

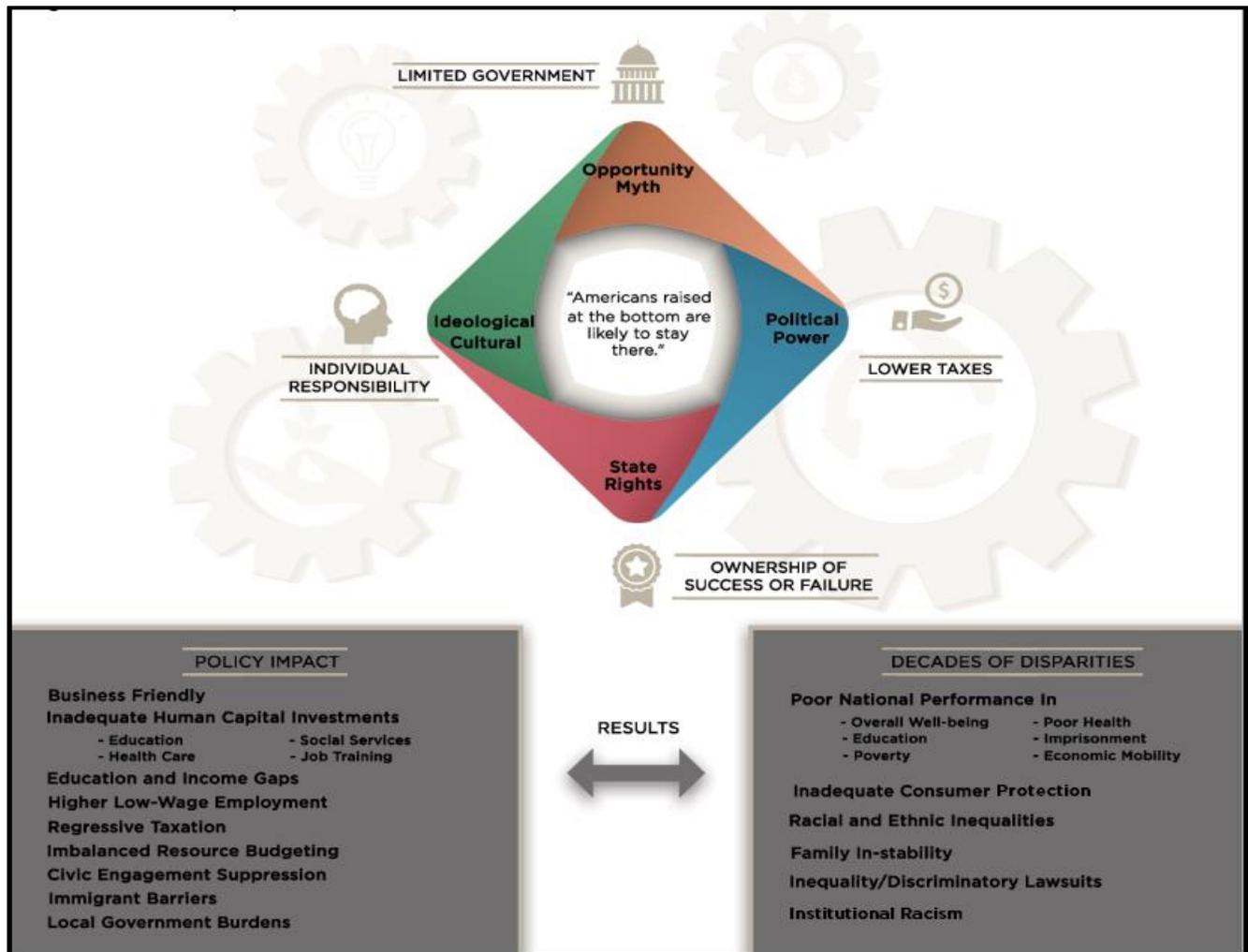
TEXAS POLICY MAKING: HURTING LATINO FAMILIES

Without transformative change to the State’s minimalist policy making approach, Latinos will experience another generation of unequal opportunity for economic mobility. Latinos and their allies must transform Texas policy-making to an approach driven more by principles of inclusion and equity.

Symposia I and II participants identified economic mobility issues and policy recommendations grounded in the realities of Texas policy-making. The panel discussions were inter-laced with the Latino community’s infrastructure capacity to change the state’s ‘**minimalist**’ public policy-making culture. A culture that intentionally minimizes human capital investments, underlying ‘**structural**’ political and policy problems disproportionately produced inequitable impacts on Latino families. They further concluded that there were more weaknesses than strengthens in the community’s capacity to significantly influence change from their harmful effects.

National and state report cards, research reports, law suits, and media investigative reporting have documented the harmful impacts from the state’s policy-making approach across human capital investment policies. **The often promoted ‘Texas Way to Policy Making is entrenched by ideological values, political power and state-rights perspectives masked by messaging related to individual responsibility, lower taxes, limited government, and ownership of individual success or failure** (Figure 1). Simplicity messaging that hides ‘structural’ problems from blaming the victim to antiquated tax code that perpetually lead to a limited budget to meet our states’ growing needs.

Figure 1: The Texas Policy Making Way



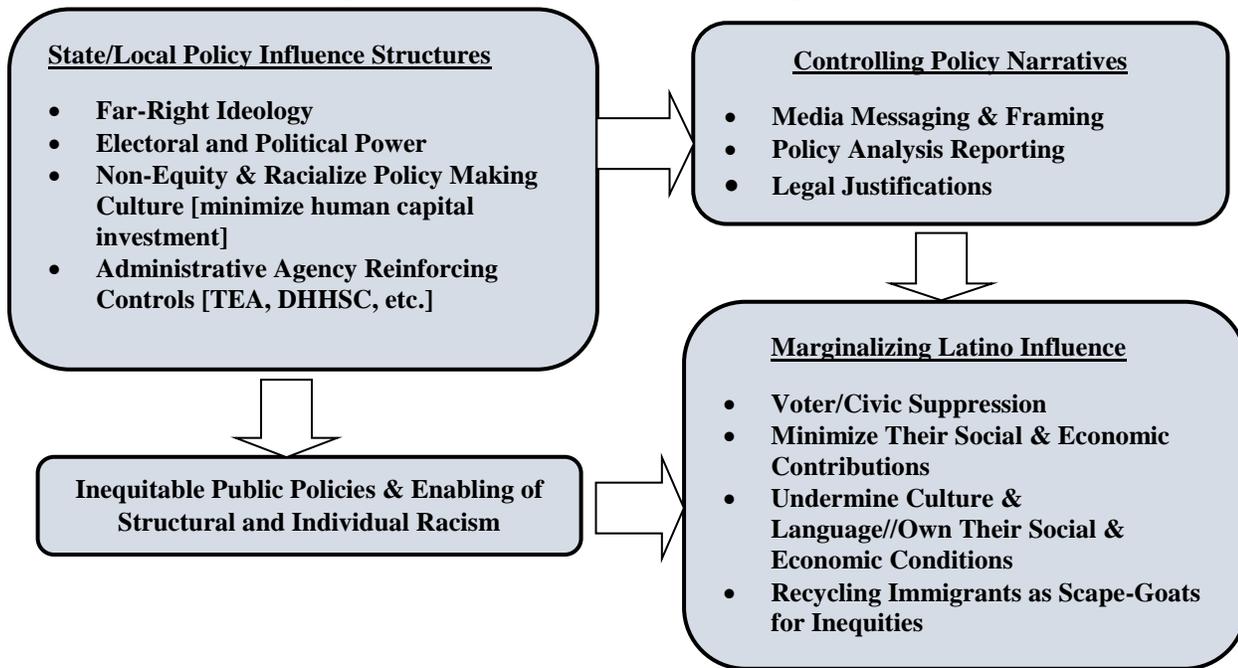
A. Mapping the Political and Policy Challenges

Political power and its underlying values and support structures were **identified by ALL the Symposium’s panels** as the influencing policy drivers that perpetuate generations of low-income families. Texas’s political and policy environment disproportionately continues to have negative policy impacts on the economic mobility of Latino families.

The Symposium discussants recognized, from the policy research presentations and their experience, the state’s policy-making status-quo **mirrors** Texas’s Policy-Making Way illustrated above. It’s evident that multiple layers of ideological, political, race/ethnic, and bureaucratic barriers must be overcome for meaningful policy changes to occur. Fundamentally, there is a **direct relational line from each of these barriers directly to unfair and racialized far-right policies and laws that offer little solutions to inequalities or simply legitimize them.**

Furthermore, that political power-brokers and policy-makers effectively use their resources (power and money) to maintain policy control by negatively framing and **messaging the issues, and very skewed policy analysis and legal justifications** (Figure 2). Together, they combine to produce unfair and inequitable policies that marginalize Latino opportunities to influence policy-making. A powerless Latino community is further fostered through voter suppression laws, blame-the-victim and negative stereotyping, and immigrants as causal scape-goats.

Figure 2: Texas Status-Quo: Ideology, Politics, And Policy



Final, the discussants underscored the similarities of Texas’s history of inequitable and racialized policies, to the current-day political environment of policy exclusion and suppression contributing to maintaining generations of families in poverty and low-income conditions. They outlined a policy influence FRAMEWORK targeting increased political power for social and economic mobility (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Latino Policy Influence and Family Economic Mobility Priority Framework

