

La Cara Humana de la Pobreza Los Niños Chicanos-Latinos en Minnesota



The Human Face of Poverty Chicano-Latino Children in Minnesota

HACER

Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment Through Research
St. Paul, MN March, 1995

The Human Face of Poverty **Chicano-Latino Children in Minnesota**

A Research Project Report

by

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Credits

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HACER is a collaborative project of *Chicanos-Latinos Unidos En Servicio* (CLUES), Metropolitan State University, Ramsey County Community Human Services Department and the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). HACER's mission is to conduct research that leads to empowerment of the Chicano-Latino community in the Twin Cities and in Greater Minnesota. The following foundations have provided funding support to **HACER**: Minneapolis Undesignated (1994-95), Emma B. Howe (1994), Otto Bremer (1994-95), Northwest Area (1995-96), and The St. Paul Companies (1995).

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

In an effort to gain a richer understanding of the problem of poverty and how it affects Chicano-Latino Children in Minnesota, HACER conducted focus group research in selected Minnesota communities where Chicanos-Latinos are known to reside in significant numbers.

Approaching the Question

The main research question the project set out to answer was, "How do Hispanic children suffer because their families don't have or don't earn enough money to make ends meet?" Further, the project sought to probe Latino parents to get a sense of their views regarding solutions they thought would help them escape poverty. To this end, the question was asked, "If agencies which help Hispanic families could change one thing to improve the lives of Hispanic children, what would you tell them to change?" To seek answers to these research questions, HACER conducted fifteen focus groups, eight in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and seven in Greater Minnesota. A total of one hundred twenty nine Chicano-Latino parents participated and provided the data discussed in this report. The research was conducted by a team of four Metropolitan State University undergraduate students and one graduate assistant from the University of Minnesota, under the supervision of HACER's current Executive Director in consultation with HACER's Research Group and Research Director.

The main section of this report discusses the findings based on the data collected from the participants, the parents in the focus groups. Of equal importance is the section that discusses proposals for solutions to the problems experienced by Minnesota Chicano-Latino children who live in poverty. The research methodology, questions used in the focus group interviews, information on site locations and the number of participants in each group are discussed in the appendices.

The Sample

The research sample for this study consisted of 110 households, sixty two in the Twin Cities groups and forty eight in the Greater Minnesota groups. In absolute numbers one hundred twenty nine parents participated in the fifteen focus groups. These families represented two hundred seventy two children, 90% of whom were under age twenty. Nearly 3/4 of the households were married-couple families; the average number of children per family was 2.5. In spite of the fact that most parents in the sample were in married-couple families and employed, about 62% of the households and 70% of the children were in poverty. About 63% of the children in poverty were age 10 and under.

Findings

The research findings demonstrate that the effects of poverty on Minnesota Chicano-Latino children are multidimensional. These children experience a number of problems because their parents don't earn enough income to make ends meet. The findings are summarized below.

Parents reported that being poor severely limits their ability to provide for their children's basic needs. Consequently, they said, their children experience problems in the schools, and their health, food and nutrition, and clothing and housing needs are not met adequately.

Parents expressed particular concern that their status as low-wage earners limits educational opportunity for their children. Their poverty-level income, they said, limits their capacity to secure their children's participation in recreational and enrichment programs. As a result, their children are denied the opportunity for a well-rounded education.

Parents expressed a deep concern that the problem of poverty affects their children most harshly. They acknowledged, often in guilt-ridden terms, that their own limitations regarding educational attainment and English proficiency are factors that contribute to their impoverished condition.

Parents, particularly those in the Greater Minnesota groups, expressed awareness that systemic and societal factors, such as institutional neglect, and discrimination and racism, also partially explain their condition of economic dependency and entrapment. Racial discrimination and racism, they said, were major problems that contributed to their impoverished status. In the Greater Minnesota groups, parents said that racism pervades their daily lives: in the workplace, in public places, and in their contact with public institutions and human services agencies. They are forced, parents said, to endure racism because they are poor and not white. Parents said that white racism reminds them constantly of their status as low wage earners and second-class citizens.

Parents' Recommendations: Or What the Folks Said Will Improve Their Children's Lives

When asked what type of public assistance they needed to help them and their children escape poverty, parents asked for programs to help them secure adequate housing, nutrition, health care, and educational enrichment and recreation programs for their children. Parents requested programs that would improve their employability skills and enhance their family income. They asked for bilingual advocates to help them secure adequate services from public assistance agencies, and called for investigations to address the problems of racism and discrimination they face. Finally, in some Greater Minnesota groups, parents also suggested that collective political actions on their behalf may be a corrective to the social injustice they experience almost routinely. The program areas in which parents requested assistance are summarized below.

Education and Family Income

- Education and Job Training
- English Literacy Programs
- Childcare Programs

Health and Human Services

- Interpreter and Translation Services
- Bilingual Staff
- Information About Services in Spanish

Housing

- Renovation of Old and Abandoned Buildings for Conversion to Affordable Living
- Regulation of Landlords to Protect Tenants' Rights
- Investigations to Eliminate Discrimination

Nutrition and Food

- Assistance programs to Supplement Their Food Budgets
- Programs Should Consider Their Cultural Preferences
(Commodities, School Lunches, Food Shelves, etc.)

Adolescent and Youth Needs

- Recreation and Sports Programs
- Extra-Curricular Activities

Racism and Social Justice

- Bilingual Advocates
- Investigations for Racial and Social Justice
- Protection of Human, Civil and Workplace Rights

Central Themes

Three central themes put a uniquely Chicano-Latino "stamp" on the problems and needs identified.

Vergüenza (shame) is a cultural phenomenon used by Chicano-Latino parents to shape and regulate their children's behavior. It has a strong impact on individual behavior, particularly among children and youth. When shame is projected onto Chicano-Latino children and their families by the majority community, it can have a particularly destructive impact and increase the risk of evoking "acting out" behavior from Chicano-Latino children and youth, especially in the school environment. In one sense, *vergüenza* as a cultural phenomenon is a negative dimension of Chicano and other Latino cultures. Caution must be exercised not to project *vergüenza* as a stereotype that resides in all Chicano-Latino families given that these cultures have been impacted by other cultures, social class divisions notwithstanding. (See Appendix VII for a more detailed discussion of *vergüenza*.)

Racism permeates the daily experience of these families, creates barriers to improving their life circumstances and augments the destructive effects of shame for their children. In the workplace, and in daily contact with public institutions and the majority society, white racism serves to remind Chicanos-Latinos of their status as second class citizens. In public discourse, moreover, racism is presented as a problem that affects adversely only African Americans, when in reality its ugly manifestations reach deep into the Chicano-Latino community. White racism victimizes Chicanos-Latinos just as harshly as it does African Americans.

Poverty and accountability are inseparable. Chicano-Latino poverty is largely a social structural phenomena that must be addressed through public policy. The Minnesota Chicano-Latino community therefore needs to hold the majority society and institutions accountable for the poverty they and their children suffer.

¿Y Ahora Qué? (What Now?)

The research findings reported here beg the question, "*¿Y Ahora Qué?*" (What Now?) In their comments to the researchers these folks reported in vivid terms that they are forced to endure poverty and economic dependency because they are not white, and are without the social and political power to initiate and sustain change efforts that can help them escape the twin problems of poverty and economic dependency. "*¿Y Ahora Qué?*" (What Now?) That is, who will address the problem of rescuing these folks from this condition of oppressive economic entrapment? Who will advocate for the elimination of racism so that these folks can get the social justice they deserve? These are the questions that these research findings pose to policy-makers and government officials, and to all Minnesotans.

Response to the "The Human Face of Poverty Report"

HACER convened a group of Chicano-Latino community leaders and professionals to ask them to comment on the report, "The Human Face of Poverty," and to offer proposals to address the problems parents identified in the report. Eight persons, in addition to HACER representatives and students, participated in the meeting held at Neighborhood House in St. Paul, January 20, 1995. Of these individuals, two were directors of community-based Latino education programs, two represented university-based Latino programs, one was a history professor, two were professionals in human services agencies, and one represented a state Chicano-Latino advocacy agency. After a brief discussion of research findings by HACER staff, the group offered comments and recommendations to address problems faced by Chicano-Latino families and children in poverty identified in the report. The recommendations fell in two categories. One set of recommendations addressed important "themes" that some group members felt should be given prominence in the report. The second category included recommendations to address specific problems and needs that parents identified. These themes are discussed in this section below, and their recommendations are included in Appendix V.

Advisory Group Response: Four Themes

Based on their review of the problems and needs identified by parents, the community responders identified four themes which informed their recommendations:

Advocacy: Chicanos-Latinos need to undertake an advocacy campaign with policy-makers and government agencies to address the problems and needs of the Chicano-Latino community.

Acceptability: A necessary first step in this advocacy campaign is to enhance policy-makers' and the majority community's understanding and acceptance that Chicanos-Latinos are a people with a different culture that needs to be considered when policies and programs are put in place.

Accessibility: Advocacy efforts would then focus on making program resources more accessible to the Chicano-Latino community, with outreach being a major component.

Accountability: Finally, the advocacy campaign would stress accountability by:

- monitoring the amount of public dollars spent for services and programs for Chicanos-Latinos.

- developing methods for involving the Chicano-Latino community in policy-making and planning efforts to ensure that programs are responsive to the community.

The recommendations to be implemented through the advocacy campaign (see Appendix VIII) would include those related to education, health, housing, nutrition, employment, youth needs, shame, racism and discrimination: the specific areas addressed by the parents.

Introduction

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Introduction

Recent research reports have focused attention on the problem of poverty in communities of color both in Minnesota and in the nation (The Urban Coalition, 1993, Minnesota Planning 1994 a and 1994 b, National Council of La Raza, 1993, and Fierro, 1993). The findings in these reports consistently demonstrate that poverty has increased dramatically since 1980, and has impacted communities of color more adversely than whites. Poverty, moreover, has impacted children of color most harshly.

These reports, however, are mostly based on census data. They offer a statistical portrait of the problem. Because of the quantitative research methodology employed, these reports present an incomplete understanding of the problem of poverty as it affects people of color. In order to probe more deeply into the problem of poverty, HACER decided to undertake a research project to enhance our understanding of its impact on children of color. More specifically, HACER set out to investigate the effects and consequences for Latino children in families who live in poverty.

The main research question the project set out to answer was, "How do Hispanic children suffer because their families don't have or don't earn enough money to make ends meet?" Further, the project sought to probe Latino parents to get a sense of their views regarding solutions they thought would help them escape poverty. To this end, the question was asked, "If agencies which help Hispanic families could change one thing to improve the lives of Hispanic children, what would you tell them to change?"

This introduction section presents a demographic profile of Minnesota's Chicano-Latino population based on 1990 Census data, and a brief discussion of this study's methodology and research sample. The parents' responses to the research questions and their recommendations for solutions to the problem of poverty they experience are discussed in the sections on the findings and recommendations in this report. Finally, information on the several aspects of this research project are discussed in the Appendices.

Census Profile: People and Poverty

Census data show that the Minnesota Chicano-Latino population increased by 68% from 32,000 in 1980 to just under 54,000 in 1990 (Spanish Speaking Affairs Council, 1991). Two thirds of these reside in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, largely in Minneapolis and St. Paul (MN State Demographer, 1994 and Urban Coalition, 1994, unpublished). Some communities in Greater Minnesota, however, experienced more dramatic increases in their Chicano-Latino population and contain some of the highest concentrations in the state. Willmar saw its Chicano-Latino population increase more than eightfold from 142 in 1980 to 1205 in 1990. Similarly, phenomenal growth in their Chicano-Latino population occurred in Moorhead (191%), East Grand Forks (150%) and Rochester (101%). In 1990 Willmar, Albert Lea and Moorhead had the third, fourth and fifth largest Chicano-Latino concentrations, respectively, in the Minnesota. St. Paul and Minneapolis had the first and second highest concentrations of Latinos, respectively.

The "Hispanics"

Several subgroups are subsumed in the category "Hispanics." People of Mexican descent, however, constituted almost two thirds of Minnesota Chicanos-Latinos in 1990. In Minneapolis, Mexicans were 54% of all Latinos; Puerto Ricans, 9%; Cubans, 5%; and "other Hispanics," 31.5%. In St. Paul, Mexicans made up almost 75% (74.4%) of all Latinos in 1990; Puerto Ricans, 5%; Cubans, 3%; and "other Hispanics," 18%. In the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area Mexicans accounted for about 62% of all Latinos in 1990; Puerto Ricans, 7%; Cubans, 3%; and "other Hispanics," 28%. In Greater Minnesota, Mexicans constituted over 70% of all Latinos in 1990; Puerto Ricans, 4%; Cubans, 2%; and "other Hispanics," 24%. Finally, in the State of Minnesota, Mexicans were 64% of all Latinos; Puerto Ricans, 6%; Cubans, 3%; and "other Hispanics," 27%.¹

Families, Age and Citizenship

The profile of Minnesota Latinos by family type, age and citizenship characteristics is interesting.

Families

In 1990 about two thirds of all Minnesota Latino families with related children were married-couple families. The remaining one third were families headed by single parents, 26.7% by single women and 6.5% by single men.

¹The terms that identify the "Hispanic" subgroups in this paragraph are those used by the Census Bureau. "Other Hispanics" refers to persons who did not identify as Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban in the Census. In this report, "Chicanos-Latinos" and "Latinos" are used interchangeably to refer to all "Hispanics," and "other Latinos" refers to all Latinos who are not of Mexican descent. "Mexican" is used to refer to all persons of Mexican descent, regardless of citizenship status, or whether they were born in the United States or Mexico.

Age

Minnesota Chicanos-Latinos were a young population; children under age 18 comprised nearly 42% of all Latinos, compared to 27% of all Minnesotans. Nearly 55% were 18-64, compared to about 61% for all Minnesotans; and only 4% of all Latinos were over age 65, compared to 13% for the total Minnesota population.

Citizenship

Citizenship characteristics were quite striking as well. Almost 90% of Mexicans and 74% of other Latinos were native-born U.S. citizens, and over half (54%) of Mexicans and 31% of other Latinos were native-born Minnesotans. Another 3% of Minnesota Mexicans and 9% of other Minnesota Latinos were naturalized U.S. citizens. Stated differently, in 1990, 92% of Minnesota Mexicans and 83% of other Minnesota Latinos were legal U.S. citizens.

Profile of "Misery"

Some educational attainment and income characteristics of Minnesota Chicanos-Latinos suggest at least a partial explanation for their poverty status.

Education

Thirty four percent of Mexicans and 21% of other Latinos over age 25 did not complete high school; and only 11% of Mexicans, compared to 29% of other Latinos, had a bachelor's degree, or a graduate or professional degree.

Income

All income measures appear to indicate that Chicanos\Latinos were worse off compared to all Minnesotans. Their average family income was \$11,365 less, and their median family income was \$9,347 less than for all Minnesotans. Another factor that compounds the poverty condition for Chicanos/Latinos is that their average household size was larger than for all Minnesotans.

Mexicans Worst Off

Among the Latino subgroups, Mexicans were worse off in terms of income. Mexicans and other Latinos had about the same average family income in 1979. However, the average family income of Mexicans had decreased by 6% by 1989, while that of other Latinos increased by 16% during the same period. As can be seen from this census profile, this pattern of social inequality between Mexicans and other Latinos in Minnesota persists across other socioeconomic status indicators.

Poverty

The poverty characteristics of Minnesota Chicanos-Latinos, particularly among children, are quite telling. About one in four (26%) of Minnesota Chicanos-Latinos were in poverty in 1990, or two and one half times the poverty rate (10%) for all Minnesotans.² Chicano-Latino children, moreover, were worse off. Thirty one percent of Chicano/Latino children were in poverty in 1989, compared to 12% for all children. In the Twin Cities in

² The federal definition of poverty in 1992 was \$11,186 for a family of three and \$14,350 for a family of four. More detailed poverty data by race and ethnicity are included in Appendix VI.

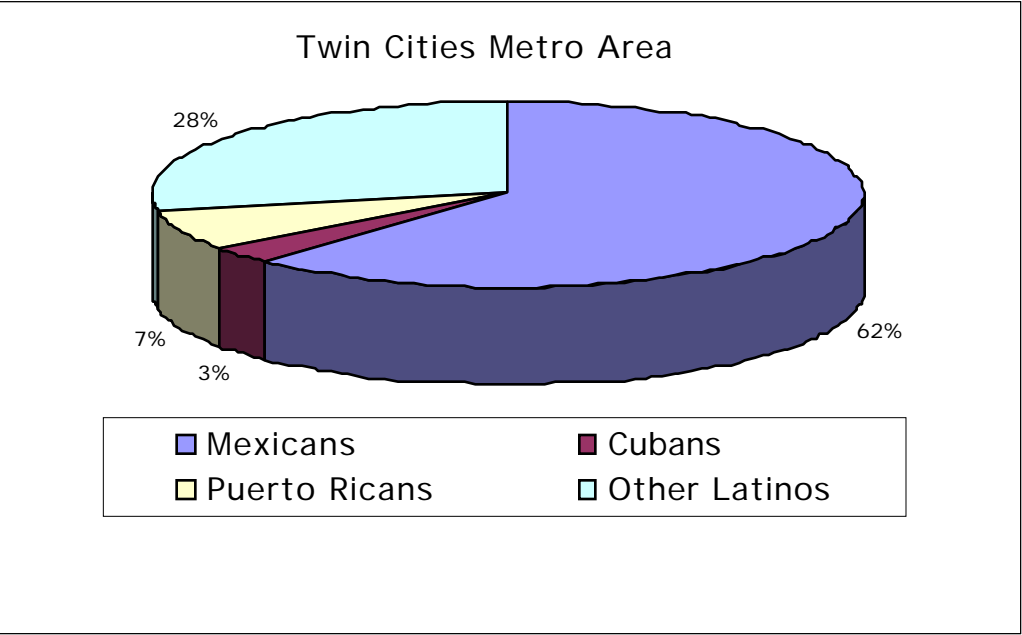
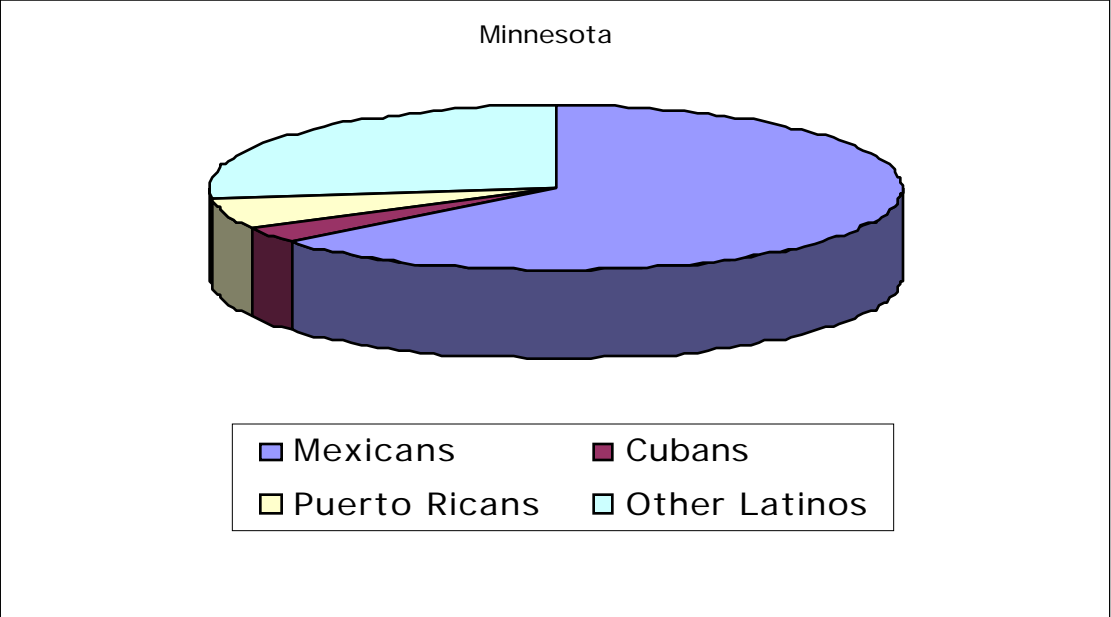
1989, 41% of Chicano-Latino children in Minneapolis and 30% in St. Paul lived in families who were in poverty, compared to 13% and 12%, respectively for white children in Minneapolis and St. Paul. This represents increases from 1979 of 9% and 6% compared to 3% and 2% for white children, respectively, in Minneapolis and St. Paul. In the seven-county metro area the poverty rate for Chicano-Latino children increased from 19% in 1979 to 23% in 1989, compared to less than 1% increase for white children. Again, Mexicans had a higher poverty rate (28%) than other Latinos (22%). The poverty rate for Mexican children increased from 19% in 1979 to 33% in 1989, compared to an increase from 19% to 31% for all Latino children during the same period.

Why Are Chicanos-Latinos in Poverty?

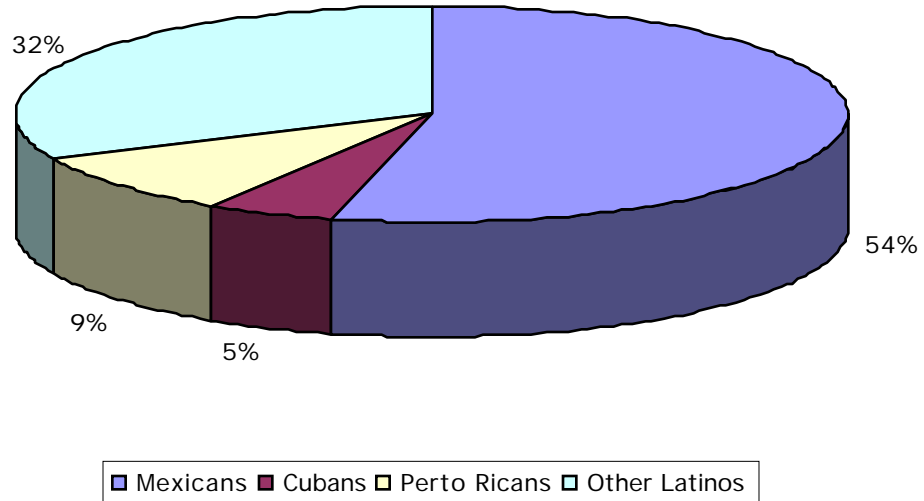
The persistence of and increase in poverty among Minnesota Chicanos-Latinos is a reality that belies their work ethic. Census data show that in 1990 Chicano-Latino work effort surpassed that of whites. The labor force participation of Chicanos-Latinos age 16 and older in 1990 was 72%, for example, compared to 70% for whites in the same age group. Yet, the number of Chicano-Latino males age 16 and over with full-time employment year-round who had incomes below poverty increased from 13% in 1979 to 26% in 1992. This suggests that factors other than the lack of work effort explain the persistence and increase in poverty among Minnesota Chicanos-Latinos. Moreover, the social disparities between the groups and the cultural diversity that characterize the Latino subgroups subsumed under the category "Hispanic" suggest that policy makers need to be aware of the socioeconomic characteristics and the unique needs of each of the subgroups when they design programs for Minnesota "Hispanics."

Minnesota Chicano-Latino Population 1990

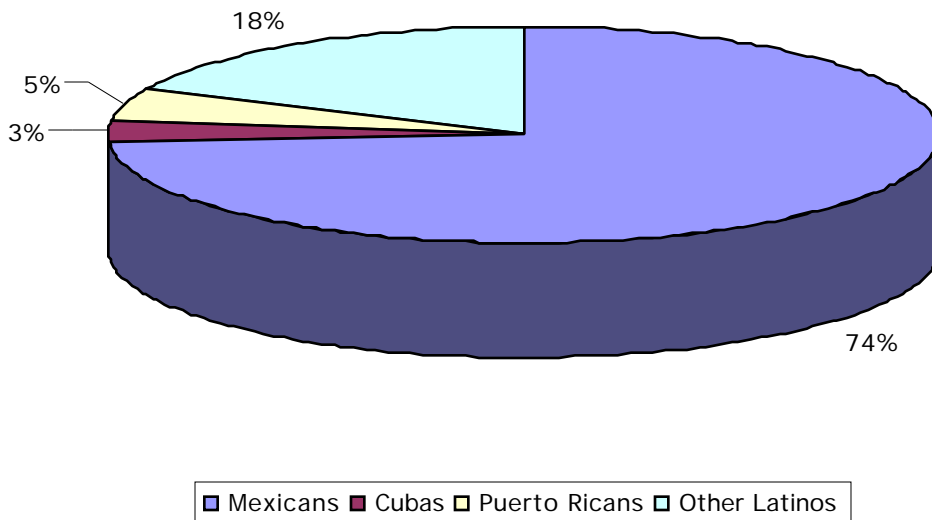
Chart I



Minneapolis



St. Paul



Research Methodology

HACER's Research Group conceptualized the research project. The Group decided that focus group research was the most appropriate methodology to use to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of poverty on Chicano-Latino children. In order to seek answers to the research questions, fifteen focus groups, eight in the Twin Cities metro area and seven in Greater Minnesota, were conducted in sites where Latinos are known to reside in significant numbers. These sites were identified using census data, and Latino non-profit agency staff and community leaders. The research was conducted by a team of four undergraduate students enrolled in the internship class, "Research in the Hispanic Community," at Metropolitan State University and one graduate assistant from the University of Minnesota, under the supervision of **HACER's** Program Director. A rigorous formulation process resulted in a set of questions that was tested with one pilot group. The research team used the results of the pilot group to revise and refine the final set of questions that was used in all subsequent groups. The questions and all forms used were drafted in English and translated to Spanish. All group interviews except the pilot group, however, were conducted in Spanish, since there was high representation of immigrants and the Chicana/o participants were bilingual.

The Research Sample

The research sample for this study consisted of 110 households, sixty two in the Twin Cities groups and forty eight in the Greater Minnesota groups. In absolute numbers, one hundred twenty nine parents participated in the fifteen focus groups. These families included two hundred seventy two children, 90% of whom were under age twenty. The proportional representation by family types was as follows: 73% were married- couple families, 14% were single-parent families, 5% were families headed by a divorced person, 6% were headed by a separated person and 3% did not report their marital status. The average family size was 2.5 children per family; the largest family reported having nine children and the smallest were a number of one-child families. The research sample was a young population. About 32% of respondents were age 20 to 29, 33% were age 30 to 39, and 22% fell in the age range 40 to 49. Eighty one percent of the families had annual incomes under \$16,000; only 11% had incomes over \$24,000. Sixty four percent of married-couple families, 60% of single-parent families and 80% of families headed by a divorced person were in poverty. In spite of the fact that most parents in the sample were in married-couple families and employed, about 62% of the households and 70% of the children were in poverty. About 63% of the children in poverty were age 10 or younger. Regarding educational attainment, 54% of respondents had less than a high school education, 20% had 1-3 years of college, and only 8% had a four-year college degree or higher. The data on educational attainment needs to be read cautiously, however, since a high proportion of respondents who reported having a high school education or better were immigrants who were educated in their respective countries of origin. The economic consequences of limited English proficiency are well known, and suggest some explanation as to why these people are in dire poverty (see Appendix III for a more detailed description of the research sample).

In spite of the fact that most parents in the sample were in married-couple families and employed, about 62% of the households and 70% of the children were in poverty. About 63% of the children in poverty were age 10 or younger.

Chart II

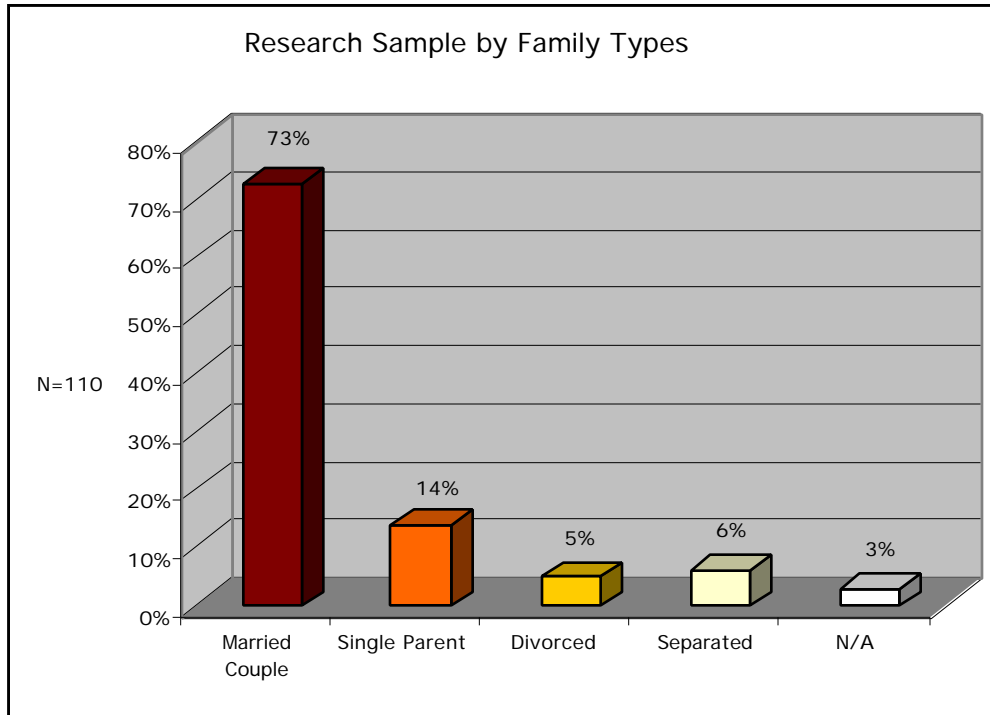


Chart III

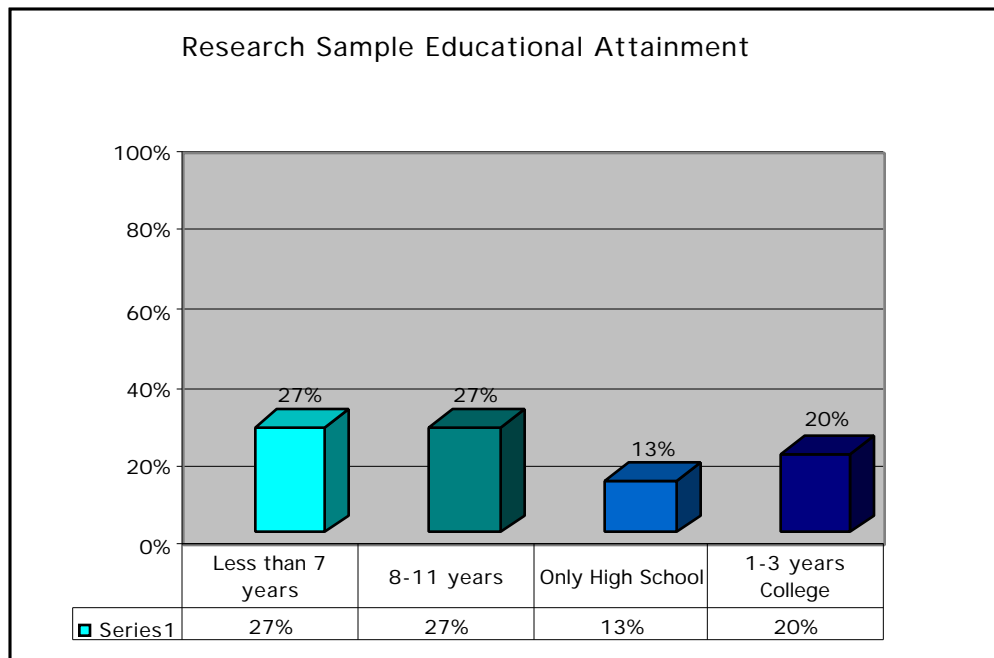


Chart IV

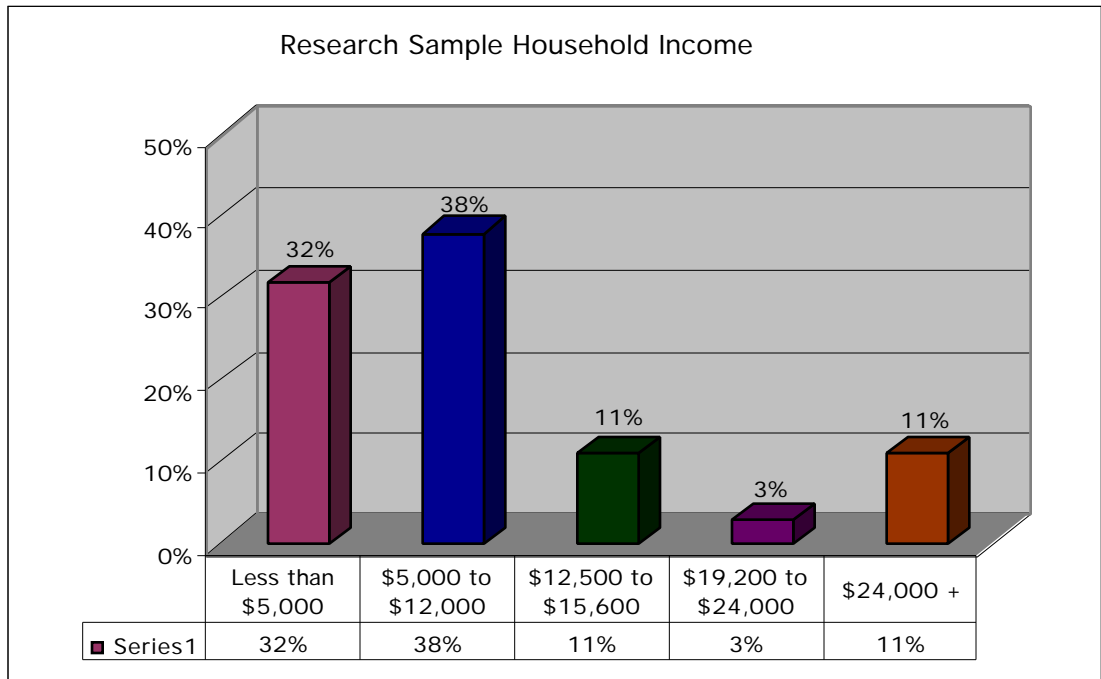
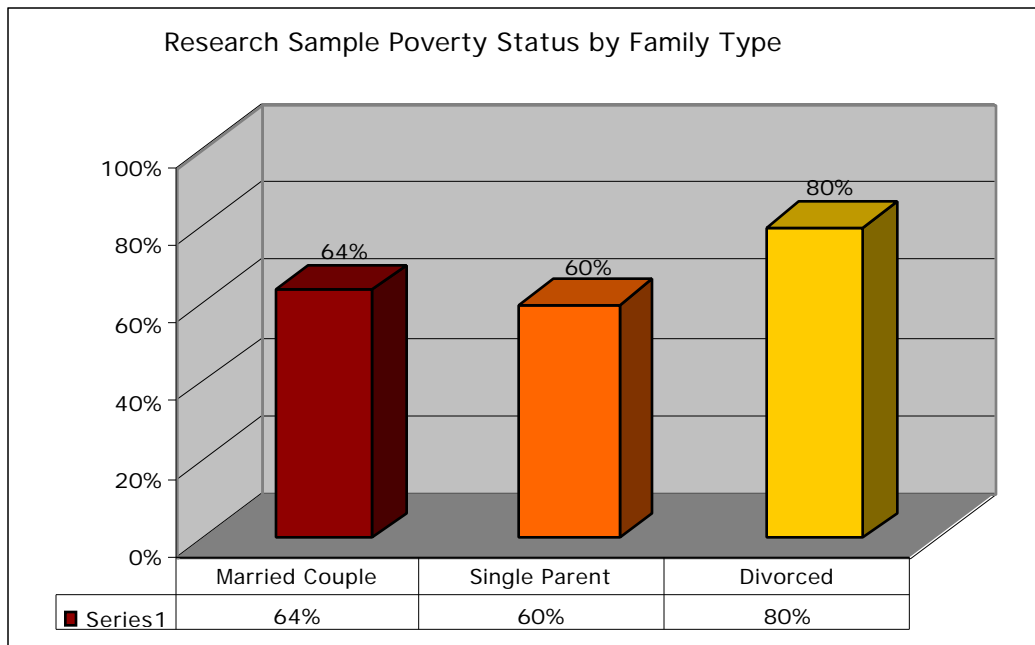


Chart V



The Research Findings

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Chicano-Latino Children in Poverty: The Research Findings

A number of common themes emerged in the groups, both across geographical regions and across national origin. All parents expressed deep concern about the well-being of their children. They agonized over the limitations imposed by the condition of poverty on their ability to provide the material and emotional support their children need to live emotionally and physically healthy lives, and to become productive contributors to society. Parents expressed a deep understanding of their situation and lamented, often in guilt-ridden comments, that their own individual limitations such as low educational attainment or limited English proficiency partly explained their situation as low-wage earners. Parents, moreover, said that poverty conditions severely limit their ability to provide for their children's basic needs such as food, clothing, medical care, and social and recreation needs. They lamented that having to spend a lot of time working, often at two jobs, kept them from spending time with their children for family social needs, supervision, or school activities. One consequence, they said, was that discipline problems with their children became more frequent. One major difference between the metro area findings and those in the Greater Minnesota groups is that, in the latter groups, participants reported frequent encounters with racial discrimination. A number of parents cited racial discrimination as a factor that contributes to their daily situation as an impoverished people. According to their reports, racism pervades their daily life routine. In addition to the social injury of economic oppression, they are forced to endure the insult of being treated as racial inferiors and as second-class citizens on a daily basis because they are not white and because they are poor. The picture that emerges from their reports is that the effects of poverty on Chicano-Latino children are multi-dimensional. This suggests that efforts to eradicate poverty defy simplistic approaches. The research findings further suggest that policy-makers and advocates for poor people need to look closely and self-critically at the way they approach the problem of poverty as it affects communities of color and Chicano-Latino children in particular. **Education "We feel bad as parents because we don't make enough money to get the special things they (their children) need for school like (activity) fees or special materials, or adequate clothes and shoes, like sweaters or snow boots."**

A number of factors that derive directly or indirectly from the condition of family poverty intervene to impose limitations on the educational possibilities for Latino children. In all the groups parents expressed a deep awareness that their children suffer emotional and physical stress because of their parents' impoverished condition. Parents understand very clearly that poverty-induced stress impacts adversely on their children's school performance, and that it places them in danger of becoming statistics on the school dropout or social deviance ledgers. A number of parents reported that scarce financial resources limit their children's participation in a well-rounded education. Some related that their children can't participate in field trips to museums, art galleries, etc., because they can't afford to pay the associated fees. Other parents said that their children can't participate in extra-curricular activities, such as the school band or sports, because uniforms and equipment are too expensive for their meager budgets. Still other parents lamented that their children's career dreams are derailed early in life because they don't have the financial means to pay for specialized instruction or tutoring that can help their children excel in school work. The effect of this stress, parents said, is to drown out early in their lives any aspirations and self-esteem the children have, causing them to lose interest in their school work and in learning. Consequently, the children become likely candidates for dropping out of school. In one metro area group, for example, a man said that his son wants to study for a career in music but is thinking of dropping out of school to work because his family's financial limitations offer dim hope that they can pay for the boy's education beyond high school. Similarly, a number of parents reported that clothing and nutrition issues also impact on their children's school performance. Parents were aware that good nutrition has a positive effect on learning interest. They were keenly aware, however, that poverty wages restrict the financial resources available to meet their children's food and nutrition needs. As a consequence, parents stated, children often go hungry because of scarce food or limitations placed on

the diet by the lack of money. Another concern that emerged was the issue of culturally appropriate food. Parents reported that even when the children qualify for school lunch programs, the food items served in the school cafeterias are not culturally appropriate. As a result, parents stated, the children go hungry because they refuse to eat foods they don't like. Consequently, parents said, the children's school performance suffers because they feel ill and are unable to concentrate on their school work or assignments. One issue regarding clothing surfaced in all the groups. Parents reported that their children are subjected to peer pressure and ridicule because they don't wear the latest "trendy" clothing that allows them to "fit in" with the kids from more affluent families. This issue was the source of much consternation for the children, parents reported, because poverty wages force them to buy items only at economy budget prices, and in limited quantity and variety. They can't afford to buy brand-name items which are much more expensive than budget-priced items. Thus parents reported that their children only have two or three pairs of pants that they must wear more than once to school during the same week. As a result the children are subjected to ridicule at school, and they soon acquire inferiority feelings because other kids make fun of them. When the burden becomes too much to bear, the children give up and start thinking of quitting school to look for work to earn money to buy the material things they desire. **Health**

"When I get sick, I wait to the very last minute until I feel very sick to see a doctor. By then, I am too sick to care for my children who are not yet in school."

Parents reported that poverty seriously limits their access to adequate medical care for their children and themselves when they need it. In all the groups, comments indicated that parents place their children's medical care needs ahead of their own. In some cases parents reported that they used home remedies as an alternative to seeing a doctor since they don't get health insurance benefits from their employers, and because they don't earn enough money on their poverty wages to pay for it out of their own pocket. When parents or the children get sick, parents stated, they wait until they get very sick to see a doctor so they can get emergency care. A woman in one metro area group described her own situation in painful terms, "When I get sick, I wait to the very last minute until I feel very sick to see a doctor. By then, I am too sick to care for my children who are not yet in school."

Racial discrimination was another dimension of the medical care problems that parents in the Greater Minnesota groups identified. They stated that being poor and Latino was a double-edge sword when they sought medical care or public assistance. They reported experiencing long waits in the clinics or the doctors' offices because whites were seen first even though Latinos had arrived prior to the white clients. Parents indicated, moreover, that Medicaid places limitations on their access to medical care. In some cases parents reported having to travel 50 or 60 miles each way to get medical care, because providers refused to accept clients on Medicaid. In another case, one participant described an incident where a Mexican woman was insulted by a white pharmacist in the presence of other customers. When the woman attempted to refill a prescription, the pharmacist began shouting insults, accusing her of being a "lazy welfare cheat" and a drug addict. The pharmacist refused to fill the woman's prescription. Parents in the other Greater Minnesota groups reported encountering similar treatment which, they argued, was motivated by racism on the part of whites. These reports suggest that in addition to limitations on access to medical care that the condition of poverty imposes on Latino families, racial and class biases also intervene to deny them medical care when they need it. **Housing "They (landlords) rent to dogs (allow pets in the apartments/houses) but not to us because we have children, they rent to dogs but not to our children."**

The need for affordable housing was an important concern for most parents in all the groups. Parents discussed problems of crowded living conditions that derived from their inability to afford decent, adequate housing. Some families reported being forced to share housing with at least one other family because of high cost and low incomes. Having to share housing with other families, they said, creates problems for their children because they find it difficult to have a quiet area to do their homework or just have some quiet time and space to themselves for relaxation. Parents also stated that the lack of privacy that results from crowded living conditions causes emotional discomfort for the whole family. Some families in the metro area groups, for example, reported that spouses were forced to sleep in separate rooms since their children of different sex required their own private rooms because they were too old (teens and adolescents) to sleep in the same room. Other families who lived in apartment buildings reported having conflicts with neighbors who complained that the children were too noisy. Several parents complained that poverty conditions limited their housing choices. They related encountering recalcitrant landlords who refused to make even minimal repairs and failed to maintain the properties. Parents reported that landlords refused to make repairs outright or waited as long as a month to make them. When they complained and persisted, parents said that some landlords threatened to deduct repair costs from the damage deposit, arguing that the parents had no legal rights. Parents commented that their poverty status forces them to live in the "bad" neighborhoods where run-down housing, violence, and crime are prevalent. They characterized this type of environment as unhealthy and unsafe, and reported fearing constantly for their children's safety. Parents expressed guilt feelings because of their inability to provide a healthy, safe living environment for their children. Racial discrimination added another dimension to the housing problems of Latino families in the Greater Minnesota groups. In some of these groups, parents reported difficulties finding landlords willing to rent to them. Other participants reported being told that there were no vacancies when they appeared in person to place rental applications, even after being told the contrary when they inquired by telephone. The problem of discrimination was captured vividly by one parent in one of these groups in reference to her own experience, "They (landlords) rent to dogs (allow pets in the apartments/houses) but not to us because we have children; they rent to dogs but not to our children."

Nutrition and Food "We know that we should be feeding our kids {but} we just can't afford it ... We are not able to give them (the children) balanced meals because we can only afford basic items. We can't give them fruits because the money we have to spend for food and nutrition is limited." "We don't have money to give them specialties. My son likes pizza but I can't afford to buy pizza, and I feel bad when he asks for it and I have to tell him I don't have any money to buy it for him."

The lack of adequate nutrition was also a need that concerned most participants. Most parents were aware of the proper kind of nutrition their children need in order to grow up

emotionally and physically healthy. Most of them were also aware of the type of nutrition their children need in order to succeed in school. However, they were painfully aware as well that they could not provide adequate nutrition for their children because of the lack of money. A composite statement of parents in both the metro area and Greater Minnesota groups captures the predicament these families face, "We know that we should be feeding our kids (but) we just can't afford it. We are not able to give them (the children) balanced meals because we can only afford basic items. We can't give them fruits because the money we have to spend for food and nutrition is limited." Another concern parents expressed was their inability to afford treats for their children. Again, this caused some parents to feel guilty because they could not afford to provide these treats when their children asked for them. One metro area parent captured this feeling well when she said that, "We don't have money to give them specialties. My son likes pizza but I can't afford to buy pizza, and I feel bad when he asks for it and I have to tell him I don't have any money to buy it for him." **Adolescent and Youth Needs** *"We can't afford to have them (the children) participate in activities after school like soccer or baseball or summer camps because they have fees or require uniforms or equipment. We feel bad that they can't participate in these activities like normal kids." "...the kids just hang out in the street or in a house all day unsupervised. They get bored and start drinking and using drugs, and they get in trouble with the police because the officers think all these kids are bad."* Parents complained frequently that their adolescent and teenage children had few or no options where their social and recreation needs can be met. This need was expressed more forcefully in the Greater Minnesota groups, possibly because few or no Chicano/Latino social service agencies are available in these isolated communities. Another factor that contributes to this problem, parents complained, is that local officials and institutions make few efforts to provide services for Latino families and children. Yet parents acknowledged that their poverty status was a contributing factor to their children's anti-social behavior which, they said, is often the source of family problems. As impoverished families, they stated, both spouses are forced to spend considerable time at work to support the family. Consequently, their children are left unsupervised much of the time during the work week.

The lack of social-recreational centers and lack of parental supervision, some parents said, resulted in serious problems for the children. Also, parents argued that since the schools failed to engage Latino children and youth in a meaningful curriculum, these "bored" youth were tempted to skip school and to turn to street life to seek an outlet for their youthful energy. Chicano-Latino adolescents and teens have no place to "hang out" except in the streets, parents stated. The kids thus became highly at risk of turning to a path of social deviance. A young single mother on AFDC in one Greater Minnesota group, a dropout herself, captured this view succinctly when she stated that she observed the Latino adolescent boys in her community who lost interest in school, and cut classes or dropped out. She said that "...the kids just hang out in the street or in a house all day unsupervised. They get bored and start drinking and using drugs, and they get in trouble with the police because the officers think all these kids are bad." Still, other parents were painfully aware of the limitations poverty places on their children. One parent in one metro area group, for example, captured this sentiment well when he said, "We can't afford to have them (the children) participate in activities after school like soccer or baseball or summer camps because they have fees or require uniforms or equipment. We feel bad that they can't participate in these activities like normal kids." **Clothing and Shame** *"Como te ven te tratan. " (The way they [other people] see you is how they treat you.)*³

In an effort to seek a richer understanding of how Latino children are affected because their families are in poverty parents were asked, "Do you think Hispanic children feel ashamed because their families don't have enough money to make ends meet or to live on?" Parents' responses often internalized their children's feelings of shame. They

³ Because insight into the consequences of *vergüenza* (shame) is essential to a deeper understanding of these responses, a fuller explanation of *vergüenza* is included in Appendix VII.

admitted feeling guilty because their meager incomes limited their children to the bare necessities such as clothing and shoes, and kept them from participating in sports and recreation activities. Parents stated that the children experience rejection by other kids because of the clothes they wear. This attitude was captured by one parent who commented in reference to her kids problems in school, "*Como te ven te tratan.*" (The way they [other people] see you is how they treat you.) These expressions of guilt and inadequacy were expressed in all the groups. The problem, however, appeared to have more impact on the metro area parents who often acknowledged having to spend a lot of time working just to be able to provide for the family's basic needs. **Employment and Income** "***We don't make enough money to afford daycare so my wife can work and help support the family.***" "***We don't have papers. If we had a work permit we could work more hours not just part-time. If we had full-time work we could give our children the things they need***" The parents voiced a number of concerns relating to employment and family income. One concern that was articulated quite frequently was that low wages kept them locked in a "*callejon sin salida*" (an alley without an exit). Low wages forced parents to work long hours, often in more than one job, just to earn enough to provide for basic family needs. Parents said that poverty conditions severely limit their ability to provide for their children's basic needs such as food, clothing, medical care, and social and recreation needs. Not surprisingly, all parents expressed deep concern about the well-being of their children. They agonized over the limitations that the condition of poverty imposes on their ability to provide the material and emotional support their children need in order to live emotionally and physically healthy lives, and to become productive contributors to society. Parents expressed a deep understanding of their situation and lamented, often in guilt-ridden comments, that their own individual limitations such as low educational attainment or limited English proficiency partly explained their situation as low-wage earners. Expressing this concern succinctly one parent said, "We don't make enough money to afford daycare so my wife can work and help support the family." Another concern related to the unique problems that undocumented immigrants face. Their undocumented status, some individuals said, makes it quite difficult for them to secure jobs that pay wages adequate to support the family and provide for their children's needs. One such parent expressed the hopelessness of their situation when he said, "We don't have papers. If we had a work permit we could work more hours not just part-time. If we had full-time work we could give our children the things they need."

Race Relations and Discrimination "***I went to the city office to get a permit to open up my auto mechanic shop but they told me that the law required that I know English in order to get the permit.***" Racial discrimination and racism were issues that surfaced quite often. Specifically, participants in the Greater Minnesota groups complained repeatedly that they experience racism and racial discrimination on a daily basis as they go about their life routine: in the workplace, in the public areas when shopping, when they seek social/human services and try to rent housing, and in contact with the schools, medical care providers, and the police. Parents reported that this daily experience with racism and discrimination is a serious blow to their dignity and self-esteem, since the treatment is so blatant and pervasive, and because it adds insult to the injury of having to live in poverty. They wondered out loud in the groups what is it that allows whites to treat them as less than human beings. One man in one Greater Minnesota group, who was a skilled auto mechanic but had limited English skills, talked about his own encounter with discrimination. He said, "I went to the city office to get a permit to open up my auto mechanic shop but they told me that the law required that I know English in order to get the permit." A woman in this same group reported that a white elderly man attacked her in a local supermarket, while shouting insults about "Mexican illegals on welfare." When this woman described the incident, she started to cry as she reported that local police officials refused to accept her complaint and request to file charges against the man. In the metro area groups, a number of parents also reported discrimination cases of one type or another. However, it appears that practices of racial discrimination and racism are more blatant in the Greater Minnesota communities, since the metro area group parents did not report as many instances of blatant discrimination or racism as did the Greater Minnesota group participants.

Recommendations and The Need for Social Change

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Recommendations and The Need for Social Change: Or What Folks Said Will Improve Their Children's Lives

"We want our leaders to do good programs for us. We don't want them to just speak for us...We want them to do something for us like get programs that will give us skills for jobs to get us off welfare."

The main question this research project sought to answer was, "How do Hispanic children suffer because their families don't have or don't earn enough money to make ends meet?" The project, however, also sought to probe Latino parents to get a sense of their views regarding solutions they thought would help them and their children escape poverty. To this end, the question was asked, "If agencies which help Hispanic families could change one thing to improve the lives of Hispanic children, what would you tell them to change?" The parents gave a number of responses to this question that were mostly related to their immediate material needs. A summative discussion of their responses follows.

Education and Family Income

The responses relating to education fell in two general categories. First, most parents expressed concern that their impoverished condition severely limited their children's chances to get a good education. Second, a number of parents recognized that educational and job training opportunities for themselves offered them the possibility that they and their children could escape poverty in the future. Yet most parents in all the groups also articulated a sharp awareness that unmet immediate material and emotional needs could derail their children's chances for educational success. A number of parents in both the metro area and the Greater Minnesota groups requested education and job training programs to help them acquire skills that could place them in better paying jobs. Better-paying jobs, they said, would give them the ability to meet their children's basic needs, such as adequate nutrition, education, housing, and healthcare more effectively. Parents also asked for childcare programs to enable mothers to work, so that they could contribute to the family income. Many of the parents, the immigrants in the groups, requested literacy and English education programs to help them learn English because they recognized that this would improve their chances for more secure employment and better-paying jobs. Parents in both the metro area and Greater Minnesota groups requested programs to help their children succeed in school and get a well-rounded education. Most parents in all the groups requested more bilingual education programs at all levels of the K-12 system. They asked for early childhood programs such as bilingual daycare and headstart, and for more bilingual staff in the schools their children attend. Bilingual staff, parents said, would enable parents to communicate with the schools regarding their children's academic needs and performance, and would improve their children's school success. A number of parents also requested that information and communications from the schools be made available in Spanish. Finally, parents across all the groups were consistent in requesting programs or assistance to enable their children to participate in all school activities like "normal" kids. Specifically, parents requested support to help their children participate in extra curricular activities and in after school tutoring, enrichment and recreation programs. A number of parents also requested scholarship programs that offer their children the opportunity to get a college education.

Health and Human Services

Parents requested an increase in the level of human service programs for their children and for themselves. The need for interpreters and translation services surfaced in all the groups, for example. A number of parents in both the metro area and Greater Minnesota groups complained persistently that language barriers limit the effectiveness and quality of services they receive. Similarly, most parents in all the groups also asked for increased availability of information on services in Spanish, and that more bilingual staff be hired as service providers.

Housing

Parents made a number of proposals to address their housing needs. First, parents in all the groups stated that their poverty-level incomes severely restrict their capacity to secure adequate housing

for their children and families because rents are too costly for their incomes. As a result, they are forced to live in crowded conditions and substandard housing. To address these problems, parents in one Greater Minnesota group proposed that vacant buildings be renovated and converted to affordable housing units they can rent, given their limited incomes. In another proposal made in another Greater Minnesota group and in some metro area groups, parents requested that regulations be enforced to force landlords to maintain and make repairs to the units on a timely basis. Finally, all parents in yet another Greater Minnesota group asked that investigations be conducted to address problems of discrimination and violations of civil rights they are subjected to by landlords and public housing staff. **Nutrition and Food** Requests for assistance with nutrition and food concerns surfaced as well. Parents requested food assistance programs to help supplement their food and nutrition budgets. A number of parents in the metro area groups also asked that food items distributed via the commodities or food shelf programs, as well as the school cafeteria menus, consider their children's cultural preferences. The parents stated that their children refuse to eat foods they don't like. Consequently, parents said, the children go hungry, get sick, and their school performance suffers. **Adolescent and Youth Needs**

One consistent request regarding the needs of adolescents and youth dominated across all the groups. Most parents persistently asked for social, sports and recreation programs to engage the young people after school hours and during weekend leisure time. Parents stated that their poverty incomes deprive their children of these experiences and opportunities, because they see these programs as giving their children opportunities for well-rounded development and as avenues to divert the youth from the path of social deviance. Most Greater Minnesota group parents emphasized that local public officials neglect these needs and added that racial discrimination was a factor in this neglect. In some cases, they said, racial biases exclude their children from participation in these types of programs which are readily available for white kids. **Racism and Social Justice**

Requests to address the problem of racial discrimination and racism were voiced in all the Greater Minnesota groups. Parents asked for bilingual advocates to look after their needs with Human Service agencies and medical care providers, when they need to rent housing, in their contact with the police and the schools, and in addressing the injustices they encounter at the work sites. Parents asked for investigations that lead to racial justice, to protection of their human and civil rights, and to elimination of the racism and racial discrimination they reported they encounter on a daily basis. Except in isolated cases, requests for these investigations were articulated mostly in the Greater Minnesota groups. In the some Metro area groups, requests for investigations of this type related mostly to injustices parents reported they suffered at the work sites.

**From Killing Turkeys to Cutting Up
the Pie: ¿Y Ahora Qué?**

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From Killing Turkeys to Cutting Up the Pie: ¿Y Ahora Qué?

"I went to college so I could get a better job...but every time I go to the employment office they send me to the turkey plant. I went to college for two years and the only job they offer me is killing turkeys." "We don't just want a piece of the pie, we want to also help cut up the pie, to have a say in the shape the pieces will take."

These proposals for change that folks articulated are representative of the views the parents expressed in all the groups. Yet, these proposals obscure another view voiced in some of the Greater Minnesota groups. In four of these groups, parents stated unequivocally that their situation as oppressed subjects needed to be addressed through collective political action. They expressed frustration that their situation of economic entrapment allowed employers, landlords, the police and ordinary white citizens to abuse their right to human equality, dignity and self-respect. This frustration is exemplified by the comments of a young Chicana, as reported by a vocational college counselor who participated in one of these four groups, "I went to college so I could get a better job...but every time I go to the employment office they send me to the turkey plant. I went to college for two years and the only job they offer me is killing turkeys." Similarly, expressing a readiness to move on their convictions, participants in another of these four Greater Minnesota groups asked the researchers, "When is the next meeting?" In yet another of these four groups, one participant suggested that collective political action may be the corrective to social injustice when he stated that, "We just don't want a piece of the pie, we want to also help cut up the pie, to have a say in the shape the pieces will take." The solutions or programs parents proposed when asked what they needed to help them escape the condition of poverty were mostly related to their immediate material needs. However, it is clear that solutions must also be sought via a strategy based on collective political action, as the folks in these Greater Minnesota groups suggested.

Racism and Social Justice: ¿Y Ahora Qué? (What Now?)

Racism permeates the daily experience of these families, creates barriers to improving their life circumstances and augments the destructive effects of shame for their children. In the workplace, and in daily contact with public institutions and the majority society, white racism serves to remind Chicanos-Latinos of their status as second class citizens. In public discourse, moreover, racism is presented as a problem that affects adversely only African Americans, when in reality its ugly manifestations reach deep into the Chicano-Latino community. White racism victimizes Chicanos-Latinos just as harshly as it does African Americans.

Poverty and accountability are inseparable. Chicano-Latino poverty is largely a social structural phenomena that must be addressed through public policy. The Minnesota Chicano-Latino community therefore needs to hold the majority society and institutions accountable for the poverty they and their children suffer.

¿Y Ahora Qué? (What Now?) The research findings reported here beg the question, "¿Y Ahora Qué?" (What Now?) In their comments to the researchers these folks reported in vivid terms that they are forced to endure poverty and economic dependency because they are not white, and are without the social and political power to initiate and sustain change efforts that can help them escape the twin problems of poverty and economic dependency. "¿Y Ahora Qué?" (What Now?) That is, who will address the problem of rescuing these folks from this condition of oppressive economic entrapment? **Who will advocate for the elimination of racism so that these folks can get the social justice they deserve?** These are the questions that these research findings pose to policy-makers and government officials, and to all Minnesotans.

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appendices

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Appendix I

HACER
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Research Methodology

In order to seek answers to the research questions, HACER decided on a research strategy based on focus group interviews. Fifteen focus groups were conducted throughout Minnesota in sites where Latinos are known to reside in significant numbers. These sites were identified using census data and Latino non-profit agency staff and community leaders. Eight groups were held in the Twin Cities Metro area and seven were conducted in Greater Minnesota. A total of one hundred twenty nine persons participated in the fifteen groups. These sites represent all geographic regions of the state except the north and northeastern areas.

The research project was conceptualized by the HACER Research Group, composed of Metropolitan State University Faculty and representatives from Ramsey County Community Human Services Department, Chicanos-Latinos Unidos En Servicios (CLUES), and the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). The research was conducted by a team of four undergraduate student interns enrolled in the internship class, "Research in the Hispanic Community," at Metropolitan State University, and one graduate assistant from the University of Minnesota. Mario Compean, Community Services Program Specialist with the Spanish Speaking Affairs Council and Community Faculty at Metropolitan State University, supervised the team. The focus groups were conducted during a period starting in early February and were completed in early July, 1994. Three undergraduate interns assumed a lead role in designing the interview questions and lead responsibility for scheduling the Twin Cities metro area groups. The graduate assistant was assigned responsibility for making all the arrangements and scheduling of the outstate groups. The graduate assistant and the fourth Metropolitan State University intern assisted the team supervisor in conducting the focus groups in Greater Minnesota.

The process of formulating and refining the research questions required seven weeks. Several class meetings were used to design and refine the main research questions. The process included inviting guest speakers who had experience in designing and conducting focus group research. Speakers were asked to share their knowledge and insights with the student interns. The interns and supervisor decided to do a pilot group to test the adequacy of research questions in eliciting the information sought from participant respondents. The pilot group was conducted the second week of February with parents whose children attend Dayton's Bluff Elementary School in St. Paul. Results of the pilot group sent the research team back to the drawing board to further refine the questions, since the team felt that the questions were not effective in eliciting the information sought. Two more groups were conducted during the first week in March on two consecutive nights. Results of these latter two groups convinced the team that the refined research questions were adequate. Thus, this refined set of questions was used in conducting all groups subsequent to the pilot group.

All interviews, except the pilot group, were conducted in Spanish. The pilot group was conducted bilingually. The researchers translated alternately from English to Spanish, and Spanish to English, because the group participants were a mix of Mexican immigrants who were only Spanish speakers and Chicanos with limited Spanish skills. It should be noted that there was high representation of immigrants in most of the groups; these were primarily Mexican, but a number of other nationalities were represented as well. Although a number of Chicanas/os also participated in several of the other groups, it was not necessary to conduct the interviews bilingually since these persons were themselves bilingual. This required that all research team members be bilingual and that all forms and documents and the interview questions used in the research be translated to Spanish (both the English and Spanish versions of the interview questions appear in Appendix III). Bilingual skills allowed researchers, moreover, to alternate in roles as lead interviewers and recorders with each focus group conducted. This flexibility also allowed researchers to obtain more richness in interpretation of the data collected.

The Research Sample

The research sample for this study consisted of 110 households, sixty two in the Twin Cities groups and forty eight in the Greater Minnesota groups. In absolute numbers one hundred twenty nine parents participated in the fifteen focus groups, in some cases both spouses from the same family were present in some of the groups. These families represented two hundred seventy two children, 90% of whom were under age twenty. The proportional representation by family types were as follows: 73% were married couple families, 14% were single-parent families, 5% were divorced, 6% were separated, and 3% did not report their marital status. The average family size was 2.5 children per family; the largest family reported having nine children and the smallest were a number of a one-child families. The research sample was a young population; 86% of the parents were under age 50, 65% were under age 40 and only 10% were over age 50. About 32% of respondents were age 20 to 29, 33% were age 30 to 39, and 22% fell in the age range 40 to 49.

Reported annual incomes of these families was also quite telling. About thirty two percent of these families reported annual incomes of less than \$5,000, 38% had incomes in the range of \$5,000 to \$12,000, 11% percent in the range \$12,000 to \$15,600, 3% in the range 19,200 to \$24,000, and 11% eleven percent reported incomes of over \$24,000. The income data thus show that 81% of the families in the sample had annual income of less than \$16,000.

A similarly telling portrait emerged regarding educational attainment. Twenty seven percent of respondents reported educational attainment of less than seventh grade, another 27% had 8-11 years of schooling, and 13% reported having completed only high school. About 20% reported having 1-3 years of college and only 8% reported having either a four-year college degree, or a four-year college degree and post-graduate study. The significance of educational attainment for the poverty status of these families and children, as educational attainment data show, is that 54% of respondents had less than a high school education. Further, the seemingly high proportion (20%) of respondents who reported having 1-3 years of college should be viewed with caution, since a high number of these were immigrants. Limited English proficiency and high educational attainment in their home country don't necessarily translate into high earnings in the United States.

Perhaps the most telling characteristic regards the poverty status of these families. For example, 80 of 110 households in the research sample were married-couple families. Sixty four percent of these were in poverty, according to their reported annual income and family size. Similarly, 60% of the fifteen families headed by a single person were in poverty, and 80% of the five families headed by a divorced person reported income below the poverty level. Demographic data in the sample suggest, moreover, that Chicano-Latino children are worse off compared to adults. Seventy percent (190) of the 272 children in the sample were in families who fell below the poverty level, and 63% of them were age ten and under. In regional comparison, 38% of the children in poverty in the Greater Minnesota groups were age ten and under. In the Twin Cities groups, 73% of the children in poverty were age ten and under.

Appendix IV

**HACER Chicano-Latino Children's Poverty Focus Group
Interview Questions**

This version of the questions was finalized in the latter part of February, 1994. The original set of questions was tested on a pilot group which met at Dayton's Bluff Elementary School earlier in February, 1994. On evaluation of the pilot group results, the research team decided that the original set of questions was inadequate to elicit the information desired from the participant respondents. The set of questions below proved to be much more reliable in keeping the groups focused on the main research question and was thus used for all the groups subsequent to the pilot group. Two main research questions were asked. The set of follow-up questions was designed to probe more deeply and as a device to draw out participation when persons in any given group were shy or were reluctant, for whatever reason, to open up and volunteer information in an uninhibited manner. This set of questions proved to be adequate to the task of securing the research information the project set out to collect. The Spanish translation of the questions follows on the next page.

The Main Research Questions

Chicano-Latino Children's Poverty

How do Hispanic children suffer because their families don't have or don't earn enough money to make ends meet?

Changes/Solutions to the Problem of Chicano-Latino Children's Poverty

If agencies which help Hispanic families could change one thing to improve the lives of Hispanic children, what would you tell them to do?

Follow-up Questions

1. Do you think being poor keeps Hispanic children from getting a good education?
2. How do you think the food and nutrition needs of Hispanic children are affected when their families are poor?
3. How do you think the health, clothing or shelter needs of Hispanic children are affected if their families don't have enough income to live on?
4. What other problems do Hispanic children experience when their families don't have enough money to make ends meet?
5. Do you think Hispanic children experience rejection because they are poor?
6. Do you think that Hispanic children feel ashamed because their families don't have enough money to make ends meet or to live on?

Spanish Translation

The Main Research Questions

Chicano-Latino Children's Poverty

En su opinion cuales son las limitaciones que sufren los ninos cuando la familia no tiene suficiente dinero para sus gastos o necesidades basicas?

Changes/Solutions to the Problem of Chicano-Latino Children's Poverty

Si las organizaciones que ayudan a las familias hispanas pudieran cambiar una cosa para mejorar las vidas de los ninos hispanos que les aconsejaria que cambiarian?

Follow-up Questions

1. *Piensa usted que la pobreza prohíbe que los niños hispanos reciban una buena educación?*
2. *En su opinión, en que manera piensa usted que la pobreza afecta la alimentación y nutrición de los niños hispanos?*
3. *En que manera cree usted que la pobreza afecta la salud o necesidades de vivienda y vestuario de los niños hispanos?*
4. *Que tipos de otros problemas sufren los niños hispanos cuando sus familias no tienen suficiente dinero o ingresos para sus necesidades basicas?*
5. *Piensa usted que los niños hispanos son o los hacen menos por ser pobres?*
6. *Piensa usted que los niños hispanos se avergüenzan porque sus familias son pobres?*

Appendix V

**HACER Focus Groups
on Poverty and Chicano-Latino Children in Minnesota**

Focus Group Interviews Conducted in the Twin Cities Metro Area

Location	Date	No. Participants
Dayton's Bluff Elementary School, St. Paul	February 8, 1994	9
Neighborhood House, St. Paul	March 1, 1994	11
France Place Office Building, Bloomington	March 2, 1994	6
Centro Cultural Chicano, Minneapolis	March 10, 1994	14
CLUES, Minneapolis	April 26, 1994	8
Todos los Santos Church Minneapolis	April 30, 1994	10
CLUES, St. Paul	May 14, 1994	2
St. Stephen's Catholic Church, Minneapolis	July 10, 1994	9
Total No. Participants		69

Focus Group Interviews Conducted in Greater Minnesota

Location	Date	No. Participants
Litchfield	May 1, 1994	8
Willmar	May 30, 1994	6
Albert Lea	June 1, 1994	8
Worhtington	June 4, 1994	3
Madelia	June 11, 1994	13
Moorehead	June 18, 1994	12
Crookston	June 18, 1994	10
Total No. Participants:		60

Appendix VI

Persons In Poverty In the Twin Cities By Race and Ethnicity 1979-1989*

Minneapolis

Race/Ethnicity	1979	1989	Percent Change
African American	30.2	40.5	+ 10.3
American Indian	41.1	53.9	+ 12.8
Asian	39.9	45.7	+ 5.8
Chicano-Latino	28.3	28.9	+ 0.6
White	10.7	11.7	+ 1.0
Total Population	13.5	18.5	+ 5.0

St. Paul

Race/Ethnicity	1979	1989	Percent Change
African American	25.7	39.2	+ 13.5
American Indian	23.4	39.2	+ 15.8
Asian	47.7	60.5	+ 12.8
Chicano-Latino	21.0	25.6	+ 4.6
White	8.9	10.2	+ 1.3
Total Population	10.9	16.7	+ 5.8

* **Source:** Profiles of Change: Communities of Color in the Twin Cities Area. The Urban Coalition, St. Paul, MN, August, 1993.

Children in Poverty in the Twin Cities 1979-1989*

Minneapolis

Race/Ethnicity	1979	1989	Percent Change
African American	38.5	53.9	+ 15.4
American Indian	48.9	66.3	+ 17.4
Asian	49.0	55.8	+ 6.8
Chicano-Latino	31.3	40.6	+ 9.3
White	10.3	12.9	+ 2.6
Total Population	18.0	30.6	+ 12.6

St. Paul

Race/Ethnicity	1979	1989	Percent Change
African American	33.7	54.2	+ 20.5
American Indian	24.3	46.4	+ 22.1
Asian	57.1	68.9	+ 11.8
Chicano-Latino	24.3	30.2	+ 5.9
White	9.9	11.8	+ 1.9
Total Population	14.4	26.9	+ 12.5

* **Source:** Profiles of Change: Communities of Color in the Twin Cities Area. The Urban Coalition, St. Paul, MN, August, 1993.

“Vergüenza in Chicano-Latino Culture

“Vergüenza” or “shame” has at-least two dimensions. On the one hand *“vergüenza”* is a cultural script that operates to regulate individual behavior in Chicano-Latino culture. For generations parents have used this concept to prevent their children from engaging in behavior that is unacceptable in Chicano-Latino culture and society. When children engage in deviant behavior, they bring *“vergüenza”* (shame) on themselves and the family. They risk being ostracized socially, and also put the family at risk of being ostracized from Chicano-Latino society. In the more rigidly regulated families, this type of behavior by the children brings dishonor to the family. When the latter type of situation occurs, it is not uncommon to hear, especially in the case of teens and young adults, that offenders are banished from the family.

Another side of this dimension of *“vergüenza”* operates to distinguish individuals who possess the worst type of behavioral characteristics from those who may deviate from accepted norms only occasionally. An individual *“que tiene vergüenza”* (who has shame) is one who abides by the accepted cultural rules, and accepts the moral guidance and authority of the parents and elders. On the other hand, the individual who violates accepted rules of conduct routinely and who does not accept the parents’ and elders’ moral authority is a *“sin vergüenza”* (one who has no shame). This latter type is a person who literally has no scruples nor respect for accepted rules of conduct. In the case of those who become habitual offenders, the family’s honor and social standing suffer because one of their members has become a *“sin vergüenza.”*

The second dimension of *“vergüenza”* operates in peer social groups. Individuals who experience *“vergüenza”* as a result of being rejected by their peers for whatever reason run the risk of becoming social outcasts. Consequently, “shamed” individuals lose their self-esteem and oftentimes react by engaging in extremely anti-social behavior. In the school environment, for example, Chicano-Latino students (especially males) may react by refusing to do their school work, and may become discipline problems for teachers by engaging in deviant behavior. In the more extreme cases, individuals react by engaging in drug use and criminal or violent behavior. They thus run the risk of dropping out of school eventually. In either case, not only do Chicano-Latino students get in trouble at school or with the law, but also with their parents because they bring *“vergüenza”* on themselves and the family.

Finally, Chicano-Latino youth who become repeat offenders by “acting out” in school run the risk of acquiring the status of a *“sin vergüenza”* in their families and in Chicano-Latino society. Oftentimes, this may be the result of majority culture teachers’ insensitivity to the uniqueness of Chicano-Latino culture who may project *“vergüenza”* on these children by admonishing them for giving the “wrong” answer or failure to participate in classroom group exercises. In peer group situations, Chicano-Latino kids who are “shamed” repeatedly by their peers because of the clothes they wear or the food they eat are highly at-risk of acquiring *“sin vergüenza”* biographies because they may react by “acting out” habitually, or worse, by engaging in violent or criminal behavior. Not only will they be ostracized at school but also run the risk of losing all sense of acceptance and “belonging” in their families. Finally, it is important to invoke a note of caution here particularly for persons of the majority culture and for persons who, for whatever reasons, may have class biases. This discussion presents *vergüenza*, in one sense, as a negative dimension of Chicano-Latino cultures, which have many positive characteristics. It is important to insist that caution be exercised to not project *vergüenza* as a stereotype that resides in all Chicano-Latino families, many of which have been influenced by the other cultures, class differences notwithstanding.

Appendix VIII

Response to the "The Human Face of Poverty Report"

HACER Community Advisory Group Meeting Neighborhood House St. Paul, MN, January 20, 1995

HACER convened a group of Chicano-Latino community leaders and professionals to ask them to comment on the report, "The Human Face of Poverty," and to offer proposals to address the problems parents identified in the report. Eight persons, in addition to HACER representatives and students, participated in the meeting held at Neighborhood House in St. Paul, January 20, 1995. Of these individuals, two were directors of community-based Latino education programs, two represented university-based Latino programs, one was a history professor, two were professionals in human services agencies, and one represented a state Chicano-Latino advocacy agency. After a brief discussion of research findings by HACER staff, the group offered comments and recommendations to address problems faced by Chicano-Latino families and children in poverty identified in the report. The recommendations fell in two categories. One set of recommendations addressed important "themes" that some group members felt should be given prominence in the report. These themes are incorporated in the executive summary. The second category included recommendations to address specific problems and needs that parents identified. Their recommendations are discussed in this section below.

Advisory Group Recommendations to Address Specific Problems and Needs Identified by Parents

The themes of advocacy, acceptability, accessibility and accountability informed the recommendations outlined below that the HACER community advisory group made to address the specific problems and needs that parents identified. The group called for an advocacy strategy with the appropriate state and local government institutions for the following:

Education

1. The multicultural curriculum K-12 should be enhanced to focus on the uniqueness of Chicano-Latino culture, to include critical cultural phenomena or values such as "*vergüenza*" (shame). The significance of this and other key cultural values, and their relevance to the self-esteem of Chicano-Latino children and youth should be emphasized.
2. Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate for culturally appropriate food items in the public school cafeteria menus.
3. Given the historical persistence of racism against Chicanos-Latinos, and the failure of majority institutions to diminish its effects, alternative education programs are needed to help Chicano-Latino children and youth cope with racism and to develop positive self- concepts. Therefore, Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate/work to establish alternative schools based on the model of the Mexican American Cultural Center in St. Paul of the early 1970's.
4. Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate for fee waivers and/or a state funds to facilitate Chicano-Latino student participation in extra-curricular activities.
5. Poverty is a social-structural phenomena that needs to be addressed by public policy. The Chicano-Latino community therefore needs to hold majority institutions (the schools and local, state, and federal governments) accountable for the poverty many of their numbers suffer.

Health

1. Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate for cultural sensitivity training for health-care providers to make them aware of and sensitive to the uniqueness of Chicano-Latino culture in order for them to become culturally competent in serving Chicanos-Latinos.
2. Increasing the number of culturally-competent majority culture service providers is only a partial solution to meeting the needs of the Chicano-Latino Community effectively. Advocacy efforts therefore need to focus on increasing the number of Chicano-Latino staff in service provider agencies and programs.

Housing

1. Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate for allocation of funds to assist families to build their own houses and/or to renovate and convert existing buildings into affordable housing units.
2. Advocacy efforts must also focus on the need for bilingual and Chicano-Latino staff in existing housing programs to enhance their capacity to serve Chicano-Latino families effectively.
3. Chicano-Latino advocates need to insist that existing housing programs make information on services and programs available in Spanish.
4. Chicano-Latino advocates should also focus efforts on implementing public policy mandates requiring availability of rental information and leases in Spanish.
5. Chicano-Latino advocates need to ask that the Minnesota Department of Human Rights investigate the extent to which housing discrimination is being practiced against Chicanos-Latinos in the State of Minnesota.
6. Advocates need to monitor existing housing programs to identify the proportion of program dollars being spent on Chicano-Latino families to make these programs accountable to the needs Chicano-Latino community.

Nutrition and Food

1. Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate for culturally diverse and culturally appropriate food items in the public school cafeteria menus.

Adolescent and Youth Needs

1. Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate for fee waivers and/or state funds to facilitate Chicano-Latino student participation in extra-curricular and other activities (field trips, etc.).

Clothing and Shame

1. "***Vergüenza***" (shame) is a cultural phenomenon used by Chicano-Latino parents to shape and regulate their children's behavior. It has a strong impact on individual behavior, particularly among children and youth. When shame is projected onto Chicano-Latino children and their families by the majority community, it can have a destructive impact. It increases the risk of evoking "acting out" behavior from Chicano-Latino children and youth, especially in the school environment. Therefore, recommendation number one in the education section above must be reasserted here: that the multicultural curriculum be enhanced to focus on the need for majority-culture service providers and professionals to be sensitive to the uniqueness of Chicano-Latino culture.
2. Chicano-Latino advocates need to request that appropriate state departments (MDE, etc.) assess the merits of instituting a policy requiring all K-12 students to wear uniforms. This is an important recommendation given the financial limitations parents said restrict their capacity to meet their children's clothing needs. The potential for destructive consequences that can result when Chicano-Latino children and youth experience "*vergüenza*" as discussed above argues forcefully for the importance of implementing this recommendation.

Employment

1. Chicanos-Latinos need to monitor existing programs to identify the proportion of public dollars being spent on services to Chicanos-Latinos in order to make them accountable to Chicano-Latino needs.
2. Chicanos-Latinos need to advocate for jobs and training programs for youth.
3. Chicano-Latino advocates need to insist that existing programs increase outreach efforts to make programs more accessible and accountable to Chicano-Latino community needs.
4. Advocates need to explore the potential and opportunities that health career fields may represent for Chicanos-Latinos.

Racism and Discrimination

1. Chicanos-Latinos need to call this problem by its real name: **racism**. **Racism** permeates the daily experience of these families; it creates barriers to improving their life circumstances and augments the destructive effects of shame on their children. In public discourse, racism is perceived to be largely a Black-white problem. **Racism**, therefore, needs to be highlighted prominently in the report, to advocate for public policy initiatives to eradicate it, and to recognize it as a problem that has adverse effects Chicanos-Latinos in Minnesota.
2. Recommendations in the reports of the “**Chicano-Latino Task Force on Racism**” and the “**Blue Ribbon Commission**” need to be reviewed for relevant recommendations that may be included in the HACER report.

Accountability

The Advisory Group placed heavy emphasis on the need for the Chicano-Latino community and advocates to hold the majority culture and public institutions accountable for the needs of the community. This theme cuts across their recommendations. However, the Advisory group also said that Chicano-Latino advocates need to accept responsibility by holding themselves and each other accountable for the adverse socioeconomic conditions the Chicano-Latino community experiences. Chicano-Latino advocates need to act on an agenda for social change that addresses the problems the parents in the study identified.