

EMERGING LATINO POPULATIONS: SOCIAL, HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN OKLAHOMA CITY

**Cindy L. Keig, Behavioral Assessment, Inc.,
Alberto Mata, University of Oklahoma, and
Richard C. Cervantes, Behavioral Assessment, Inc.**

ABSTRACT

As the Oklahoma City Latino community's population increases, Many in this community will feel socially, marginally, and politically invisible. Presented here are some of the challenges Oklahoma City's Latino population face, including language and cultural barriers, limited English as a Second Language (ESL) education, and lack of health services. Racist attitudes have increased throughout the region. Finding general population statistics easily and readily accessible for Latinos remains difficult. A number of academic, behavioral, and health problems are emerging along with this growing population. Many of these problems are similar to those confronted by other urban Latino groups. These similarities have lead researchers to call for data necessary to address risk factors threatening the Latino community, family, and its' youth. Many researchers argue that when these data are coupled with innovative CBO programming, they will lessen the widening gap between Latinos being at high risk to better health and social functioning. These data and programs may also serve to make Latino families more resilient. Enhancing the Latino community, its family and youth resiliency, and by improving their coping skills, will allow them to meet many of their own personal familial and social needs.

Across the United States Latino populations are growing and spreading in traditional and non-traditional areas. This population growth has been not only in traditionally older immigrant communities and port of entry communities and neighborhoods, but now extends to non-traditional areas. The Latino community is becoming the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States. With over 90 percent of recent immigrants coming from non-English-speaking countries, the United States is becoming a more ethnically diverse society than ever before (O'Hare 1992; Martin & Midgley 1994). Among the largest Latino populations in this country are Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans. The Latino population is growing faster than any other ethnic group in this country. It has more than doubled in the past twenty years. By the year 2020, it is estimated that Latinos will be the single largest minority group in the United States. Latinos are predominantly young, with more than one in three being under the age of 18 (Latina Girls 2002).

The Census 2000 statistics for the Midwest reflects evidence that the Latino immigrant population in this region has increased dramatically in recent years. This increase in new immigrant communities is mirrored throughout the United States – in regions that have not seen such dramatic demographic shifts in decades (Paral 2000). Results from a recent study commissioned by the Illinois

Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), shows that the Midwest is beginning to experience "new immigration" beyond traditional areas of settlement. The majority of counties throughout the Midwest states have had an increase in Latino population in the past five years, while the majority of those counties have also lost white population. Much of the new immigration is in response to economic restructuring in the Midwest including growth in the meatpacking industry, an expansion of the service economy, and the development of new manufacturing zones outside of the bigger cities. Census statistics suggest that immigrants are no longer using major cities as "gateways," but now settle directly in small towns and rural areas. One region that has witnessed a rapidly emerging population is in the "sun belt" of America. Oklahoma lays within this region and is exemplary of a state with an emerging Latino population.

According to the 2000 Census, the breakdown of Latinos by origin in Oklahoma is as follows: The total Oklahoma Latino population is estimated at 179,304, with 132,813 from Mexico. There are 8,153 from Puerto Rico; 1,759 from Cuba; 4,348 from Central America (the largest population from Guatemala at 1,839); South American population is at 3,212; 498 from Spain, and 269 from the Dominican Republic. There were 28,252 categorized as "Other Hispanic or Latino". Of the 36 million (U.S. Census 2000) Latinos

living in the United States, 21 million were born in the United States, and most of them are under the age of 35 (McClellan 2002). The Oklahoma Latino community has thrived through the 1950's. In the past three decades, particularly the past decade, Oklahoma City and Tulsa join Little Rock, Nashville, Atlanta, Louisville, Raleigh, and Lexington as areas that have reported the greatest increases in the Latino population. These new areas of settlement may be termed "emerging" communities because they are experiencing similar patterns of growth, labor trends, family characteristics, school demographics, economic, political and civic ties and finally in terms of needing to develop social capital. The prospects and challenges for Latinos in this decade are formidable for both the older and emerging communities, but appear more marked for emerging Latino communities due to their having to develop their own community leadership, organization, and voice. At the same time, emerging Latino communities must deal with larger society demands, dynamics, and trends. The more prominent features of an emerging Latino community are its recency, youthfulness, low social economic status, under-educated status, and the reliance on the family to meet daily needs. As a result of the rapid growth of the Latino community in Oklahoma City, especially this past decade, the community is challenged, stressed, and strained. The Oklahoma City Latino community, as an emerging Latino community, faces serious issues, obstacles, and trends.

This paper provides a brief demographic profile of Latinos in the U.S., Oklahoma, and Oklahoma County. It then provides some historical background about Latinos in Oklahoma, reflecting on early Mexican immigration into the state. It then charts current demographics of the Latino community in Oklahoma City. The essay profiles the youthfulness of this community, and the issues and barriers that need to be addressed to help with their adaptation to life in Oklahoma City, the state, and the American society

This paper turns to the Latino community's efforts to improve their conditions and improve the quality of life for Latinos in this community. The Latino community within Oklahoma City is an under-served community that is continuing to grow. This paper will highlight some programs and services currently available to the Latino community in Oklaho-

ma City and will suggest areas that need to be expanded or enhanced. The concluding discussions will turn to the various services that have been developed to bridge these gaps.

THE STUDY'S DATA AND METHODS

For the purposes of this paper, those referred to as Mexican are descendants of Mexican origin populations. Later we will refer to other Latin American origin populations that also include Mexicans and Mexican Americans as Latinos. While the majority of the Latino population in Oklahoma City (OKC) is of Mexican descent or is Mexican-American, there are other Latin American origin populations.

The study is primarily exploratory and descriptive. The data for this study were largely archival social indicator data from federal and state government documents. The primary author also called and made direct contact with many state agencies and local CBOs. These data will be presented to provide a socio-historic background and also to present a current demographic and qualitative profile of the OKC Latino Community. Today, the Latino population in Oklahoma continues to grow at a steady rate. Along with the Latino population increase in Oklahoma City, one is also seeing a rise in the problems of daily life that they and their families need to address.

EARLY MEXICAN IMMIGRATION INTO OKLAHOMA

For centuries there has been a unique relationship between Mexico and the region that is now known as Oklahoma. As far back as the 1500's, Spanish explorers crossed through present-day Oklahoma in search of fabled treasures. While leaving few traces of their presence in the state, these men provided the basis of Spain's claim to the territory, which became known as the Kingdom of New Spain (Mexico) that included all of present-day Oklahoma (Smith 1981). The harsh conditions of the land served as barriers to further Spanish penetration into the region. However, for hundreds of years, trails and roads through Oklahoma facilitated commercial contact (Smith 1980). The famous Santa Fe Trail and the Chisholm Trail cut across Oklahoma, linking American settlements in Kansas and Missouri to the Northern Mexican province (Smith 1980). Af-

ter the Civil War, millions of Mexican Longhorns were funneled through Oklahoma from Texas to railheads in Kansas and Missouri in great cattle drives. Many of the cowboys and wagoners were Mexicans who introduced the Mexican influence throughout the Southwest (Smith 1981). For example, the Spaniards from Mexico introduced the horse to the Plains Indians, resulting in horse-mounted hunters and later some of the finest light cavalry in history. The American cowboy borrowed practices and equipment from the Mexican culture, including the establishment of ranches, tending cattle on horseback, and branding livestock. The use of the lasso, cowboy hats, and chaps were also introduced (Smith 1980). The Mexican culture played an important role in the everyday life of the Oklahoma cowboy.

Prior to 1900 there were only scattered accounts of Mexicans actually living in Oklahoma, but during the first few decades of the twentieth century, a variety of factors stimulated massive migration of Mexicans across the border and subsequently into Oklahoma. Increasing numbers of Mexicans worked on railroads, in coal mines, and in cotton harvests throughout the state. As the conditions in Mexico worsened, many people faced the chilling alternatives of either flight or starvation. As a result, migration was the only plausible alternative to those facing bleak prospects in Mexico. Most of those migrants were inhabitants of the populous Central Plateau. This included most of the states of Jalisco, Michoacan, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosi, and Zacatecas. The residents of these states were those who most sharply felt the effects of the social and economic problems of Mexico and who comprised the largest groups of immigrants to Oklahoma (Smith 1981). The ravages of the Mexican Revolution produced widespread suffering and drove even more from the land. The Mexican Revolution and the social upheaval of the next two decades caused a massive migration of Mexicans into the United States.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, American laborers, whose wages and standards of living were rising at this time, were refusing to take many of the jobs in the West (Smith 1980). Traditional sources of foreign labor from Europe and the Orient were eliminated. This caused American agriculturalists and businessmen to develop an increasing dependence upon Mexico as a source of

workers. Since Mexicans came to Oklahoma as migrant or temporary workers, labor needs dictated their distribution in the state. In 1900 there were only 134 Latinos officially recorded for Oklahoma. As the economy developed after statehood, the federal census counted 2,645 Latino residents in the state, with the largest number being in Oklahoma County, which was recorded at 449 (Smith 1981 11). By 1920 the population had risen to 6,697 an increase of over 200 percent. During the two World Wars informal and formal migrant labor trails arose. These migrant streams proved beneficial to migrant [Mexican] agricultural workers and to this nation's need for cheap sources of reliable workers. Mexican workers in the Southwest would soon spread out across the United States.

By 1930 the heaviest concentration of Latinos remained in Oklahoma City where nearly 1000 resided (Smith 1981). The Depression affected the presence of Latinos in Oklahoma. Thousands had either returned to Mexico in 1930 or had migrated elsewhere in search of employment. In other parts of the country, they were repatriated from the United States to Mexico. By 1940, only 1,425 residents were recorded. The Latino population of Oklahoma and Oklahoma City declined by two-thirds. Oklahoma City's Latino community generally remained distant if not isolated from the Anglo majority in a racially conscious society. Those who chose to remain to endure the hardships of the Depression and the tribulations since World War II helped establish the foundations of a lasting and growing Latino community in Oklahoma.

OKLAHOMA CITY'S NEW LATINO COMMUNITY

Census figures illustrate the growth of Oklahoma's Latino population since World War II. In 1970, the largest number of Latinos lived in Oklahoma City. Over 51,000 residents of Oklahoma identified themselves as being of Spanish *descent*, but those of *Mexican* surname comprised the vast majority (U.S. Census 1970). The social and cultural adjustment of Latinos in Oklahoma was difficult. For the vast majority of immigrants and migrants, a major impediment was their inability to speak or read English. A large majority were also illiterate in Spanish (Smith 1980). Before the Revolution, the Mexican govern-

Table 1 - Population Statistics Comparing U.S. Figures on Race, Origin, Language, and Poverty Levels to Oklahoma, Oklahoma County, Tulsa County, and Comanche County, 2000

	USA	Oklahoma	Oklahoma County	Tulsa County	Comanche County
Total Population	284,796,887	3,460,097	662,153	564,079	112,466
Latino	12.5%	5.2%	8.7%	6.0%	8.4%
White	75.1%	76.2%	70.4%	75.0%	65.2%
Other	5.5%	2.4%	4.4%	2.8%	3.5%
Mixed Race	2.4%	4.5%	3.9%	4.4%	4.7%
Foreign Born	11.1%	3.8%	7.2%	5.4%	5.4%
Language other than English spoken at home	17.9%	7.4%	11.6%	8.4%	11.3%
Below Poverty 1999	12.4%	14.7%	15.3%	11.6%	15.6%

Source: 2000 U.S. Population Census, State and County Quick Facts - Oklahoma online <http://www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/40/40101.html>.

ment at the time did not support education for the masses. It had built few schools for the lower class, especially in rural or remote areas. As a result, many were uneducated and their poverty status made it necessary to put young children to work. Many immigrants did not take advantage of the educational opportunities available in the United States (Smith 1980).

The local Catholic Church was an important and valued communal institution. In 1921, the Order of Discalced Carmelites established a mission in Oklahoma City to serve the state's largest Latino community. These early Latino settlers also built the Little Flower Church, which remains a key social institution in Oklahoma City today.

The low literacy rate in Spanish accounts for why Latinos did not produce any Spanish language publications or newspapers in Oklahoma as had been done in Kansas City, Kansas. The inability to speak English isolated them from the broader community culture in this western frontier state. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) for recent immigrants and their children remains a key obstacle in becoming full contributing members to their respective communities.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS OF A LATINO EMERGING COMMUNITY

Over the last decade, the population of Latinos grew especially fast throughout the nation, ranking Latinos as the second largest minority group in the country. Given their high levels of immigration, the fact that many are of childbearing age, and known for high fertility rates, are three key factors that have

driven this rapid population growth the past two decades. These features are expected to further the growth of the Latino population in the United States for decades to come (O'Hare 1992). These same trends seem to be occurring in Oklahoma, Oklahoma County and Oklahoma City too.

The Latino population in Oklahoma has grown from 86,160 in 1990 to 179,304 in 2000 (U.S. Census 2000). Many argue that these numbers do not include those who did not respond to the census, or that did not claim to be Latino, or those who identify themselves as multi-raced (U.S. Census 2000). By their estimation, the actual Latino population in Oklahoma may be closer to 200,000. The county with the greatest number of Latinos is Oklahoma County with 57,336 (U.S. Census 2000), followed by Tulsa and Comanche counties (see Table 1).

According to Garcia Guillermo (2002) this growth in the number of Latinos accounted for half of the increase in the population of the state's largest city (Oklahoma City). Oklahoma City is now the state's largest city because it's population surpassed 500,000 for the first time. In Tulsa, the growth in the Latino numbers also accounted for one third of the increase in Oklahoma's second-largest city. The population grew seven percent (Garcia 2001). The population growth in Lawton, the third largest concentration in Oklahoma, is a pattern that will be repeated in other Oklahoma cities and towns. While it is a pattern that is not as prominent as it is in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, growth is also expected in Oklahoma's second tier cities. Steady growth in hog farming in the north-

Table 2 - Kids Count Census Data Reflecting Hispanic/Latino Children Population Data in Oklahoma 2000

	Total All Oklahoma	Hispanic	White	Other Race
Total Population (all) children in Oklahoma -all ages	892,360	n/a	n/a	n/a
Population under 18	892,360	70,078	576,731	245,551
Ages 15-17	159,453	10,690	107,000	41,762
Age 3+ enrolled in school	727,603	50,652	477,353	199,598
Ages under 18 living in poverty	171,495	21,034	80,853	70,042
Language Other than English at home (ages 5-17)	50,497	35,801	n/a	n/a
Annual dropout average ages 19 & under	5,899	8.50%	61%	33.40%

western part of Oklahoma as well as southwest Oklahoma's small farms and ranches have opened employment opportunities attracting Latinos to Texas county in Oklahoma.

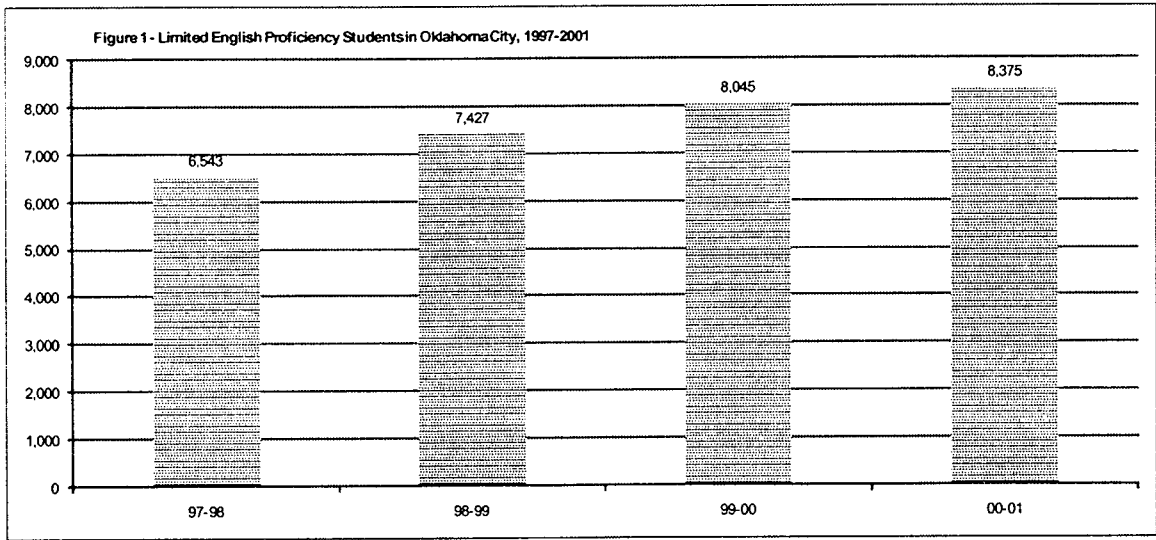
Once a city with only a few persons of Latino origin, and given its geographic position in the Southwest U.S., Oklahoma City has become the home for the fastest growing Latino population in the state. According to the 1990 census there were 25,000 Latinos residing in the greater Oklahoma City area. Today, the population has increased to nearly 60,000 (see Table 1). The Latino population in Oklahoma City is predominantly Mexican American (76%) with over 80 percent of these residents having ties to Mexico (U.S. Census 1990). It was anticipated that the Latino population in Oklahoma would increase to well over 200,000 by 2003 (U.S. Census 2000). Nevertheless, there are many that will argue that there is a large undercount.

SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING LATINO COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES, AND YOUTH

While the majority of immigrants in the Oklahoma City area are of Mexican descent, Latino immigrants from countries other than Mexico such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Spain, and those of Central America are also increasing in the Oklahoma City area. Studies have shown that immigrants from some countries seem to acculturate better than others. For example, Cuban immigrants seem to have greater success at adapting to American culture, resulting in greater success in terms of socio-economic status. Unlike their Cuban counterparts, many Mexican immigrant families tend to be entrenched in low paying, low skilled jobs soon after their arrival into the United States and thereafter (Santisteban & Szapocznik 1982). Studies show that the youth in many Mexican fami-

lies tend to adapt to mainstream values and acculturate sooner than their parents, but many continue to live in the same impoverished conditions that their parents experienced (Santisteban & Szapocznik 1982). The development of mediating institutions is regarded as important to assisting many new Latino arrivals.

As migration of Mexican Americans from low income border communities, as well as Latinos from Mexico, Central America, and South America, continues, the low educational attainment levels of these people will continue to have communities needing to address their LEP and low occupational skills status. Many Latino families, particularly those who have recently arrived to this country, have been noted to experience a number of stressors and problems associated with adaptation to a new culture. Families experience difficulties relating to different and sometimes opposing cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs. For example, while Latino parents value and encourage strong family ties and relationships, Anglo American culture advocates that adolescents be independent and have a life outside the family structure. Moreover, as Spanish may be spoken at home, bilingualism is not valued or nurtured. For a small number of immigrants, language difficulties and language barriers add to an already stressful environment. When children adapt more rapidly than their parents, and quickly learn English as a second language, the ability to speak and understand both Spanish and English enables them to become their parent's translators. This results in a shift in the power balance in their respective families. The power shift often creates tension and conflict within the family, and for some sets the stage for alcohol abuse and substance abuse in youth.



Family conflict can also result in gang involvement, alcohol and drug abuse, and school dropout among Latino youth (see Table 2). In short, Latino youth are a rapidly emerging segment in the population of Oklahoma City; they present a number of academic, behavioral, and health problems as well.

EDUCATION STATUS

According to the 1990 Census, 25.4 percent of the adults in Oklahoma over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. In addition, 15.6 percent of these adults have between a ninth and twelfth grade education, and 9.7 percent have completed less than nine years of school (Oklahoma State Department of Education 2002). School failure and school dropout rates have been consistently found to correlate with substance abuse among youth. Given the high rate of school dropouts among Latino youth compared to other ethnic groups, the Latino community's youth in Oklahoma City are at risk. As of October 2001, there were 676,502 children enrolled in public schools (pre-school-12th) in Oklahoma. The Latino student population total was estimated at 48,022 with 2,630 enrolled in private schools (OKC Public Schools 2001). In all, the graduate rate in Oklahoma high schools in May 2002 was at 31.5 percent.

The racial composition of students in Oklahoma City has risen from 13.9 percent in 1996 to 22 percent in 2001 (OKC Public Schools 2001). The student dropout rate for Latino students is not currently recorded separately in Oklahoma City Public Schools, but

records do show that in 2000-01, 22 percent of the entire student population was Latino, and a total of 1,260 students were dropouts (grades 7-12).

A lack of education can impact a child's health and well being, and research suggests that dropouts have higher rates of substance abuse (OK Institute for Child Advocacy 1999). Youth not completing high school have a greater chance of suffering severe economic consequences including poverty, limited employment opportunity, and poor earning ability, which could lead to a lifetime of financial dependence. Unemployment rates for workers over age 19 are twice as high for dropouts than for graduates (OK Institute for Child Advocacy 1999).

Language barriers pose a threat for many Latino youth now entering the Oklahoma City Public School Systems. Given their family's low-income status, low educational attainment, and their own parent's Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Latino youth's LEP is expected to impact the quality of education that they receive. The quality and the negative educational experience that these youth undergo are expected to increase the risks of these youth dropping out. LEP is seen as a major obstacle affecting Latino students and their families. Improving this problem assures the likelihood of them being contributing members to their families and to the larger community.

Of the top one hundred (four-year) colleges and universities graduating the most Latino students, Florida International University ranked number one with a total of 2,131

Table 3 - Oklahoma Children and Family - State Statistics 2000

	Hispanic	White	Other
Number of children under the age of 5	22,915	146,581	66,857
Number of children under the age of 5 in poverty	7,516	24,347	21,338
Number of children ages 10-14	17,096	116,956	67,977
Number of children ages 10-14 in poverty	6,990	26,612	25,208
Number of children ages 15-17	10,690	107,001	41,762
Number of children ages 15-17 in poverty	5,376	25,379	19,313
Median family income for Oklahoma families	\$28,748	\$43,451	n/a

Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, Census Summary File 3, Tables P46, PCT70H, P77, P154H, P154I, I 36, PI47H-P147I. File 1, Tables P28, P28H-P28I, P12. KIDS COUNT Special Report: Trends in Child Poverty 1976-2000, Table 88.

Table 4 - Oklahoma Children and Family - State Statistics 2000

	Hispanic	White	Other
Children living with both parents in the home	44,766	414,173	128,195
Children living with one parent in the home	16,242	112,737	80,755
Children living with relatives other than parents	6,786	36,407	29,233
Children with both parents employed	20,888	258,993	77,380
Children with one parent employed	16,600	138,089	37,372
Children with neither parent employed	5,701	12,302	7,117
Children under the age of 18 with Health Insurance	5,174	34,742	n/a
Children age 3 and above enrolled in public school	48,022	428,284	133,576

Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, Census Summary File 3, Tables P46, P77, P154H, P154I, I 36, PI47H-P147I. File 1, Tables P28, P28H-P28I, P12. KIDS COUNT Special Report: Trends in Child Poverty 1976-2000, Table 88.

Latinos graduating with Bachelors degrees and 552 with Masters degrees. Unfortunately, Oklahoma colleges did not make the list for Latinos receiving Bachelors or Masters degrees, but did rank at number 100.

The number of LEP students in Oklahoma City schools has nearly doubled from 4,494 in 1997 to 8,375 in 2001. LEP students are defined as those whose native or dominant language is other than English and those who have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language as to deny them the opportunity to learn successfully in an English-speaking-only classroom. Figure 1 shows increase in the number of Oklahoma City LEP students from 1997 to 2001. While there are a few Asian and "other" LEP students attending Oklahoma City schools, the majority of the LEP students are of Latino descent, whose primary language is Spanish.

In Oklahoma City schools, LEP students are offered English as a Second Language. There are other programs available to meet this need in most of the schools, but bilingual services are limited, as bilingual instruction requires sufficient numbers of teachers who are bilingual and trained to teach subject matters in languages other than English.

Currently there are very few teachers who meet the bilingual education training criteria in the Oklahoma City Public School System (Oklahoma City Public Schools 2002).

The schools with the largest Latino population in the Oklahoma City Public School System (District 7) are Capitol Hill High School (the education population center for this emerging community) and Shields Heights Elementary. Both have close to 80 percent Latino student populations. The lowest population in District 7 is at Oakridge Elementary with a Latino population of 8 percent. Of the nine public schools in this Oklahoma City district, every school has a significant number of LEP students, a small percentage of minority staff, and significant dropout rates. For example, in 2000-01 the percentage of LEP students at Capitol Hill High School was at 48.8; minority staff was less than 35 percent, and the dropout rate was at 11 percent. The other schools were: Bodine Elementary had 11 percent LEP, with 25 percent minority staff; Hayes had 12.9 percent LEP, with 10.3 percent minority staff; Lafayette had 10.1 percent LEP, with 4.3 percent minority staff, and a 33 percent Latino population; Oakridge had a 6.0 percent LEP, with a 5 percent Latino population, and 0.0 percent

Table 5 - Programs Available to Youth in Oklahoma City Public Schools

Dual Language Program	A Spanish/English immersion program in grades K-2. Foreign language study along with English Language development are the main features of this program.
Peer Mediation	A conflict resolution program by peers for peers. Selected students are trained in conflict resolution.
Weed and Seed	A U.S. Department of Justice Community Discretionary Grant initiative. The program aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity in high-crime neighborhoods. A partnership between residents, law enforcement, and community-based organizations and businesses.
Whiz Kids	An after school tutoring program using church facilities and volunteers to assist elementary students to improve academic skills.
DIVA	Drug Intervention Violence Awareness is a program that coordinates community and other resources to support services addressing substance abuse and violence to promote academic excellence.

Source: *The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Services, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, November 2002.*

minority staff. Webster Middle School had 19.9 percent LEP students and a Latino student population of 25 percent, the number of minority staff at 35 percent, and the dropout rate was close to 4 percent. (All the figures are based on the 2000-01 school year.)

ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTORS AMONG LATINOS

In Oklahoma, the total child population (all ages) is estimated at 3,450,654. In Oklahoma County, out of 662,153 people, an estimated 8.7 percent (76,109,54) are Latino (U.S. Census Bureau 2000b). Children under 18 comprise 25.9 percent (892,360) of this total (U.S. Census 2000) (see Table 3).

According to the 2000 KIDS COUNT census data, 70,078 of the total population under 18 in Oklahoma are Latino, with 30.9 percent of this total living below poverty levels. Fifteen and eight-tenths percent of Latino youth under the age of 18 in Oklahoma City are living under poverty levels. In short, it is estimated there are currently over 21,000 Latino children under the age of 18 (in Oklahoma County) living below poverty levels.

Although Tables 3 & 4 provide Oklahoma City Latino data in comparison to white population, these statistics bear on what is going on in Oklahoma City. But they may be suggestive of what may also be occurring in Tulsa and Lawton. When one compares Oklahoma children and family state census figures, one finds Latinos to be over represented as living in families with children 5 years and under, in families with children 10 years to 14 years of age, and families with children

15 years to 17 years of age. More troubling is the fact that these data report that Oklahoma Latino families are over represented in families living in poverty, for families with children: *under the age of 5 years, with children aged 10 years to 14 years, and with children aged 15 years to 17 years.* Median income is substantially lower than that for Anglo and other ethnic counterparts. Although Latino youth are likely to have both parents employed, family income substantially lags behind Anglo and African American counterparts. These data also suggest Latino families and children in Oklahoma are more likely to be under and uninsured with respect to health insurance. In short, Oklahoma Latino families are low income and more likely to have limited income resources going to more family members.

The technology gap that exists among the Latino youth and other minority populations limit what Latino children could achieve using computers. According to the Oklahoma Department of Education, some of the poorer schools with large minority populations have other priorities. With continuing budget cuts, information processing technology is not presently one of those priorities. Schools in general have a critical need for more minority and Spanish-speaking computer instructors to help Latino students feel more comfortable using technology. Studies have shown that minority students tend to get less "hands-on" computer training at school, and many do not have computers or Internet access at home. Additional student services available to Latino students within Oklahoma

Table 6 - Need for Treatment Among Juveniles in Oklahoma Juvenile Affairs Custody by Race

Race	Population	In Need of Treatment for Alcohol	In Need of Treatment for Illicit Drugs	In Need of Treatment for Illicit Drugs & Alcohol
White	371	162	260	290
African American	206	99	161	180
American Indian	129	64	86	88
Latino	49	27	39	39
Other	4	0	2	2

Source: Oklahoma Juvenile Justice Department 2000. Juvenile Populations. Online at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>. November 2002.

City and the surrounding area are available through the following agencies:

- Newcomers Center
- Capitol Hill High School
- Parent Educational Center
- Bilingual Assistants Bachelor's Degree Program
- University of Central Oklahoma
- Southeast High School
- University of Oklahoma
- Alternative School (6-8)
- Latino Community Development Agency

There are additional programs offered to youth in the Oklahoma City Public School system. While these programs are not specifically for Latino students, the programs benefit all the students who choose to participate (see Table 5).

LATINO YOUTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

For young people in general, the use of alcohol or other drugs during the teen years can be the beginning of lifelong dependencies or addictions. According to statistics from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, an estimated 1.1 million persons (ages 12-17) needed treatment for an illicit drug abuse problem in 2000. Of this group, only 0.1 million people aged 12-17 years received treatment, leaving an estimated treatment gap for youths of 1.0 million (SAMHSA 2000). The percentage of Latinos needing treatment (for ages 12 and up) was estimated at 574,000 (SAMHSA 2000). Only 51,000 or 9.0 percent of all Latinos (all ages) needing treatment received it (SAMHSA 2000).

Substance abuse is the number one public health problem in Oklahoma and nationally. The economic cost is staggering, estimated at nearly \$7 billion annually in Oklaho-

ma and \$414 billion nationwide (ODMHSAS 2002). Annual costs of substance abuse in Oklahoma are nearly \$2 billion for expenses related to health care, public safety, social services, costs to business, and property loss. Another \$5 billion in costs is related to lost productivity (ODMHSAS 2002).

In Oklahoma, drug and alcohol addiction contributes to 85 percent of all homicides, 80 percent of all prison incarcerations, 75 percent of all divorces, 65 percent of all child abuse cases, 55 percent of all domestic assaults, 50 percent of all traffic fatalities, 35 percent of all rapes, and 33 percent of all suicides (ODMHSAS 2002).

The ODMHSAS 2002 estimates nearly 6 percent of the state's 323,000 adolescents, approximately 20,000 teenagers need treatment for alcohol and drug addiction. State-wide, alcohol addiction surpasses drug addiction by an average of 7.5 to one, meaning that for every person needing drug treatment, more than seven people need alcohol treatment (ODMHSAS 2002). But more direct indicators of youth at high risk come from data of juveniles in Oklahoma Juvenile Affairs custody. These data, while not representative of all Latino youth, do reflect all adolescents who have come to the attention of Oklahoma Juvenile Affairs departments (see Tables 6, 7, & 8). For a variety of reasons, the Oklahoma City Public School District has chosen not to participate in national studies of school-based Alcohol Tobacco or Drug Abuse (ATOD) among the Latino youth in the community, but they do participate in The Center for Disease Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The state's version does not collect data on Latino students. They categorize Latinos as "other" combined with Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Asian Americans.

Alcohol abuse among Latinos was at 36 percent in 1999, and opiates abuse was at

Table 7 - Prevalence of Alcohol Use Among Juveniles in Custody of OJA by Race 2001

	Population	Lifetime	Last Year	Last Month
White	371	349	316	218
African American	206	189	167	124
American Indian	129	119	102	64
Latino	49	49	41	30
Other	4	4	2	0

Source: Oklahoma Juvenile Justice Department, 2000. *Juvenile Populations*. Online: <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>. November 2002.

Table 8 - Prevalence of Illicit Drug Use Among Juveniles in Custody of OJA by Race 2001

Race	Population	Lifetime Illicit Drug Use	Last Year Illicit Drug Use	Last Month Illicit Drug Use
White	371	371	308	250
African American	206	206	179	124
American Indian	129	129	100	74
Latino	49	49	41	33
Other	4	4	3	2

Source: Oklahoma Juvenile Justice Department 2000. *Juvenile Populations*. Online at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>. November 2002.

32 percent. Both had a larger percentage than non-Latinos (SAMHSA 1999).

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, CRIME AND ADOLESCENCE

Because there have been few studies of substance abuse among Latino youth in Oklahoma, there are no current statistics representing Latino youth in general. However, there were some studies conducted that targeted Latino populations within Oklahoma's criminal system.

The state was recently added to the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Survey (ADAM) studies. Since then, the Oklahoma Juvenile Affairs (OJA) collaborated with the ADAM to include juveniles. In 2001, Oklahoma City juveniles in the custody of OJA were added to the ADAM juvenile study. Results of the study indicated that Oklahoma City had the highest rate of treatment need for both alcohol (55.8%) and illicit drugs (79.3%) (Dampousse 2001). The prevalence of alcohol use among Latino youth who participated in the study was estimated at 100 percent lifetime use; 84.35 percent had used in the past year, and 60.88 percent had used in the past month. Moreover, the same youth reported a 100 percent illicit drug abuse lifetime use, 84.35 percent had used an illicit drug in the past year, and 66.33 percent had used in the past month, as shown in Table 8 (Dampousse 2001). Most of the arrests and convictions in Oklahoma City have involved youth less than 18 years of age (Dampousse

2001). This is the same group that has experienced an estimated 113 percent population increase within the Latino community in Oklahoma and across the United States. It appears that Latino youth initiate drug and alcohol use earlier than other ethnic groups. Over the last decade, the percentage of drug abuse arrests among youth in Oklahoma has more than doubled (5.8% vs. 13.3%).

It is not clear if these represent all Latino youth in Oklahoma City or if it just represents court supervised youth. Table 9 reflects the increase in Latino juvenile populations in Oklahoma, and Oklahoma, Tulsa, and Comanche counties from 1990 to 1999. It also shows Oklahoma juvenile populations in comparison to total USA populations.

The relationship between substance abuse and criminal behavior is evident. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that drug users have a greater involvement in crime and are more likely than non-users to have criminal records, and that crimes rise in number as drug use increases (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1993) (see Tables 10a and 10b).

With Oklahoma City having the largest population of Latino youth in the state, and the fact that Oklahoma is among the top three states for incarceration rates since 1993 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1993), these facts indicate that substance abuse among the Latino youth in Oklahoma City is a serious concern.

Table 9 - Juvenile Population (Ages 0-17) Comparison by Race 1990-1999

	Total Juveniles	White Juveniles	Latino Juveniles	Black Juveniles	American Indian	Asian
USA 1990	64,177,103	51,391,825	7,898,058	9,849,931	741,870	2,193,477
USA 1999	70,199,158	55,479,445	11,098,453	10,825,074	813,481	3,081,158
Oklahoma 1990	841,324	653,114	34,759	82,171	95,668	10,371
Oklahoma 1999	3,358,044	2,788,026	136,634	262,136	262,581	45,301
Oklahoma County 1990	157,457	112,815	10,282	32,127	8,818	3,697
Oklahoma County 1999	636,539	496,167	40,753	98,817	25,298	16,257
Tulsa County 1990	132,644	104,175	4,451	17,737	8,755	1,977
Tulsa County 1999	548,296	455,698	20,188	57,841	36,532	8,225
Comanche County 1990	31,618	21,655	2,519	7,044	1,991	928
Comanche County 1999	30,816	21,083	3,733	6,839	1,702	1,192

Source: Oklahoma Juvenile Justice Department, 2000. Juvenile Populations. Online at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>. November 2002.

Table 10a - Percent of Arrestees in Oklahoma City Tested Positive for Drugs by Age 1998

Age	Any Drug	Cocaine	Marijuana	Opiates	Methamp.	PCP	Multiple Drugs
15-20	87.3%	18.2%	87.3%	0.0%	7.3%	7.3%	32.7%
21-25	70.3%	17.6%	67.6%	1.4%	4.1%	8.1%	32.4%
26-30	68.4%	33.3%	52.6%	3.5%	14.0%	0.0%	33.3%
31-35	68.6%	25.5%	52.9%	0.0%	9.8%	0.0%	25.5%
36+	61.4%	34.3%	32.1%	2.9%	7.1%	0.0%	19.3%

Source: Oklahoma Juvenile Justice Department, 2000. Juvenile Populations. Online at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>. November 2002.

Table 10b - Percent of Arrestees in Oklahoma City Tested Positive for Drugs by Race 1998

Race	Any Drug	Cocaine	Marijuana	Opiates	Methamp.	PCP	Multiple Drugs
African American	76.7%	37.0%	57.5%	0.7%	0.7%	6.8%	26.0%
White	63.2%	18.1%	50.8%	3.1%	15.0%	0.0%	29.0%
Latino	45.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%
Other	94.4%	33.3%	77.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%
TOTAL	69.0%	27.3%	53.1%	1.9%	8.0%	2.7%	26.8%

Source: Oklahoma Juvenile Justice Department, 2000. Juvenile Populations. Online at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>. November 2002.

LATINO YOUTH AND HIGH RISK BEHAVIORS: TEEN PREGNANCY, HIV/AIDS AND STDs

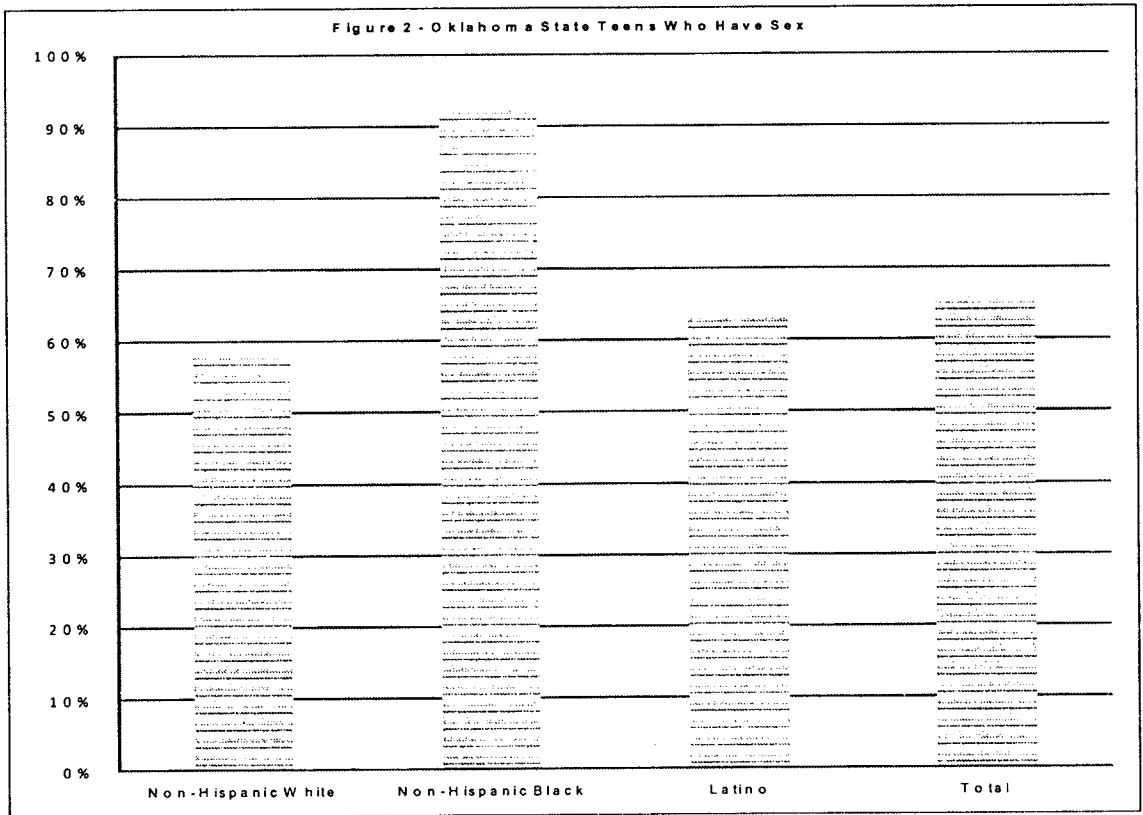
As the Latino youth population in Oklahoma City continues to increase, and given the risk factors involved with many of these youth, health problems will likely increase. The stressors driving substance abuse and crime among Latino youth are the same stressors that increase the risk for unsafe sex practices resulting in teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. For example, poor literacy skills, poor progress in school, drug use, and lack of self-esteem are good predictors of early childbearing (OK Institute for Child Advocacy 1999). Figure 2 indicates an increased risk of teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS among teens in Oklahoma by showing the percent of teens who have sex.

Low-income families and neighborhoods

heighten adolescent stress, and strain their abilities to be resilient. Increasing family's abilities to cope and buffer these risk factors would help to promote negative high-risk behaviors.

Latino Teen Parents

Teen mothers often face bleak futures. Each young mother is more likely to be poor, to drop out of school, to have unsteady employment, and will likely be on public assistance at least once in her lifetime. According to the Kids Count profile of Oklahoma 2001, the number of births to Latinos nearly doubled from 3,616 in 1991 to 6,098 in 1998. The total number of births to teens in Oklahoma in 1998 (16.3%) exceeded the national average of 12.5 percent (Kids Count 2001). Of the 6,098 Latino babies born in Oklahoma, 23 percent (1,403) were born to mothers with



less than 12 years of education and 5.1 percent (120) had no prenatal care (Kids Count 2001). In 2000, the total number of babies born in Oklahoma totaled 48,082; only 5,174 Latino babies born were covered by health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau 2000b).

Teen childbearing is costly to Oklahoma taxpayers (see Table 11). In 1997 Oklahoma taxpayers spent \$647,633,777 on public assistance (TANF, food stamps, WIC, Medicaid) to support families begun by teens. Of this total, close to 10,000 teen mothers were Latino residents of Oklahoma County (Garrett 2002). The Oklahoma State Department of Health reports that in 2000, there were an estimated 598 babies born to teens aged 17 and under in Oklahoma County alone. For every dollar spent on the consequences of teen childbearing, less than one-half of one cent is spent on prevention of teen pregnancy (Oklahoma Department of Human Services 2002). The children born to teen mothers are the real victims; these babies are more likely to repeat the cycle of teen childbearing, to have lifelong developmental and health problems, to do poorly in school and to exhibit behavior problems (OK Institute for Child Advocacy 1999). President Bush's faith-based

programming in this area is one that all high-risk youth might benefit from, yet little has been implemented in Southwest Oklahoma City communities and families.

Sexually transmitted diseases are another public health threat as the numbers of cases continue to increase (see Table 12). Data relevant to the general population reveal that adolescents are engaging in sexual activity earlier and are initiating unprotected sexual intercourse more frequently, resulting in higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents (Latina Girls 2002).

In Oklahoma County, the 2000 Census reported 42 cases of Syphilis, 2,010 cases of Gonorrhea, and 3,134 cases of Chlamydia among youth aged 13 to 19, a significant increase from 1998 Census statistics. For many young Latino/Latina women, cultural influences and traditions hinder their ability to protect themselves. Many childbearing women receive little or no prenatal care, and may not be aware of the impact a sexually transmitted disease could have on the health of their unborn children.

Other problems contributing to high-risk behavior among youth are held to also result

Table 11 - Teen Births and State Health Care Recipients by Race in Oklahoma 2000

	White	African American	Latino	American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander/Other
Teen births (1999 data)	35,059	4,688	3,616	n/a	6,098
Number of children covered by health insurance	39,667	5,956	5,174	n/a	n/a
Child recipients of SoonerCare	185,235	57,679	27,351	44,978	2,496
Adult recipients of SoonerCare	110,020	23,740	4,375	13,665	1,571
Child recipients of TANF/AFDC	306,770	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Adult recipients of TANF/AFDC	43,081	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, 1999. *State Benchmarks Fact Book*. Online, Sept. 1, 2002 - <http://odl.state.ok.us/kids/factbook/kidscount99/state.htm>.

Table 12 - HIV/AIDS and Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases for Oklahoma, Tulsa, and Comanche Counties 2000

	All of Oklahoma	Oklahoma County	Tulsa County	Comanche County
HIV Cases (June 2002)	2,568	964	726	141
AIDS cases (June 2002)	4,021	1,555	1,105	127
Syphilis	61	42	6	1
Gonorrhea	4,840	2,010	1,096	476
Chlamydia	10,622	3,134	1,998	900

Source: Information Technology Service for Health Care Information Division, Oklahoma State Department of Health. Online at <http://www.health.state.ok.us/board/>. November 2002.

in sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The composition of Oklahoma City's population is changing, and as a result, the cultural circumstances of HIV/AIDS should be considered and included in research and prevention programs. HIV/AIDS is the sixth most common cause of death among 15 to 24 years old (Anderson, Kochanek & Murphy 1997). As of May 2000, 4,073 persons in Oklahoma were reported to have been HIV infected and 1,639 people were reported to have full blown AIDS. In Oklahoma County alone there were 965 cases of HIV and 1555 AIDS. Little to no research has been conducted on Latino populations and HIV/AIDS in Oklahoma, except for a study in 1999 that indicated of all the AIDS cases in Oklahoma City, 76 percent were white and 32 percent were people of color.

There were no specific data for Latinos reported except for the 8 reported under "other" in 1997, who could have been Latino. This report also indicated that the data was not accurate, as the diagnosis year data were not complete (Epidemiological Profile 2000).

Although race and ethnicity are not risk factors for HIV transmission, they are cofactors for underlying social, economic, and cultural factors that shape personal behavior and health. Low socioeconomic status in particular is associated with morbidity of

STDs. Unemployment and poverty are correlated with decreased access to health education, prevention, and medical care, resulting in an increased risk for disease.

THE OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE AND THE OKC LATINO COMMUNITY

Given the number of high-risk Latino youth in Oklahoma City, compared to the number of services available, there is a need for additional programs and services for this targeted population. One should keep in mind that many Latinos are from rural to small communities. Although the programs and services made possible through the Little Flower Church, OKCPS, and Latino Service Associations are extremely helpful and rewarding, there was recognition that Oklahoma City's Latino community needed a major Community Based Organization (CBO) advocating on its behalf. What follows is a brief outline and discussion of the services that lead to this recognition of need for an OKC CBO and the current situation of the Latino community vis a vis predecessors and Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA).

Throughout the state of Oklahoma is the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES). With county offices statewide, the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

provides education and information to Oklahomans in the areas of agriculture and marketing; nutrition, family life, and human development; 4-H youth programs; and rural and community development. The Cooperative Extension Service is the result of the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. The Morrill Act gave all the states in the United States the authorization to sell public lands to create land-grant universities and the Smith-Lever Act took the findings of the researchers from the universities to the general public through the Cooperative Extension Service.

The OCES programs reach every area of the state as each county has an Extension Office that serves as a "hub" office for information distribution. Each office is also equipped with computer/Internet access to help the general public get online information as well. The major limitation is that the OCES has limited if any, Latino or bilingual staff.

The OCES could include information on their website in Spanish, and could also provide publications and other informational materials produced by OCES in both English and Spanish. Many of the materials produced through the OCES are distributed to the public through the county health departments, public libraries, and on local Oklahoma Educational Television (OETA). One television program currently available is a gardening program (Oklahoma Gardening); broadcast in English only. With a few resources, the OCES could better serve the Latino population (and its youth) of Oklahomans in Oklahoma City and throughout the state. But more important many Latino students who graduate from high school could benefit from OCES's working relationships with state vocational technical institutes and community colleges.

The mission of the 4-H Youth Development Program is to provide Oklahoma youth, families, and communities with educational programs that will create environments for diverse audiences of youth and adults to reach their fullest potential. The programs are promoted through the public schools and organizations such as the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and through the OCES. The youth programs help youth to practice effective problem-solving and decision making skills; be environmental stewards, and demonstrate positive character and ethical be-

havior; appreciate human differences; have a strong sense of community and social responsibility; contribute to positive relationships with families, peers, and community; demonstrate communication and leadership skills; value lifelong learning; and feel the personal pride that comes from achievement. Again, the only drawback is that in Oklahoma, there are few, if any, 4-H programs available for non-English speaking or limited English speaking Latino children in Oklahoma. Four-H agents are just beginning to organize 4-H programs to better serve Latino children in the state of Oklahoma.

LATINO COMMUNITY SERVICES

Although there are a few community-based programs and services available to the Latino community in Oklahoma City, the Latino Community Development Agency offers the greatest selection of services. Religion plays an important role in the lives of many Latino people, and the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Latino Affairs and the Little Flower Church both offer religious services and fellowship in Spanish and English to better serve the Latino Community. The Archdiocese also set up the first Latino cultural center and Latino "free" clinic.

As was noted earlier, the early OKC Mexican community developed close and lasting ties to the Little Flower Church and to the state Catholic churches. The first services were largely voluntary and ad hoc mutual aid services. After WWII and the Korean War, the OKC Latino community witnessed new but small growth. (This community is what some termed the Mexican-American generation.) This group would be more bilingual and bicultural than their parents' generation. They participated in more social and economic associations and began to develop their own. In OKC one saw the development of an American GI Forum Manual Perez chapter and soon thereafter a LULAC chapter. Since the 1960's these chapters have served as principal service organizations, but were generally limited to these second-generation participants. While LULAC, The Perez GI Forum, and Little Flower would draw different elements of OKC, none seemed to be able to address the needs and calls for services from the next wave of Mexicanos, Cuban Americans and Latin Americans.

One organization that many Mexican seasonal workers would turn to was the Oklaho-

ma Rural Organization (ORO). ORO emerged in late 1970 in western Oklahoma and then operated from SW OKC. ORO first serviced largely Spanish speaking migrant farm workers needing social services or who were leaving the migrant stream for more stable work opportunities. ORO now operates a county office in SW OKC and serves Oklahoma county's families and nearby communities.

In the late 1980's one saw the development of two major professional organizations, Oklahoma Hispanic Professional Association (OHPA), and Tinker Air Force Base Hispanic Association (TABHA). The first was the Tinker Air Force Base's Hispanic Association and the second was OHPA. Like the GI Forum and LULAC, they tended to largely respond to their membership, but began to provide association support to community events and to fund school scholarships to help further the education of Latino children. Each sought to promote Stay in School programs and tutoring. Yet they would be best known for sponsoring riverside community cleanup — a joint effort linking OU's Hispanic American Student Association (HASA), TABHA and OHPA. All three organizations still exist today and remain viable voices for Latino issues.

The needs of a growing population soon overcame the early service organizations and professional groups. It was clear that the OKC Latino community would need a full-time dedicated Latino community-based organization (CBO) to advocate for the city's Latino population and provide these services. Within the Latino community one heard the need for an integrated and community based Latino CBO. In 1988 Pat Fennel and Larry Medina would acquire facilities through the OKCPS, old Riverside School, and small state & county social service contracts. The growth and needs for social service by newest arrivals would also be met by a second yet smaller CBO, the Hispanic Services Organization (HSO). We now turn to LADC.

Responding to the pent-up unmet needs, the Latino Community Development Agency emerged and filled a very important void. There are a number of youth programs currently available to the Latino community and its youth in Oklahoma City through the Latino Development Community Agency (LDCA). Located in downtown Oklahoma City, the mission of the LDCA is to strengthen the capabilities and knowledge of Latino youth by im-

plementing prevention strategies that equip, educate, and prepare youth for tomorrow. The LDCA has several programs available to the Latino community in Oklahoma City. The Oklahoma Youth Empowerment System, The Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Program, The Latino Leadership club, and a Traffic Safety Program are all successful programs initiated through LDCA to service Latino youth.

The Oklahoma Youth Empowerment System is a program designed to reduce gang and delinquent activity in ten targeted high-risk areas of Oklahoma City. The program creates proactive empowered youth and families, and strives to encourage youth to be involved in the community, to be drug free, and to stay away from gangs and delinquent behavior. The targeted population is Latino youth between the ages of 15-18 who meet specific criteria, which includes gang involved youth, siblings of gang involved youth, parents involved in gangs or in the correctional system, delinquent youth, and siblings of delinquent youth. The services provided include a delinquency prevention program serving at-risk youth and their families by providing intensive case-management services, advocacy, referral, counseling and additional educational and recreational activities. The goal is to reduce the number of Latino youth becoming members of the juvenile justice system, and to help them become productive citizens. Some of the accomplishments of the Oklahoma Youth Empowerment Program developed by the LCDA are art classes provided to Latino youth, and these youth artists assisted in the completion of two murals at a local Oklahoma City community center; a tutoring program initiated on Tuesday and Thursday evenings; the establishment of a Latino club at Rockwood Elementary School; the Cesar Chavez Alternative School for Latino adolescents; the Gateway Academy; and the program also sponsors a yearly violence awareness activity for Latino youth.

The Latino Leadership Club was founded in 1991 by the LCDA as a response to an awareness of the over representation of Latino youth in gang involvement and substance abuse, as well as in the criminal justice system in Oklahoma City. The Latino Leadership Club targets pre-adolescent and adolescent Latino youth in high risk and high-needs neighborhoods. The program is currently working with six high schools, five

middle schools, and four elementary schools in the greater Oklahoma City area. There are approximately 300 active members in the Latino Leadership Club. The members meet on a regular basis and discuss a range of topics including teen pregnancy, AIDS/HIV/STDs, drugs and alcohol, and culture and values.

The Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Program is another service available in Oklahoma City through the LCDA, funded by the Oklahoma State Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The goal of this program is to provide effective drug/alcohol treatment services to participants, including complete abstinence from alcohol or drugs during the treatment period and for at least six months after treatment. Participants must stay enrolled in school or vocational training while in treatment and for at least a period of six months afterwards. Successful attempts are made to place the participant in a positive, nurturing environment when exiting from treatment (if his/her family system does not meet the criteria) for at least six months after treatment. The targeted population for this program are adolescents, ages 12-21, that have abused chemicals to the extent that they have become socially dysfunctional. Family members or significant others of the participant are also part of the population to be served. Other services provided include the assessment of the substance use/abuse, counseling in individual, group and/or family sessions, and referrals to alcohol/drug facilities and other outside agencies.

The Traffic Safety Program is a program developed to educate Latino children and their mothers through Oklahoma City's public school system. The program helps increase knowledge and promotes the use of seat belts, child restraints, bicycle safety, and communication about the problems of drinking and driving. Child passenger safety workshops are given with trained technicians to ensure proper installation of child restraints. Other projects include a T-shirt designing contest conducted through various Latino clubs at high schools, and a calendar-coloring contest for 3rd and 4th grade students involved in Latino clubs. Two bicycle rodeos are given for children from kindergarten to 6th grade, with bicycle helmets provided to all participants. The program coordinates with Latino clubs in the Oklahoma City Public

Schools to create interactive learning concerning traffic safety for children, and each school receives two visits per year.

The Latino Community Development Agency also sponsors health programs available to Latino youth in Oklahoma City. These services include a Tobacco Education Network, an STD Prevention Initiative, and HIV Education and Risk Reduction programs. The Tobacco Education Network engages Latino leaders and the community in prevention and elimination of tobacco use among Latinos in Oklahoma. The program educates about the health risks associated with the use of tobacco through public service announcements using Latino radio and television stations and newspapers in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lawton. Some of the other services provided include a tobacco education outreach service to schools and throughout the Latino community, and technical assistance is provided to county and local Latino community-based programs regarding tobacco education needs, education, and outreach.

The Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention Initiative Project has only been available this year. This new program's goals are to assess sexual health risk behaviors among the local Latino population, particularly high school youth, and to identify ways of educating and changing risky sexual behaviors. The project's goal is also aimed at promoting prevention strategies to reduce the incidence and impact of STDs among the Latinos in the Oklahoma City area.

The LCDA has a program available to Latinos in the Oklahoma City area that provides counseling, the ability for participants to learn their HIV/AIDS infection status, and to help develop behaviors that can lower the risk of HIV/AIDS. The program, called "Breaking the Silence" also has a referral service for individuals practicing high-risk sexual activities, and for those already infected with HIV/AIDS. The program helps clients to get psychological or medical help in order to meet treatment and prevention needs. There is also routine testing and post-test counseling available when informing an individual of positive test results.

Some other programs available through the LCDA include a healthy family program called "Nuestras Familias" aimed at helping Latino families enhance family relationships, and provides pregnant and first time moth-

ers with prenatal care, parenting skills, behavioral management skills, and other child development education. There is also a family violence program available that focuses on coping skills and prevention/intervention services for children living with family violence.

LATINO PROGRAMS THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION'S DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMMING AND OTHER SERVICES

Discretionary Program Grants help fund many of the programs currently available to Oklahoma's youth, including the Latino population. Many organizations including universities, faith-based, and others keep the programs alive by their continuous efforts of writing and submitting grant proposals. An example includes the recent proposal submitted by the Southeast Area Health Center: a proposal based on underserved Latinos in Oklahoma City's Southeast Area. The currently funded program provides health services to migrant farm workers and their families through the State Department of Health, Family Health Services.

The Amigo Foundation in Oklahoma City serves Logan, Canadian, Oklahoma, and Cleveland counties. The youth services they currently provide include tutoring, alternative secondary school services, summer employment opportunities, work experience, occupational skill training, leadership development opportunities, supportive services, adult mentoring, artistic and cultural programs, follow-up services, and comprehensive guidance and counseling. Most of the staff in the Amigo Foundation are bilingual Latinos.

Wells Fargo Bank has recently created a partnership with the National Council of La Raza that will offer home ownership opportunities to Latinos in 19 cities across the U.S. Oklahoma City is one of the cities chosen to participate due to the emerging Latino population (*San Francisco Business Times* 2002).

Another new effort in Oklahoma City designed to benefit Latino youth involves a recent partnership between the Oklahoma Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Latino Community Development Agency, who together have expanded substance abuse services for Oklahoma City's Latino youth. The new services will help Latino youth in need of treatment to overcome "motivational deterrents" and will include

case management, crisis intervention, and individual and family counseling and group therapy. Ruth Mazaheri, the Director of Programs for the LCDA said,

they are finally acknowledging the critical need for culturally and linguistically competent treatment services for Latino youth in central Oklahoma. (personal interview)

Out of all the schools in Oklahoma City District 7, the number of Latino personnel as of May 2002, is at 313, with only 4 listed as Administrators. The majority of Latino personnel in this district are Teacher's Assistants (126) and Nutritionists (28). There are no Latino Principals, Nurses, or Special Ed Teachers, and only 4 Counselors (OKC Public Schools 2001). These figures reflect District 7 in Oklahoma City, which has the largest population of Latino and minority residents in the area. They do not include the other six districts in the Oklahoma City area.

IN SUMMARY

As the Oklahoma City Latino community's population increases, many of these families will be residing in low income, socially drained and "changing" neighborhoods. Many in this community will continue to feel socially, marginally, and politically invisible. Many Latinos, especially those working poor, are rarely acknowledged as being a contributing segment of the greater Oklahoma City community. Some of the challenges Oklahoma City's Latino population must face include:

- Languages and cultural barriers have made accessing public services difficult for new immigrants.
- There is not sufficient bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) education to meet demand.
- Immigrants have trouble obtaining drivers licenses because they lack required identity documents, and therefore many are driving without licenses or insurance.
- New immigrants have experienced the economic difficulties that are common among low-wage workers in the region including difficulty finding affordable housing, and the lack of access to health insurance.
- Racist attitudes have increased throughout the region – particularly in the previously all white areas – which are

caused primarily by fear, lack of understanding of the culture, and the language of the new immigrant communities.

Further, for adolescents in this group one must acknowledge that this is a period of tremendous change for the Latino child. Transition is not only from being a child to adolescent, and then adolescent to early adulthood, but one that is always between two social worlds and distinct demands and stressors. For these youth there are always reminders that they are non-white in a predominantly white society, which can only serve to increase individual, social, and familial stress levels.

Attempts to record, outline, and otherwise understand the making of the Latino Oklahoma City community is far from being an easy endeavor. Although there are data on Latinos reported by most other sister states, it is difficult to get accurate statistics of various Latino populations in Oklahoma. Most of the research collected for this paper did not come directly from the state or county. In fact, most came from outside and federal agencies. Finding general population statistics easily and readily accessible for Latinos remains difficult. While most Latinos are still considered white, because of their low numbers in the 1960's and 1970's, they have usually been combined with Native Americans, Pacific Islanders and Asian populations. While the Latino population's biggest concentration remains in three counties, the Latino population throughout the state is dispersed, small and invisible in many county reports.

A number of academic, behavioral, and health problems are emerging along with this growing population. Many of these problems are similar to those confronted by other urban Latino groups. These similarities have lead researchers to call for data necessary to address risk factors threatening the Latino community, family, and its' youth. Many researchers argue that when these data are coupled with innovative CBO programming, they will lessen the widening gap between Latinos being at high risk to better health and social functioning. These data and programs may also serve to make Latino families more resilient. Enhancing the Latino community, its family and youth resiliency, and by improving their coping skills, will allow them to meet many of their own personal

familial and social needs. Studies show that resilient youth cope and adapt better when faced with emerging communities. There is the need to get state policymakers to acknowledge their presence, address their needs and include them in current and future programming. So long as their numbers remain small throughout the state, meaningful innovative programs will not come from the state agencies and legislature. In fact most of this programming will come from local and discretionary grant programming efforts. While some youth manage to grow and prosper in spite of the difficult circumstances in their lives, others are overcome by difficult life events and are easily led to substance abuse or other negative behaviors. Programs and services that enhance and expand Latino's community social capital will prove to be beneficial to their children and their parents.

Nine-Eleven and its aftermath has severely cut into the nation, the state, and the city's psyche, priorities, and budget plans. Nevertheless, local agencies need to plan ahead for budget cuts and many expect no growth budgets to serve program budgets for the next two to four years. Expenditures for basic education, health, and mental health are facing major cuts. An example is the recent announcement that the Oklahoma Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Medicaid will be curtailing programs currently serving thousands of women, children, and disabled (*Stillwater News Press* 2002). Many of those families are being cut from programs within the Oklahoma Latino community. Language barriers not only limit educational opportunities, they limit Latinos accessing much needed state, county, and municipal services. Many state, county, and municipal services do not have staff that are bilingual and bicultural. For example, police and the emergency communication-service (911) are experiencing conflicts of police-citizen interactions, delays in service, and in some cases severe consequences (Simone 2002). The emerging Latino population in Oklahoma City will continue to grow. As a result, programs and services for the Latino community of Oklahoma City will need to be expanded and enhanced.

The eventual securing of the Latino community's visibility, social, economic, and political status will come from past decades of Latino families setting roots and becoming

socially, politically, and economically active in Oklahoma City and the state. But no less important ones will be the Latino community's leadership through its services, civic associations and CBOs pushing, calling, and making reform and social change. The larger community's hesitancy will lessen as they come to see the Latino communities and families as contributors to the city's and state's social fabric. As an emerging Latino community, they will have to develop not only a voice and leadership, but also a voice with other emerging Latino communities in various states, and regional and national forums.

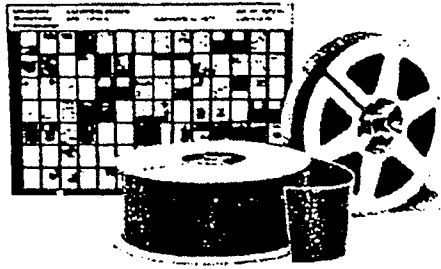
The Oklahoma City bombing, the great 1999 tornado, and related threats to the city's public health and safety have allowed the Oklahoma City community to reconsider what working relationships will be mutually beneficial between the larger community and the local Latino community. These are actions that are best reflected in the Latino community's past and current community developing efforts that have been briefly described and presented in this essay. The coming decade will spell out the directions and consequences that Oklahoma City's Latino community makes for itself and its neighbors.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, R.N., K.D. Kochanek, & S.L. Murphy. 1997. *Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1997*. Diane Publishing Co.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. 1993. *A National Report: Drugs, Crime, and the Justice System*. U.S. Department of Justice. NCJ-133652.
- Damphousse K. 2001. *The Juvenile Justice Survey Project*. 14-15. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.
- Epidemiological Profile. 2000. Oklahoma Statewide Epidemiological Profile for HIV Prevention Community Planning. (Online). Sept 19, 2002 <http://www.health.state.ok.us/program/hivstd/epi/Okla>.
- Garcia G.X. 2001. Bank accounts to illegal workers. *USA Today*.
- Garrett L. 2002. Oklahoma State Department of Human Services. Oklahoma County. 2002. Guest speaker at Esperanza del Pueblo agency, SW Oklahoma City. June 2002.
- Latina Girls. 2002. Eating disorders among Latina girls. (Online) August 5. <http://www.4women.gov/bodyimage/bodywise/uf/Latina%20girls2.pdf>.
- McClellan S. 2003. An urban crossover, English language show targets U.S. born Latinos. *Broadcasting & Cable Magazine*. September 23 32.
- Martin P. & E. Midgley. 1994. Immigration to the United States: journey to an uncertain destination. *Pop Bull* 49 2. Washington DC: the Population Reference Bureau.
- ODMHAS. 2002. Oklahoma Department of Mental Health Services. Online 2002. http://www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/departement_of_mental_health_and_substance_abuse_services_odmhas_overview_oklahoma.htm
- O'Hare W. 1992. America's minorities - the demographics of diversity. *Pop Bull* 47 4. Washington, DC: the Population Reference Bureau.
- Oklahoma City Public Schools 2001. *Statistical Profile 2000-01*. Oklahoma City Public Schools Planning, Research and Evaluation Department. October.
- _____. 2002. Statistical Profile. Oklahoma City Public Schools Planning, Research and Evaluation Department.
- Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy. 1999. Online 2002. <http://www.odl.state.ok.us/Kids/factbook/kidscount99/intro.htm>.
- Oklahoma State Department of Education. 2002. Online <http://se.sde.state.ok.us/ses/compliance/monitoring/district/Tahlequah%20Mon%20Rpt.pdf>.
- Oklahoma State Department of Health. 2002. Online http://www.ok.gov/health/Organization/Office_of_Communications/News.
- Oklahoma State Juvenile Justice Profiles 2000. (Online) October 25, 2002 <http://www.ncjj.org/stateprofiles/profiles/>.
- Paral R. 2000. *A Lifeline to Renewal: The Demographic Impact of Immigration at State and Local Levels*. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) website. American Immigration Law Foundation. Online. 2002. <http://www.gcir.org/node/251>
- Personal interview. 2001. Ruth Mazaheri, the Director of the Latino Community Development Agency. June 7.
- Population Reference Bureau. 2002a. Analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census summary file 1. Tables P12, P12H, & P12I. (Online) Sept. 15. <http://www.prb.org/>.
- Population Reference Bureau. 2002b. Analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census summary file 3 (Tables P87 & P159H) Sept. 15. <http://www.prb.org/>.
- SAMHSA. 2000. Office of Applied Studies, *National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. *San Francisco Business Times*. 2002. Wells Fargo launches mortgage program for Latinos. June 18.
- Santisteban D.A. & J. Szapocznik. 1982. Substance abuse disorders among Latinos: a focus on prevention. In *Mental Health and Latino Americans: Clinical Perspectives*. R.M. Becerra, M. Karno, & J.I. Escobar. NY: Grune & Stratton.
- Simone M. 2002. *Materials Essential to reaching*

- Hispanic clients*. ProQuest, Oklahoma State University Library. Online. August 25. <http://proquest.umi.com/>.
- Smith M.M. 1980. *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*. Norman, OK: U Oklahoma Press.
- _____. 1981. *Crossroads Oklahoma, The Mexican-American Experience in Oklahoma*. Stillwater, OK: Department of History. Oklahoma State University.
- Stillwater News Press*. 2002. More agencies announce cuts. Oklahoma City Associated Press. Sept. 17, A3.
- The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. 2002. Online: <http://www.okc>
- hispanicchamber.com/
- U.S. Census Bureau. 1970. Census of Population & Housing. Online 2001. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1970.htm>
- U.S. Census Bureau. 1990. American FactFinder. Online 2001. <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen1990.html>.
- U.S. Census Bureau 2000a. State and County QuickFacts - Oklahoma. Online. August 23, 2002. <http://www.aecf.org/>.
- U.S. Census Bureau 2000b. KIDS COUNT Data. Online. 9/12/2002. <http://www.aecf.org/cgi-bin/aecensus/>.

this publication is available in microform



Please send me additional information.

University Microfilms International

300 North Zeeb Road
Dept. P.R.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
U.S.A.

18 Bedford Row
Dept. P.R.
London, WC1R 4EJ
England

Name _____
Institution _____
Street _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____