . When minimum wages go up, rates of child neglect, underage alcohol consumption, and teen births go down. Smoking, too, decreases" (p. 61). He argues, "Economic security leads to better choices" (p. 62).

In Chapter 4, "How We Force the Poor to Pay More," Desmond argues, "the poor are exploited laborers, exploited consumers, and exploited borrowers" (p. 78). He indicates, "Poor Americans continue to be crippled by the high cost of housing. Rent has more than doubled over the past two decades, rising much faster than renters' incomes" (p. 65). He continues, "Poor people—and particularly poor Black families—don't have much choice when it comes to where they can live. Because of that, landlords can overcharge them, and they do" (p. 65). He adds, "Poor renters are also excluded from homeownership, not because they are too poor to make regular mortgage payments . . . but because several factors discourage them from even trying" (pp. 69–70).

Desmond shows that "poverty isn't simply the condition of not having enough money. It's the condition of not having choice and being taken advantage of because of that. When we ignore the role exploitation plays in trapping people in poverty, we end up designing policy that is weak at best and ineffective at worst" (p. 78). Desmond asserts, "When legislation lifts incomes at the bottom—say, by expanding the Child Tax Credit or by raising the minimum wage—without addressing the housing crisis, those gains are often recouped by landlords, not wholly by the families the legislation was intended to help" (pp. 78–79).

In Chapter 5, "How We Rely on Welfare," Desmond describes the ambivalent welfare state, which on one hand has a visible poverty policy and cash transfers, and on the other hand, has hidden, wealth-boosting tax breaks and benefits. He addresses underlying ideologies of deservingness and welfare. He indicates that virtually all Americans benefit from some form of public aid. "We're all on the dole" (pp. 91–92). Desmond argues, "Today, the biggest beneficiaries of federal aid are affluent families," who benefit from employer-sponsored health insurance, mortgage interest deduction, and 529 plans (p. 93). He states, "Americans who rely on the most *visible* social programs (like public housing or food stamps) are also the most likely to recognize that the government had been a force for good in their lives, but Americans who rely on the most *invisible* programs (namely tax breaks) are the

least likely to believe that the government had given them a leg up" (p. 95). He concludes, "Help from the government is a zero-sum affair. The biggest government subsidies are not directed at families trying to climb out of poverty but instead go to ensure that well-off families stay well-off. This leaves fewer resources for the poor" (pp. 101–102).

In Chapter 6, "How We Buy Opportunity," Desmond describes a history of social inequalities, how wealth-building in the United States works and doesn't work via redlining, segregation, white flight, and wealth-rapacious exclusionary zoning. Desmond argues, "A trend toward private opulence and public squalor has come to define not simply a handful of communities, but the whole nation" (p. 107). He indicates that "tax cuts are one of the main engines of private opulence and public squalor" (p. 109). He argues, "The drive toward private opulence and public squalor harms the poor not only because it leads to widespread disinvestment in public goods but also because that disinvestment creates new private enterprises that eventually replace public institutions as the primary suppliers of opportunity" (p. 111). Desmond argues, "Equal opportunity is possible only if everyone can access childcare centers, good schools, and safe neighborhoods—all of which serve as engines of social mobility. But private opulence and public squalor leads to the 'commodification of opportunity,' where those engines of social mobility now cost something" (p. 111).

In Chapter 7, "Invest in Ending Poverty," Desmond asks, "How do we, today, make the poor in America poor?" (p. 120). He highlights three ways: 1) We exploit them, we constrain their choices and power in the labor market, the housing market, and the financial market, driving down wages while forcing the poor to overpay for housing and access to cash and credit; 2) We prioritize the subsidization of affluence over the alleviation of poverty; and 3) We create and maintain prosperous and exclusive communities (pp. 120–121). Desmond suggests that policy needs to "go big" to address poverty, by targeting poverty welfare policy with a broader "tent targeting," or "targeting universalism" (p. 130). He concludes, "We need to ensure that aid directed at poor people stays in their pockets, instead of being captured by companies whose low wages are subsidized by government benefits, or by landlords who raise the rents as their tenants' wages rise, or by banks and payday loan outlets that issue exorbitant fines and fees" (p. 138).

In Chapter 8, "Empower the Poor," Desmond describes ways to eradicate poverty. He starts by indicating, "A crucial step toward ending poverty is giving more Americans the power to decide where to work, live, and bank, and when to start a family" (p. 139). He suggests that "Congress should raise the minimum wage and make sure all workers are paid it, ending subminimum pay. But it should do more than that. It should ensure that workers never again have to fight to earn a living" (p. 139). He suggests, "The United States should require periodic (and humane) reviews of the minimum wage" (p. 140). He also suggests, "New Labor (policies) must be inclusive and antiracist, empowering workers, young and old, including those bending in our fields, waiting on our tables, cleaning our homes and offices, and caring for our old and sick" (p. 141). To end rent gouging and neglected properties, Desmond suggests

that "we need to expand housing opportunity for low-income families" (p. 143). Desmond continues, "We should also ensure fair access to capital. Banks should stop robbing the poor and near-poor of billions of dollars each year, immediately ending exorbitant overdraft fees" (p. 149). To eradicate poverty, Desmond also suggests ending overdraft fees, greater regulation to payday and usurious lending, increasing access to birth control, holding our institutions accountable, and consumer activism that encourages corporate and anti-poverty practices.

Finally, in Chapter 9, "Tear Down the Walls," Desmond argues that "our walls, they have to go" (p. 161). He indicates that "even the most ambitious anti-poverty proposals . . . such as universal basic income, often leave segregation untouched." He writes, "Opposing segregation is vital to poverty abolitionism" (p. 163). Desmond supports integration. He showed based on previous research that "moving poor families to high-opportunity neighborhoods, without doing anything else to increase their incomes, improves their lives tremendously" (p. 161). He wrote that after the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, racial segregation in schools was unconstitutional. "Black children who were enrolled in integrated schools performed better in the classroom, graduated at higher rates, and were more likely to go to college than their peers who experienced segregated education" (p. 163-164). As a result, "Black students who benefitted from court-ordered integration were significantly less likely to experience poverty as adults. White children whose schools desegregated remained on track: their academic achievement, and a later-life well-being did not suffer as a result of their new Black classmates" (p. 164).

Desmond further indicates that increasing inequality has led to a further polarization and a rise in income segregation among school districts. He shows that "students from poor families who attended low-poverty schools significantly outperformed those who attended high-poverty schools" (p. 164). He observes, "Our children's schools today are less economically diverse than their grandparents' schools were, and most of our communities remained sharply segregated by race as well" (p. 165). Desmond calls for community integration to address America's poverty.

Desmond describes "scarcity diversion" as a process that allow elites to hoard resources like money or land, pretend that arrangement is natural and unavoidable or ignore it altogether, attempt to address social problems caused by the resource hoarding only with scarce resources left over, and finally fail to decrease the poverty rate and build more affordable housing. This process sustains ideologies around welfare and who most deserves to be helped. Desmond calls for a new paradigm, the opposite of "scarcity diversion," in line with an "economy of abundance." He indicates that "choosing abundance, at once a perspective and a legislative platform, a shift in vision and in policy design, means recognizing that this country has a profusion of resources—enough land and capital to go around—and that pretending otherwise is a farce" (p. 175). This is an excellently written and must-read book on poverty in the United States, especially for policymakers, and students in sociology, social work, and other social sciences courses that focus on social stratification and inequality.

# Research Brief Highlights Equity Issues in Education and Employment in Latina/o Detroit

By Richard Cruz Dávila, Ph.D.

Detroit Future City's (DFC) Center for Equity, Engagement, and Research has released a new brief titled "Prosperidad Económica: Education and Workforce for Detroit's Latino/Hispanic Community." The brief, released on July 23, 2024, builds on the findings of DFC's 2021 report, "The State of Economic Equity in Detroit," which "revealed that Latino/Hispanic Detroiters encounter challenges around economic well-being similar to those experienced by Black Detroiters, though challenges that are unique in their own right," particularly "disparities in access to quality education and employment opportunities . . . exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic" (2). The 2024 brief uses data from the 2022 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey to identify opportunity gaps faced by Latina/o Detroiters in education and employment and contextualizes these findings with national research and trends, as well as insights from a "research advisory group that works with, and reflects, the community" (2). What follows are key findings of the brief.

## EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In the area of educational outcomes for Latina/o Detroiters, the brief highlights disparities in English/Language Arts (ELA) proficiency and educational attainment, as well as a need for career and technical education (CTE). While third-grade ELA proficiency is widely understood as a critical early indicator of educational success, the brief notes that only 10% of Detroit's Latina/o third graders were proficient in ELA, compared to 29% statewide. Further, while third-grade ELA proficiency dropped by 5% citywide between 2019 and 2022, Latina/o students saw a decline of 9%. The brief also notes a significant disparity in educational attainment for Latina/o Detroiters, with 45% of Latina/o Detroiters aged 25+ in 2022 having less than a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to only 17% for all students citywide and 23% of Latina/os statewide. Likewise, only 11% of Latina/o Detroiters in 2022 held a bachelor's degree or higher, an achievement often linked to higher wages; comparatively, the citywide average in 2022 was 17% and for white Detroiters, it was 37%. Finally, according to Michigan Department of Education data, between 2019 and 2023, the completion rate of Latina/o Detroiters in CTE programs, which can provide pathways to well-paying skilled employment, dropped from 39% to 29%.

## THE EDUCATION-WORKFORCE CONNECTION

The brief also points to challenges Latina/o Detroiters face in the workforce, including wage gaps and disparities in labor force participation and year-round employment. It notes, for instance, that while Latina/o Detroiters without a bachelor's degree earned $16 per hour on average in 2021, in keeping with the citywide average, those with a bachelor's degree earned only $24 per hour, compared to the citywide average of $26 per hour and $29 per hour for white Detroiters. Latina/o Detroiters also lagged significantly behind Latina/os region-wide, who earned an average of $36 per hour. While Latina/o workforce participation in Detroit increased from 63% in 2017 to 66% in 2022, an increase of 3%, the participation rate for white Detroiters increased by 7% over the same period, from 62% in 2017 to 69% in 2022. Likewise, while Latina/o unemployment in Detroit fell from 15% in 2017 to 12% in 2022, they still lagged behind white Detroiters, whose unemployment rates were 11% in 2017 and 8% in 2022 (racial disparities in both workforce participation and unemployment were highest for Black Detroiters during this period). Finally, while Latina/o Detroiters in 2022 were employed in full-time jobs at a slightly higher rate than the citywide average—84% to 82%, respectively—they lagged in terms of year-round employment, with only 77% of Latina/os employed 48 weeks or more in the year, compared to 82% citywide. The types of jobs in which Latina/os were employed earned lower wages and had limited opportunities for advancement and access to benefits, with Latina/os in 2022 having the lowest rate of health insurance coverage (82% compared to 92% citywide).

## CONCLUSIONS

The brief concludes by stressing the need to close achievement and opportunity gaps that negatively impact the city's Latina/o community. Its authors state, "Improving educational outcomes for the future Latino/Hispanic workforce is critical to ensuring Latino/Hispanic Detroiters can compete and participate in the rapidly evolving job market, ensuring access to growth occupations and middle-class wage opportunities" (19). The following solutions are offered: "addressing existing disparities and investing in educational solutions"; "aligning education pathways and college majors to meet the demands of growing industries"; "improving access to, and outcomes of, job-training skills and workforce readiness programs"; "reducing unique barriers in opportunity and participation"; and "strengthening wraparound services" (19). Through its summation of challenges faced by Detroit's Latina/o community and recommendations for action, the brief provides a valuable resource for city and state governments, as well as service providers and others seeking to advance economic equity for Latina/o Detroiters. ▨

> "Latino/Hispanic Detroiters encounter challenges around economic well-being similar to those experienced by Black Detroiters, though challenges that are unique in their own right," particularly "disparities in access to quality education and employment opportunities"
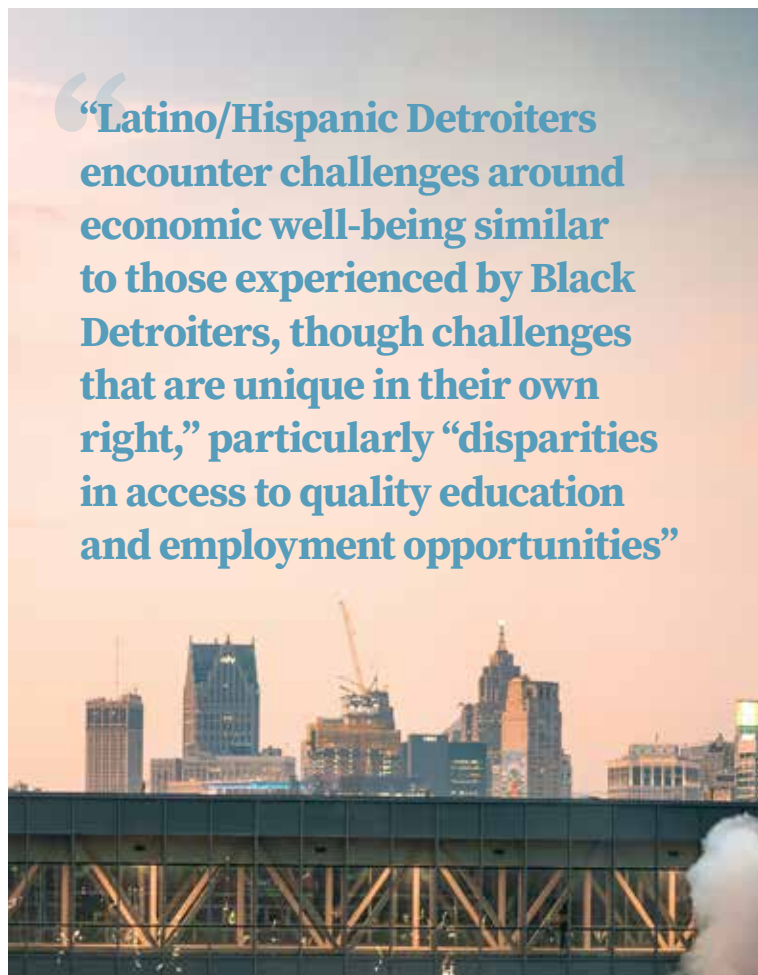
## READ THE REPORT

To read the full report scan the QR code or visit: detroitfuturecity.com/data_reports/prosperidad-economica-education-and-workforce-outcomes-for-detroits-latino-hispanic-community

Race/Ethnicity, Immigrant Status, and Household Poverty:

# The Effects of Local Opportunity Structures

By Jean Kayitsinga, Ph.D.

## INTRODUCTION

Latinos/Hispanics in the United States make up almost one-fifth of the total population. They are the second largest group after the non-Hispanic white population, the largest ethnic minority group, and the fastest growing population in the United States. According to 2023 U.S. Census estimates, the Latino population was 65.2 million, representing 19.5% of the total population. In Michigan, the Latino population in 2023 was estimated at 600,102, representing 6% of the total.

The Latino population in the U.S. significantly increased over the last 5 decades, from 14.6 million in 1980 to 62.2 million in 2023, or an increase of about 50.6 million. The number of Latinos increased by 3 million between 2020 and 2023, including an increase of 1.16 million Latinos between 2022 and 2023 alone. Michigan has seen a similar trend. The Latino population grew from 157,626 in 1980 to 600,112 in 2023, an increase of 442,476. The number of Latinos in Michigan grew by about 34,226 between 2020 and 2023, with an increase of 11,799 Latinos between 2022 and 2023 alone.

The Latino population growth is primarily due to natural increase (births-deaths), but also to international immigration. According to the 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, about 45.3 million people in the United States were foreign-born, representing 13.7 percent of the U.S. population. Among the foreign-born population, 50% were born in Latin America, 31.2% in Asia, 10.6% in Europe, 5.7% in Africa, and 2.4% in other regions.
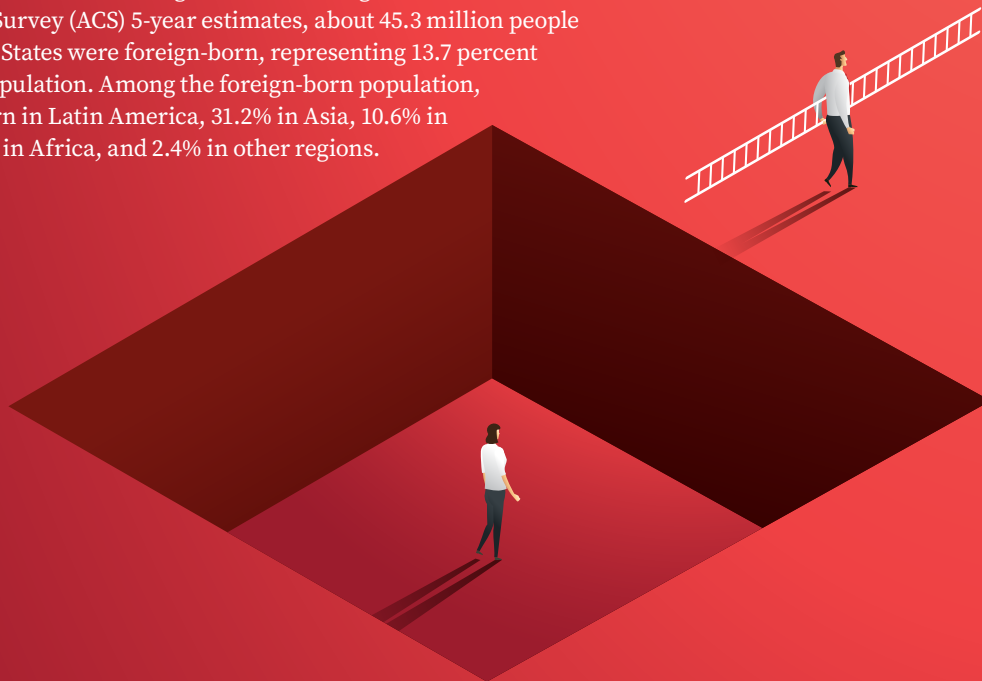
Historically Latinos in the United States have concentrated in the largest metropolitan areas in the Southwest and the Northeast. Latinos have traditionally resided in five states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois. Within those states, they tended to concentrate in gateway and ethnic hub cities such as Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, New York City, Miami, and Chicago. More recently, Latinos have settled in new destinations outside of traditional gateway cities, particularly in the Midwest and Southeast.

Population changes in both the U.S. and in Michigan, on one hand, are attributable to the increase of the Latino and Asian populations, but on the other hand, to the decline of the non-Hispanic white population. These demographic shifts are linked to economic changes in many places and have implications for the communities experiencing them. The Latino population has been attracted to new destinations by, or recruited for, employment opportunities in agriculture, meat packing, other food-processing jobs, timber harvesting and processing, and other industries. In Michigan, the Latino population is attracted by local labor market opportunities, especially in nonmetropolitan areas in agriculture-related occupations. The out-migration of non-Hispanic white and other native populations from many places is also linked to changes in local economies of those places. Local economic changes are directly linked to the availability or lack of job opportunities, which have implications for family income, income security, racial/ethnic inequalities, including increased poverty, housing shortages, and overall well-being of the population in those places. This article focuses on the well-being of racial/ethnic and immigrant population in Michigan, focusing on household poverty. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do racial/ethnic minority households in Michigan compare with non-Hispanic white households in terms of poverty?

2. How do immigrant households in Michigan compare with native households in terms of poverty?

3. Do the associations between race/ethnic minority and immigrant status and poverty persist after controlling for other individual and household confounders?

4. Do local labor market opportunity structures influence household poverty, net of the effects of nonmetropolitan/ metropolitan location, concentrated disadvantage, and individual and household confounders?

## BACKGROUND

The causes of poverty are multifaceted and include both micro- and macro-level theories. In this article, I will focus only on three main explanations of the causes of poverty: (1) Human capital explanations that emphasize characteristics such as human capital, attitudes, and behavior of the individual (Becker, 2009; Lichter et al., 1993); (2) Structural explanations such as economic restructuring and global processes that highlight macro forces that affect the distribution and changes in opportunity structures (Wilson, 2012); and (3) Social stratification that highlights inequalities across social groups, including race/ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and geopolitical space.

### HUMAN CAPITAL EXPLANATIONS

Individual explanations of poverty suggest that individuals with lower levels of education and job experience are employed in low-wage jobs and are likely to have lower earnings and therefore be in poverty. Alternatively, individuals with higher education and better job experience should earn higher wages and hence are less likely to be poor. These views are used to explain why racial/ethnic minorities, who tend to have lower levels of education, are in low-wage jobs, and likely to be in poverty.

This view has dominated research and policy on poverty, however, emphasis on individual attributes and actions often overlooks the enormous impact of social, economic, and political systems on poverty. Structural factors, such as not having enough good jobs, rather than not having enough skills or motivation (Iceland, 2013), may be the main cause of poverty. While individual attributes such as human capital may partially explain poverty differentials and income gaps, existing opportunity structures beyond individuals' attributes and abilities may better explain the level of poverty and why it persists.

### ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING EXPLANATIONS

The ongoing restructuring of economies has not only created new structures of work but has also constrained choices available to workers in different labor markets and at home. Deindustrialization, the increase in new technologies, and globalization are key macro-level factors that may be related to poverty. Economic restructuring led to the loss of many good jobs, especially low-skilled, blue-collar jobs with greater incomes as well as health insurance and retirement benefits. The newly created jobs in the service sector of the economy were of two kinds: (1) those requiring higher education and technical skills, and (2) those requiring lower job skills. With deindustrialization, a growing number of new jobs are part-time, contingency, subcontracted, or temporary, with irregular work schedules and high layoff and turnover rates (Seccombe, 2000).

Technological changes in the economy play a role in increasing inequality by raising the demand for high-skilled workers, such as engineers and programmers, while reducing the demand for lower-skilled, low-paid workers (Iceland, 2013). A major effect of deindustrialization has been the loss of employment. Many families, especially those with lower skills and educational levels, were unable to find jobs, especially good jobs that pay well enough to lift them out of poverty and economic uncertainty and offer fringe benefits, such as health insurance and pensions.

The process of globalization may have triggered the incidence of poverty. The importation of manufactured goods from less developed countries places workers in advanced countries in direct competition with those in less developed countries. The lower labor costs and lack of environmental regulation costs make

the import of manufactured goods economically beneficial to companies but costly to workers because they reduce wages and increase unemployment, especially for the least-skilled workers.

Another aspect of globalization has been the continuous decline of labor unions. According to Desmond (2023), "only around one in ten American workers today belong to a union, and most of them are firefighters, nurses, cops, and other public sector workers. Almost all private sector employees (94 percent) are without a union" (Desmond, 2023:49). Greater unionization is normally associated with reduced income inequality and greater well-being. However, employers have an arsenal of tactics that prevent collective bargaining (Desmond, 2023). Nonunionized workers typically are paid lower wages and have less job security (Iceland, 2013), which may contribute to poverty.
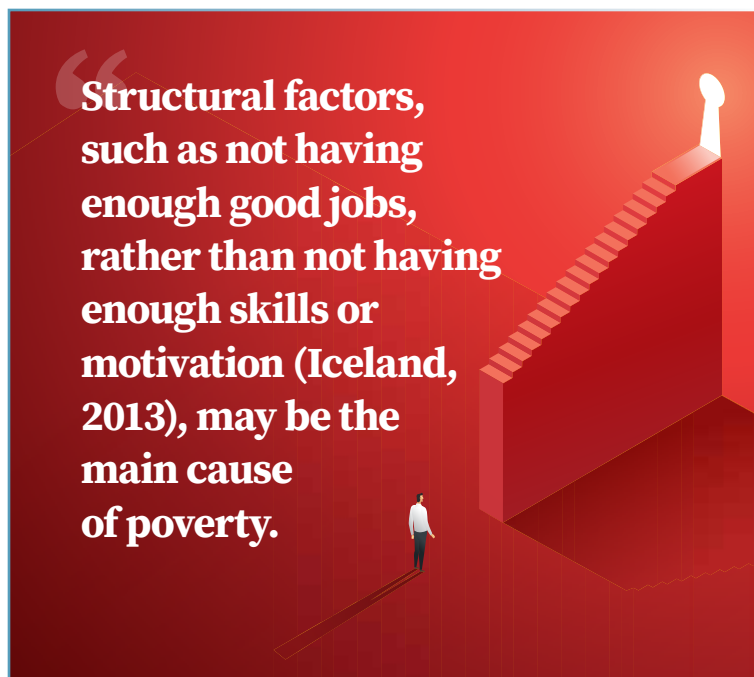
### SOCIAL STRATIFICATION EXPLANATIONS

Social stratification explanations of poverty underline the hierarchical and uneven access to opportunities across race/ethnicity, social class, gender, and immigrant status. Racial/ethnic minorities are on average more likely than non-Hispanic whites to have lower levels of education, lower levels of employment, lower wages, and chronic health conditions—all characteristics associated with higher poverty rates (Iceland, 2013). Women, compared to men, especially minority, female-headed households, continue to occupy lower economic positions and are more likely to be in poverty.

Immigrant families are at greater risk of poverty and have lower incomes than nonimmigrant families. Limited language proficiency and unfamiliarity with U.S. customs and the labor market considerably hinder immigrant economic mobility in the short run. But over time and in subsequent generations, labor market barriers become less important (Iceland, 2013). The influx of low-skilled migrants is often viewed as increasing poverty, in part because they displace native workers and threaten their wages, although this relationship has been contested (Portes & Zhou, 1992; Waldinger, 1996). Other studies argue that overall levels of racial and class polarization have increased, with immigrants concentrated in "casual" jobs and native whites concentrated in professional jobs (Frey & Liaw, 1998; McCall, 2001).

Economic well-being is not only unevenly distributed across race/ethnicity, social class, gender, and other social strata, but it is also unevenly distributed across geopolitical spaces. The impact of economic restructuring has been uneven across spaces, affecting individuals, families, and communities in different locations (Lobao, 1990; Lyson & Falk, 1993; Tickamyer et al., 1993). In urban areas, poverty persists because of the combined and interacting effects of joblessness, deteriorating neighborhoods, and the "oppositional" culture that these forces generate (Duncan, 1999; Wilson, 2012). In rural areas, economic restructuring has intensified existing disadvantages of rural communities (Lyson, Falk, Henry, Hickey, & Warner, 1993; Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990). Nonmetropolitan families are more likely to be in economic distress and poverty than their metropolitan counterparts (Castle, 1993). Nonmetropolitan areas have relatively limited employment and earnings opportunities and less diversified labor markets (Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990).



> " Structural factors, such as not having enough good jobs, rather than not having enough skills or motivation (Iceland, 2013), may be the main cause of poverty.

## DATA AND MEASURES

### DATA

Data for this article are drawn from two sources. Individual-level data on 121,651 households are extracted from the 5-year (2018–2022) American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). Local labor market area (LMA) data are from the 2018–2022 ACS Summary file (ACS-SF). The ACS PUMS data is a national sample of population and housing unit records. This study uses a sample of population and housing units in Michigan. The primary level (level - 1) is the household. Only householders of working age (i.e., 16–64 years) are selected. Excluded from the analysis are subfamilies within households, military households, households with zero household income, and individuals living in group quarters. The ACS-SF contains sample data about the characteristics of different geographic units. The level - 2 unit of analysis is the local labor market area (LMA). We used the PUMA level as a proxy of the LMA. For the U.S. Census Bureau confidentiality requirements, PUMA contains at least 100,000 people.

### MEASURES

The primary outcome variable is household poverty, a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 if the household falls below the official poverty line (i.e., below 100% of the poverty threshold) and 0 otherwise. Descriptive statistics of household and LMA levels (means, standard deviations, and percentages) are displayed in Appendix Table A1.

## INDIVIDUAL- AND HOUSEHOLD-LEVEL VARIABLES

The basic household characteristics include householder's age (years), sex/gender (male or female), race/ethnicity, immigrant status, educational attainment of householder and/or spouse/partner if present (the highest), marital status ((i.e., married, formerly married (divorced, separated, and widowed), and never married)), number of children, employment status, home ownership (i.e., housing owner or renters), and residential stability (i.e., 10 years or more in the same house or otherwise). The main predictors at the household level are race/ethnicity, immigrant status, and employment status of householder and/or spouse/partner. The other variables are controlled for in the level - 1 model. Race/ethnicity is constructed using race and Hispanic origin variables. First, Latino householders are distinguished from non-Latino householders. Second, non-Latino householders are categorized by race to include whites, African Americans, Asians, including Pacific Islanders, and other races, including Native Americans and multiple races. The latter category of other races was excluded from the analysis. Immigrant status is constructed as a dummy variable indicating if the householder is foreign-born or not. Employment status is a composite variable indicating whether either the householder or spouse/partner (if present) are employed or not. This variable was aggregated at the household level to indicate the number of earners in the household and was recoded as a dummy variable to indicate whether at least one earner in the household was employed or otherwise.

## LOCAL LABOR MARKET AREA VARIABLES

The analysis includes several demographic, socioeconomic, and employment characteristics at the PUMA level. These include nonmetropolitan status, percentages of the population 65 years and older and under 18 years of age, high minority concentration (i.e., 40% or more of African Americans and Latinos), immigrant concentration (i.e., percentage of the population that is foreign-born), concentrated disadvantage (i.e., a standardized principal factor scale) combining the following variables: percentage of residents in poverty, percentage of residents unemployed, percentage of households receiving public assistance, percentage of female-headed families with children under the age of 18, percentage of residents 25 years or older with less than high school education, and in negative coded: percentage of residents 25 years or older with college education, percentage of residents in managerial, professional, and technical occupations, percentage of affluent households (i.e., with household income ≥ $150,000), and median household income. At the PUMA level, industrial structure is measured by the following industries: percentage of manufacturing industry, percentage of consumer service industry, and percentage of good jobs (i.e., professional, managerial, and technical occupations, information, and finance, insurance, and real estate occupations).

## STATISTICAL METHODS

A multilevel logistic regression model for binary outcomes (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) is used to model the odds that a household in each LMA is in poverty. The odds that a household is in poverty are modeled as a function of individual, household, and LMA characteristics. The analysis proceeds from examining first the household and then the LMA effects on odds of poverty. The first set of models examines the effects of race/ethnicity and immigrant status on the odds of being poor, controlling for age and sex (Model 2, Table 1). The second stage of models adds household background characteristics, including educational attainment (Model 3) and employment status and examines their effects on the odds of being poor, controlling for marital status, homeownership, and residential stability (Model 4). The last set of models examines the effects of nonmetropolitan status and LMA concentrated disadvantage on the odds of being poor, net of the effects of household characteristics. They also examine the effect of having at least one earner in the household on the odds of being poor and whether LMA employment opportunities reduce poverty via employment (Model 5, Table 2).

## RESULTS

Model 1 of Table 1 displays the results of an unconditional model (no predictor) of household poverty. This shows that the average odds of poverty are 0.094, or about 1 to almost 11. This corresponds to a probability of $1/(1 + (1/0.094)) = 0.086$. Assuming that the odds of poverty are approximately normally distributed with mean 0.094 and variance of 0.374, it is expected to be a 95% confidence interval of (0.028, 0.311) or, in terms of probabilities, a 95% confidence interval of (0.027, 0.237). It appears that some labor market areas (LMAs) have poverty rates near zero, while in others, 24% of households are in poverty, which shows significant variations in poverty across LMAs in Michigan.

Model 2 consists of race/ethnicity and immigrant status combinations, adjusting for householder's age, gender, marital status, homeownership, and residential location. The results show that the odds of poverty are significantly higher among non-Hispanic white immigrant, Latino native, Latino immigrant, Black native, and Black immigrant households than non-Hispanic white native households. More specifically, the odds of poverty are 3.1 times higher for non-Hispanic white immigrant, 1.5 times higher for Latino native, 1.6 times higher for Latino immigrant, 1.8 times higher for Black native, and almost 2 times higher for Black immigrant households than non-Hispanic white native households, respectively (Model 2). These results adjust for significant control variables, which show that the odds of poverty increase by householder's age and are significantly higher among female than male householders, among formerly married (i.e., divorced, separated, or widowed) and never married than married householders, and higher in nonmetropolitan than in metropolitan areas. The results also show, as might be expected, that the odds of poverty are significantly lower among homeowners than renters. These demographic variables explain about 56% of variance in poverty across LMAs (Model 2).

Model 3 shows the effects of educational attainment on poverty. The results show, as expected, that the odds of poverty are significantly lower for households with high school, some college, and college or higher education than those with less than high school education. Specifically, the odds of poverty are 56% lower in households with a high

school education, 71% lower in households with some college education, and 89% lower in households with a college education compared with those in households with less than high school education, respectively. Notice that the odds of poverty are reduced for every racial/ethnic and immigrant group and rendered for Latino immigrant households not significantly different from those of non-Hispanic white native households, once education is taken into consideration. Educational attainment explains an additional 21% variance in poverty across LMAs.

Model 4 in Table 1 adds the number of earners in the household. Having at least one earner in the household is associated with significantly lower odds of poverty. Notice that once the number of earners in the household is accounted for in Model 4, the odds of poverty for racial/ethnic and immigrant groups remain significantly higher than those of non-Hispanic white native households and slightly increase for immigrant households. Adding the number of earners in the household explains additionally 29% variance in poverty across LMAs.

Models 5 – 7 in Table 2 combine household characteristics and LMA characteristics in predicting the likelihood of poverty. The results in Model 5 show that the odds of poverty remain significantly higher in nonmetropolitan than in metropolitan LMAs, adjusting for household characteristics. Specifically, the odds of poverty are 10% higher for households in nonmetropolitan than in metropolitan LMAs. The results also show that the odds of poverty are significantly higher in concentrated disadvantaged than in nonconcentrated disadvantaged LMAs. Specifically, each standard deviation increase in the concentrated disadvantaged scale increases the odds of poverty by 18%, net of the effects of individual and household confounders in the model. Adding nonmetropolitan residence and concentrated disadvantaged scale in Model 5 accounts for an additional 28% variance in poverty between LMAs.

Model 6 in Table 2 tests whether characteristics of the local labor market affect poverty. The results show that the greater the proportion of manufacturing industries the lower the odds of poverty. Specifically, each standard deviation increase in the proportion of manufacturing industries reduces the odds of poverty by 12%, net of the positive effects on poverty of living in nonmetropolitan/metropolitan and concentrated disadvantaged local labor market areas. Adding the percentage of manufacturing industries in LMAs in Model 6 explains an additional 26% variance in poverty between LMAs.

The final model (Model 7) tests the degree to which the risk of poverty is reduced by the local labor market opportunity structure and the number of earners in the household. The results in Model 7 show that the odds of poverty are significantly lower in local LMAs with more manufacturing industries, but higher in local LMAs with high concentration of disadvantage and in nonmetropolitan LMAs. The results also show that the odds of poverty are significantly lower in households with at least one earner and that those odds are further reduced if the household is located in local LMAs with high rates of manufacturing industries and good jobs (i.e., professional, information, and finance, insurance, and real estate services).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results highlight racial/ethnic and immigrant status' differences in household poverty in Michigan. The results show significant differences in household poverty by race/ethnicity and immigrant status. Immigrant and minority (Latino and Black) households are more likely to be overrepresented among the poor than non-Hispanic white native households. Drawing on the results in the final model in Table 2, the odds of poverty are 3 times higher for non-Hispanic white immigrant, 1.3 times higher for Latino native, 1.4 times higher for Latino immigrant, 1.4 times higher for Black native, and 2.7 times higher for Black immigrant households than those on non-Hispanic white native households, respectively. One of the key findings of this analysis is that racial/ethnic and immigrant differences in poverty remain significant, even after accounting for confounders such as educational attainment, number of earners in the household, householder's age, gender, marital status, homeownership, residential location, and LMA characteristics.

The results also show that the odds of poverty are significantly higher in nonmetropolitan than in metropolitan LMAs, adjusting for individual and household and LMA characteristics. Although the overall adjusted effect of residential location on poverty is diminished, it remains statistically significant. The odds of poverty are in the end 5% higher in nonmetropolitan than in metropolitan LMAs, adjusting for individual/household and LMA characteristics. This implies that the uneven development may explain poverty differences between LMAs, with households in nonmetropolitan LMAs experiencing greater burden in terms of poverty than those in metropolitan LMAs.

The results also show, as expected, that odds of poverty are significantly higher in LMAs with higher concentration of disadvantage than in concentrated advantaged LMAs, net of the influence of individual/household characteristics and nonmetropolitan/metropolitan residence. Overall, each standard deviation increase in the concentrated disadvantage scale increases the odds of poverty by 15%, net of the effects of individual/household characteristics and nonmetropolitan/metropolitan residence. These areas are characterized by high poverty, unemployment, proportions of less skilled workers, proportions of households receiving public assistance, and high proportions of female-headed families with children. They are also characterized by a low proportion of workers employed in managerial, professional, and technical occupations and a low number of affluent households.

Another important finding is that the greater the proportion of manufacturing industries in a labor market area, the lower the odds of poverty, net of the effects living in nonmetropolitan/metropolitan and concentrated disadvantaged LMAs, and individual and household characteristics. The adjusted odds of poverty are reduced by 12% for each standard deviation increase in the proportion of manufacturing industries.

Another important finding is that the odds of poverty are significantly lower in households with at least one earner, and those odds are further reduced if the household is in a local LMA with high rates

of manufacturing industries and good jobs. More importantly, the odds of poverty for those living in a nonmetropolitan or concentrated disadvantaged LMA are significantly reduced when at least the head and/or the spouse in the household works and they live in LMAs with high rates of manufacturing and availability of great jobs (i.e., in professional, information, and finance, insurance, and real estate services).

The results reported above highlight persistent racial/ethnic and immigrant inequalities in household poverty. They also suggest that poverty is likely to remain unchanged unless one pays attention to both individual and structural characteristics that create poverty and poor places. More employment opportunities with quality jobs are needed in nonmetropolitan areas to reduce the differences in poverty rates between nonmetropolitan and metropolitan LMAs. The lack of economic opportunities in those LMAs may be associated with high poverty. High minority and immigrant populations tend to be concentrated in those areas. Economic restructuring hit these LMAs the hardest with the loss of manufacturing jobs that were paying relatively well and the flight of middle-class families (Wilson 2012). Most residents in manufacturing industries, especially those with low levels of education, lost their jobs and were not able to secure comparable new jobs in the service sector and other newly created jobs. With economic restructuring, the flight of middle-class families produced social and economic environments with limited tax bases and reduced social resources. Investing in better job opportunities in those areas may reduce poverty and other socioeconomic disadvantages.

The findings reported also suggest that more employment opportunities in manufacturing industries, which traditionally pay relatively higher incomes, are crucial to reducing poverty, especially in nonmetropolitan and concentrated disadvantaged LMAs. More importantly, having at least one earner in the household, especially in LMAs with high rates of manufacturing and availability of great jobs, has a higher propensity to reduce poverty.

Finally, the findings above reveal that even after accounting for the effects of LMA opportunity and composition structure, residential location, and individual and household confounders, racial/ethnic and immigrant status' differences in poverty remain significant. This implies that policymakers at all levels—federal, state, and local government— can intervene to reduce poverty overall and differences in poverty between race/ethnicity and immigrant groups. This can be done in ways that increase investment in human capital through spending, for example, more on schools so they can hire qualified teachers, but also through investment that improves job training and skills. This can also be done by investing in economic opportunities that create more and sustainable jobs in different labor markets in both nonmetropolitan and metropolitan areas and forgotten places with high concentration of economic disadvantage, specifically by creating job opportunities that pay a decent and livable incomes above poverty, such as those in manufacturing and professional services. This can also be done by supplementing incomes of those in or near poverty through local, state, or federal programs such as income-tax credits and housing programs.

> **"While individual attributes such as human capital may partially explain poverty differentials and income gaps, existing opportunity structures beyond individuals' attributes and abilities may better explain the level of poverty and why it persists.**
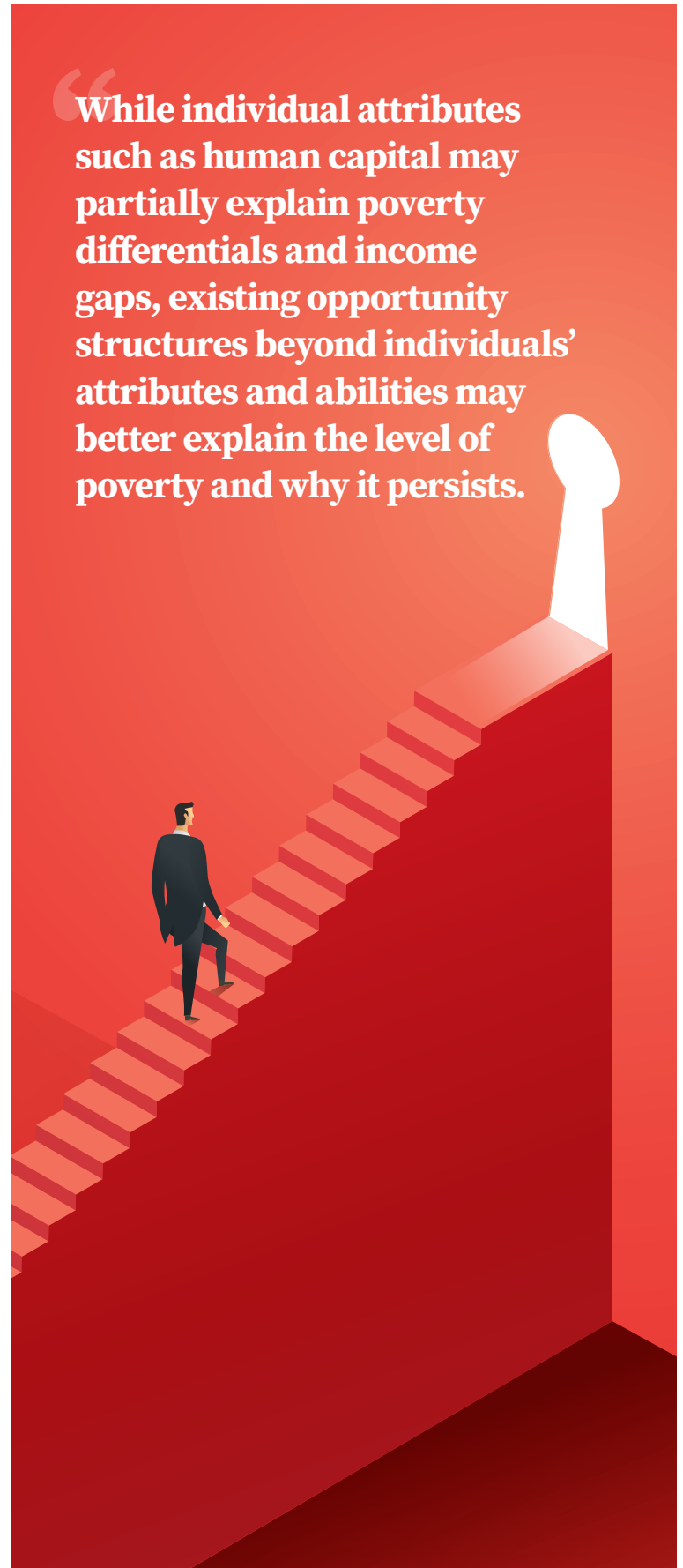
**Table 1. Effects of Household and LMA Characteristics on Household Income (Odds)**

| Variable | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Household characteristics | | | | |
| *Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Status* | | | | |
| White native[a] | | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| White immigrant | | 3.084*** | 2.804*** | 2.961*** |
| Latino native | | 1.502*** | 1.290** | 1.283** |
| Latino immigrant | | 1.612*** | 0.942 | 1.387* |
| Black native | | 1.796*** | 1.531*** | 1.460*** |
| Black immigrant | | 1.954** | 1.801* | 2.633*** |
| *Educational attainment* | | | | |
| Less than high school[a] | | | _____ | _____ |
| High school | | | 0.442*** | 0.566*** |
| Some college | | | 0.289*** | 0.397*** |
| College or higher | | | 0.109*** | 0.172*** |
| *Number of earners* | | | | |
| None[a] | | | | ----- |
| At least one earner | | | | 0.126*** |
| *Control variables* | | | | |
| Age (years) | | 1.007** | 1.001 | 0.977*** |
| Male[a] | | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Female | | 1.401*** | 1.511*** | 1.537*** |
| *Marital status* | | | | |
| Married[a] | | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Formerly married | | 2.643*** | 2.197*** | 1.640*** |
| Never married | | 2.830*** | 2.380*** | 1.641*** |
| *Homeownership* | | | | |
| Renter[a] | | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Owner | | 0.351*** | 0.423*** | 0.490*** |
| LMA characteristics | | | | |
| Intercept | 0.094*** | 0.072*** | 0.249*** | 0.838† |
| Metropolitan | | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Nonmetropolitan | | 1.245*** | 1.155** | 1.125** |
| Variance components | | | | |
| LMA | 0.374*** | 0.165*** | 0.131*** | 0.093*** |
| | | 55.88 | 20.61 | 29.01 |

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; † p < 0.10 (two-tailed tests)
Notes: N = 121,295 (Level - 1); N = 68 (Level - 2). [a]Reference category.

**Table 2. Effects of LMA Characteristics on Household Income and Number of Earners (Odds)**

| Variable | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Household characteristics | | | | |
| *Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Status* | | | | |
| White native[a] | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| White immigrant | 2.972*** | 2.976*** | 2.952*** | |
| Latino native | 1.275* | 1.275* | 1.269* | |
| Latino immigrant | 1.377* | 1.379* | 1.403* | |
| Black native | 1.434*** | 1.428*** | 1.430*** | |
| Black immigrant | 2.625*** | 2.605*** | 2.708*** | |
| *Educational attainment* | | | | |
| Less than high school[a] | _____ | _____ | _____ | |
| High school | 0.567*** | 0.567*** | 0.568*** | |
| Some college | 0.399*** | 0.398*** | 0.399*** | |
| College or higher | 0.174*** | 0.173*** | 0.175*** | |
| *Number of earners* | | | | |
| None[a] | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| At least one earner | 0.126*** | 0.126*** | 0.122*** | |
| *Control variables* | | | | |
| Age (years) | 0.977*** | 0.977*** | 0.976*** | |
| Male[a] | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| Female | 1.537*** | 1.538*** | 1.536*** | |
| *Marital status* | | | | |
| Married[a] | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| Formerly married | 1.639*** | 1.639*** | 1.643*** | |
| Never married | 1.679*** | 1.674*** | 1.674*** | |
| *Homeownership* | | | | |
| Renter[a] | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| Owner | 0.489*** | 0.490*** | 0.491*** | |
| LMA characteristics | Intercept | Intercept | Intercept | Number of Earners (Slope) |
| Intercept | 0.825† | 0.818* | 0.811** | |
| Nonmetropolitan | 1.104** | 1.086** | 1.054* | |
| Concentrated disadvantage | 1.184*** | 1.175*** | 1.146*** | |
| Percent manufacturing | | 0.876*** | 0.924† | 0.882** |
| Percent of good jobs | | | | 0.900* |
| LMA variance components | | | | |
| Intercept | 0.066*** | 0.049*** | 0.052*** | |
| Number of earners, slope | | | 0.099*** | |
| % of variance explained | 29.03 | 25.76 | -22.45 | |

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05 (two-tailed tests).
Notes: N = 121,295 (Level - 1); N = 68 (Level - 2). [a]Reference category.

**Appendix A. Descriptive Statistics of Selected Variables**

| Variable | Mean (%) | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Household Characteristics (N = 121,295)* | | | | |
| Household poverty | 9.41 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Householder's age (years) | 44.82 | 12.52 | 16.00 | 64.00 |
| Female (%) (ref. = male) | 50.01 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Race/Ethnicity (%) (ref. = non-Hispanic White) | | | | |
| Latino | 5.12 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Black | 14.39 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Foreign-born %) (ref. = native) | 5.64 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Race/ethnicity and immigrant (ref. = non-Hispanic White native) | | | | |
| Non-Hispanic white immigrant | 3.5 | | | |
| Black native | 13.9 | | | |
| Black foreign born | 0.5 | | | |
| Latino native | 3.5 | | | |
| Latino foreign born | 1.6 | | | |
| Educational attainment (%) (ref. = Less than high school) | | | | |
| High school | 19.95 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Some college | 35.93 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| College or higher | 39.78 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Marital status (%) (ref. = Married) | | | | |
| Formerly married | 21.27 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Never married | 29.16 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Number of children (5 = 5 or more) | 0.65 | 1.06 | 0 | 5 |
| Employment status (%) (ref. = At least one earner) | | | | |
| Number of earners | 85.31 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Homeownership (%) (ref. = renters) | 69.36 | | | |
| Residential stability (%) (ref. = Less than 5 years) | 13.39 | | | |
| *LMA Characteristics (N = 68)* | | | | |
| Nonmetropolitan (%) (ref. = metropolitan) | | | | |
| Nonmetropolitan (%) | 17.65 | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Percent 65 and over | | | | |
| Percent under 18 | 21.43 | 2.65 | 12.19 | 27.29 |
| High minority concentration (%) (≥ 40%) (ref. = < 40%) | | | | |
| High minority concentration | | | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| Immigrant concentration | 9.12 | 8.73 | 1.51 | 38.73 |
| Concentrated disadvantage | 0.00 | 6.56 | -14.51 | 17.59 |
| Percent of good jobs | 0.00 | 2.28 | -4.20 | 6.82 |
| Percent in manufacturing | 18.50 | 4.42 | 8.92 | 33.55 |
| Percent in services | 24.43 | 3.01 | 18.29 | 31.71 |

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# Melvindale Street Renamed in Honor of Michigan Conjunto Pioneer Martin H. Solis Jr.

By Richard Cruz Dávila, Ph.D.

2024 saw two more wins for Martin H. Solis Jr., a bajo sexto player and vocalist who, outside of the Tex-Mex music scene of Southeast Michigan, received little recognition for his talents until the last years of his life. In July 2024, Solis was inducted into the Texas Conjunto Music Hall of Fame in San Benito, Texas, and in August, a street in his longtime home of Melvindale, Michigan, was renamed in his honor.



Family and friends of Martin Solis Jr. stand beneath the new street sign.

Born in San Antonio in 1929, Solis moved to Michigan in 1942 when his family joined the stream of migrant laborers heading north to work in seasonal agriculture. The family soon settled in Detroit. After serving in the U.S. Army for two years at Fort Rucker in Alabama and a brief stint with a vocal trio, in the early-1950s Solis formed his first conjunto, Conjunto Los Primos, alongside his cousin Willy Huron. Theirs was among the first conjuntos based in Detroit. In 1961, Solis and Huron moved to Oklahoma City for work, continuing to play music on the side. In 1964, Solis moved his family back to Detroit, while Huron stayed behind in Oklahoma City. Solis fell right back into the music scene in Detroit, playing with many local musicians over the years, especially accordionist Manuel "El Lobo" Rivera. He later sang for the conjunto of his eldest son, Martin S. Solis Jr., also a bajo sexto player.

In all the decades of Solis' musical career, he never released his music on record. Fearing that his father's importance to the musical history of Detroit's Mexican community would therefore fade into obscurity, his youngest son, Frank, began a campaign in the 2010s to cement his father's legacy. The accolades began in 2017 with his induction into the Tejano R.O.O.T.S. Hall of Fame in Alice, Texas, followed by a declaration in 2018 of Martin Huron Solis Jr. Day in Melvindale, and receipt of the Michigan Heritage Award in 2019 from the Michigan Traditional Arts Program at Michigan State University. Though Solis passed away in 2019, the honors continued. In 2020, Jack White's Third Man Records released an album of rehearsal tapes discovered in Solis' attic, some dating back to the 1950s—Solis was at least able to hear a test pressing of the album before he passed. In 2023, Martin was honored on an official State of Michigan Historical Marker commemorating Mexican and Mexican American migration to Detroit and the emergence of the Tex-Mex music scene.

On the afternoon of Saturday, August 17, 2024, less than a month after his induction into the Texas Conjunto Music Hall of Fame, a crowd of around 30 gathered to celebrate the renaming of B Street, a one-block stretch that joins Roger Street and Stanley Avenue, just north of West Outer Drive. This location was chosen for its proximity to the home on Stanley Avenue, bought in 1964, where Solis and his wife, Anna, raised their three sons, Martin, Pete, and Frank, and where they continued to live until his passing.

During the unveiling ceremony, Solis' life was celebrated by Wayne County Commissioner Cara Clemente, as well as supporters of the Solis family and fixtures at Tejano dances in Southeast Michigan, José and Laura Chapa. Frank Solis then reflected on the journey from Solis' initial induction into the Tejano R.O.O.T.S. Hall of Fame to the renaming of a Melvindale Street in his honor. "I'm so honored that my dad is part of [the Texas Conjunto Music Hall of Fame]," he said. "He's up there with the legends, but then I think now, he is [one]. He deserves to be there." The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of a new street sign marking the intersection of Martin H. Solis Jr. Street and Stanley Avenue. Afterward, attendees danced in the street to songs from Solis' album.

Festivities continued throughout the weekend. On Saturday evening, a celebratory dance took place at the Prestige Banquet Hall in Allen Park, Michigan, with live music from Juaquin Chavez y Los Conjunto Boys of Sarita, Texas. On Sunday, the inaugural Martin H. Solis Jr. Tejano Festival took place outside of Parts & Labor Bar in Melvindale with live music from local group, Grupo Vicio.

Commenting on the significance of the weekend's events, Wayne County Commissioner Clemente said, "Having this street naming in Melvindale was very important to the family to honor their father, Martin Solis." She continued, "Their hope is that more people in the community will learn about his legacy and Tejano music." 🖾

*A version of this article was previously published on September 5, 2024, in* El Central *under the title, "Street Renamed in Honor of Michigan Conjunto Pioneer Martin H. Solis, Jr."*


Joe and Silvia Salvidar (sister of Martin Solis Jr.) dance in front of the new sign.


Silvia Saldivar shares memories of her brother as Frank Solis (foreground) looks on.

## ¿Qué está pasando en el instituto?

## WHAT'S NEW AT JSRI

### EMILIA BREUNING

Emilia Breuning is a student in the Master's in Marketing Research and Analytics program at MSU's Broad College of Business. This past summer she graduated from MSU with a bachelor's in marketing and minors in Spanish, international business, and global studies in social science. On campus, she has been involved with the Literature Association, Spanish Club, and Women's Leadership Institute. She is interested in consumer behavior and ethical standards of marketing and has experience in communications and data management.

### SAKARI WILCOX

Sakari Wilcox is a senior studying philosophy and psychology, with a minor in Spanish. She is passionate about continuous learning and growth and striving to live with intentionality.

Throughout her time at MSU, she has held various roles with the Tower Guard student organization. In previous years she served as vice president and student advisor, and currently leads a team within the organization that is responsible for the creation of tactile graphics. In her free time, she loves to write, draw, read, practice Spanish, and work on learning Chinese! After graduation, she hopes to pursue a career for which communicating, learning, creating, and fostering self-understanding are central.

She is very excited to be joining the Julian Samora Research Institute team!

## JSRI SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

### VIVIAN MORALES

Vivian Morales is a graduate of Michigan State University's Urban & Regional Planning Program. She graduated in three years and has spent her final year as a research assistant under Deyanira Nevárez Martínez, Ph.D. Together, they received the Tomlanovich-Dimond Research Grant to research the accessibility of affordable housing for female farmworkers in western Michigan. This past summer, she completed a congressional internship in Washington, D.C., as one of the 30 students selected by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. She is now pursuing a master's in urban & regional planning at MSU.

**MARISOL MASSÓ**

Marisol Massó is a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum, Instruction and Teacher Education program in Michigan State University's College of Education. She is from Mendoza, Argentina. A Latina herself, she is interested in understanding the teaching practice of Latino teachers serving multilingual learners in K-12 classrooms in Michigan. In her dissertation research, she is examining the instruction of culturally relevant texts of a Latino teacher teaching students of Latino heritage in an elementary school in Michigan.

**NANCY HERNANDEZ**

Nancy Hernandez is a doctoral student in the School Psychology Program at Michigan State University. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from St. John's University and a master's degree in school psychology from MSU. Her research interests revolve around the benefits of physical activity on executive functioning and attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms in the Latino child population. Nancy seeks to use the scientific-practitioner model to improve the research-to-practice gap by evaluating the effectiveness and acceptability of physical activity as an intervention for Latino children to foster their success.

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• The **P. Lea Martinez Endowed Scholarship Fund**, which supports students studying health issues among Latinos;

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### If you need additional information on giving to JSRI, including planned giving, please contact:

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