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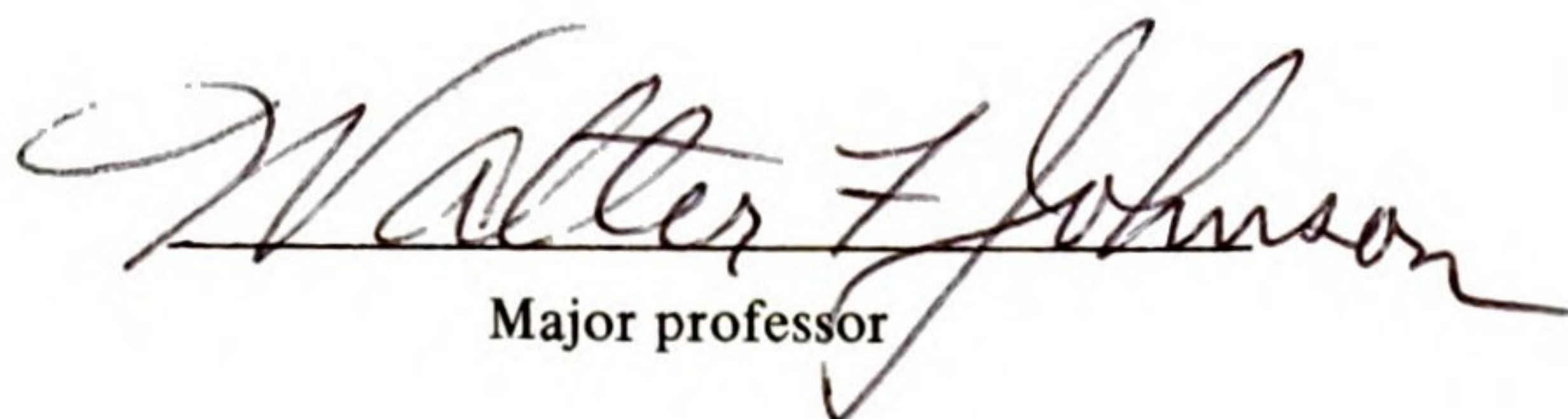
MEXICAN-AMERICANS AND PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTIONS
IN A MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY: AN ANALYSIS OF
MUTUAL IMAGES AND INTERACTIONS

presented by

Alfredo H. Benavides

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MEXICAN-AMERICANS AND PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTIONS
IN A MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY: AN ANALYSIS OF
MUTUAL IMAGES AND INTERACTIONS

By

Alfredo H. Benavides

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ABSTRACT

MEXICAN-AMERICANS AND PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTIONS
IN A MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY: AN ANALYSIS OF
MUTUAL IMAGES AND INTERACTIONS

By

Alfredo H. Benavides

The problem examined by this study is the interaction between a small midwestern Mexican-American community and the educational, public, and welfare institutions which serve it. More precisely, this study examines the relationships these institutions have developed with the community; how decisions affecting the community are arrived at by persons working within these institutions; and, the attitudes expressed by the community and institutional personnel towards each other.

The principal methods of investigation used in conducting this study are anthropological in nature. They are:

- 1) participant-observer,
- 2) key informant, and,
- 3) survey--open-ended questionnaire.

Demographic data was gathered by the use of a questionnaire designed by the investigator for use in a Mexican-American community. Such information included data on housing, income level, educational level, and participation in social and/or public welfare programs.

The investigator was also able to gain the confidence of community members and school officials, which enabled him to participate and observe many interactions between the two. Also, the investigator was able to establish key informants within the community, the social and public welfare agencies, and the schools. These informants were used by the investigator to support survey data, assess attitudes and behaviors within different groups, and to reinforce existing bonds with various community leaders, school and service agency personnel.

In addition to these methods, the investigator spent one year as an employee of one of the Mexican-American-"oriented" service agencies. This proximity to the population under study greatly enhanced the opportunity for in-depth and close-up study.

The major conclusions arrived at by this study primarily indicate the following:

- 1) that the relationship between the Mexican-American community and its schools and service agencies is primarily negative;
- 2) there is a lack of understanding among educators and agency personnel about Mexican-Americans in general;

- 3) that school administrators and agency personnel and administrators are motivated more by the acquisition of federal monies, than by what services these monies will provide;
- 4) Mexican-American community leaders are more concerned with the immediate employment impact for their constituencies, than with the long-term goals and outcomes of federally funded educational programs;
- 5) there is a lack of understanding among Mexican-American community leaders and members about the nature of public and social welfare institutions, their services and operations; and,
- 6) there is a lack of technical knowledge among Mexican-American community leaders about the operation, goals, and purposes of their own social service agency.

These major findings are not based upon empirical data and its analysis. Rather, they are based upon long and extended periods of observation and participation by the investigator. These findings as such, constitute general patterns and tendencies of behavior and attitudes as manifested by a small midwestern Mexican-American community, and its educational and social service institutions.

to Christine and Joseph Tomas

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

There is a need in education today to answer some of the crucial questions concerning school and community relations. This is especially true as more schools come under increasing pressure from minority or ethnic communities, to meet the particular educational needs of those communities. Some of the questions in need of answering are:

1. What is the precise nature of the community-school relationship?
2. What role do school administrators play in this relationship?
3. What non-ethnic or situational factors are considered by school administrators in making decisions affecting school policy in relation to these communities?
4. To what extent does parental involvement or community leadership affect school policy?
5. What socio-economic conditions do certain communities face, which may affect the school-community relationship?

This study focuses on the educational problems and attitudes of a small Mexican-American midwestern community, and, on how its school system has attempted to meet its

educational needs. As a part of the study, the investigator also collected socio-economic data on the community, and investigated the nature of the relationship between the community and the social and public welfare agencies which serve it. Therefore, a more precise definition of the problem would be the description of the relationship between a small Mexican-American community and the institutions serving it. The institutions can be defined as the social and public welfare agencies and the educational system within the community.

Purpose and Importance of the Study

The basic purpose for this study is to examine through the use of description, the nature of the relationship between a community and its institutions. It is the investigator's thesis that the quality of this relationship directly affects the quality of services provided to the community by its local institutions.

More specifically it is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that this type of research is essential for educators in order to identify and understand the nature of the particular educational needs and problems of a given community. Given this understanding, educators can begin to make constructive changes which will ultimately benefit the community, as well as the educational system which serves it.

Methodology

The approach to this study of Mexican-Americans is both descriptive and anthropological in nature. Lindquist (1970), states:

The role of the anthropologist in studying education is partially the application of ethnographic fieldwork methods, and cross-cultural reference points to some aspect of education. Basic fieldwork methods, in summary, include (1) the need for participation and observation; (2) maintenance of as value-free and "objective" an attitude as possible toward the group being studied; (3) constant attempts to place the data being collected into a holistic conception of the culture and society of the group or groups involved; (4) gaining an understanding, even in the absence of agreement, of the goals of the superordinate group, if there is one; (5) grasping the variant meanings of symbols which the groups involved are using, both within each group and in communication between groups.

(Lindquist, 1970, pp. xiii-xiv.)

Three principal methods of investigation were employed. These were:

1. participant-observer,
2. key informant, and
3. survey--open-ended questionnaire.

As participant-observer, the investigator actually participated in and observed the events described in the study, since only through participation in and observance of the lives and daily occurrences of community members, could one begin to understand the composition of the community, as well as its basic needs and problems. In order to maintain proper perspective and objectivity in

conducting the research, the investigator declined several attempts by community members and leaders, as well as school administrators, to act as spokesman for any one group. At the same time however, he was allowed to participate in and observe all meetings and communicative interactions between the community and school system, as well as the local social and public welfare agencies.

The key informant method of investigation was also used in conducting this study. Key informants were defined as those community leaders or members, school personnel, or social and public welfare agency personnel, who in the course of daily affairs, possessed knowledge of the community or its local institutions.

Enlistment of key informants was a slow process. This process was accomplished in several ways. Initially, the investigator was a member of a research team whose task was to gather information about the structure and operation of social and public welfare agencies in the community. Through the Mexican-American personnel in some of these agencies, the investigator began to discover who community leaders were, where the community had its formal social organization (social club), and other general information about the community.

During these initial phases of the study (June 1974-September 1974), the investigator spent an average of two days per week in the community. This time was devoted to

studying various agencies and familiarizing oneself with the community and its population. Once he became known, the investigator was asked to become a member of the Latin American Club, the community's social club. This opportunity was quickly accepted because the investigator felt that through such membership, he could acquire more specific knowledge of the Mexican-American community.

In March of 1975, the investigator was offered a research position within a social service agency within the community, especially funded to work within the Mexican-American community. The name of the agency was El Centro Latino, Incorporated. A principal purpose for establishing the research position was to collect socio-economic data within the Mexican-American community. This was a fortuitous circumstance since data of this type had also been projected as a necessary part of this study. The position was accepted with the following conditions:

1. reasonable autonomy in conducting the research,
2. freedom to maintain working hours and schedules as deemed appropriate, and,
3. the right to retain residency in Lansing, Michigan, rather than having to move into the community being studied.

The position called for providing El Centro Latino with two types of information:

1. a complete list of all existing Mexican-American households, as identified by the survey, and,

2. an analysis of the socio-economic problems within the Mexican-American community.

Only the first of these two conditions was met by the investigator because the agency was closed in June of 1976. It is hoped that this study will partially, at least, provide some of the data of significance with regard to the second purpose.

Through the auspices of El Centro Latino, the investigator eventually came to know all community leaders, many school administrators and teachers, and many other agency directors and personnel. Through this medium it was also possible to meet many others in the community who sought the agency's services. These services were mainly referral in nature--meaning that people came to El Centro Latino seeking a specific service, and were referred to the agency offering that particular service.

Fieldnotes were a great asset for the research endeavor. Notes of all interviews, meetings, and significant observations and encounters were kept from the very beginning of the study. When note-taking was not possible, it was necessary to rely on memory, with notes being recorded as soon as feasible. With time and successive interaction, it was possible to achieve acceptance as a "semi-resident" of the community. This acceptance also aided in the establishment of key informants.

All information provided by informants was checked with other informants when possible. There was no evidence of having been given intentionally misleading information during the period of study. The confidentiality of all informants was protected at all times. All names appearing in the study, including the name of the community, have been changed to maintain confidentiality. The people and events described however, represent real people.

The third method of investigation employed is that of the open-ended questionnaire. This questionnaire was administered to the Mexican-American heads of households who were included in this study. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, a list of all possible Mexican-American residents of the community was compiled. This information was obtained through telephone directories (using the investigator's knowledge of Spanish surnames), voter registration files, social club membership lists, city directories, service agency files, community leaders' knowledge of the community, and constant revision by the interviewers and the investigator, in order to avoid duplication of names and addresses.

Eight bilingual (Spanish-English), interviewers were used to conduct the survey. The investigator was able to select only two of the eight interviewers, the remaining six already being in the employ of El Centro Latino. The eight interviewers averaged 21 years of age. All

interviewers were paid by Neighborhood Youth Corps funds provided to El Centro Latino. The interviewers worked an average of twenty hours per week. They were given a minimum of sixteen hours of instruction by the investigator, in interviewing techniques. The interviewers were under the direct supervision of the investigator or the Executive Director of El Centro Latino at all times.

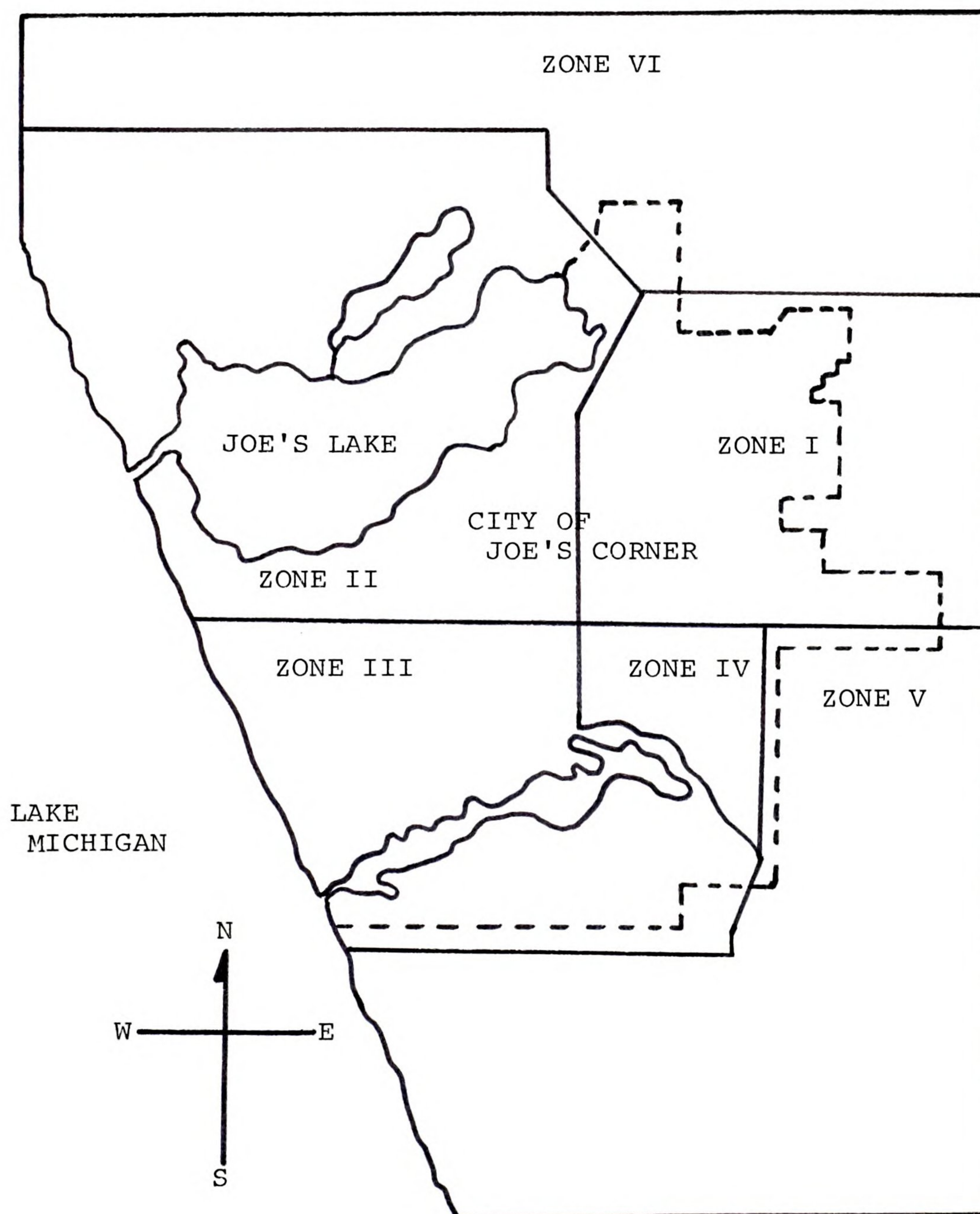
The survey questionnaire was especially devised for the Spanish-speaking population. It was aimed at obtaining specific demographic data and other relevant characteristics about the Mexican-American community. Specific information was obtained from the following areas:

1. housing,
2. income and employment status,
3. formal education and skill training,
4. place of prior residence and length of present residency,
5. need and use of social and public welfare agencies, and,
6. attitudes toward education, community schools, and public welfare agencies which they had contact with, if any.

Specific questions such as "place of birth" or any question pertaining to the citizenship status of individuals, were purposely omitted. This was done in order that community members who might have been illegal residents, would cooperate willingly. The collection of data began in

Figure 1

Division of Zones in Joe's Corner



April of 1975, and ended in September of 1975, requiring a total of five and one-half months.

The community was divided into six zones, two rural and four metropolitan. Interviewers were assigned in pairs to each zone. The pairs consisted of one male and one female interviewer, in order to prevent any problems arising from a male interviewer entering a female resident's home, or vice-versa.

The administration of the survey was not without problems. A few weeks after the initial collection of data began, a Mexican-American woman called the investigator at El Centro Latino, and claimed to have been threatened by representatives of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. According to the woman, she had granted an interview to one of the survey interviewers about a week before. She stated that she suspected the interviewer of turning her in to the authorities. The woman stated that three of her children were not citizens of the United States. The three children were actually an orphaned nephew and two sisters, who had come from Mexico to live with her several years before. According to the woman, they were legal aliens because they reported their alien status through the United States Post Office each year. She could not understand why the children were being threatened with deportation when they had always reported their alien status to the government.

Rumors of this incident and another similar one, began to spread within the Mexican-American community. Interviewers began reporting some difficulty in interviewing some of the heads of household. At this point, the investigator personally reassured the woman who had had the trouble and appeared on a local Spanish radio talk show to explain the survey, its purpose and value, and to deny any connection with the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. Shortly thereafter, interviewers reported no problems in interviewing heads of households.

It was never established how the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization had received the woman's name. However, rumors began in the community that the "migra" (a slang expression used by Mexican-Americans in direct reference to immigration officials), had a paid informant operating within the Mexican-American community. Also, since the woman in question had been heavily dependent upon public assistance (a fact substantiated by the survey), another rumor spread in the community that the county Department of Social Services had allowed immigration authorities access to client's files. None of these or other rumors were ever substantiated and they finally ceased to circulate publicly.

Limitations of the Study

There were several factors which limited the scope and intensity of the study. One limiting factor was that a similar survey of non-Mexican-Americans was not undertaken simultaneously within the same community. This tends to limit the study in generalizability and relativity. The findings cannot be compared to non-Mexican-American groups in terms of problems and attitudes. This limitation however, may be better explained and perhaps justified, by other factors which defined the scope of the study. These factors were time, a lack of money, and also, a lack of qualified personnel.

Time was a limiting factor in several ways. First, it was only possible to spend three days per week in the community. It would have been better to be able to move into the community and live day by day among its residents. This might have provided more insight and depth into the community.

Second, more time was needed to conduct the survey itself. The interviewers were limited to an average of twenty hours per week. In addition to the limited hours, interviewers were limited initially to working only Monday through Friday, during the daily operating business hours of El Centro Latino. This was later adjusted by the investigator, in order to allow the interviewers to work during the weekends and also evening hours. The

investigator felt this would enhance the chances of finding more residents and working couples at home.

Another manner in which more time would have been beneficial to the study was in the actual conduct of the interviews, and the number of people interviewed. More time would have allowed the interviewers to get more in-depth information on the educational histories of community people, and also interview more people. In total, 364 interviews were conducted, with approximately 50 known households left uninterviewed. However, this sample size would appear to be a more than fair representation of Mexican-Americans in the community.

The lack of money and qualified personnel were also limiting factors in the conduct of this study. The lack of money made hiring more interviewers impossible. Some of the interviewers were quite inexperienced in many ways and could not fully understand the reasons behind the survey. No number of explanations was ever satisfactory in removing their doubts. It is possible that some of the interviewers were not sufficiently sophisticated to collect such in-depth data.

Several interviewers, however, proved extremely adept at deriving information. It was not unusual for these interviewers to spend over an hour with some heads of households, and fill the backs of the questionnaire forms

with short family case histories and other relevant in-depth attitudinal data. The investigator recognized this pattern early in the survey phase of the study and assigned these interviewers to critical areas in the community, as identified by several community leaders and agency personnel.

Even with these limitations, it is the investigator's opinion that the information contained in this study is representative of the problems and attitudes among the Mexican-Americans of this community and perhaps others like it. This type of research will hopefully show the need for more in-depth study within similar communities, and also be of practical value to community people, educators, social and public welfare agency personnel, and other interested people. Whatever the limitations and weaknesses of this study may eventually prove to be, one should not deny its use in terms of practical application and also in serving as a model for further research of this nature.

CHAPTER II

THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Size

The actual size of the Mexican-American community in Joe's Corner* has been disputed in recent years. Several Mexican-American community leaders have expressed opinions that U.S. Census Bureau figures for 1970 were misleading and incorrect. The main concern among community leaders is that many social service and educational agencies base their assistance to communities, on population studies. The community leaders felt that a large undercount in Joe's Corner's Mexican-American population would mean less federal, state, and local educational and social services.

The sentiments of these community leaders are not totally without justification. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1974), reported a significant undercount of persons of Spanish surnames. In its findings, the Commission reports:

Current and accurate demographic, social, and economic statistics on persons of Spanish speaking background are needed by Federal agencies, State and local governments, private organizations,

*Psuedonym.

and individuals for a variety of purposes including the protection of voting rights, the administration of federal and other public social programs, and the assurance of equal employment opportunity. (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, April, 1974, p. 102.)

The Commission findings further state that "the Bureau did not pay sufficient attention to methodology . . ." and furthermore:

- b. The fifth measure, Spanish origin self-determination, is the preferred method but was asked only of 5 percent of the United States population. (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, April, 1974, pp. 102-103.)

An accurate count of Mexican-Americans or persons of Spanish origin, was also needed by El Centro Latino, the agency aimed at the needs of the Mexican-American community in Joe's Corner. Since the investigator was working for this agency, it was determined that he should try to establish the actual number of Mexican-Americans in the community. This resulted in the use of the survey questionnaire.

The total population for the county in which Joe's Corner is located is reported by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to be 157,426. The population of metropolitan Joe's Corner is 61,935. (U.S. Bureau of the Census Final Report, 1972, p. 1.)

In its ethnic breakdown of the population, the Census Bureau shows two categories for Mexican-Americans. These are "Spanish surname" and "Spanish Mother Tongue."

An explanation is not given for the use of these two categories.

The total Mexican-American county population of Joe's Corner as reported by the Census Bureau is as follows:

- a. Spanish Surname 2,221
- b. Spanish Mother Tongue 1,549

The investigator's survey was less accurate than that of the Census Bureau. Using lists of Spanish surnames assembled from various sources (telephone and city directories, voter registration and agency files, social clubs, churches, and older residents' knowledge), the investigator assembled a list of 620 potential households of persons of Spanish or Mexican-American descent. The following is a breakdown of the 620 contacts made during the survey:

a.	# completed interviews	364
b.	# refusing interview	16
c.	# located but unavailable for interview	27
d.	# moved, but known to be in county	7
e.	# unable to locate household	19
f.	# moved with no forwarding address	84
g.	# incomplete address	11
h.	# moved out of state or county	10
i.	# no such address	21
j.	# deceased	4
k.	# no such person living there	17
l.	# non-Spanish surname	40
Total Contacts		<u>620</u>

The total number of residents identified by the 364 interviews was 1537. In addition to the 364 interviews, a minimum of 50 known Mexican-American households were not interviewed (b, c, d). Also, there were 114 possible

households still within the city or county (e, f, g). Using 4.2 as the average number of persons per household, it is conceivable that the minimum number of Mexican-Americans in the county is as high as 2,226. This does not compare to the figure of 3,770 found by the U.S. Bureau of Census.

As the evidence shows, the true Mexican-American population of Joe's Corner is very difficult to determine. There are many factors which hamper proper identification, the largest being mobility. There were 169 addresses which were inaccessible to the investigator due to the factor of mobility (d, e, f, g, h, i, k). This problem is compounded by some residents who list multiple addresses.

It would appear that community leaders' concerns over improper identification of the Mexican-American population by the Census Bureau are not justified. Whereas the Commission Report of 1974 may show the Census Bureau to have undercounted populations in various segments of the country, this does not appear to be the case in Joe's Corner.

Community History

It is important to look historically at the Mexican-American population of Joe's Corner because through history one can begin to understand the foundation upon which the present situation rests. History can provide an idea of migration patterns, urban and rural settlement, and

the general characteristics of the Mexican-Americans who first came to Joe's Corner. History can also provide insight into the existing character of the Mexican-American community.

According to voter registration files there were "voting-age" Spanish surnamed individuals in Joe's Corner as early as the early 1900's. However, the first substantive movement of Mexican-Americans into Joe's Corner came just prior to and during World War II. Contrary to the belief held by many residents of Joe's Corner, that these early settlers were agricultural fieldworkers, these first Mexican-Americans were skilled and semi-skilled industrial workers. They came from a variety of places, including Monterey and Torreon, Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico.

These "first" Mexican-Americans were employed in factories and foundries in or within the vicinity of Joe's Corner. According to Jesus Garcia, a retired Joe's Corner factory worker and resident for over 45 years, many "mexicanos" were hired prior to and during World War II. According to Garcia, many of these skilled workers were brought from Mexico.

According to Garcia and other older community residents, language was many times a factor in acquiring factory jobs. By the time World War II had broken out, there were apparently several Mexican-Americans working in

factories and foundries in Joe's Corner, who were bilingual (Spanish-English). Garcia pointed out that if a "mexicano" was highly skilled and bilingual, it was not difficult to become a foreman. By doing this, the companies could then recruit Mexican or Mexican-American labor, and assign these people to bilingual foremen. In this manner, the company was able to meet its labor demands without regard to language barriers. According to Garcia, many workers were hired in this manner.

One of the companies involved in the recruitment of Mexicans was the Campbell, Wyant and Cannon (CWC), Foundry. At that particular time, C.W.C. was involved in ironworks casting and defense contracting. The following are excerpts from a two hour visit with Mr. Lupe Ortega at his home in Lansing, Michigan. It should be mentioned that Mr. Ortega is a native of Laredo, Texas, although he has lived in Michigan since the age of 12--approximately since 1921. Mr. Ortega is retired from the Motor Wheel Forge Plant of Lansing, where he worked for 16 years. When asked who had brought them to Joe's Corner, several community leaders and members mentioned Mr. Ortega's name.

Hiring as a Labor Recruiter

Mr. Ortega worked in the C.W.C. Plant in Joe's Corner during the late thirties and early forties. In 1941 (he could not remember the exact date), he and Juan Beltran

(another employee), were summoned to one of the plant owner's office. They were asked if they were qualified and interested in taking a job as labor recruiters for the factory. (The investigator assumed for Mexican-Americans.) Beltran declined, explaining he had no experience. Mr. Ortega was experienced, having been (prior to moving to Joe's Corner), a labor recruiter for factories and sugar beet fields in central Michigan. Furthermore, he wanted the job. When asked what he wanted in terms of salary, he asked for the top pay within his shop at the factory, plus his expenses. The company executive thought it over, and a few days later, agreed.

Mr. Ortega was then sent to the Southwest to recruit labor for the factory. Ortega admitted, however, that he also did some recruiting among seasonal agricultural workers in central Michigan.

Ortega worked as a recruiter for approximately one and one-half years. When the demand for labor subsided, he was reassigned to his job "in the shop." Ortega refused this reassignment. According to him, "I had gotten used to being out, moving around, and talking to people. I didn't want to work in a hot, noisy, and dirty factory shop any more."

The company then offered him a position in the personnel office. He claims that he was not sure if he

wanted it. The company then gave him a leave of absence to think it over. At the end of his leave, he declined the company's offer, and moved his family to Lansing. In Lansing, he obtained a job with Mortor Wheel, a plant affiliated with the C.W.C. plant in Joe's Corner.

The Labor Recruitment Process

According to Ortega, the demand for labor in Michigan factories was great, and many companies recruited personnel from other factories to travel across the country. These persons were to operate through the structure of the State Employment Agencies. Their first contact was with State Employment offices in the capitol cities. From here they were sent to areas chosen by the State Employment Agency hierarchy. Ostensibly, the decision as to where a recruiter was sent was based on the availability of surplus labor in given areas and "openings" for labor recruiters.

Labor recruiters were prohibited from recruiting directly, and instead had to set up desks at State Employment Agencies. Over these desks were signs indicating the areas they were recruiting labor for. Persons looking for work were admitted to offices where they could look over the areas, then choose one. In turn, they were brought to the desk of the area they had chosen. The recruiter was not allowed to actively solicit interviewees. Once at the desk, the prospective laborer would be given all of the

relevant information (pay, type of work, benefits, etc.). If he decided on that location or job, he was given money to get a physical examination, and a ticket for himself and his family, or traveling expenses.

According to Ortega, only those without tuberculosis or ruptures (hernias), were accepted. Ortega would then inform the C.W.C. personnel office as to who was arriving and when. The personnel office then received the recruited laborers, who were installed in company housing. (Company housing will be described in a later section.)

Ortega was initially sent to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the company of a C.W.C. personnel officer by the name of Smith. On the first day in Albuquerque, Smith decided to take a few days off in order to visit his son in Los Angeles. On the next day, Ortega received a visit from a high-up C.W.C. executive, who apparently had come down to check up on them. When Ortega revealed to him that Smith had left for a few days with the company money they had been given, the executive asked him if he thought he could handle the recruiting by himself.

Ortega told him that he had already made a reconnaissance of the Spanish-speaking "barrio" in Albuquerque and had ascertained the names of interested persons. The company executive according to Ortega, made him out a check for \$1,000 for his expenses, and told him to tell

Smith that he was to return to Joe's Corner immediately. Smith did return and was apparently fired.

From Albuquerque, Ortega was assigned a recruiting desk in Santa Fe. He didn't like it there because it was hard to recruit "locals" to work in Michigan factories. In his opinion, "those people were a little backward or rural." He was only able to recruit 7 or 8 in several days.

He asked for permission to go to Texas. On his way, he stopped in Big Springs, where he got his brother to accompany him to Austin (in his brother's car). In Austin he checked in with the State Employment office and he claims that they wanted to assign him to Georgetown. He felt that there weren't enough Mexicans in Georgetown, so he asked instead for a desk in San Antonio. He claims the official was reluctant to allow him to recruit in San Antonio. In any event, he was told there would be no openings in San Antonio for at least a month. The employment official told him that he didn't think C.W.C. would like it if he had to wait that long.

Ortega told the official to call the C.W.C. plant in Joe's Corner. A call was put through (top priority), and the employment official was told by Mr. Campbell, one of the owners, ". . . anything Lupe wants to do is O.K. by us." A month later he had his desk at the San Antonio

employment office. During the period he was in San Antonio, he was recruiting between 10 and 20 workers per day and, according to him, developing a good reputation with his employers back in Michigan.

Another aspect of the recruitment process which Ortega disliked, was the restriction placed on recruiters as to recruiting only in the employment offices. He took it upon himself to move around and recruit directly in the community. Sometimes he traveled beyond the confines of San Antonio--as far south as Cotulla, Texas. There he would recruit people in the "barrios," but arrange for them to appear at the employment office where they would ask for a slot at his desk.

Urban and Rural Settlement

When World War II came to an end, many American men returned to Joe's Corner to find their jobs in the factories already occupied. According to older Mexican-American residents of Joe's Corner, this influx of returning service men created a surplus labor market. As a consequence, many Mexican-Americans lost their jobs and either returned to Mexico or the Southwest, or began life anew as agricultural fieldworkers. However, a significant number of Mexican-Americans remained in these "good-paying jobs."

Although Joe's Corner is predominantly an industrial community, it is surrounded by large counties which depend almost exclusively upon agriculture for a means of support. At the same time that Mexican-Americans were being hired to work in Joe's Corner's factories, unskilled agricultural laborers were beginning to move into the adjacent counties on a seasonal basis. These workers came mainly from northern Mexico and southern Texas. They came as migrant workers following the seasonal crops. In this particular area they came to work mainly the asparagus, pickle, apple, and cherry crops.

As pointed out by the Ortega interview, some of these migrant families were also able to secure jobs in factories and foundries. Thus, aside from the earlier Mexican-Americans who were recruited strictly for the industries, there also began a gradual settling out process among migrant workers in the area.

This settling out process was hastened during the 1950's, as farmers began using mechanical devices instead of field workers. By 1968, several federal and state agencies such as United Migrants for Opportunity, Incorporated (UMOI), began to make concerted efforts to "settle out" migrant families. According to present and former U.M.O.I. officials, these settling out efforts were conducted in order to provide more stability within the

migrants' lives, and also to decrease their numbers. This influx of Mexican-Americans into Joe's Corner created a need for more jobs, and/or social service agencies to care for jobless families. It also created a division within the Mexican-American community.

The divisions created by this rapid influx were ultimately felt on the social, economic, and political fronts of the established Mexican-American families. What in essence developed, were two distinct populations of Mexican-Americans--an "older" and a "younger" population.

The "older" and "younger" Mexican-American populations differed in various significant ways. First, the "older" group was for the most part skilled or semi-skilled, and held factory jobs. The "younger" group for the most part was unskilled. The factory Mexican-American also considered himself "above" the migrant, not only economically, but socially as well. It can readily be drawn that a definite class distinction developed between the two groups.

This class distinction is apparent in several observable ways. First, the "older" Mexican-American considered himself middle class, having attained some measure of economic success through stable factory employment. Also, the "older" population was fast becoming assimilated and acculturated to the American life style.

This is evidenced today by many second and third generation families who in the opinion of some "older" residents, are totally ignorant of the Spanish language and Mexican culture and traditions. In speaking with some of the "older" generation, they at times make reference to "esa gente corriente"--"those common people." They also remark about how vulgar and crude "those people" are because they cannot even speak correct Spanish.

In terms of settlement, the two groups also differ significantly. The factory-employed "older" Mexican-Americans first settled in the northeastern section of Joe's Corner. To the first Mexican-Americans who settled there in the early and mid-1940's, this neighborhood was known as "la colonia," or the "colony." By its very name--"la colonia"--a name which is still used in Mexico to refer to neighborhoods, one can develop some idea of the type of people who settled there.

"La colonia" is better described by Mr. Ortega, the labor recruiter:

A consortium involving the City of Joe's Corner and the C.W.C. and Lakey companies constructed a pre-fab housing project which came to be known as the Ryerson Heights subdivision. According to Ortega, the city-approved housing subdivision had in excess of 300 houses. Through his efforts, half of these came to be occupied by families he recruited in Texas. The subdivision had been assigned to Ortega and another non-Spanish recruiter from Lakey Company. They decided to begin at opposite ends of the subdivision, and fill it up as best they could.

Ortega did not remember if the housing was free or rented to workers. According to Ortega, it was new housing and very adequate--with city services such as lights, water, and sewage.

By contrast, the settled-out migrant population began settling the southeastern section of Joe's Corner in the early 1950's. According to James King, an educator for over 18 years in this particular area of Joe's Corner, "property values never increase, and families often find it difficult to sell their properties and move to a better part of town." King also mentioned that this part of Joe's Corner is also settled by "lower-class whites" from the South. The Mexican-American population of this area refer to it as "el barrio," a term used extensively in Texas and other areas where many Mexican-Americans are found. The term is used to describe a neighborhood or "ghetto."

The visual differences between "la colonia" and "el barrio" are striking. "La colonia" has both old and modern homes, and shows many signs of recent renovation and development, such as businesses, apartment complexes, and parks. Also, all of the streets in "la colonia" are paved.

In sharp contrast to "la colonia," "el barrio" has a rather shabby appearance. Most of the homes found here are old and appear flimsy and in need of repair. There are no signs of development in the area, and many of the streets are unpaved.

The reasons for the differences in the two populations are apparently socio-economic. The "older" population has attained a more stable economic base and some measure of economic success. It could be argued by some that age differences and degree of political involvement may be contributing factors. The investigator found no evidence of this. Still, the significance of these two populations is in their heterogeneity as a community.

General Characteristics

However distinct these two groups are economically, there is a complex set of values and attitudes that is held in common by both. These values and attitudes can best be illustrated through a description of their social and political behaviors, and the alliances built within these two constructs. One of the best means of observing such behavior is the Latin American Club.

The Latin American Club

The Latin American Club is a private social organization founded in 1958 by several leading members of the "older" group of Mexican-Americans. Historically, the club has enjoyed periods of prosperity, when the membership exceeded 300 people. It has also experienced "lean years" when the membership was down to only a couple of board members. Nevertheless, the Latin American Club has taken

the role of private social club, and "sounding board" for politically-inclined members. It would be accurate to say that every community leader of the "older" group of Mexican-Americans is a member of the club. On the other hand, community leaders of the "younger" group are not all members.

At the social level, both groups participate actively in the club, except for the leaders of the "younger" group. On the political level, the leadership of both groups disagree. However, their constituencies, who are almost all club members, are not always constant in terms of whose side they are on. Consequently, the appearance is given that there is always a political feud in progress.

Socially, the membership of the club gathers almost every week at the club for Mexican dances. The Latin American Club also sponsors dinners, children's activities, and other social fund-raising events. It is also the proper forum for the community to celebrate the traditional Mexican holidays such as September 16, and May 5. The Latin American Club is also involved in representing the Mexican-American community when city festivals are celebrated.

The investigator (as a non-voting club member), was present at many of these functions and was able to observe and interact with many club members. The attitudes and

values expressed to the investigator during these periods were extremely important in understanding the residents and leadership of the community.

As previously noted, the Mexican-American population of Joe's Corner is divided by economic class. However, social attitudes and behavior were very consistent in the people observed at the Latin American Club. Among some of the most often mentioned opinions were:

- 1) discrimination against Mexican-Americans did not exist in Joe's Corner,
- 2) educators were "foolish" for attempting to study the community because there was no real concern for the community on their part,
- 3) welfare was wrong, because ultimately they paid for it,
- 4) a strong desire for their children to succeed in school and in life,
- 5) the "Anglo" was not all that bad--it was the Mexicans' fault for being where they are, and,
- 6) a deep pride in being Mexican or Mexican-American, but not Chicano.

These attitudes were expressed mainly by the "older" male population within the club. However, the "younger" male population expressed many of the same beliefs. The only discernible difference between the two groups was that the "younger" group seemed more tolerant and accepting of values which were different than their own. The only expressed belief which several "younger" members disagreed with, was the belief that there was no

discrimination in Joe's Corner. To them discrimination was very much a reality in their everyday lives, but they did not feel that it was a problem they could correct on a mass level. One member summed it up by stating that, "each person has to deal with it in their own way." To the reference of being Mexican versus Chicano, the "younger" members did not feel depreciated by the word as did "older" members.

Political Leaders

Politically there are distinct differences between the Mexican-American leadership. It is the investigator's opinion that the outcome of any political movement by Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner would in all essence be the same. However, different leaders approach the solution to problems in different manners. Before examining the political differences among Mexican-American leaders in Joe's Corner, it should be noted that those most actively involved in Mexican-American politics in Joe's Corner are women. It is hoped that the main reason for this will become apparent in the description of Mexican-American politics.

In Joe's Corner there are several community leaders who represent distinct segments of the community, based largely on whether these segments are "older" or "younger" populations. Without exception, these leaders have risen

to the forefront of community politics through several social service agencies in which they have held jobs. To better understand these leaders and the constituencies which they represent, it is necessary to provide a background profile on three such leaders.

Juanita Rodriguez

Juanita Rodriguez is a 59 year-old member of the "older" Mexican-American population of Joe's Corner. She has been involved in community affairs for over 25 years. She has served the Mexican-American community in several capacities, among which are:

- 1) legal assistant at court hearings involving Mexican-American community members,
- 2) school board member for several years,
- 3) city council member for 8 years,
- 4) former social service agency employee working for agricultural fieldworkers (UMOI),
- 5) board member (and President) to several community agency boards of directors, and,
- 6) employee of Michigan Department of Civil Rights--specialist in Mexican-American affairs.

Through her involvement in community agencies and local-level politics, Rodriguez has gained not only state visibility, but some national recognition as well. Ms. Rodriguez has been awarded numerous citations and awards for community service--both by the Mexican-American and Anglo communities. She has been recognized by other

Mexican-American community leaders and members, as "having the power" in Joe's Corner. The non-Mexican-American community also recognizes her as the spokesperson for the Mexican-American community. Rodriguez's long tenure in the community and her staff position in the Michigan Department of Civil Rights only add clout to her political activities.

Juanita is a native of San Antonio, Texas, and was educated in Mexico. Over the years she has also completed two years of study at a local community college. The twenty-five years which she has spent in Joe's Corner have helped solidify her political constituency better than any other single community leader.

Rodriguez is admired and respected by many Mexican-Americans in the community, yet despised by others. Those who do not regard her very highly are usually members of the "younger" population. She is sometimes radical in her approach to problems, yet sophisticated enough to be extremely diplomatic in seeking her way.

A good example of her diplomacy was when school officials were contemplating the implementation of a bilingual curriculum at a nearby school. Rodriguez privately cursed each administrator's knowledge and incompetence, then flattered them at successive meetings, until the administrators acted as if the original idea for a bilingual program had been theirs alone.

One of Rodriguez's main assets in her political behavior is that she is very astute and can play both sides of an issue extremely well. Due to some of this "fence-straddling," she is consistently on the "winning" side. Other community leaders and members interpret her "straddling" as non-cooperation, and accuse her of using devious means to achieve her goals.

In her many conversations with the investigator, Rodriguez often talked of "retiring," but not before she felt there was someone who could take her place. She consistently spoke of developing younger leadership so that she could "rest." This was interpreted by others as a leadership which she could manipulate and control.

Juanita Rodriguez's ultimate goal of training her successor never materialized. Rodriguez expired of a heart attack in January of 1977. It is the investigator's opinion that the contributions of this woman, however controversial, will be sorely missed by all residents in Joe's Corner.

Jane Garcia

In direct opposition to Rodriguez is Jane Garcia. Garcia is a member of the "younger" population, having only lived in Joe's Corner for ten years. Her leadership has its support base in "el barrio," and is composed almost exclusively of social service or "welfare clients." These

people see Garcia not as an employee of an agency, but rather as a "neighbor who cares." In many conversations with Garcia's supporters, Garcia was seen as a person able to provide services, rather than an employee of an agency providing services.

Garcia does not view herself in this manner. In conversations with the investigator, Garcia seemed to always put the community's interests above her own. This was one of her criticisms of Rodriguez. Garcia felt that Rodriguez was selfish and only wanted the recognition of being a community spokesperson. To the investigator's knowledge, Garcia never received any community awards or overall recognition.

This does not however mean that Garcia was not active or deserving of community recognition. The investigator has personal knowledge that the initial funding for El Centro Latino came about largely due to her efforts. These efforts were not only unrecognized, but credit for El Centro's establishment was taken by Juanita Rodriguez. The investigator never fully understood the negative relationship between these two leaders, but felt that surely the issue over El Centro Latino was at the core.

Jane Garcia is a native of Mission, Texas, where she finished her high school studies. Her subsequent arrival in Joe's Corner was via the migrant stream.

According to survey information, Garcia has been employed as a nutrition aide for six years. Her employer is a county agency.

Garcia's efforts in the community are helped somewhat by her work at a local radio station. Garcia has a one hour show which she devotes to Mexican music and news items in Spanish for the community. The investigator used this medium to explain the survey questionnaire and to deny allegations of collusion with immigration officials.

Despite Garcia's efforts, her base of support is limited to her employer, one or two service agency personnel, and her direct service recipients. She is unknown to the educational administrators and establishment, and to the investigator's knowledge, has never been active in community educational reform. Ms. Garcia's efforts are also diminished by her not being a member of the Latin American Club, since much of the social and political events are tied to the club membership.

Ben Garza

The third community leader is somewhat of an enigma to the community. Ben Garza is in his late 30's and was born and reared in Joe's Corner. Garza is a prime example of the second generation Mexican-American who speaks little Spanish and rarely mixes socially with the Mexican-American community. Garza worked his way up through

union activities at a local factory. He quit his factory job and took a position as a "community organizer" with a religiously-affiliated regional agency. Garza is extremely vague when asked about his job. Consequently, few, if any, community members know what his position or role is in the community.

On several occasions the investigator noted that Garza's political behavior was impulsive and characteristic of "grandstanding." One such incident involved the local school board. The Mexican-American community for some time had been pressuring local school administrators to implement a bilingual program at an elementary school with a sizable Mexican-American population. The negotiations had been long and delicate. Finally, the Mexican-American community had its chance to go before the school board to make its formal request. Garza, who was in the audience at the meeting, rose and told the board of education that if a bilingual program were not implemented immediately, all Mexican-American children would boycott the schools, before the fourth-Friday count could be taken. Garza felt that the Joe's Corner's schools would lose a lot of state funding if Mexican-American students were not included in this enrollment count. Needless to say, his actions enraged many parents, and also stiffened opposition by several board members.

It is difficult to determine Garza's motivation for behavior such as described here. Several agency personnel, however, felt that Garza was trying to establish himself as a bona-fide community leader. It is generally known that he was very close to Juanita Rodriguez; however, he was considered by many to be merely an instrument for her use.

This opinion is not shared totally by the investigator. The investigator does not doubt that Rodriguez would have used him. However, Garza actually held some power of his own. His power did not come from the community, rather it came from his position on the Manpower Advisory Board. This advisory board had a great amount of input to the County Board of Commissioners who in turn decided the financial fate of many social service agencies in Joe's Corner. Garza was the only Mexican-American on this advisory board and thus, was the voice of the Mexican-American community interests. Therefore, the investigator's opinion is that while Garza did not have as much "grass-roots" support as Rodriguez, his powerful position on the advisory board forced other community leaders to take him seriously.*

*After the investigator left Joe's Corner, he learned that Garza had been elected to the County Board of Commissioners.

Political Behavior

It is necessary to understand the relative success or failure of the Mexican-American community's political advancement through the actions of these three leaders, and one other extremely important factor. This factor is the presence of four very influential "older" families, and the control they are able to exert over the community. These families are interrelated by kinship, marriage, and/or "compadrazgo," (Rubel, 1966, pp. 80-83), and are considered influential because of their sheer numbers and length of residence within the community. They are highly respected within the community because of their economic success, but more importantly, for their involvement in most social activities at the Latin American Club. Sometimes it is said that without these families the Latin American Club would collapse.

If any one leader can influence enough of these families to see things his or her way on an issue, then the support which comes with them through the system of "compadrazgo" is usually enough to settle the issue. This support then gives that particular leader the basis for proclaiming "community support." If, however, these families cannot be won over, the political strategy becomes one of caution and compromise.

This is an example of what Rubel (1966), describes as "personalismo." Rubel's analysis of Mexican-American political behavior is that the Mexican-American operates at the "personal level." Rubel points out that Mexican-Americans vote for the person, and not the issues involved. Mexican-Americans' political decisions are therefore based primarily on how well they know the person and values, rather than on what the issues are. (Rubel, 1966, pp. 138-139.)

Both systems of "compadrazgo" and "personalismo" can be seen operating in Joe's Corner's Mexican-American community. However, in the opinion of the investigator, these concepts are too oversimplified by Rubel's analysis. One should not make the assumption that these concepts are simple in nature and accurate predictors of all Mexican-American social and political behavior. On the contrary, these concepts are extremely complex and involve several variables. Among these variables are: 1) the familial responsibilities and obligations which accompany "compadrazgo"; 2) the time and spatial limitations of a particular family member's identification with Mexican-American culture; and, 3) the personal nature of the relationships which many of these families have shared as a result of their common midwestern experiences. In Joe's Corner, Mexican-American social and political behavior is

a manifestation of some or all of these variables operating at times jointly, and at other times independently of each other.

Socio-Economic Conditions

The final segment of this chapter will concern itself with a description of socio-economic conditions among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner. These socio-economic conditions can readily be seen in their housing, income, and employment statistics, as well as those statistics reflecting the need and use of social and public welfare agencies.

Housing

Housing conditions among Mexican-American families in Joe's Corner vary significantly by geographical location and economic resources. In other ways however, the data reflects no significant differences from location to location. Of the 364 completed interviewes, 359 contained usable housing information. It is from these 359 interviews which the information contained in Tables 1, 2, and 3 is obtained.

It is readily seen that Zones V and VI are less populous than Zones I through IV. These two zones represent rural communities, and cannot be considered as accurate indicators of housing conditions among all

Table 1
PROPERTY-RESIDENT STATUS

Zone	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
# of Households	164	62	41	60	18	14	359
# Who Own Homes	32	12	7	13	10	6	80
% Who Own Homes	19.5	19.3	17.0	21.6	55.5	42.8	22.3
# Who Are Buying	58	24	17	21	5	4	129
% Who Are Buying	35.3	38.7	41.4	35.0	27.7	28.5	35.9
# Who Rent	73	26	14	26	2	3	144
% Who Rent	44.5	41.9	34.1	43.3	11.1	21.4	40.1
# Unknown Households	1	0	3	0	1	1	6

Table 2
HOUSING AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Zone	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
# Households	164	62	41	60	18	14	359
# People	637	299	157	274	82	56	1,505
Avg. # People Per Household	3.8	4.8	3.8	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.2
Avg. # Rooms Per Household	5.3	6.2	5.6	4.9	5.3	4.9	5.4
Avg. # Rooms Per Person	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3
Avg. # Bathrooms Per Household	1.1	1.4	1.1	1.1	Unknown	1.0	1.2
% Indicating Home as Inadequate	18.2	22.6	12.2	21.6	11.1	28.5	18.9
% Indicating Home as Adequate	78.6	77.4	80.4	78.3	83.3	64.2	78.3
% Home-owners without Home Insurance	3.3	2.7	0.0	5.8	6.6	30.0	4.7
% Home-owners with Home Insurance	91.1	91.6	100.0	94.1	93.3	70.0	91.8
% Households with Insurance on Furnishings	54.2	54.8	70.7	56.6	83.3	57.1	58.2
% Households without Insurance on Furnishings	28.0	27.4	17.0	36.6	5.5	28.5	27.0

Table 3

ESTIMATED VALUE OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN HOMES

	Zone						Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	
Average Home Value	\$15,309	\$15,872	\$17,225	\$12,021	\$16,714	\$18,071	\$15,868
# Above Average	33	14	6	14	6	3	68
# Below Average	44	15	14	18	8	4	111
# of Respondents	77	29	20	32	14	7	179
							46

Mexican-Americans residing within the county of Joe's Corner. The vast majority of Mexican-Americans reside within the city limits of Joe's Corner, or very close to them. However, it was felt that the statistics concerning the rural zones should be included in order to provide a greater amount of information.

Before attempting to analyze the information from Tables 1, 2, and 3, it is necessary to provide some physical description of each of these zones. Zone IV was described earlier in Chapter II, as "el barrio" of the Mexican-American community. It is this neighborhood which is considered by many to be sub-standard. The Joe's Corner Metropolitan Planning Commission made a study of this particular neighborhood in July of 1971. The following is a description of the existing conditions within this "barrio", according to that study.

The emerging picture of the East Broadway Study Area is one of a neighborhood that "just grew", with no planning, and few services or facilities. It is a deteriorating area, but it differs from the average old deteriorating neighborhood in that its original condition was marginal, its houses small and its amenities few. Its residents, many of whom belong to minority groups, have incomes below the City's average and own homes whose values are considerably lower than the average.

The mixed land use pattern in the area, as well as a deficient street system, have created a marginal overall living environment. The lack of utilities service has placed an additional constraint on the area resident and has effectively curtailed significant new development.

The lack of residential amenities includes the scarcity of developed open space and the almost total lack of community facilities, such as convenience commercial and recreational or neighborhood centers. These environmental assets which do exist have been ignored as developmental foci.

For the above reasons, as well as through general depreciation, the area's housing stock has deteriorated significantly. A detailed survey of the area's housing could result in a percentage of deficient (deteriorating and delapidated) structures far exceeding the original estimates of approximately 16 per cent. It appears likely that this figure could reach 50 per cent. These figures would indicate a very serious need for prompt remedial action. (East Broadway Area--Neighborhood Study, Joe's Corner Metropolitan Plannign Commission, July 1971, pp. 20-21.)

It is apparent to the casual observer that living conditions in Zone IV have not changed in any significant manner in the elapsed five years since the study was conducted. The study mentions "minorities" as the principal residents of Zone IV. These "minorities" which the study mentions are almost exclusively Mexican-Americans.

Zone I was also described in Chapter II, but only in part. Zone I contains that part of town known as "la colonia" to some Mexican-Americans. However, Zone I also contains a great part of the downtown and inner-city area. Many of the homes found here are older and have been divided to form low-rent apartments. This zone is also the largest of all zones studied, and contains a great many beautiful homes within it. There are significant differences in socio-economic conditions within this zone alone. However, most Mexican-Americans reside either in the

downtown area or in "la colonia" of this zone. While "la colonia" does not compare in terms of poverty conditions with Zone IV, the downtown area is certainly very similar to Zone IV in terms of poor living conditions.

The reasons for the similarities between these two areas appear to be the general deteriorating conditions of these older parts of town, and the inability of its residents to upgrade their neighborhoods, because of a lack of financial resources. Although the city is undergoing an extensive urban-renewal project, it is limited to the business district and little of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. In essence, it appears that Joe's Corner will someday have an ultra-modern business district, surrounded by a poverty-stricken racially integrated ghetto area.

Zones II and III on the other hand, are very different from Zones I and IV. These are the more "affluent" areas of Joe's Corner. Although both zones take in a small section of the downtown area, both extend far into the suburbs and offer much more open space, which has been developed for commercial interests and also recreational facilities. Both zones border on "resort" lakes and have many lakeshore homes and cottages. Both zones also border on one of the area's only country clubs. It is in these two zones that many professionals and white collar workers

reside. Some Mexican-American families also live in these areas.

It is obvious, however, that living conditions are much poorer in Zones I and IV, particularly the latter. This is evidenced by the data from Tables 1, 2, and 3. Of particular interest is the data in Table 2, showing a total of 78.3% of all respondents who felt that their homes were "adequate or satisfactory." This is despite the fact that many of these residents appear to be over-crowded. The average number of rooms per person does not rise above 1.4, and this is in one of the more "affluent" zones. In Zone IV, the average number of rooms per person is 1.1. As an entire population (all six zones), the average number of rooms per person is merely 1.3. Also from Table 2, it is observed that families who rent are less likely to have insurance on their homes or furnishings.

Table 3 also shows that Zone IV is the poorest zone in terms of property values. This agrees with information provided by community leaders, educators, and the neighborhood study previously cited. Both community leaders and educators cite these low property values as evidence of poverty, a lack of community growth, and educational problems within the schools. However, close inspection of the data suggests that all zones are depressed in terms of property value among Mexican-American households. The

average home value for all Mexican-American homes in the entire county is only \$15,868. Also, out of a total of 179 homes, 111 are below the average value. This is almost twice the number of those which are above the average value. In Zone IV, the difference between the number of homes above and below the zone average is very small. Therefore, one can make the assumption that most Mexican-American homes in Zone IV have low property values.

Income, Employment and Welfare

More insight and understanding may be gained by examining other relevant data concerning the socio-economic conditions of Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner. The following four tables show the income, employment, and welfare data obtained from the Mexican-American community.

As can be seen from Table 4, the income level for Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner is quite low. More than one-third of the Mexican-American population earns \$5,900 or less per year. Also, more than one-half of the population earns \$7,900 or less per year. These figures represent the combined incomes of all family members. It should be of special interest to note that 29.7% of all adult Mexican-American females were employed at this time.

These income levels are not surprising when one observes the data on Tables 5 and 6. Unemployment among Mexican-American heads of household in Joe's Corner is

Table 4

INCOME AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICANS IN JOE'S CORNER

	Zone					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
# of Respondents	152	56	36	61	15	14
\$5,900 or less	56 (36.8%)	13 (23.2%)	15 (41.6%)	24 (39.3%)	2 (13.3%)	5 (35.7%)
\$6,000-7,900	27 (17.7%)	17 (30.3%)	3 (8.3%)	8 (13.1%)	3 (20.0%)	2 (14.3%)
\$8,000-10,000	19 (12.5%)	7 (12.5%)	5 (13.8%)	11 (18.0%)	1 (6.6%)	4 (28.5%)
Above \$10,000	50 (32.9%)	19 (33.9%)	13 (36.1%)	18 (29.5%)	9 (60.0%)	3 (21.4%)

Table 5

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN
MALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD
(Urban Zones Only)

Zone	# Employable	# Employed	# Unemployed	% Employed	% Unemployed
I	116	89	27	76.72	23.28
II	43	33	10	76.74	23.26
III	32	23	9	71.86	28.14
IV	47	30	17	63.83	36.17
Totals	238	175	63	73.50	26.50

Table 6

MEXICAN-AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING
PUBLIC SERVICES IN JOE'S CORNER

Zone	# Reporting	# Unknown	# Receiving	% Receiving Aid
I	160	5	105	65.6%
II	62	0	34	54.8%
III	40	2	23	57.5%
IV	61	0	43	70.5%
V	19	0	5	26.3%
VI	14	1	6	42.8%
Totals	356	8	216	60.6%

extremely high. According to sources within the Employment Security Commission, the overall unemployment rate for the County of Joe's Corner reached a recession-level peak at approximately 18.0%. During this same period, however, (1975), Mexican-American male heads of household experienced a total unemployment rate of 26.5%. The data also indicates that Zone IV was higher than any other sector in terms of unemployment. Zone IV shows an unemployment rate of 36.17% for the period April to September of 1975.

Table 4 indicates that during the previous two years, 60.6% of all Mexican-American households in Joe's Corner received at least one form of assistance through a social service agency. More specifically, Zone IV ("el barrio"), was very high in terms of services received. Of the 61 Mexican-American families interviewed in Zone IV, 43 had received services in the previous two years. The most frequently used services or aid received were:

- 1) food stamps . . . 24.4% of all households
- 2) unemployment compensation . . . 16.8% of all households
- 3) aid to dependent children (ADC) . . . 15.7% of all households
- 4) social security . . . 13.5% of all households

Table 7 shows the types of social services and welfare services received by Mexican-American households in Joe's Corner. Although these figures appear to be

Table 7

TYPES OF SERVICES AND WELFARE RECEIVED BY
MEXICAN-AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS IN JOE'S CORNER
(Urban Zones Only)

Type of Service	Zone I	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV
Food Stamps	40 25.0%	13 20.9%	8 20.0%	21 34.4%
Aid to Dependent Children	26 16.2%	12 19.4%	3 7.5%	11 18.0%
Social Security	24 15.0%	8 12.9%	3 7.5%	10 16.4%
Vocational Education	19 11.8%	7 11.3%	2 5.0%	6 9.8%
Direct Aid	6 3.7%	1 1.6%	0 0	1 1.6%
Unemployment Compensation	33 8.1%	9 1.6%	8 2.5%	9 8.2%
Nutrition Services	3 1.8%	1 1.6%	0 0	1 1.6%
Health Services	17 10.6%	6 9.7%	3 7.5%	10 16.4%
Counseling	8 5.0%	1 1.6%	2 5.0%	0 0
Special Education	6 3.7%	3 4.8%	0 0	2 3.3%
Adoption Services	2 1.2%	0 0	1 2.5%	0 0
Family Planning Services	14 8.7%	4 6.4%	1 2.5%	4 6.5%

Table 7 (continued)

Type of Service	Zone I	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV
Adoption	2	0	1	0
Services	1.2%	0	2.5%	0
Family Planning	14	4	1	4
Services	8.7%	6.4%	2.5%	6.5%

relatively high, according to the Director of the Department of Social Services for the County of Joe's Corner, Mexican-Americans comprise only 3% of their total recipients. One must then assume that in general, there are many persons receiving social and welfare services besides the Mexican-American population. These statistics will become even more important in Chapter III, where the need and use of social service and welfare agencies will be more critically examined.

Closing Statements

In summary, one can see that Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner are heterogeneous in social and economic class, as well as social and political behavior. The Mexican-American community has in general, had a long history in Joe's Corner. Consequently, the attitudes and values held by community residents have been shaped not only by the Mexican-American culture, but also by the collective and individual experiences of the Mexican-American in the midwest--and in this particular case, Joe's Corner, Michigan. To assume that everything about the Mexican-American in the midwest can be learned through a single semi-vicarious experience, would be erroneous.

Chapter III

SOCIAL AND PUBLIC WELFARE SERVICES

Social and public welfare agencies in Joe's Corner are numerous. According to information supplied by the United Way county office, there are 115 agencies which provide services within the county. These agencies represent approximately 55 areas of services, ranging from child abuse and community health, to legal and educational services. According to its Executive Director, the United Way, in varying degrees, lends financial support to 43 of these agencies.

For the investigator, it was a physical impossibility to research each of these agencies. However, an effort was made at researching agencies representative of the scope and nature of social and public welfare services available to the residents of Joe's Corner. The categories of agencies which were researched were:

- 1) education,
- 2) employment,
- 3) family services,
- 4) financial assistance,

- 5) medical and health care, and,
- 6) legal services.

The following is a listing of the specific agencies contacted under each category and a brief description of the types of services that particular agency has available.

1) Education

- a. Adult Education Program. This program offers a variety of courses which adults can take. The basic thrust of the program is aimed at helping adults obtain a high school diploma, or G.E.D. equivalency.
- b. Alcoholism Information Center. This agency concerns itself with the individual and familial problems of alcoholics. It provides information about how a family can help the alcoholic, as well as referring alcoholics to treatment centers.
- c. The Skills Training Center. The role of the Skills Training Center is to provide job training for persons meeting federal poverty guidelines. Students are paid a stipend for attending classes.

2) Employment

- a. Department of Human Resources. This is a county agency which makes referrals to industry and business, aiding them with their manpower needs.
- b. Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. This agency is aimed at providing job skills to persons who are mentally or physically handicapped.
- c. Employment Security Commission. This state agency is aimed at assisting people in locating employment. It also makes referrals to job or skill training centers.
- d. The Urban League. This agency is aimed at placing people in job training programs in

industry and business, as well as job and skill training centers.

- e. Community Action Against Poverty. This agency sets up neighborhood centers aimed at job or welfare referrals.

3) Family Services

- a. Catholic Social Services. This is a referral agency. It makes a needs assessment on families and individuals, then refers them to the proper agency.
- b. Child and Family Services. The goals of this agency are to help those in need of adoption, counseling, or juvenile court assistance.
- c. The Children's Home. This agency places children in foster homes, arranges adoptions, counsels families with problems, and conducts family planning and pregnancy clinics.
- d. Planned Parenthood, Inc. This agency is aimed at helping people with family planning.
- e. Family Planning Program. Aimed at family planning, this agency also conducts pregnancy tests, venereal disease screening, and abortion counseling.
- f. County Health Department. This agency concerns itself with a wide range of services, including preventative medicine, drug abuse programs, inoculations, and water sanitation.
- g. Department of Social Services. This agency also provides wide-ranging services including direct financial assistance, aid to dependent children, juvenile custody, food stamps, and home visits. This agency is also in charge of medicaid services.

4) Financial Assistance

- a. Social Security Administration. This federal agency disburses social security funds, and social security benefits to qualified dependents.

b. The Urban League (See above).

5) Medical and Health Care

a. Visiting Nurses Association. This agency provides nursing services to mainly the bedridden elderly.

b. West Shore Mental Health Clinic. This agency is not totally free. It provides individual psychiatric treatment and family counseling.

c. Department of Social Services (See above).

6) Legal Services

a. Legal Aid Bureau, Inc. This agency provides legal services for clients who cannot afford to hire their own attorneys.

As can be easily seen, several of these agencies serve multiple functions in the community. Also, inherent in many of these agencies are numerous sources of funding, including federal, state and county monies. Some of these agencies also receive private donations and may also charge a fee for services rendered.

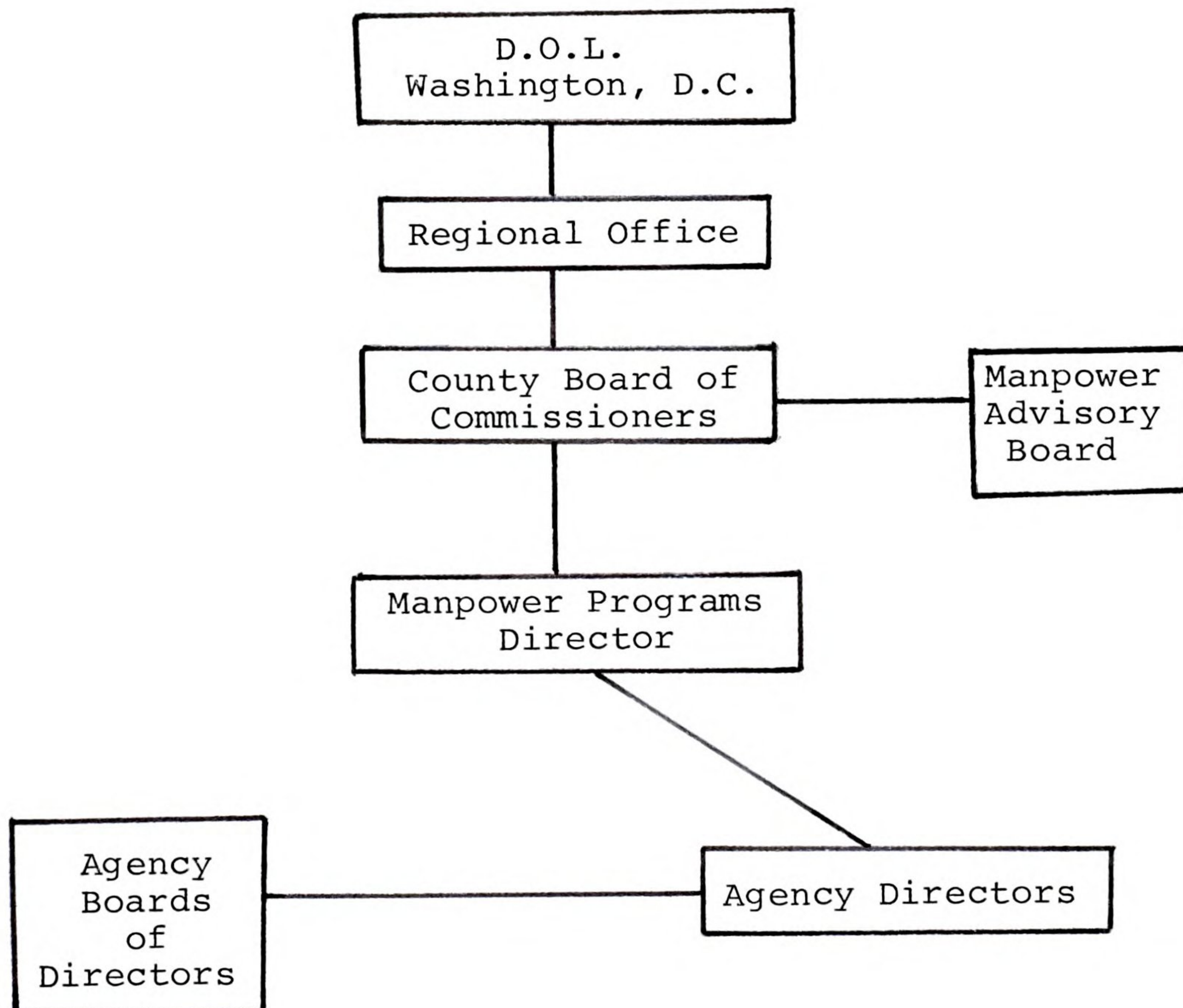
Structure of Agencies

These are but a few of the many agencies found in Joe's Corner. There also exist separate agencies which are funded through federal manpower programs. The bulk of these agencies are aimed at combating poverty by providing job training for people meeting the federal poverty guidelines. Some manpower programs are aimed at problems faced by women, ex-offenders, and other "special-interest" groups. All of these agencies are governed by boards of directors,

composed of a wide spectrum of the community. These boards are usually representative of most minority groups, business, law, religion, industry, and others from the community. The director of each agency is responsible to the Manpower Programs Director within the county political structure. The Manpower Director is directly responsible to the County Board of Commissioners and a regional Manpower office in Chicago. The regional office is in turn responsible directly to federal officials in Washington, D.C.

However, at the county level, there is a powerful advisory body to the county commissioners. This is called the Manpower Advisory Board (See reference in Chapter II). This board is usually composed of community leaders with a great amount of county-level political experience. This board is powerful because it can approve or disapprove any agency proposal, including their budgets. The following is a schematic drawing of the Manpower Program structure in Joe's Corner.

Figure 2
Manpower Agency Structure



It is important that one understand the significance of these Manpower agencies in direct reference to the Mexican-American community. The agencies are supposedly there to create employment opportunities and up-grade the standard of living within the community. From a political viewpoint, it makes agencies look good in the eyes of the community when they claim to be helping people. It appears, however, that helping people is not the only goal of these agencies. Once these agencies are initiated, high priority is given to agency survival. Much time is thus spent on creating a rationale for the agency's continued existence. The work of creating this rationale does not always coincide with the needs of the community. Instead, it helps to keep the agency staff employed.

The outward appearances given by most agencies are all usually very positive. However, there is ample proof to show that many of these agencies are misrepresenting or not meeting their stated objectives, and are, in their present form, of little value to the Mexican-American community. This is evidenced by several factors. Among them are:

- 1) a general lack of understanding for Mexican-Americans,
- 2) stereotyped images of the Mexican-Americans,
- 3) a lack of affirmative action hiring policies towards Mexican-Americans, and,

- 4) an overall lack of commitment by local funding sources to aid the Mexican-American community.

This last point must be elaborated upon in order for it to be correctly understood and interpreted. This lack of commitment on the part of local funding sources means that too often "soft money" is used in the hiring of many Mexican-Americans within local agencies. When these federal "soft money" funds expire, the county does not revert to making room within its own budget in order to keep these people employed. Consequently, some people are hired, then laid off due to a lack of funds. Some of these people begin drawing unemployment benefits, while others are rehired under a different "soft money" program. The major consequence of this action is that some people are forced to leap from job to job, without ever acquiring any sense of security or employment fringe benefits.

This approach to employing Mexican-Americans within the community is within itself self-defeating, and greatly resembles tokenism. Mexican-Americans who have had these types of work experiences are never made to feel as if they are a part of the system, like other employees around them. Instead, they are made to feel, at best, "marginal". They are constantly worried with whether or not the program will be refunded. "Will I have a job tomorrow?"

These workers many times lose a great amount of credibility within the Mexican-American community because

of the instability associated with their positions. Several community members who are recipients of services have expressed doubts about the worker's ability to function properly within the community. As one lady said, "one day they're here, and the next day they are somewhere else. You can't count on anyone." She was referring to a person switching jobs so often.

To better understand all of these points, and to try and get a clear idea of agencies and their structure and functions, it is necessary to take an in-depth look at several of them, representative of the agency structure in Joe's Corner. These agencies, with the exception of El Centro Latino, are all experienced agencies, and have been a part of the community since at least 1965. Through an examination of this type, one can begin to understand their failures and successes relative to the Mexican-American population.

Among the agencies charged with providing services to the community, are the Skills Training Center (STC), the Family Planning Project (FPP), the Employment Security Commission (ESC) and El Centro Latino. These agencies are combinations of local, state and federal programs and are representative of education, health, employment and referral service agencies.

Skills Training Center

The Skills Training Center was begun in June of 1965, as the result of some "go-getters" in the local school district, who wanted to deal with the "drop-out" problem. "Go-getters" is the term used by the Program Manager of the STC. She was referring to a group of Joe's Corner educators who saw the opportunity to attract federal funds and did so. According to the Program Manager of the Skills Training Center, "nobody in Joe's Corner wanted to admit that there was a drop-out problem." Funds were allocated for the center through the Manpower Act of 1962. The funds were both federal and state, and were given to the Joe's Corner Board of Education, through which the center is operated.

All students at the Skills Training Center receive stipends for attending. These are based on the number of dependents a student has, and also their attendance record, since students lose wages when they are late or absent. According to the Program Manager of the STC, most students average approximately \$60.00 per week.

The real goal or objective of the STC is to get people ready for employment. This preparation includes the attainment of an employable skill, a "good" attitude, "good" attendance, and a sense of responsibility for themselves and their equipment. These goals are achieved

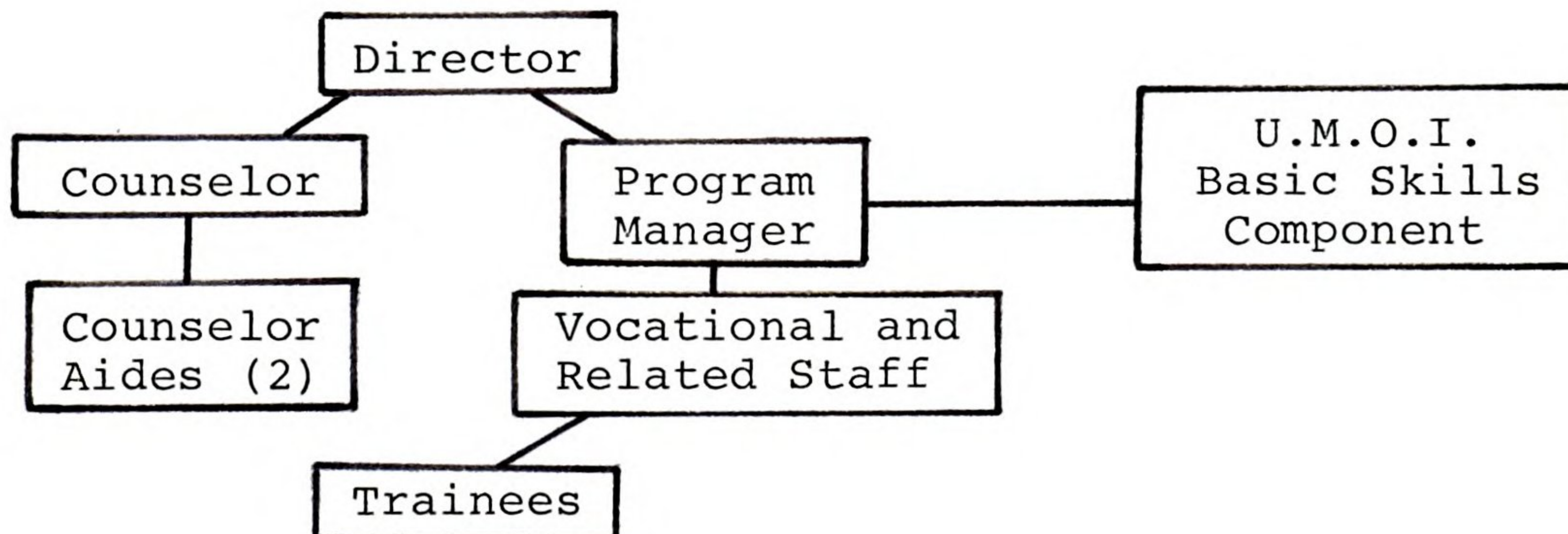
through various classes such as group counseling, attitude classes, and their skills classes. In addition to these classes, there are classes in related instruction such as math and English. The skills offered at the STC are:

1. Production Machine Repairman,
2. Welder,
3. Auto Body Repairman,
4. Clerical,
5. Accounting Clerk,
6. Farm and Power Equipment Repair,
7. House Repair and Maintenance, and,
8. Auto Mechanic.

A schematic organizational chart for the Skills Training Center is as follows:

Figure 3

Organizational Structure of the
Skills Training Center



The Director is responsible to the Board of Education, with all other staff directly responsible to him or the program manager. There are 27 staff members mainly from industry, who are paid through the school district. In addition to these staff members, there are other agencies which provide staff people to the Skills Center. Of particular importance are the staff provided by the Employment Security Commission and the United Migrants for Opportunity, Inc.

It is important to understand why components of these two agencies are located at the Skills Training Center. First, the ESC has at least one counselor assigned there because the ESC sets the guidelines for the acceptance of trainees into the training programs, and each applicant is a direct referral of the employment office. According to John Mitchell, Director of the ESC, the guidelines for accepting trainees into the STC are that at least 65% of all trainees must be poor, disadvantaged, and any one of the following.

1. disabled,
2. a minority,
3. over age 45,
4. under age 22, or,
5. a high school drop-out.

The other agency which houses a staff at the STC is the United Migrants for Opportunity, Inc. (UMOI). The UMOI connection to the STC differs from other agencies

because the UMOI component is a self-contained program aimed mainly at the migrant population of the county. The UMOI in essence "buys" into the STC facilities using its own funds. The UMOI pays for each student it admits, although each student must meet the ESC guidelines. The basic component of the UMOI office within the STC is charged with teaching basic English reading and writing skills. The idea is that once a trainee completes the basic education course, he is then admitted to one of the skill components. This concept appears to be sound, however, in reality, it is extremely impractical.

It is impractical from the viewpoint of the migrant. First, he is put into a Basic Education class for 6 months, then transferred to a "skills" class for an additional 4 to 6 months. Since most of these students are married and have families, it is very difficult for them to exist financially on the \$60.00 to \$85.00 per week stipend. The majority of these students seek out the STC only as a last resort. If they are unable to find secure employment elsewhere, then they apply at the STC. It is known by students and agency personnel alike, that many students are there "only for the money." "A married man with a family to support can hardly be expected to remain a student for about a year, at such a low level of subsistence," remarked one agency staff person.

Being that Anglo and Black students do not have the communication problem experienced by some Mexican-American students, it is easily conceivable how they can in essence "afford" to enter the STC for \$85.00 per week. They will only be there at most for 6 months, and usually less. Mexican-American trainees, however, have to spend double time, for the same results--a salable skill. According to the Program Manager, this may perhaps be a reason why the UMOI and Skills Training Center have such a difficult time retaining Mexican-American students until graduation.

According to the UMOI Basic Skills teacher, since the UMOI component of the STC is not paid for by the school district, the STC supervisory personnel does not really show much concern for it. Several times within the past year, the STC Director and Program Manager showed scorn for the UMOI Basic Education Program. Once, the STC fired a Mexican-American instructor and replaced her with an Anglo "certified" teacher. The only problem with that, according to several students, was that the new teacher could not speak Spanish very well. When the students objected to the hiring of the new teacher, they were told they would lose their classroom facilities, and therefore, their paychecks.

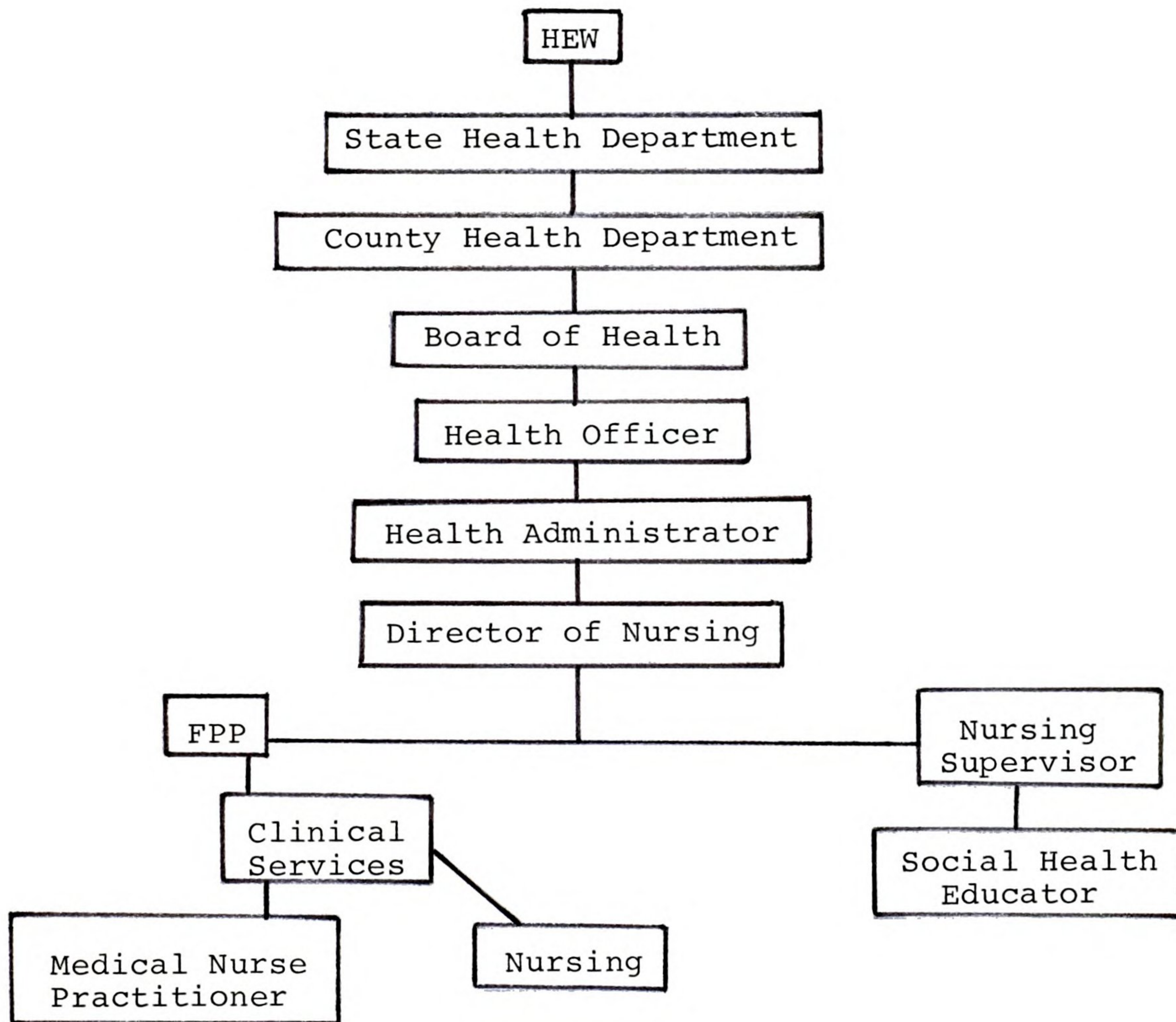
It should be pointed out that although the STC houses the UMOI staff, it does not pay their salaries. There are no Mexican-Americans on the paid staff of the STC.

This issue has been regularly raised by several community leaders. However, the STC has never responded in any positive way to the community. Community leaders also tried to get the STC to enroll more Mexican-American students into their skill components. The response, according to those leaders, has always been minimal.

Family Planning Project

One of the more traditional agencies operating in Joe's Corner is the Family Planning Project (FPP) operating through the auspices of the County Health Department. This program is totally funded by federal monies provided to the state by the Health, Education and Welfare Department (HEW). The state then distributes this money to the local level. The organization of the FPP is as follows:

Figure 4
Organizational Structure of the
Family Planning Project



According to the nursing supervisor, the overall goal of the FPP is "to reach all of the patients." Also, the FPP has, as a goal, to service all low-income patients who could not get these services through a doctor. The supervisor added that nobody was ever refused services because of income level and also that all services and supplies were free. The types of services provided by the FPP are as follows:

1. Lab testing--venereal disease, blood, etc.
2. Pregnancy testing.
3. Teen Services--Anyone under 18 years of age who goes to the clinic must see a counselor. Upon interviewing the patient, the counselor makes the determination if they are sexually active, and sees that they receive the proper services and supplies.
4. Counseling--This is actually done during all phases of patient care. The FPP counsels all patients as to pregnancy, methods of birth control, venereal disease, abortions, etc.
5. Pre-marital Counseling--This is available before marriage and also includes pre-marital testing of females if desired.
6. Sterilization--Sterilization is available for both sexes. Vasectomies are performed at the clinic, while females are usually referred to a doctor.
7. Infertility Counseling--The clinic provides the basic medical screening for patients unable to have children. These patients are usually referred to a doctor.

There is another phase of the FPP which tries to involve the community. This is the clinic's outreach

phase. This facet of the program has 3 girls who visit communities and well-baby clinics, and inform people as to the free services provided by the FPP. According to the supervisor, "one of these 3 girls was a Mexican-American, but she is no longer with us."

The nursing supervisor added that the FPP had an advisory board which was composed of "agency people" and patients. She said the role of the board was to provide input to the program, as well as advise and evaluate the program. The following statistics were also provided by the nursing supervisor:

1. From January 1973 to August 1973, there were 6,816 patients seen.
2. Of these patients, 49% had less than 12 years of education, and 46% of those 18 and 19 years of age had completed 12 years of education.
3. From January 1973 to August 1973:
 - a. 5% of all patients earned \$1,000 or less,
 - b. 9% of all patients earned \$1,000-\$1,999,
 - c. 19% of all patients earned \$2,000-\$2,999,
 - d. 17% of all patients earned \$3,000-\$3,999,
 - e. 1.5% of all patients earned over \$10,000 per year.
4. 57% of all patients were never married.
5. 33% of all patients were presently married.
6. 4% of all patients were divorced.
7. 5% of all patients were separated from their spouses.

From all outward appearances it would appear that the Family Planning Project was attempting to deliver some

vital services to the general community. Seeing as how they had served so many people within the eight months specified, the investigator inquired specifically about the services provided within the Mexican-American community. Although the supervisor was at a loss for statistics, she was able to provide some information.

In direct reference to Mexican-Americans, the supervisor said that the FPP had encountered their own share of problems, especially with the older people. She said birth control among Mexican-Americans was a problem because of the influence of religion or church. She also expressed the attitude that some Mexican-American husbands refused to allow their wives to take the pill (birth control pill). She added that a vasectomy for a "Chicano", was "almost out of the question due to their cultural upbringing and personal pride." She did say that "younger kids" were more accepting of the program's efforts.

From the outward appearances during the interview, the investigator got the distinct impression that this agency was lacking in its total understanding of Mexican-Americans within Joe's Corner. The overall approach of the FPP appeared to lack tact and sensitivity towards Mexican-Americans in general. Although the investigator was not aware of the Nursing Director's information sources, it was assumed that these attitudes towards Mexican-Americans



came from personal clinic contact.

This lack of understanding can best be exemplified by 1) what the investigator observed at the clinic; 2) what agency people said in relation to Mexican-Americans; and 3) what several community people had to say to the investigator, concerning the FPP. The following are three examples of each of the aforementioned sources.

Example 1: Investigator's Observation

Upon entering the receiving office of the FPP, I noticed an extremely large wall display of birth control methods. This display was in full view of all patients as they waited to be helped by different staff members. Of particular interest to the investigator, was an over-enlarged prophylactic on display. The investigator felt uncomfortable and slightly embarrassed by the over-enlarged condom. It was difficult not to feel that others (non-Mexican-Americans included) could also be easily embarrassed by this particular display.

Example 2: FPP Staff Member's Observations

While interviewing the nursing supervisor, the investigator was introduced to a male nurse within the program. The following is a summary of that encounter, complete with direct quotes:

He began telling me that venereal disease (VD), was a major problem and that with regards to Mexican-Americans, even more so. He explained that they (FPP), did have a language barrier with some of the Mexican-Americans and were sometimes hardpressed to find interpreters. He added that problems with Mexican-Americans also increase because of the personal nature of VD. "Many times we can treat the male Mexican-American, but it is difficult to find out anything about his wife or girlfriends. They simply will not talk about who they are or anything. We understand that this is all a very cultural thing."

He continued by saying, "the VD problem is even

more acute among migrants."* I asked him why it was more acute. He simply said that because they migrated so much--that was the real problem in terms of VD. "It's because they all have prostitutes on the side. Living in Texas near the border makes it very easy for them. Mexico is bad news when it comes to VD. I know that it's a cultural thing, and it is acceptable to them and their women, but it really poses a serious problem for us."

Example 3: Service Recipients

In speaking with several young adults, the investigator became engaged in a casual conversation with a girl I shall call Sara. Sara is a 21 year old high school drop-out, who comes from a family of 16, including her parents. Sara has an illegitimate child, 3 years of age. I asked if she had ever considered birth control. She stated that both she and her mother had attended some night classes in birth control sponsored through the FPP. She said that the explicit movies and explanations given by "male" speakers had very much embarrassed her mother and her. She said that she and her mother decided not to return to the classes.

It is the investigator's opinion that although the FPP may be trying to provide a valuable service to the community at large, it is failing in its efforts within the Mexican-American community. This opinion is supported by statistics in Table 7, showing that very few Mexican-Americans have received any type of family planning services. Furthermore, the attitudes expressed by the FPP staff and also their educational approach seems to leave much to be desired.

*Note: From all indications of collected data, there are relatively few migrants in this particular county.

The FPP staff was correct in only one thing concerning Mexican-Americans, and that is that sex is of a very personal nature to them. Sex however, is personal to many people, ethnicity notwithstanding. With this in mind, programs could be developed to facilitate their effectiveness in the Mexican-American community. Another consideration which the FPP should take into account is their lack of Mexican-American professional staff. Hiring someone to interpret is fine, however, the bulk of the Mexican-American community will not be reached unless they have people they can feel secure with. Obviously, from the attitudes and misconceptions expressed, the FPP has no one who is qualified to do this.

Employment Security Commission

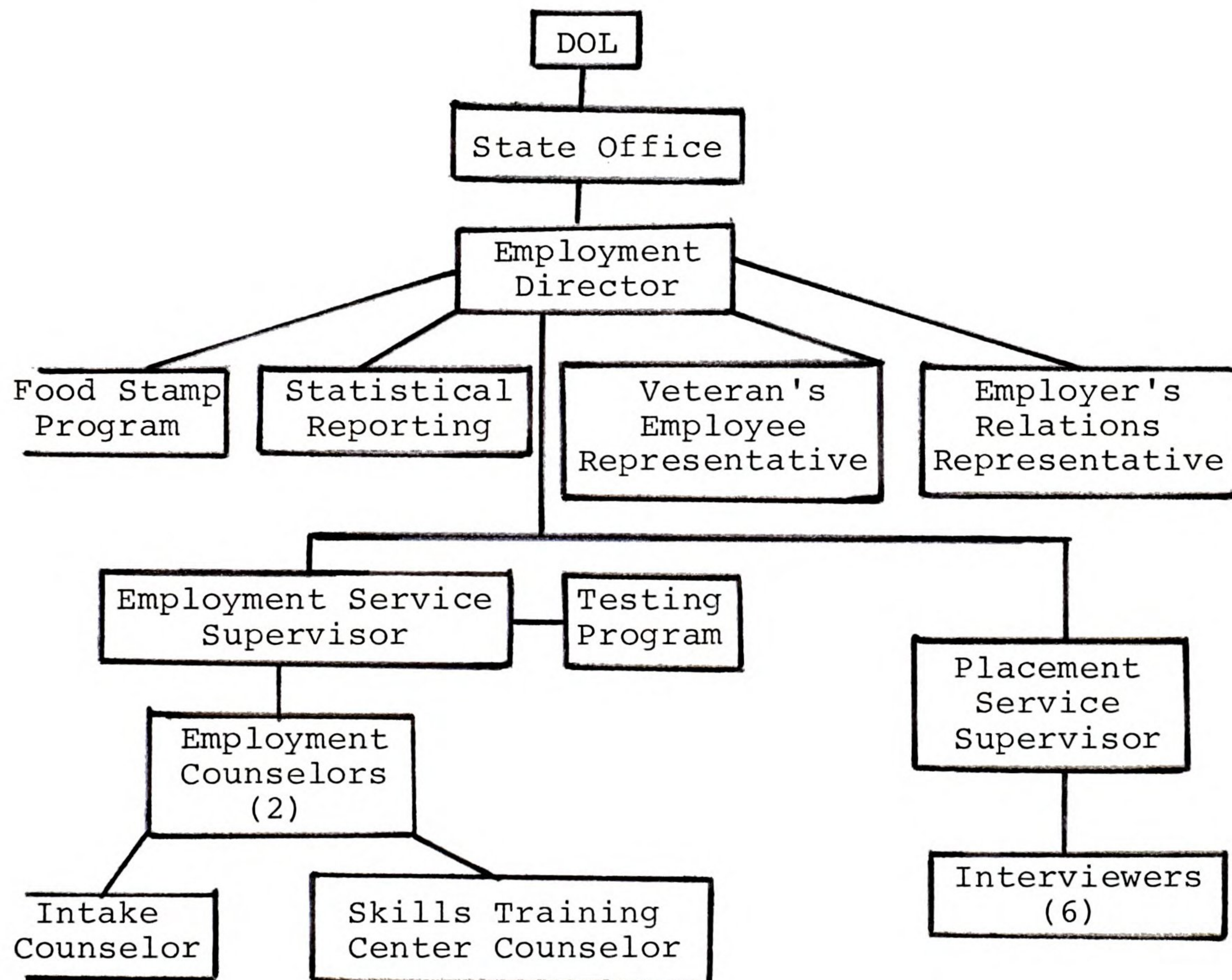
Another vital entity of any community is the employment center. Given the status of today's job market, it is necessary to take an in-depth look at how the employment office is structured. In this manner, one can better understand its relationship to the community, and how it tries to meet the specific needs of that particular community.

The Employment Security Commission of Joe's Corner is composed of three basic programs: employment, unemployment, and the Work Incentive Program (WIN). The emphasis being on employment per se, the investigator only

researched the employment aspects of the agency. However, to clarify the distinctions between the three programs, it is necessary to say that the WIN Program is a stipended program geared to providing monetary incentives to people trying to learn basic job skills. The Unemployment Program is where people register for, and upon qualifying, receive unemployment benefits.

The Employment Office, however, is charged with finding jobs for people. According to John Mitchell, Director of the Employment Security Commission, the goal or objective of the ESC is to "help employers get workers, help workers get jobs, and to help people get jobs." In order to understand how the ESC tries to perform its duties, it is necessary to view a schematic of its organizational structure.

Figure 5

Organizational Structure of the
Employment Security Commission

When a person seeking employment first arrives at the ESC, he is met by an intake clerk who asks that the client fill out an application for employment. The intake clerk also registers the applicant (client) with the ESC. After this preliminary task is completed, the client is referred to an intake counselor. This counselor is responsible for interviewing the client in order to ascertain any specific job skills the client may possess, and also, what type of job he is seeking.

The client is then referred to the employment counselor who also interviews him and may also test the client. Based on the interviews and the test results, the employment counselor makes a determination as to the client's "job-readiness". Mitchell described "job-readiness" as the client's ability to perform on a job, by skill, as well as emotionally and psychologically. If the client is judged "job-ready", then he is referred to the placement services, where the client and a counselor try to match available jobs to the client's skills. This part of the job-seeking process is almost entirely left up to the client. The placement services interviewer merely assists in showing the client how to look through the job description files. However, if the client is judged to not be "job-ready" for any reason, then the employment counselor has the responsibility to counsel and refer the client to

the proper "educational agency" in order to prepare him. One such agency used for referral is the Skills Training Center. It is only after a client is deemed "job-ready", that he is allowed to search the job files.

The job files of the ESC are kept in what Mitchell referred to as a Job Bank. This is a computerized system for listing jobs state-wide. Mitchell also noted that the Job Bank was expanding to a nation-wide computerized system. According to Mitchell, this would enable the ESC to place people in jobs which were out of town as well as out of state. Mitchell then listed the job descriptions contained in the Job Bank. They were:

1. Manufacturing--factories, etc.,
2. Professional, clerical, and sales,
3. Service Industries--hospitals, restaurants, and,
4. Communications, Transportation and Utilities.

Mitchell made two points which were of significance to the study of this agency. In talking about the Job Bank and the overall depressed employment conditions, he insinuated that not all clients were treated equally. His exact words in describing people coming from out of town looking for employment were: "Of course you don't tell everyone everything, we want to give the locals (local people), a chance first."

The next significant point Mitchell made was in direct reference to minorities in general. Mitchell noted that "veterans, minorities, and the poor, remain longer in the employment files. The longer someone remains in the files, the less chance there is of getting a job." Mitchell could not explain why this was so. His only comment was that, "it is just too bad that things have to be that way." It was apparent to the investigator that Mitchell was being vague during this portion of the interview.

It must be remembered that the ESC plays a vital role in trying to find employment for the approximately 19,000 people who use their services each year. However, there are indications that the ESC does not live up to its stated goals and objectives. Furthermore, in its efforts to help veterans, minorities and the poor, the ESC by its own admission, is failing. There may indeed be many reasons for this. However, it seems that the ESC is not actively seeking ways to improve their services.

Although the ESC is not directly or financially tied to the County Board of Commissioners or the Manpower Agency structure, it finds ways of "cooperating" with these agencies. The best example which can be used is their referral system. Since many of the Manpower Agencies are specifically geared to meeting the needs of the poor, and disadvantaged, the ESC at times tries to "unload" some of

its clients on these agencies. These are termed "referrals" and are recorded as positive statistics or terminations for the ESC.

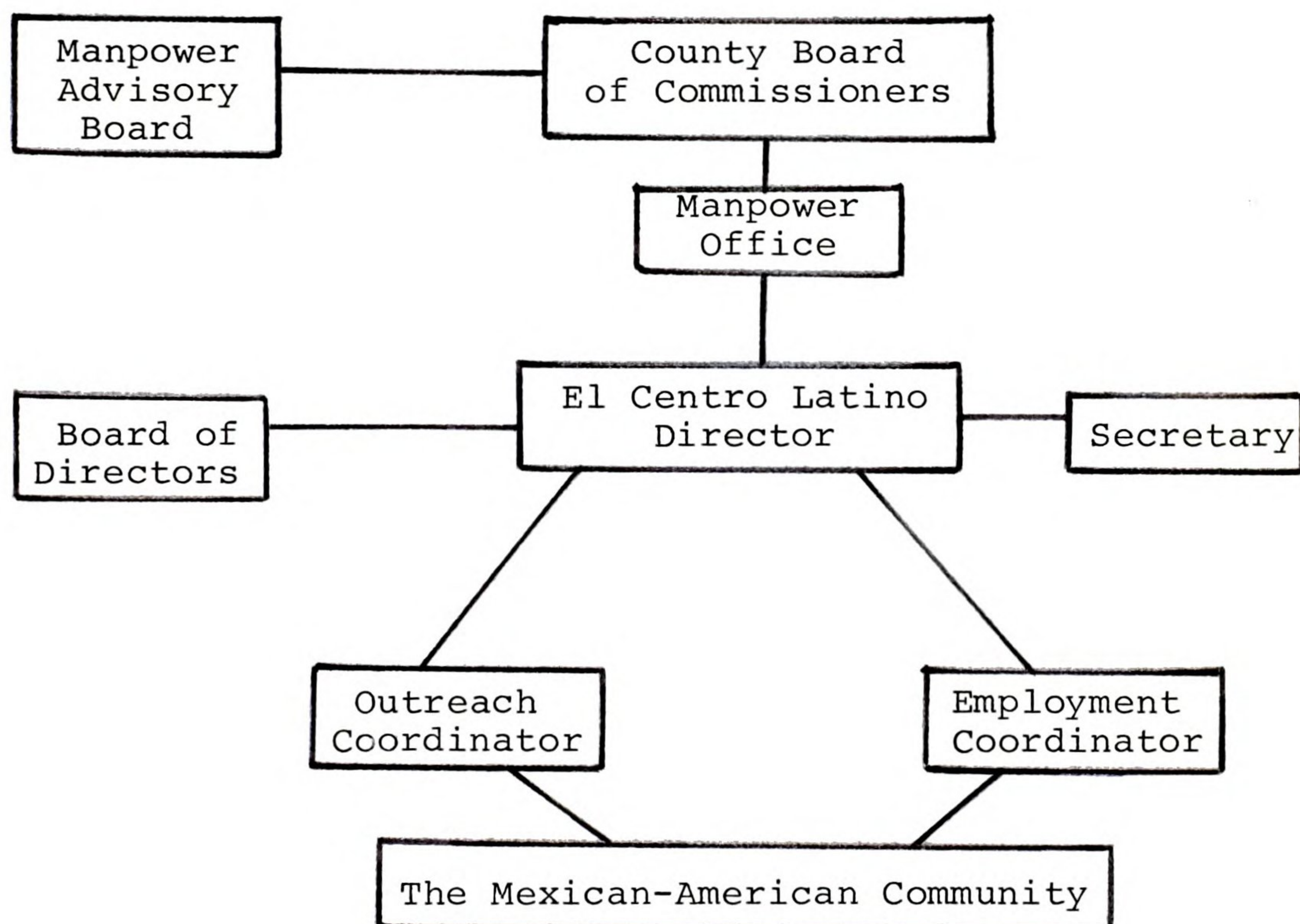
In specific reference to the Mexican-American community, the ESC appears to be at a total disadvantage. This is meant to imply that they are in essence unaware of the employment problems of Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner. Mexican-Americans have one of the highest unemployment rates among adult males in Joe's Corner (26.5%). Yet, in looking at how many received employment services from the ESC, there were few indeed. (See Tables 5 and 7 in Chapter II.)

El Centro Latino, Inc.

The fourth and final agency to be examined in-depth, is the agency with which the investigator had the most experience. This agency was El Centro Latino, an agency funded initially by the County Board of Commissioners. El Centro Latino's main purpose was to link the Mexican-American community with the other Manpower agencies, through a system of referrals. The agency was funded in October, 1974, and began operations in January, 1975. The investigator joined the staff in March, 1975. The following is a schematic drawing of El Centro Latino's initial internal structure:

Figure 6

Organizational Structure of
El Centro Latino, Inc.



The main function of El Centro Latino was to make referrals. This meant that Mexican-American or Spanish-speaking community members could come to this specific agency with a problem, then be referred to the agency handling problems of that nature. The investigator's opinion is that the intent of El Centro Latino's original goals were positive and achievable. However, the problems that arose due to the expansion of agency and its personnel eventually led to its closing.

Although it is difficult for the investigator to remain totally objective in his description of El Centro Latino, due to the nature of his close involvement with the agency, an attempt at objectivity will be made. Where the investigator feels that objectivity is lacking, references will be made in the first person, and set off from the main body of the text.

It was my opinion that El Centro Latino made an initial mistake in the hiring of its Director. First, the committee responsible for the Director's hiring was led by Juanita Rodriguez. In many conversations with Juanita, I discovered that she was very feminist in her views, and consequently had insisted on a female Director for the center.

The person hired as Director was Gloria Steiner, a 24 year-old recent college graduate, with quite an array of impressive social service agency experience. Steiner claimed to be one-half Mexican-American, and one-half Jewish. In the absence of Mexican-American college graduate applications, Steiner's own feminist views, and also her agency experience, it was my feeling that she was specifically hired by Juanita Rodriguez.

When I joined the staff of El Centro in March of 1975, it was apparent to me that Steiner was experiencing problems with Rodriguez. Steiner claimed that Rodriguez was trying to control her and the agency too much. She said that Rodriguez (who was President of El Centro's Board of Directors), was trying to get her involved as a member of the Latin American Club, and was also "pushing" her to "go out into the community."

Rodriguez on the other hand complained to me that "Gloria was isolating" herself too much from "el barrio". "All she wants to do is stay in her office and attend agency Directors' meetings," she would say.

I felt almost from the beginning of my employment with El Centro that there was bound to be a power struggle between Rodriguez and Steiner. With the knowledge I had gained of the Mexican-American community and Rodriguez, I was sure that Steiner did not stand a chance of taking political control of the community.

By May of 1975, I had begun to learn many interesting things about the community, El Centro Latino, and the various personalities involved with its daily operation. I had begun to suspect that Gloria Steiner was not really Mexican-American, and perhaps this was the principal reason why she felt so uncomfortable going "into the community." Steiner's use of the Spanish language was also a hint. Her Spanish sounded extremely foreign, and when trying to use "barrio speech", it sounded terribly phony and incorrect. I kept this to myself and concentrated on conducting the survey within the community.

Other very interesting observations which I made were:

- 1) the secretary hired by El Centro was a niece of Juanita Rodriguez,
- 2) the "legal" opinion of the Board of Directors was that Rodriguez's niece did not constitute nepotism,
- 3) Steiner was not well liked in the community--especially by the women, and,
- 4) the rift between Steiner and Rodriguez was becoming more pronounced.

I feel obligated to elaborate on points 3 and 4. First, Steiner, I noticed, began seeing quite a succession of men. From personal accounts given me by several persons in the community, I gathered that she was very aggressive sexually. It appears that this did not impress the more conservative ladies in the community. Indeed, even Rodriguez had begun to hear rumors. I must admit that to my knowledge, these rumors were correct.

Concerning point 4, the division between Rodriguez and Steiner, I felt that Rodriguez's niece had quite a lot to do with it. It appeared to me that Steiner was somewhat paranoid about her secretary. She felt that the secretary was "running to her aunt" with everything that occurred at the agency. My distinct impression was that Steiner was afraid of the secretary and was also growing to dislike her immensely.

During June, July, and August, El Centro Latino experienced a period of tremendous growth, and also some problems which severely tested the Board of Directors and administrative staff. Beginning in June, El Centro was awarded an additional \$187,000 to commence a training program. The aim of the program was to train individuals in the community in the areas of

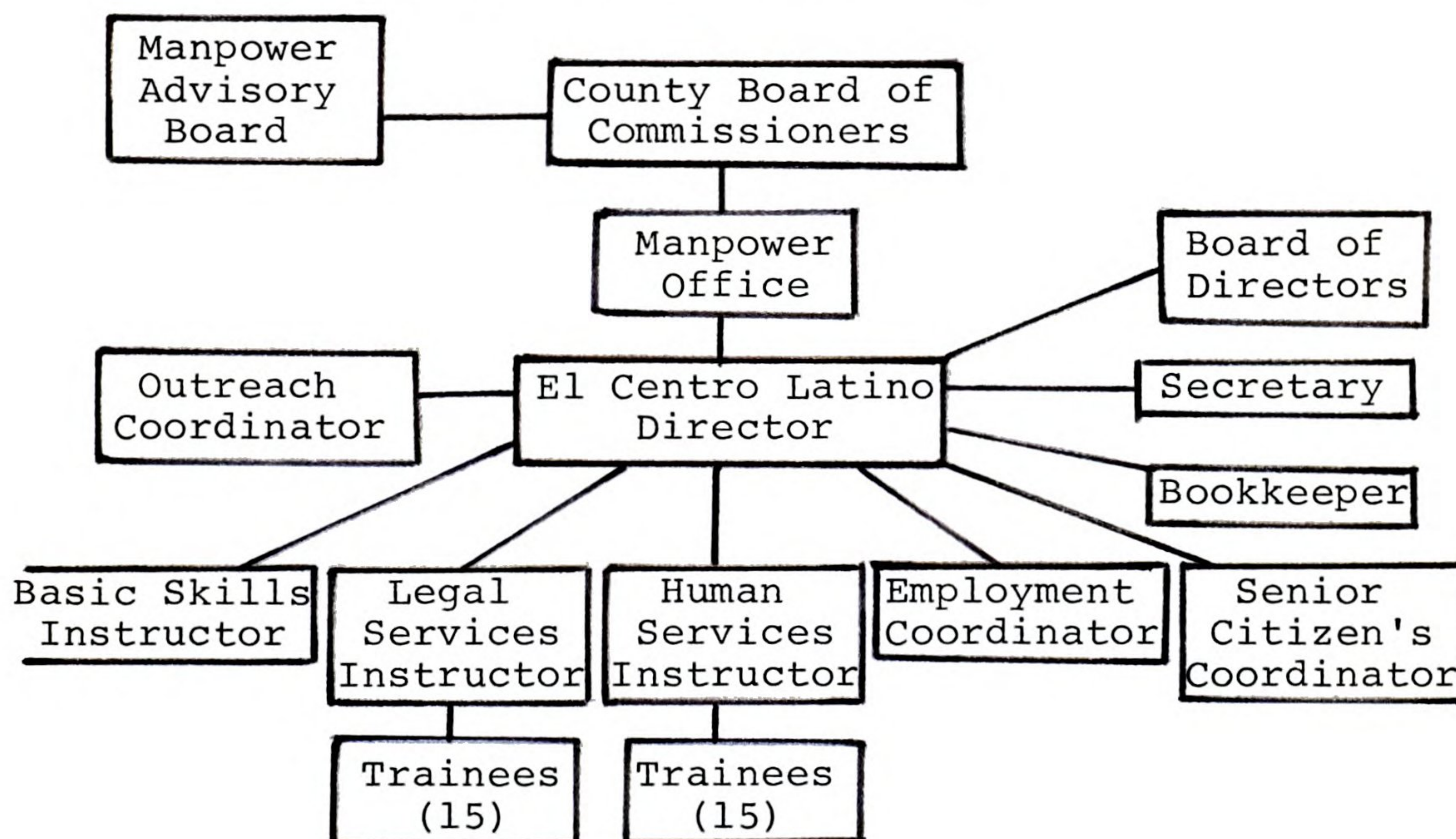
legal and human services. It was felt that those students learning legal service skills could take jobs as clerks and assistants in law offices. Those students learning human services skills could take positions as social worker aides.

The concept of the new programs seemed sound. However, it began to occur to me and others, that very few jobs would be obtained as a result of the training. After all, I asked, "with 15 students in each training area, how many possible legal and human services aides could Joe's Corner handle?" Initially, this did not seem to bother Steiner or anyone else.

Several new people were added to the staff as a direct result of the training programs. Also, another staff member was added with funds obtained to establish a Senior Citizens group for Mexican-Americans at the center. Therefore, El Centro grew and took on the following schematic appearance:

Figure 7

Expanded Organizational Structure of
El Centro Latino, Inc.



The problems that came with the new programs were many and complex. The first problem came with the students. There were decisions to be made as to who qualified and who did not. This alienated several community members whose relatives or friends were not accepted into the training programs. Also, the Senior Citizens' coordinator had two sons who were accepted into the programs. This also looked like nepotism, but it did not seem to bother Steiner or the Board of Directors. It did, however, bother some people in the community.

The disciplining of students also became a problem. The two sons of the Senior Citizens' coordinator seemed to feel that they could do as they pleased. Steiner reprimanded them several times until she finally tired of the situation and recommended that one of the brothers be released from the program. This incurred the wrath of Rodriguez, who was the President of the Board. Rodriguez and the brothers' mother were also very close and intimate friends. Instead of approving Steiner's recommendation, the Board reprimanded her.

Another problem arose with the hiring of the bookkeeper for the new programs. The new employee was "Anglo", which I felt infuriated Rodriguez. Rodriguez, however, did not interfere. Rodriguez's niece, however, did interfere. She was vehemently opposed to the new girl's hiring because she felt that she was too "sexy". She made her views known to both Steiner and me. She insinuated that all of the male trainees and staff members would constantly be "after her".

Despite her secretary's protests, Steiner hired the girl. It was my feeling that this set off a major battle between the secretary and the bookkeeper. This battle finally erupted into full-scale war between the two.

Rodriguez was also incensed at the hiring of two other "Anglos" for the Training Program. One component of the training program was aimed at helping the trainees achieve a solid bilingual (Spanish-English), fluency in their work objectives. This was called the Basic Skills Component. The other component for which an "Anglo" was hired was the Legal Services Program.

El Centro continued to operate its training programs until October of 1975. During the course of the training programs, it was apparent to the

agency staff and myself, that the majority of the students were there not solely for the training, but mainly for the stipends they received.

As a result of the inadequate management of the training programs, the Manpower Program's Director threatened to not fund El Centro Latino any further. This was protested by Steiner, Rodriguez, and the agency's Board of Directors. The Manpower office appeared to back down and funding was continued. This funding was contingent upon the restructuring of training program goals at El Centro. It was felt that there was little need to train legal and human services trainees in the community, and therefore El Centro Latino should concentrate on different programs.

El Centro Latino's response was to create a new program to train students in job readiness and survival skills. This new training program began in January of 1976. The agency training staff remained the same.

Throughout this entire period of training programs at El Centro Latino, many other problems arose. Indeed it appeared to me that Steiner was operating the agency on a crisis to crisis basis. One such crisis involved the "warfare" between the secretary and bookkeeper.

I was present and "Acting Director" of El Centro, (Steiner was out of town), when I witnessed a verbal fight taking place between the two employees. The secretary apparently lost her temper and took a swing at the bookkeeper. She did not strike the bookkeeper. I filed a report of this incident and consequently the secretary was fired from her job.

Rodriguez, the secretary's aunt, put the blame on Steiner, although I had suggested firing as a means to end the problem. Rodriguez did not blame me although I testified at a closed Board hearing that I had witnessed the fight. Rodriguez and I had become good friends and I felt that it was my responsibility to be truthful about the incident. Steiner on the other hand, incurred the wrath of Rodriguez again. Also, the secretary hired to replace the departed one, was "Anglo".

Through problems like these the agency continued its struggle to remain afloat. The agency was finally closed in June of 1976, three and one-half months after I had left its staff.

In many ways it appears as if of all the agencies studied, El Centro Latino has the majority of the problems. This, in the opinion of the investigator, is an erroneous assumption for anyone to make. All of the agencies studied had daily problems. Those of El Centro Latino merely stand out because of the investigator's intimate contact with that particular agency. Given similar contact with other agencies, the investigator's opinion is that similar problems would emerge.

These four examples of agency services in Joe's Corner are only indicative of the overall scope of social and public welfare agencies operating within the community. Many other agencies are also operating in a similar fashion. The ultimate impact which these agencies have on the Mexican-American community is difficult to assess.

Agency Impact on the Community

The impact these agencies have on the Mexican-American community as previously stated, is difficult to assess. However, perhaps the best measure of agency success can be shown by the statistics reflecting the need and use of such agencies by the Mexican-American community.

The statistics presented in Chapter II under the title "Socio-economic Conditions," show an overall general description of the housing, income, and employment characteristics of the Mexican-American community. Table 7 in

particular, shows the use of agency services by the community. It can easily be inferred that while the need for social and public welfare agencies appears great, the actual services received by the community are few.

The reasons for the lack of services received by the community are in the investigator's opinion, also difficult to determine. However, it is the investigator's thesis that these reasons are based on the attitudes manifested by the agencies and the community towards each other.

Agency Attitudes Towards Mexican-Americans

From the descriptions of the four agencies studied in-depth, one can surmise that agencies in general have a negative attitude towards Mexican-Americans. This is evidenced by the lack of regard given the Mexican-American by such agencies as the Skills Training Center and the Family Planning Project.

Of perhaps critical importance are the attitudes concerning the Mexican-American community, as evidenced by its own agency, El Centro Latino. In general, the investigator noted that the staff of El Centro Latino was very concerned with the conditions within the Mexican-American community. The employment coordinator was always working hard at trying to find scarce jobs; the Director was working hard at expanding the agency; and rules were many times "bent" to accommodate people in need of help.

This view of El Centro Latino's efforts contrasts sharply with the efforts of other agencies. However, it appears that the one most notable feature of all agencies, is the effort and time spent on surviving as agencies. The structure imposed upon them in essence makes it difficult for the agencies to determine and meet community needs. Too much time must be allocated by the agency for rationalizing their political and economic survival.

Another important aspect of agency attitudes toward the Mexican-American community is the feeling by many agencies that the Mexican-American is having his needs met by other agencies--in particular, the United Migrants for Opportunity, Inc. Agencies such as the Skills Training Center, the Family Planning Project, and the Legal Aid Bureau, are examples of agencies whose Directors expressed convictions that UMOI was supposed to handle all problems relevant to the Mexican-American.

The attitudes of the Skills Training Center and the Family Planning Project can be assessed from the descriptions of their services and operations in an earlier segment of this chapter. On the other hand, the Legal Aid Bureau, an agency not examined in-depth in this chapter, viewed the Mexican-American population of Joe's Corner as "mainly a migrant population," not existing in large numbers.

Historical and demographic evidence presented in Chapter II shows that this attitude is erroneous. The Mexican-American population of Joe's Corner is an old and well "settled-out" population. Mexican-American migrant workers do exist in the vicinity, but generally are located in the northern adjacent county, approximately 35 miles away. Also, the UMOI agency is strictly an organization aimed at helping agricultural fieldworkers. It does not involve itself with the non-migrant population.

Community Attitudes Towards Agencies

The types of attitudes shown by agencies toward the Mexican-American population makes it difficult for the community to have positive attitudes towards the agencies. Mexican-Americans in general feel that they are lowest on the agencies' priority ladders. Table 7 in Chapter II shows the use of agency services as reported by the Mexican-American population. In general, such services as food stamps, aid to dependent children, and unemployment compensation, rank high because of the nature of the service. However, services such as education, nutrition, counseling, and employment, are scarcely visible.

Black-oriented Agencies

One reason why Mexican-Americans feel generally neglected by agencies, is their belief that many of the agencies cater specifically to the Black population of

Joe's Corner. In essence, Mexican-Americans view these as "Black-oriented" agencies. The feelings of the Mexican-American community toward "Black-oriented" agencies can best be described as a mixture of confusion, lack of understanding, and in some cases, envy. However, it is necessary to point out that these attitudes are not so much the individual community members' attitudes, as much as the attitudes expressed by the community's leadership.

The Mexican-American leadership views itself as being in competition with the Black leadership for a "fair share" of the federal dollar. Community leaders feel that the more money they are able to secure for their respective communities, then the better they look to their constituents, and, more services can supposedly be delivered to the community. Since the Black leadership in Joe's Corner has been more adept at justifying and attracting more federal aid, the Mexican-American leadership has become somewhat resentful and envious. This envy is translated into confusion and a lack of understanding for the populations involved. In essence, the Mexican-American leadership in Joe's Corner is not always 100% indicative of the community's sentiments, especially when it comes to the Black community.

The investigator found that Mexican-American community leaders and some community people in general, felt that:

- 1) "Black-oriented" agencies and Black people in general, get everything they ask for in the form of social services and federal programs.
- 2) "Black-oriented" agencies do not hire Mexican-Americans.
- 3) "Black-oriented" agencies do not concern themselves with the Mexican-American "barrio".
- 4) Black leaders do not involve themselves with the educational problems of Mexican-Americans.

The investigator's opinion is that these negative attitudes are fostered primarily by the community leadership. An example of this is evidenced by the funding of El Centro Latino. At the same time El Centro was being initially considered for funding as an "experimental" agency in October 1974, another agency--the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)--was also being considered "experimentally". It was obvious that El Centro was being backed by the Mexican-American leadership and the OIC by the Black leadership.

It was not until both agencies had been approved and were operational that Mexican-American community leaders began to complain about the inequality of the two programs. El Centro Latino had received only \$33,000, while the OIC had received \$250,000. What these Mexican-American community leaders failed to recognize was their own program planning. Both agencies had received what their proposals had requested. The fact that El Centro

Latino received less than the OIC was a direct result of poor planning by Mexican-American community leaders, and not due to inequality at the hands of "Black-oriented" agencies.

The negative attitudes towards "Black-oriented" agencies however, still remain. Perhaps the overall general reasons for those feelings were best exemplified by a measure of resentment within the Mexican-American community and its leadership. These feelings of resentment seemed to say:

Black people always get what they want even though they riot and act in shameful ways. It should be the peaceful people who should receive all of the aid. Chicanos never cause anyone problems and they get ignored. (Investigator's interpretation of overall community sentiment.)

El Centro Latino, Inc.

The general attitudes of the Mexican-American community toward social and public welfare agencies in general, are of critical importance when assessing their attitudes towards their own agency, El Centro Latino. According to survey information and the investigator's personal assessment of the community, El Centro was initially viewed by most, as a very positive endeavor within the Mexican-American community. Community attitudes gradually changed, however, until at the time of its closing, it appeared as if only the agency's staff and the community leadership really cared.

In assessing the overall impact of community attitudes towards El Centro, it is necessary to examine them through the use of two criteria. These criteria are time and level of community interaction within the agency. Although the investigator feels that there perhaps are more variables involved, these two are the most important and also most easily accessible to study.

In terms of time, El Centro Latino existed for eighteen months. These eighteen months can be broken down into three six month periods as follows:

- 1) first six months--a great amount of community support,
- 2) second six months--period of expansion, growth, problems, and community support begins to splinter, and,
- 3) third six months--community support has eroded, leadership is divided, no apparent solutions foreseeable.

During the first six months of operation it appeared that there was a lot of optimism in the community for the agency. The survey questionnaire used in part to study the community, asked respondents for input concerning the types of activities they wanted to see happen at El Centro. This input was generally of a very positive nature. Community residents expressed ideas such as educational and cultural programs, day-care activities, and fund-raising events. There was also a great amount of hope expressed

for El Centro's efforts in obtaining more employment opportunities for community members.

The second six-month period was characterized by growth at El Centro, and communication and credibility problems in the community. Many of these communication and credibility problems were a direct result of El Centro's management and expansion.

In Figure 6, one can see the relative simple organization of El Centro's staff. Also of importance at this initial period in time, all staff employees were Mexican-Americans. Later, as evidenced in the organizational structure presented in Figure 7, the agency appeared to be much more complicated. In addition to the organizational complexity, the agency director had surrounded herself with several key personnel who were non-Mexican-American. Although these employees were generally able people, they possessed no actual knowledge of and experience with Mexican-Americans. Consequently, some of the contacts which community members experienced with El Centro employees were of a negative nature.

As previously stated, the investigator felt that Steiner herself was not Mexican-American. This feeling was later supported by one of Steiner's closest friends and former roommate. The former roommate told the investigator:

"Gloria is not Chicano. She never has been. Her mother is German and her father is Jewish. I answered the telephone when Rodriguez called to offer her the job. When she asked if Gloria Steiner-Mendez was home, I said "who?" Gloria asked me never to let on to anyone. She just really wanted the job."

The fact that Steiner was not Mexican-American was never truly known in the community. However, her initial opposition to joining the Latin American Club and "going out into the community", as well as surrounding herself with several non-Mexican-American employees, tends to point to the assumption that she was not totally comfortable with Mexican-Americans.

The community responded to this "stand-offish" behavior with distrust. Steiner's quickly-growing reputation with men also hurt her politically and socially in the community. Among the three top community leaders previously described, Rodriguez argued with and "tolerated" her; Garza paid her very little attention; and Garcia despised her--a feeling which the investigator learned was mutual.

As a consequence, it appears that Steiner alienated the three most active Mexican-American community leaders. This in turn, damaged the efforts of the entire thrust of El Centro Latino. The Mexican-American community began to interact less and less with the agency.

The final six months in the life of El Centro Latino were characterized by 1) very little community

involvement at the agency; 2) dissatisfaction among employees; 3) dissent within the Board of Directors; and 4) the attempt by several "older" residents to start an alternative program. Community involvement at El Centro tapered off during its last six months of operation, to the point that agency-sponsored events were attended by agency personnel only. This produced an attempt by several community members including Jane Garcia, to begin a rival organization.

The Board of Directors, unhappy with Steiner's management of the training programs and hiring policies, found it more difficult to support the agency when it was criticized and attacked by the Manpower Office. The Board was also split as to whether Steiner should be fired and the training programs continued.

Finally, two of El Centro's three Mexican-American employees left their jobs due to the lack of agency direction and general dissatisfaction with the program. One employee went to Texas and the other simply quit. Although the investigator was not always present during the final three and one-half months of operation, he was constantly in contact with Steiner, Rodriguez, and agency employees. This final synopsis of El Centro Latino's existence is a compilation of their information.

Closing Statements

The overall scope of social service and public welfare agencies in Joe's Corner has had a minimal impact on the Mexican-American community. The reasons are many and varied. However, some of the most important and perhaps obvious reasons are:

- 1) the lack of heterogeneous leadership among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner, i.e., programs cannot be continued to be totally operated by the present internal leadership; new leadership must be attracted from without the community;
- 2) the unwillingness of agencies and county politicians to admit that problems exist within the Mexican-American community;
- 3) the lack of commitment on the part of local funding sources to provide some measure of economic stability to the Mexican-American community, thus, creating more dependency in the community;
- 4) a general lack of understanding and sensitivity towards Mexican-Americans by local agencies;
- 5) the failure of agencies, including those operated by Mexican-Americans, to recognize ineffective programs and remedies within the Mexican-American community; and,
- 6) the inability of Mexican-American community leaders to overlook the programs of "Black-oriented" agencies, and perhaps strive to use them as models for handling federal monies.

In brief, the failure of public social welfare agencies to meet the needs of the Mexican-American community can be attributed to a combination of political, economic, and social shortcomings on the parts of both the community

and the agencies which attempt to serve it. The community is not equipped to identify and research its own unique needs. This role ultimately belongs to the agencies.

Also, community agencies assigned the tasks of meeting the needs within the Mexican-American community should be allowed the resources, freedom, and authority to accomplish these tasks. Agencies are limited by their very nature--that of bureaucratic organization and operation. Due to the agency's own structure and guidelines regulating it, intended functioning is not possible.

Another perhaps critical point in the functioning of a community agency is the composition of its staff. Agency staff many times become dependent upon the agency for a livelihood, and at times become more concerned with the reporting of favorable statistics rather than treating the clients. Economic security for agency employees is also needed. Also, the ethnic composition of the agencies' staffs in Joe's Corner do not reflect a positive effort on the part of the agencies to hire more professional Mexican-American staff. This includes staff at El Centro Latino. When Mexican-Americans are hired within agencies, they are many times relegated to clerical jobs with very little community contact. Those who have community contact are expected to pacify the Mexican-American leadership and community, or satisfy the agency's affirmative action goals.

Finally, the Mexican-American community in Joe's Corner is one which needs a stronger economic base. The role of social service and public welfare agencies, however, is to provide social needs, and not economic needs. The stimulation and strengthening of the economic base of the Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner needs immediate remediation in order for social and public welfare agencies to succeed.

Chapter IV

THE EDUCATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICANS

The Community Perspective

Many Mexican-Americans today view "education" in the abstract, in very positive terms, while their concept of educational institutions (i.e. schools), is generally negative. Carter (1970) argues that these feelings may be very well grounded. Indeed this is the apparent situation in Joe's Corner. Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner view education as a necessity, yet express negative feelings about their educational system and its attempts at trying to meet the needs of the Mexican-American community. However, before examining community attitudes in Joe's Corner, it is necessary to explore some of the historical basis for Mexican-American sentiment today.

Acuna (1972), approaches the subject of education among Mexican-Americans from the viewpoint that Mexican-Americans are in essence a "colonized people". Acuna states:

Education is important to a colonized people, since it can either be used as an instrument for creating awareness and thus motivating liberation movements, or it can be used as an agent of the colonial government and its economic system to

condition the oppressed to accept their status. Unfortunately, Anglo-American schools have traditionally played the latter role, not only at the expense of the Mexican, but also in relation to other have-not peoples. Their primary role has not been to educate or to make the student aware, but to "school" children into accepting and supporting the Establishment. This process has been called Americanization. (Acuna, p. 146.)

Acuna continues his assault on "Americanization", blaming it for a host of educational ills among Mexican-Americans. Acuna continues:

At the very core of Americanization is the compelling necessity for Anglo-Americans to remake the unassimilable masses so they can be more acceptable. This is accomplished by erasing their culture, language, and values, and replacing them with Anglo-American culture, language, and values. It is a process that has caused considerable cultural conflict for the Chicano and that has resulted in the following: many Chicanos developing negative self-images; many Chicanos accepting the values of the colonizers and rejecting their own heritage; Anglo-Americans justifying the colonization by glorifying the history of the colonizer and erasing that of the colonized; and Chicanos being conditioned to accept their colonized status, limiting their aspirations, and training them to fill low-paying jobs. (Acuna, p. 146.)

Acuna's position points out effects more than their causes, and seems to resemble the rhetoric used by Mexican-American community leaders not only in the Southwest, but in Joe's Corner as well. Acuna's argument lacks historical perspective in the sense that it offers no specific reasons for the conscious attempt at the assimilation of the Mexican-American.

Sanchez (1966), takes a somewhat differing position in that he views the Anglo-American attempt at acculturation and assimilation as a failure, thus producing the vast socioeconomic, educational, and health problems among Mexican-Americans today. Sanchez is able to provide a solid historical perspective while citing the many reasons for the Anglo-American failure. Sanchez writes:

Until about the mid-nineteenth century, the Californios, the Nuevo Mexicanos, and the Texanos went their separate cultural ways, . . . The annexation of Texas and the occupation of the rest of the Southwest by the United States changed the course of human affairs in the region, but the change was a slow one, unplanned and haphazard. The United States had not developed the social and cultural institutions to carry out an effective program of acculturation among her new citizens. The new states and territories were left to shift for themselves, with an understandable lack of success. The Spanish-speaking peoples of the Southwest remained Spanish-speaking and culturally isolated--unassimilated citizens, subject to the ever increasing dominance of a foreign culture. (Sanchez, p. 6.)

Perhaps most important in Sanchez's argument at this point, is his mention of the undeveloped "social and cultural institutions" to insure acculturation. According to Meier and Rivera (1972), the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848, had guaranteed those Mexican citizens who wished to remain in the United States after the Mexican War, the protection for their religion, property, civil, and political liberties. Meier and Rivera continue:

Absent from the treaty, however, were provisions for protection of their social institutions. Historically, the acculturation process for newcomers to the United States was facilitated by the American school system. Acculturation was not a goal in the early days of the American West; there frontier conditions and institutions, including schools, had not developed objectives of cultural assimilation. (Meier and Rivera, pp. 70-75.)

The argument can thus be made that while it was legal and permissible to speak Spanish or adhere to one's own cultural traditions and customs in the Southwest, the same could not be done within a court of law or a classroom. The Anglo-American institutions were not equipped to handle Spanish-speaking citizens. In essence, the Mexican-American was left mute, not understanding, nor being able to make himself understood. Sanchez continues by stating:

Other things being equal, time alone would have had its influence, and the Hispanos would have become full-fledged English-speaking Americans. However, not only were the social institutions inadequate, but also changing conditions made it impossible for time alone to bring about their assimilation. After 1870, the southwestern scene changed rapidly. The coming of the railroads brought new economic opportunities and made old ones more attractive. The region ceased to be the "Wild West." It became instead a land where minerals and lumber, cotton and corn, cattle and sheep, fruits and vegetables gave rise to new economic empires.

These developments in themselves were not hindrances to acculturation. On the contrary, they should have done much to aid it, just as economic expansion in the East accelerated the Americanization of the heterogeneous masses from Europe. However, in addition to the fact that southwestern developments were based largely in rural life and on the production of raw materials, in contrast to the urban-industrial situation in the East, this area was sparsely populated, and, insofar as the "American

Way" was concerned, culturally immature and insecure. Worst still, since labor for the new enterprises was not available in the East, the Southwest had to turn to Mexico and the Orient. As a consequence, the region, already suffering from cultural indigestion, added to its troubles by importing thousands of Mexican families, again postponing the day for the incorporation of its Spanish-speaking population.

Even thus enlarged by immigrants from Mexico, the Indo-Hispanic group could have been assimilated had the United States taken time to assess the cultural issues and the increasingly complex socioeconomic problems--particularly those of this ethnic minority. But before 1910 almost no one seemed aware that there were far-reaching issues and problems. Virtually no thought was given to the educational, health, economic, or political rehabilitation of the Hispanos. And after 1910 the opportunity had passed. Until then the issues and problems were still of manageable proportions. They were soon to grow beyond all hope of quick solution.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 and World War I combined to bring many thousands of Mexicans to the Southwest. Large numbers came as displaced persons, driven across the border by a chaotic civil war. Even larger numbers came as contract laborers, recruited by the trainload to work the beet fields of Colorado, the gardens and groves of California, the railroads of the entire West, the copper mines of Arizona, the cotton fields of Texas, even the iron-works of Chicago and the coal mines of West Virginia.

The consequences of this free dipping into the cheap labor reservoir of Mexico are not difficult to observe. What for brevity I choose to call "cultural indigestion" can be documented by health and educational statistics, by pictures of the slums of San Antonio, and by depressing socioeconomic data from all over the southwest. Suffice it to say that once again the Southwest pyramided problem upon problem, burdening itself with a situation for which sooner or later there would be a costly reconing. (Sanchez, pp. 6-7.)

The positions presented by Acuna and Sanchez although differing, lead to only one apparent conclusion. That is that the status of Mexican-American education has been in a state of perpetual neglect, made difficult to

correct due to a host of historical, political, economic, social problems. The main concern here, however, is to examine these problems in the context of Joe's Corner, and attempt to analyze the way in which they interrelate to produce the specific educational conditions among Mexican-Americans in the target community.

Although Joe's Corner is not within the Southwest, many of the patterns shaping the form of Mexican-American education there, have also been evident in this midwestern community. The apparent neglect in Mexican-American education in Joe's Corner can be observed in many ways. Among them are the statistics reflecting the educational level attained by the adult male and female population. Philip D. Ortego (1972), maintains that in the Southwest, the Mexican-American population has a limited and inadequate education. Ortego goes further by saying:

The educational statistics on Mexican-Americans are shocking. Their dropout rate is more than two times the national average, and estimates of school years completed by Mexican-Americans (7.1 years), are significantly below figures for Black children (9.0 years) or Anglo children (12.1 years). In Texas, 39 per cent of the Mexican-Americans have less than a fifth-grade education, and Mexican-Americans twenty-five years of age or older have as little as 4.8 years of schooling. Almost half of the Chicanos in Texas essentially are still functional illiterates. (Ortego, p. 225.)

The educational statistics among adult Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner are not quite as low as those

presented by Ortego, however, they are still relatively low. Tables 8-11 show the educational level of adult males and females in Joe's Corner. As is seen in Table 8, adult males average only 8.0 years of formal education. Women, however, average a total of 9.2 years of formal education. (Table 9.)

What is particularly interesting in Tables 8 and 9 is the apparent pattern of the number of years of formal education from zone to zone. Among males, it appears that a lesser amount of formal education is found in Zones I and IV, the "poverty" zones. Zones II and III tend to agree with the 1970 Census. These two zones show an average of 9.3 years of formal education among adult males. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972, p. 19.)

Women, on the other hand, appear to have attained a significant amount of formal education beyond that of their male counterparts. From Table 9, one can see that the amount of variance from zone to zone is not as great as it is for men, with the exception of Zone IV. Yet, education among women in Zone IV is still higher than it is for men of the same zone.

Tables 10 and 11 offer a more detailed picture of the educational status among Mexican-American adults in Joe's Corner. Of a total of 307 adult males, 186 (60.5%), did not complete high school. Only 51 (16.6%), did

Table 8

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN MALES*

Zone	Total Years Formal Education	Number Subjects Responding	Average Years Formal Education	Number with College Degrees
I	1006	127	7.9	3
II	419	45	9.3	2
III	251	27	9.3	2
IV	315	47	6.7	0
V	134	15	8.9	1
VI	78	12	6.5	0
Totals	2203	273	8.0	8

*These figures represent the formal educational level of Mexican-American male heads of households. They do not include people identified as having college degrees, or people on which data was unknown.

Table 9

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN FEMALES*

Zone	Total Years Formal Education	Number Subjects Responding	Average Years Formal Education	Number with College Degrees
I	1331	137	9.7	2
II	561	58	9.6	2
III	310	32	9.6	3
IV	382	52	7.3	0
V	159	16	9.9	1
VI	112	13	8.6	0
Totals	2855	308	9.2	8

*Female is defined here as the head of the household, or as the spouse of the head of the household. These figures do not include people identified as having college degrees, or people on which data was unknown.

Table 10

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICAN ADULT MALES

	Zone I	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV	Zone V	Zone VI
B.A. or higher	3 (2.12%)	1 (2.08%)	3 (8.11%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.0%)
H.S. + some college	10 (7.09%)	6 (12.50%)	7 (18.92%)	5 (9.43%)	2 (11.75%)	2 (15.38%)
High School	21 (14.8%)	15 (31.2%)	6 (16.2%)	4 (7.5%)	2 (11.7%)	3 (23.0%)
G.E.D./equivilancy	8 (5.67%)	1 (2.08%)	2 (5.41%)	1 (1.88%)	0 ---	0 ---
Non-High School	89 (63.1%)	24 (50.0%)	14 (37.8%)	41 (77.4%)	11 (64.7%)	7 (53.8%)
Number Unknown	8 (5.6%)	1 (2.1%)	5 (13.5%)	2 (3.7%)	1 (5.8%)	1 (5.8%)

Total Population Responding = 307 (including unknowns)

Total Without High School = 186 (60.58%)

Table 11

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICAN ADULT FEMALES

	Zone I	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV	Zone V	Zone VI
B.A. or higher	2 (1.34%)	2 (3.22%)	3 (7.69%)	0 ---	1 (5.55%)	0 ---
H.S. + some college	(11.41%)	(12.9%)	(12.82%)	(5.17%)	(11.11%)	(21.42%)
High School	40 (26.85%)	17 (27.41%)	11 (25.64%)	11 (18.86%)	2 (11.11%)	3 (21.42%)
G.E.D./equivilancy	7 (4.7%)	2 (3.22%)	0 ---	1 (1.72%)	1 (5.55%)	0 ---
Non-High School	70 (46.98%)	32 (51.61%)	17 (43.59%)	39 (67.24%)	11 (61.11%)	7 (50.0%)
Number Unknown	7 (4.70%)	1 (1.61%)	4 (10.25%)	4 (6.9%)	1 (5.55%)	1 (7.14%)

Total Population Responding = 334 (including unknowns)

Total Without High School = 176 (52.69%)

complete high school, while 12 (3.9%), received their high school diploma through the G.E.D. Program (General Equivalency Diploma). The pattern from zone to zone, also appears to hold true. Zones I and IV are lower than are Zones II and III. Non-high school completion in Zones I and IV is extremely high, averaging 63.1% and 77.3% respectively.

Among adult women, the rate for non-completion of high school is also high, yet significantly better than the rate for males. While 60.5% of the adult male population did not complete high school, only 52.7% of all Mexican-American women did not complete high school. The percent of women who completed high school (including those through G.E.D.), is also significantly higher than that of men, 28.0% for women and 20.5% for men.

Although higher education was not a primary concern of this study, it is interesting to note that both males and females were about equal in these two categories. Eight males and eight females had college degrees, while 32 males and 38 females had some college-level education after completing high school. It was the investigator's observation that the majority of men and women holding college degrees were married couples.

The lack of formal education within the Mexican-American adult community in Joe's Corner does not imply that they do not value or desire that their children obtain

an education which will advance them in life. Ample evidence exists in Joe's Corner to prove that Mexican-American parents have been actively involved in promoting the education of their children. In presenting this evidence, the process used by the community and its leaders to communicate with its schools will become evident. The attitudes and perceptions of the community regarding the education of their children, will also become evident at this time.

In a research study of Spanish-speaking school children in Texas, Manuel (1967), points out:

. . . first, the reports show in vivid and convincing manner that there are many problems in the education of Spanish-speaking children and that they are serious from the standpoint of education and public welfare; second, it is clear that the problems vary from child to child--in the matter of language, for example, some of the children do not even speak Spanish; third, many of the problems seem to cluster in three overlapping areas--language, economic status, and attitudes. Many of the children know little or no English when they start to school, and many suffer the privations of severely limited family income. In many cases the attitudes of English-speaking people or Spanish-speaking people or both make progress difficult. (Manuel, p. 106.)

This brief summary by Manuel is important because it points out the three significant factors--language, economic status, and attitudes, which have a great bearing on the relative success or failure of Mexican-American students. Perhaps more important and crucial in terms of Joe's Corner, is the idea presented by Manuel that the problems affecting Mexican-American children "vary from child to child." (Manuel, p. 106.) Not only does this idea

hold true for the children in Joe's Corner, but it is also very indicative of the nature of the problems encountered by Mexican-American parents in dealing with the school system in Joe's Corner.

Mexican-American parents in Joe's Corner are diverse in terms of economic status, language, and attitudes. Their diversity in economic status has already been pointed out in Tables 1-6 of Chapter II. It can be seen in these tables that not all Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner are poor economically. It is also evident from these statistics that housing varies from zone to zone. While it may be generally true that Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner may not be "well-off" economically, it would also be erroneous to suggest that there is no diversity among their economic status.

In terms of language, there is also great diversity among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner. Based on the investigator's personal observations, most of the adult Mexican-American population does speak Spanish. However, not all adults speak Spanish, nor do they all use the same idioms or necessarily speak grammatically correct. It would be more representative to say that Mexican-American adults speak Spanish in varying degrees, and also varying forms, depending upon whom they are with and in what setting.

The diversity in Spanish language usage can best be explained by the diversity of the Mexican-American population itself. Some community members are from Mexico and thus speak only Spanish. Others were born and reared in Joe's Corner, and speak no Spanish at all. Some people are extremely traditional and may speak only in the Spanish formal rather than the familiar Spanish used among those who share closer relationships. Still others use the local idioms of their native South Texas, otherwise known as "Tex-Mex", an accepted blending of Spanish and English. There are also a few people in Joe's Corner from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and South America, who speak varying forms of Spanish.

The theme of diversity within the Mexican-American community is best exemplified in their attitudes. This brings to light a saying which the investigator heard from a community member. The community member said, "donde hay tres mexicanos, siempre hay cuatro opiniones." Translated, the saying means, "whenever you find three Mexicans, you will find four opinions." This investigator's close working relationship with Mexican-American community members many times bore out this old saying.

These three variables--language, economic status, and attitudes, correctly mirror the diverse views which Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner hold towards their

educational system. The investigator's observations support the following findings by Carter:

Reports that the traditional Mexican-American culture devalues education or sees it as a prerogative of the aristocracy seem to have little relevance today. Although there is no contemporary, widespread, systematic research that would verify it, there is every indication that as a group Mexican-Americans view education positively, adhering generally to the American belief that "getting a good education" is a prerequisite to upward social mobility. While the idea of education in the abstract is well accepted, minority-group views of the school, as an institution, may diverge considerably from those of the middle class. (Carter, p. 134.)

Carter points out what this investigator found in Joe's Corner. The general consensus among Mexican-American parents and community leaders was that education was very desirable. They also felt that their children should be given every available opportunity to all facets of education, like all other non-Mexican-American children.

However, not all Mexican-American parents felt that the schools in Joe's Corner were the proper places for their children's education. Many felt the schools in Joe's Corner were inferior and generally "bad" places to be. On the other hand, some parents thought the schools were "very good." These differing attitudes on the part of Mexican-Americans correctly reflect the diverse problems which they face as Mexican-Americans, and also, the variety of methods used in prompting school officials into taking some action, based on the individual needs of the school children.

Parental Attitudes Towards Schools

As previously stated, educational attitudes among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner vary greatly. The investigator's survey asked community members three questions concerning the education of their children and their general attitudes towards their educational system. The responses were varied and represented all zones in Joe's Corner. King Elementary School is mentioned quite often by many parents. This is so because King Elementary has the highest percentage of Mexican-American students than any other single school in Joe's Corner. Also, the investigator learned that King Elementary has been the focal point of many attacks by Mexican-American parents on the educational system in Joe's Corner.

The three questions asked by the investigator's survey concerning education were:

- 1) Are you satisfied with what the schools are doing for your children's education? If no, why not?
- 2) If yes, what other things would you like to see the schools do (which they are not presently doing), for your children's education?
- 3) If you have no children in school at the present time, as a concerned citizen, do you feel that the schools are doing a good job with Spanish-speaking children? If no, why not?

The following responses are indicative of the attitudes and concerns of Mexican-American parents in Joe's Corner:

I'm completely satisfied but actually I'm not that involved with the schools. But I've never had any problems. I've had eight children attend King Elementary School. No one bothers us, we don't bother them. I don't want to see anything change because it will cost more in taxes. The more you get, the more it costs. We're just concerned with our children's learning and education.

Another parent was not so positive towards King Elementary School. Her views were:

I'm not satisfied because they don't go by the rules. I've seen many things which I don't feel are right. The teachers are simply too rough on the kids--I've seen some teachers hit kids. My overall impression of King is very negative.

Another parent, also with eight children, saw the situation at King Elementary much the same way. She responded:

King School is despicable. The principal has been there too long. Principals should come up for review more often. Kids there run around loose and wild. Young kids smoke, swear, and are always getting into trouble. They need more things to keep them busy and learning. There should be better supervision and discipline in the school. Teachers don't make enough of an effort to teach. There should also be a better education for kids who are slow learners.

Still another parent from Zone IV related this story:

No, I never was satisfied with King, but thank God all of my children are finally out of that dreadful school. They mistreated the kids. Once, my son broke his arm in school, and he never even received first-aid. So I went to complain to the Assistant Principal . . . y esa vieja chingada me cerro la puerta . . . (that damn woman closed the door on me). Ellos se aprovechan de gente que no sabe ingles . . . (they take advantage of people who know little English).

You know how little kids are, one does something and then all the rest do the same thing. Once, this

pack of white kids was swearing at the principal, and then my daughter did the same thing. When the principal got aggravated, who did he expel from school? He expelled my daughter only--the only Mexican-American.

Another parent had something to add to the regular list of complaints. He felt that the teachers were only there for their paychecks. However, he added, "I think this busing system is rotten!"

One community member who had been an instructor in the Adult Education Program, also had negative feelings about the school system in Joe's Corner. She stated:

I don't have children of my own, but my sister does, and they attend King School. King School is a bunch of ----! I'm especially concerned about migrant children and all Spanish-speaking children at King are held back because they are considered mentally retarded. They need more individual attention. It doesn't matter whether you were born here or out-of-state, the school is discriminating to some extent. I went so far as to join a parent's group, even though I'm not a parent. We picketed and protested at King and talked to the Board of Education. We wanted the principal fired. But we were unfortunately unsuccessful.

It was clear from these interviews that many parents held many negative attitudes towards King Elementary School. Although many parents could describe their dissatisfaction with the school, many did not know what to do about it. One father explained it in this manner:

I would like my kids to attend different schools because I don't think they're learning much where they're at now. My son Tony skips school a lot and is always fighting with his teachers. My other son George is fifteen years old and only in the seventh grade. This makes me very unhappy, but what can I do?

Still another parent related the following story:

My little girl came home crying from King, saying that the principal pulled her hair a lot and hurt her. That same afternoon I went to complain to him and I gave him a piece of my mind. Do you know what he answered? He said, "Well, Mrs. Gonzalez, if you don't want me to pull her hair, send her to another school." I told him that if he ever pulled her hair again I would call a lawyer and have him lose his job. He then said, "I wish you and all Mexicans would get off my back!"

He's afraid because he's almost retiring and his retirement will be thrown out the window if he's not careful. He's too old and he doesn't understand children or the younger generation. They do need younger teachers, especially one to replace Mrs. Doe. When people get old, they get grouchy and have no patience with children. They are still teaching what I was learning thirty years ago. Kids today need new methods. Also, there are a lot of fights and dope too. After school, the little kids can't go play (on the playground), because there are a lot of older boys smoking, and girls lying in the playground.

All residents of Zone IV did not express negative opinions towards schooling or King Elementary. When those expressing positive attitudes towards the schools were asked "why", the responses were also greatly varied. Out of a total of thirty-five households in Zone IV with school-age children:

- 1) 23 expressed negative opinions about their neighborhood school,
- 2) 7 expressed positive opinions, but with specific reservations and recommendations for change,
- 3) 4 answered that their children were in Catholic schools, and,
- 4) 1 expressed a totally positive opinion towards the neighborhood school.

Mrs. Juanita Rodríguez, a resident of Zone IV for thirty years, and an ex-school board member, summed up the community's educational attitudes towards King School, in the following manner:

I am not satisfied with our schools, even though my own kids go to Catholic schools. Not only is our local educational system bad, but the entire national system is sub-standard. The Chicano child is completely left out. Chicano children need to feel pride in what they are, and to have more relevant materials presented to them. The only way I see this happening for us, is to have good bilingual-bicultural education programs.

Similarly, the residents of Zones I, II, and III voiced opinions and concerns which were varied and uppermost in their minds. Mr. Frank Anaya in Zone I was concerned that he did not have enough money to send his daughter to college. Mr. Anaya continued:

My wife and I have always been active in school affairs. All of my kids have done well, and have been treated well. We were the first Mexicans to enroll our kids in this school system (a suburban school system), and we really have no complaints. When I feel something is wrong with my kids in school, I go straight to the school to straighten it out.

My only concern now is trying to get my daughter through college. She really wants to go but I can't afford it. Maybe being Mexican will finally pay off if she can get a scholarship or financial aid. I can guarantee you that if she does or doesn't get aid, I'm going to see to it that she gets her chance to attend.

Mr. Anaya's daughter did not receive a scholarship or any type of financial aid because her father "made too much money." Mr. Anaya admitted that his income had been

\$14,700 that year, "including a lot of overtime." He continued:

How the hell can I feed my wife and four kids on that salary, and send one of them to college? I'm being taxed to death as it is. You either have to be poor or rich; the man in the middle doesn't have a chance.

Anaya's daughter eventually took a job as a telephone operator in order to save enough money to begin college the following year.

A Zone V resident, Mrs. Sanchez, expressed her attitudes towards the schools in the following manner:

All of my kids have been very successful in school (also a suburban school). There is no discrimination out here. Last year my son was elected Homecoming King. He is now attending Ferris State College. My other son is a junior at the University of Michigan.

Of course we had to pay a price for all of that. They don't speak Spanish or know much about their history; but they are succeeding. It could have been different if we would have lived in the "barrio" and they would have had more Mexican friends, but we can't complain. I think they're both happy.

Mrs. Sanchez appears to be saying that scholastic achievement and success in school were at the time more important to her family than remaining culturally distinct. She felt "bad" that her sons didn't know much about their language and culture, but had decided that material and scholastic success were more important.

Mr. and Mrs. Alvarez of Zone I did not agree with Mrs. Sanchez. Mrs. Alvarez noted:

I came here from Mexico when I was thirteen years old. I was put into a kindergarten class because I didn't know English. That was a terrible thing for me because I felt really dumb. They could have had some special teachers to help me.

Now my little kids go to school and come home and refuse to speak Spanish. My mother lives with us and she doesn't know any English. Why should my children be ashamed of speaking Spanish--even to their grandmother?

This is the main reason why I'm so involved in the bilingual education movement in Joe's Corner. I know that I'm not politically sophisticated like Juanita Rodriguez, but I'm learning fast from her and will continue to make waves for the school administration until they begin to cooperate with us parents.

The variety of educational issues and concerns among Mexican-American parents not only varied within each zone, but also from zone to zone. Many parents from all zones preferred to send their children to parochial schools. These parents felt that parochial schools gave their children a "better education generally," rather than stronger religious instruction. "Better education" took on several different meanings, depending upon the parent's reasons for sending their children to parochial schools. Mrs. Cortez of Zone I, had the following comments:

Many parents don't like their kids going to public schools because there are too many "prietos" (blacks), going to these schools. The teachers can't control the kids and no learning takes place. Before you know it, the kid is dropping out of school. That is one of our biggest problems--keeping kids in school.

It is not known if Mrs. Cortez was implying "racial problems" within the schools as a main factor influencing

parental attitudes. What she did imply however, was that she and other parents felt discipline was too lax in the public schools.

Other parents in different zones had other varying opinions. Mr. and Mrs. Macillas of Zone II felt their kids needed to grow up speaking good English. Therefore, they only spoke English at home and were against any type of curriculum changes within the schools which would offer a bilingual approach to education. Mrs. Macillas was in so much opposition to bilingual education, that she wrote a letter to the editor of the Joe's Corner Daily newspaper, stating her opposition. Her chief concern was that bilingual education would retard a child's ability in English.

Still a different view of education and schools was expressed by Mr. Cardenas of Zone III. He felt that the public schools should be more than schools. He continued:

What this community really needs is a place to meet socially. The schools could serve that purpose if they remained open after hours. People could really use the facilities--especially the gym--for recreational purposes.

Community Heterogeneity

The main purpose for presenting the amount of parental attitudes, opinions, and concerns thus in evidence, is to support the thesis of heterogeneity within the Mexican-American community. While many parents openly

expressed their individual concerns, others did not.

However, in brief summary, it should be noted that the range of parental concerns towards education in general, was wide. The majority of those parents expressing opinions were generally concerned with the following issues:

- 1) bad teachers,
- 2) bad administrators,
- 3) finances to provide for college educations,
- 4) discipline within the schools,
- 5) busing,
- 6) the lack of attention given children with special problems such as English deficiencies,
- 7) the lack of a curriculum which emphasized the contributions of Mexican-Americans to American society (a relevant curriculum),
- 8) drugs and morality in schools,
- 9) the sometimes evident lack of respect shown Mexican-American parents by teachers and other school officials,
- 10) discrimination against Mexican-American children, and,
- 11) the "ever-present" dropout rate of Mexican-American children.

While the general feeling of the Mexican-American community was negative, it is significant that the issues, opinions, and concerns expressed by them, be understood in their heterogeneous nature. The thesis of community heterogeneity is significant because it has a direct bearing on the methods used by community members and leaders

to draw attention to their problems, and perhaps even more important, the manner in which school administrators interpret community sentiment and how they as administrators, try to find ways to alleviate the educational problems.

Community Attempts at Educational Reform

The attempts to change the educational system for Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner have been historically political, and mainly instigated by Mexican-American community leaders. Change has almost been non-existent in the Joe's Corner School District, and any changes which can be seen as positive by the community have only been minimal.

According to Mrs. Juanita Rodriguez, the educational system in Joe's Corner does not lend itself to change. Rodriguez feels that change can be measured by more Mexican-American graduates from high school each year, the hiring of more Mexican-American teachers, and more curricular changes, such as the beginning of bilingual and/or bicultural educational programs. Instead, according to Mrs. Rodriguez, the situation has worsened. Rodriguez emphasized that there were only two Mexican-American teachers in Joe's Corner. Rodriguez blames the school district and its administration for not realizing the needed changes and implementing them.

According to community sources, there have only been two actual movements by community leaders and members at large, to try and bring pressure on school officials to change policies affecting the Mexican-American community. The first of these efforts was in 1970 when a Mexican-American teacher was denied tenure at King Elementary School. Community leaders, members, and college students staged a protest and picketed the school, alleging discrimination and general unfairness to Mexican-Americans. At this time, the community was demanding:

- 1) tenure for the teacher,
- 2) the hiring of more Mexican-American teachers and aides, and,
- 3) the firing of the school principal.

The result of the community's effort was that one teacher's aide was hired for the 1971-1972 school year.

The only other known time when political pressure has been applied by Mexican-Americans to the Joe's Corner School District, was between April 1975 and April 1976. This is the time period which the investigator was able to observe first-hand. The initial pressure was instigated by Ms. Gloria Steiner (see Chapter III), who at that time was the Director of El Centro Latino, a Manpower program aimed at the Mexican population. Steiner, knowing that the State of Michigan legislature had recently passed a bill mandating bilingual instruction in school districts which

had high concentrations of non-English speaking people, took it upon herself to inquire of school administrators as to the possibility of such a program in Joe's Corner, and particularly at King Elementary, since this was a school which had approximately a 22% Mexican-American enrollment. According to Steiner, she was told that it would be "looked into". As time went by, and she received no word from the school administrators, she brought the subject to the attention of Mrs. Alicia Alvarez, a student at El Centro Latino. Mrs. Alvarez felt very strongly about bilingual education (see interview in section on community attitudes), and decided to work at getting a program for Joe's Corner. She first approached Mrs. Juanita Rodriguez and other influential community leaders, to see if they would support her efforts. The initial consensus among this small group of women was to call a general meeting of interested community people, in order to solicit support and present their views on the subject.

The meeting was held in the first week of August 1975, and approximately 45 people were in attendance. Two bilingual specialists from the Michigan State Department of Education were asked to speak to the parent's group, and inform them as to the nature of the state law, and the meaning of bilingual education. There were some parents who wondered if bilingual education meant that their

children's English-speaking ability would be sacrificed. Others however, were in total agreement with the concept of bilingual education, and related to the group many personal stories of their own limited educational experiences, and how they felt that perhaps bilingual education would help their children not only with English, but also give them a sense of pride in being Mexican-Americans. The meeting ended with various committees being formed and given various tasks, such as reviewing the state law, addressing envelopes to more community members, and other matters. The meeting also ended on a high emotional note, and another meeting was scheduled for the following week.

During the following week, Mrs. Alvarez and other members of her committee, drafted a letter to be sent to the area intermediate school district superintendent, on behalf of the parents' group. The following is the complete text of the letter.

Dear Mr. Taylor,

We are writing this letter in hopes that perhaps you will take the initiative in what we consider a very grave matter. We have united as a concerned organization of Spanish-speaking parents to specifically deal with the issue of bilingual-bicultural education within the Joe's Corner public schools.

Historically, the Spanish-speaking children of Joe's Corner have been either ignored or completely disillusioned by the educational establishment. We are also extremely concerned about the lackadaisical attitude taken by the schools whenever it concerns our children. This lack of concern and ineptitude on behalf of the schools is evidenced by an extremely

high dropout rate, and an inexcusable general state of academic unpreparedness among Spanish-speaking students who are in or who have been in the Joe's Corner public school system.

We feel that the above situation is caused in part by the lack of adult role models for Spanish-speaking children to identify with. According to Mr. Roy Hart, Assistant Director of Personnel, there are only two Latino teachers out of a total teaching staff of over 570 in Joe's Corner alone. We feel that this is a totally unjust and unacceptable situation. In a time when bilingual and bicultural teachers are in plentiful supply, your failure to hire them is taken by the Spanish-speaking community as an act of bad faith.

Furthermore, we feel that these problems can be alleviated by a strong Bilingual and Bicultural Education Program. This program must, if it is to succeed, be directed and staffed by qualified bilingual and bicultural personnel. This we feel is extremely important due to the cultural values which our children possess upon entering the educational system for the first time. For too long a period of time, these values have been systematically and consciously erased from their minds. We will no longer passively accept this form of cultural and educational rape.

We hope you will take this matter into serious and quick consideration. As a Parent's Advisory Council we will do all we can to help in the creation of a program such as the aforementioned. We have at our disposal professional consultants to advise us, a list of over 300 recent bilingual and bicultural graduates of several colleges and universities, and a great desire to better our children's education. We are well aware of House Bill 4750, and of its implications for the Joe's Corner Public Schools.

The time has come for Joe's Corner school officials to act diligently in accordance with the law, in creating a viable instructional tool for our children. We urge you, Mr. Taylor, to contact us quickly so that we may begin the basic groundwork that needs to be done.

Sincerely,

Alicia Alvarez, Chairperson
Parent's Advisory Council

This letter was mailed on September 2, 1975, although some members of the parent's group did not like the idea of mentioning "cultural rape". When the superintendent did not immediately reply, Mrs. Alvarez called him on the telephone. According to Mrs. Alvarez, the superintendent told her that he did not have responsibility for the Joe's Corner School District. His concern, according to Alvarez, was the intermediate district, of which Joe's Corner was but one in several. He also suggested that the parent's group address itself to the superintendent of the Joe's Corner School District.

By early September, the parent's group had met four times, each meeting drawing fewer people. There was concern on the part of the leadership, that enough people would not show up for their meeting with the Joe's Corner Board of Education, which they had decided to confront before the end of the fourth Friday enrollment count. The group strategy was to get enough Mexican-American people there so as to "frighten" the board into action. Approximately 50 people showed for the school board meeting, including several out-of-town guests representing the Department of Civil Rights and the Michigan State Department of Education. The investigator was also present at this meeting.

The strategy for the meeting had been set by the group's leadership which was composed of Mrs. Alvarez and

Mrs. Rodriguez. The strategy consisted of going to the school board meeting and speaking Spanish to the board members while Ms. Steiner interpreted and acted as spokesperson for the parent's group. The leadership was hoping to intimidate and embarrass the school board into taking some form of action. The parent's group had been advised by its leadership that most likely nothing would happen this year in terms of program implementation. However, their intent was to prompt the board into planning for a bilingual program for the 1976-1977 academic year.

The strategy worked well for the parent's group. There was somewhat of a circus atmosphere within the meeting room, as parents voiced their opinions in Spanish and before they could be translated into English, the crowd loudly applauded what had been said. Everyone got a chance to speak, and the board members looked very attentive and somewhat surprised at the apparent level of sophistication shown in the organizing of their presentation, and also at the manner in which it was being presented.

One board member responded by saying that he felt he understood what the parents were saying. He related to the group how he had been the son of German immigrants, and how he had watched his older brother struggle with the English language in school. Several people in the crowd responded with words to the effect of "you can't possibly

understand or know how it feels." The board member looked somewhat confused and offended.

The general mood of the school board was one which seemed very cooperative. They agreed that this "problem" merited "looking into," and assigned the task to the assistant superintendent. It appeared that everyone would go home satisfied, when very suddenly and apparently without prior warning, Ben Garza, the "community leader" without a following, threatened the school board by saying that if something were not done immediately, all Mexican-American parents would withdraw their children from school before the fourth Friday count. Garza later told the investigator that he felt that if this were to happen, the school district would lose their federal funds, thus creating economic and political problems for the district.

The president of the school board was visibly disturbed at Garza's comments, but ignored him and adjourned the meeting. Other community leaders such as Rodriguez and Alvarez were also disturbed by Garza's threat. They felt that if he had bothered to attend the parent group's meetings, he would have known of their strategy. Instead, many parents felt that Garza had damaged their efforts.

The parent's group then appeared to dissolve. Only the group's leadership remained to actually conduct its

meetings with school officials. The leadership was composed of Mrs. Alvarez who had never before been involved in politics, and Mrs. Rodriguez, who had a great amount of political experience. The investigator was asked to act as a spokesman for their cause, however, desiring perspective and neutrality, the investigator declined. Instead, the investigator was asked to attend all meetings between community leaders and school officials and act chiefly as an advisor to both. Also, the investigator was asked to provide school officials with statistics reflecting the severity of the educational problems within the Mexican-American community.

It must be pointed out that these community leaders were in essence charged with a tremendous responsibility. The initial responsibility of seeking some sort of bilingual education program was only a part of the entire scope of responsibility. The other part of their responsibility was to represent the variety of views and interests which the community had expressed--not only in the investigator's survey, but in the parent group's meetings also. Not all community members were totally in favor of bilingual education, as stated previously. Also, not all members of the community showed the enthusiasm for educational change, as did the leaders who were "pushing" for bilingual education.

This was a task which the leadership was not

prepared for. In the following weeks, while meeting with school officials on the one hand, the leadership was also trying on the other hand to "educate" Mexican-American opponents of bilingual education. This does not mean to imply that there were many community members who were not in favor of bilingual education. On the contrary, there was actually only one person who expressed public opposition to bilingual education. However, the leadership felt that their chances of succeeding would be damaged if even one person began making public statements against bilingual education. Therefore, the leadership continued to hold meetings with several community members, and inviting State Department employees to speak to them on the merits of bilingual education. This tactic succeeded quite well, since all public opposition to bilingual education from the Mexican-American community, was silenced. According to Mrs. Rodriguez, community people had to be involved in these matters. However, their inclusion was not meant as a positive step in their awareness, but rather as a neutralizing process. As Mrs. Rodriguez explained:

These people know very little of what is really going on. They complain about how bad things are, then 'bitch' about someone trying to improve them. They don't need to be in the decision-making process. Just make them feel like they're important. Include them in the strategy sessions, and soon they'll come around to how we think. They do need to be educated --but carefully and to our point of view.

Summary

In summarizing the first part of this chapter, it is necessary to mention two significant aspects of the education of Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner. While it can be generally acknowledged that the educational level among Mexican-American adults is quite low, it is more important to note the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the community. The entire community could not agree on what their one most significant educational problem was. Many did feel that their children were not receiving an adequate education, however, there were those who felt the educational system was quite good. Therefore, one could conclude that the educational problems, the educational attitudes, and the solutions to these problems as expressed by the community, would also reflect this diversity.

The other significant finding in this part of Chapter IV is the degree of authority exercised by the community's political leaders, in determining the type of education needed by Mexican-American children. It was not the community as a whole which confronted the school board, but rather the leadership. Also, in the attitudes and concerns expressed by the community in the investigator's survey, there was hardly any mention of bilingual or bicultural education. Their attitudes and concerns were more typical of problems which parents encounter in everyday life--money, basic skills; and social interaction. Their

main concern was that their children receive an education which would help them achieve success in life. It was the investigator's interpretation of community sentiment, that this should be accomplished at any cost--whether by regular educational programs, bilingual programs, or any means available, as long as their children succeeded.

This does not imply that the community was not generally in favor of bilingual education. Rather it implies that bilingual education to them was merely a means to an end--success for their children. The investigator interpreted community sentiment towards bilingual education in such a way as to mean that since Anglo education was failing anyway, why not try something new and different. The political leadership however, saw bilingual education not solely as a means to an end, but as a "bread and butter" issue as well. By forcing the school system to provide bilingual education, political leaders would be able to give a positive image of themselves to the community, and provide jobs (as teacher aides), to several members of the community, thus solidifying their political power.

This is not a totally unfamiliar pattern as John Shockley (1974), describes in his book, Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town. Shockley describes the transition of political power in Crystal City, Texas, from a mainly

Anglo-based orientation, to a more radical Chicano political party--La Raza Unida Party (the United Race).

Shockley writes:

In matters affecting the schools in particular, the system continued to feel the effect of the successful strike (student strike). The school attorney, R. A. Taylor, was fired, and Jesse Gamez, a young San Antonio lawyer who had grown up in Crystal City, was hired in his place. The faculty and administration also changed considerably after the strike. . . . By the fall of 1970, for the first time nearly forty percent of the faculty was Mexican-American. And many of the new teachers, both Anglo and Mexican, were quite different from their predecessors in outlook. Because the Crystal City school district was establishing itself as a beachhead for Chicano power, or as Gutierrez (political leader), had said, "for extending education to the Chicano," the teachers accepting appointment tended to be more or less sympathetic to the aims of La Raza Unida.

Besides important changes in the composition of the faculty, the number of teacher aides was greatly expanded, and many Chicano mothers were able to find employment and help the school system at the same time. Similarly, the number of cafeteria workers was increased, with Chicanos becoming the new employees. The Raza Unida administration was thus making full use of the school system to employ many of its supporters. . . . Money that had always gone to Anglos now began shifting dramatically to Mexican-American members of the community. (Shockley, pp. 161-162.)

The difference between Crystal City, Texas and Joe's Corner, Michigan, is not the people, but rather the quantity of people. Political transformation was possible in Crystal City because the population there was overwhelmingly Mexican-American. However, in Joe's Corner, the situation is quite different. Politically, Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner are of no significance to Anglo

politicians. Due to this fact, Mexican-American political leaders in the community have had to rely on tactics other than the ballot box to achieve results.

These new tactics have not worked very well for the overall Mexican-American population in Joe's Corner. Mexican-American political leaders realize this and also, that they are in essence powerless to bring about change. These leaders have instead opted for a means by which they can share in providing stable employment for friends or the offspring of friends. In this manner, they can still be seen at the forefront of community involvement, and also retain their constituency's loyalties.

The Institutional Perspective

The second part of this chapter will address itself to the school administration's perceptions of the educational problems within the Mexican-American community. Particular emphasis will be given to the administration's assessment of these problems from their institutional and professional perspective, and the communication between the school system and the community. Attention will also be given to the schools' efforts to resolve these problems, and the factors which were of significance in the administration's policy and decision-making process.

After more than twelve months of continuous contact with and observation of the existing relationship

between the school administration and the community, the investigator made the following observations:

- 1) the schools and the administration were unaware of existing problems in the education of Mexican-American children,
- 2) the schools and the administration were unprepared to resolve the existing problems, and,
- 3) the schools and the administration were reactive rather than proactive, in attempting to resolve the educational problems in the Mexican-American community.

To better understand the school administration's perceptions and problems in dealing with the Mexican-American community, it is necessary to examine in detail these three general characteristics. Also of significance at this particular point is King Elementary School. Much of the focus in this part of the study will center on this particular school. The reason for this is that King Elementary is located in the heart of "el barrio", in Zone IV. This school has the largest number of Mexican-American children than any school in the district. Another important reason is that many community leaders and members expressed a great amount of concern about that particular school. It also allowed the investigator to reduce the number of school personnel to be interviewed and studied to a manageable number.

Attitudes of School
District Personnel

There were many indications given the investigator by school officials including aides, teachers, principals, and central administrators, to support the three main observations. What follows is the analysis and description of interviews conducted with personnel of the Joe's Corner School District. These interviews and the investigator's participant-observer status will provide the basis for the investigator's conclusions with respect to the relationship between the Joe's Corner School District and the Mexican-American community.

Molly A.

Molly A. is a Mexican-American teacher's aide at King Elementary School in Joe's Corner. She is in her fifth year with the school district, three as an aide for a kindergarten teacher, and two as a "para-professional" for the Title I Headstart Pre-school Program. She described her duties as:

- 1) recruiting students for pre-school,
- 2) telling stories to the pre-school age children, and,
- 3) making home visits to Mexican-American homes.

Molly told the investigator that she had made many home visits this year (1975-76) and that these visits were made when a child was either ill or absent a lot. She also

stated that she felt that there were many Mexican-American children at King Elementary who were very much in need of language instruction. She admitted that working with pre-schoolers and at the kindergarten level made it more difficult to detect language deficiencies "because children are not being taught to read or write at this early age." However, she stated that English language deficiencies among Mexican-American children were very apparent in the upper grade levels.

Molly felt that there was a very substantial need for bilingual instruction at King. She also stated that many teachers at King were very negative towards bilingual education and refused to admit that Mexican-American children were having difficulty in their classrooms. However, Molly felt that since she made the home visits, she had first-hand knowledge of the problems which Mexican-American children were experiencing. She added that some teachers did try to help, but could only do so through Bonnie M., a half-time teacher who worked with Mexican-American children at King for two hours each week. Molly said that Bonnie worked well with children but was only seeing two Mexican-American children at King, at that particular time.

When asked more specifically about her role at King Elementary, Molly added that she did not feel discriminated against, however, she did feel somewhat embarrassed at

faculty meetings. Molly "felt" that part of her role was to "speak up" for the Mexican-American community, something she wanted to do, and felt there was a need to do. However, Molly expressed apprehension and fear in doing this because she felt she did not have the training or proper credentials to make what she considered to be professional judgments. Molly felt she was not on "equal professional grounds" with the rest of the school staff.

In subsequent interviews, Molly stated that the school district's administration had done nothing to hire additional Mexican-American personnel--better qualified than herself. She felt there was a strong need for more Mexican-American teachers, counselors, and administrators. She said that currently there were only two Mexican-American teachers in Joe's Corner, and that they were at the senior and junior high level (a fact substantiated by the personnel office and other administrative officials). The only other information which Molly could add was that she saw no involvement in any manner by the principal at King Elementary (or his office), with Mexican-American children, their families, or the Mexican-American community at large.

Bonnie M.

Bonnie M. is a one-half time teacher with the Joe's Corner School District. Her one-half time status was due

to her asking for maternity leave, but agreeing to the one-half time position instead. Bonnie's main responsibility was to work with Mexican-American children who were having problems with the English language throughout the district. She did this by going from school to school as needed.

By her own admission, Bonnie was very weak in her ability to converse in Spanish. She had learned it while living in Columbia, South America. She said that she worked primarily with very young children or those who knew little Spanish. Bonnie felt that most Mexican-American children at King Elementary did have problems with English and could use some form of help. She continued however by stating, "but I'm restricted to only two students at King. The principal will not allow me to work with any student who has a "C" average or better academically or who is not a discipline problem."

Bonnie substantiated several points made by Molly A., the Mexican-American aide at King Elementary. She stated that many teachers at King were opposed to bilingual instruction there because they had had some negative experiences with the Mexican-American community. She did not elaborate on these negative experiences. She also felt that nothing was being done to hire Mexican-American personnel.

Bonnie continued by saying that she had been hired for this particular position by Nora P., the Director of Instruction who had recently retired. According to Bonnie, she was first given the title of "Director of Bilingual Education." She felt this was done to ease some of the pressures coming from various Mexican-American community leaders. However, when Mrs. P. realized that the title of "Director" meant paying Bonnie on the administrative pay scale, she was quickly "demoted" to teacher. In addition, Bonnie felt she was hired because Nora P. did not trust the personnel office to hire any bilingual personnel after she retired. According to Bonnie, Nora P. was very innovative and was always wanting to start new programs. Bonnie said that it was Nora P. who began moving in the direction of bilingual education because she had recognized the need for it. Nora's intentions with regards to bilingual education were to start small (one school only), and have it only on a trial basis.

With these two conditions in mind, Bonnie wrote a proposal for bilingual education aimed at Oak Park Elementary School where there were few Mexican-American students. Bonnie stated that her reason for writing the program for that particular school was to insure success, since it would be implemented on a trial basis only. She felt that if the program was initiated at King Elementary, where

approximately 64 out of 290 students were Mexican-American, it might fail. She then reasoned that beginning all over again would be extremely difficult.

In the meantime, Mrs. Nora P. retired as the Director of Instruction. The person chosen to succeed her was Lloyd D. When Bonnie submitted her proposal to Lloyd D. he refused to accept it. According to Bonnie, she was given no specific reason for the refusal of the proposal except that Lloyd wanted it done differently. Bonnie, who had taught under Lloyd (a former elementary school principal), did not like or trust him. She described Lloyd as "vague, ambiguous, and nervous."

Another teacher at King Elementary School, Mrs. Sandra O., also expressed concerns in such a manner as to illustrate the severity of the unawareness among administrators. Sandra made the following points:

- 1) "I am concerned that there is no communication between the school and the Mexican-American community. The community is not comfortable and our principal makes them feel uncomfortable."
- 2) "There is also no communication between us and our principal. The principal removes himself from teachers, parents, and everything."
- 3) "I do not agree with bilingual education as proposed here at King. I feel it will do more harm than good. I recognize the fact that some kids have language problems, two in particular, and I speak slowly to them."
- 4) "Don W. is a great individual and administrator, but he handles mostly finances. Lloyd is

Director of Instruction. It would be better for all if they switched jobs."

Don W.

Don W. was perhaps this investigator's greatest source of information from within the central administration of the Joe's Corner School District. Don was the Coordinator for Special Projects and the Director of Compensatory Education. In all of the meetings which had transpired between the Parent's Group, State Department of Education officials, and Joe's Corner school administrators, Don had never been a direct participant. It was not until Lloyd D., Director of Instruction, had "blown up" over the issue of bilingual education that Don became actively involved with the problems of the Mexican-American community.

In the many "talks" which this investigator had with Don, he revealed himself and his administrative colleagues as very fallible human beings. He expressed concern that the Mexican-American community felt that the school district had never tried to help their children. He specifically pointed out two previous signs of trying to help. The first was the hiring of Molly A., the aide at King Elementary. That was in October of 1970. This was done, he said, because they saw the need for something positive at King. Then he added that he, Nora P., and the

Assistant Superintendent had introduced a teaching tool at King. He described it as "The Talking Page", a recording system which was to teach word-decoding to children having language problems. He added that it was not solely intended for Mexican-American children but recognized that they did need this language instruction very badly.

As the investigator and Don W. spent more time discussing problems and issues, Don became more trusting and was very open with his responses. He was very emphatic about the reasons that "The Talking Page" had failed and other problems related to King Elementary School. He said that the teachers at King tried to use this method as the "sole means" of language instruction. Don felt the teachers at King had previously and were presently shirking their responsibility. "The principal there," he said, "is of no help whatsoever. He shirks his responsibilities all of the time. As long as he (the principal) doesn't have to deal with it, he doesn't care one way or the other."

Don was extremely incensed at the King principal and blamed him for his "lack of guts to control his teachers," and, for the failures of many positive efforts at King Elementary. Another example cited by Don of administrative failure on the part of the principal was the principal's non-attendance at meetings between Don and Mexican-American parents (held at King), in regards to

bilingual education. Don said, "he was commanded to attend! Hell, the meetings are being held in his school building."

Don felt that the principal's failure to attend these meetings was the direct result of two things:

- 1) according to Don, the principal was "anti-everything", meaning that anything new was bad or wrong, and,
- 2) the principal was retiring at the end of the 1975-76 school year, therefore, his attitude was one of "why bother?"

Don was of the opinion that there had been an almost complete administrative breakdown with regards to King Elementary School. It was apparent that the principal had no control of his teachers and that central administration had no control over the principal. He was extremely happy that the principal was retiring, and expressed hope that the new principal could "turn that school inside-out."

The extent to which administrators in the Joe's Corner School District were unaware of the severity of the problems among Mexican-American children was illustrated even more by Don. When the investigator asked Don what events or factors had convinced top administrators to look more clearly at these problems, he responded that it had been this investigator's survey which had finally convinced him.

Don said that his initial direct involvement with the educational problems of the Mexican-American community and in particular bilingual education, began after the Parent's Advisory Committee (Mexican-American parents group) sent a heated letter to the Intermediate School District Superintendent (see letter in section on Community Attempts at Educational Reform). Copies of this letter were also sent to the governor of the state and various state officials, as well as the Joe's Corner Daily newspaper. It was at this point that Don became concerned and "I began looking for ways to improve the situation. His efforts were hurried when a large group of Mexican-American parents confronted the Board of Education a few days later demanding that the school district comply with the state bilingual education law.

According to Don, he felt that the issues and events leading the district to a decision were getting very emotional. As mentioned previously in the Bonnie M. interview, Lloyd, the Director of Instruction, had already "wiped his hands" of bilingual education. Don began by going through the enrollment lists of all students in compensatory education and special education. In his own words, he "found too many Latin names on the enrollment lists." Don next called the investigator and asked for any statistics from the survey which could be of use to him.

The investigator supplied Don with the following information regarding Mexican-American children at King Elementary School. Don explained that his initial lack of direct involvement stemmed from unawareness and fear. His feeling was that if he took the responsibility for bilingual education upon himself and failed, that this would certainly reflect badly on him. However, after studying the information presented to him, he felt that "something had to be done." He stated that he felt there would be a lot of opposition but that his concern was for kids--not teachers, administrators, or parents. Later that fall, after meeting with a parent's group at one of the elementary schools he related how several principals had accused him of "giving everything away." In actuality he stated he had only "promised the parents to look into the possibilities of a bilingual program." According to Don his response to the principals was, "I am concerned with education and kids--not you!" It was at this time according to Don, that the Assistant Superintendent told him that he had a friend in Washington, D.C. who read bilingual proposals, and urged him to submit one.

Peter M.

Up to this point, many views have been expressed and duly recorded regarding the principal of King Elementary School--Peter M. The investigator felt more than

TABLE 12

AGE-GRADE RETARDATION AMONG
MEXICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN
(King Elementary School)

5	m=0 f=1	m=1 f=1	m=0 f=1					
6		m=4 f=1						
7		m=1 f=2 **	m=3 f=2		m=1 f=0			
8		m=1 f=0 **	m=0 f=3 **	m=2 f=4	m=0 f=1			
9				m=1 f=2 **	m=5 f=0	m=0 f=1		
10					m=0 f=1 **	m=3 f=0	m=2 f=1	
11						m=1 f=3 **	m=1 f=0	
12						m=0 f=1 **	m=2 f=3 **	
13							m=1 f=0 **	m=2 f=3 **
	Pre-	K	1	2	3	4	5	6

Grade Level

Total Population= 62

m=male f=female

**=Age-grade retardation
9 males and 18 females
manifest age-grade retar-
dation--42.8%

obligated to interview him and record his attitudes, perceptions, and feelings towards the Mexican-American community which his school served. What follows is the narrative of two formal interviews and one informal "lunch" with Peter M.

Peter M. has been at King Elementary School for eighteen years--nine as superintendent and nine as principal. He is retiring at the end of the 1975-76 school year. Peter agreed to allow notes to be taken during his interviews. The interviews sought mainly to seek out information about Peter's assessment of any problems with the Mexican-American student or community population and also to solicit his views on the role of the administrator in a multicultural school.

Peter M. began the interview by saying that he had never personally encountered any problems in dealing with the Mexican-American community or school population. He noted that the "only" problem he had ever encountered was with a Mexican-American teacher. "The man simply could not perform, so I had him transferred." (Peter did not mention that the Mexican-American community had protested and picketed King Elementary over this action, and demanded his dismissal.)

Peter M. stated that any problems his school had could be directly attributed to "lower socio-economic

class whites." He felt that the "whites'" high incidence of poverty and divorce made it difficult for their children to succeed in school. He added, "since most Mexican-American homes are rarely broken, then most Mexican-American children are very successful at King."

This discussion led to an expose of some values held by Peter M. Value-laden statements made by Peter M. included:

- 1) "There is no more church in our society and therefore no morals."
- 2) "Many parents are extremely involved with their children up to about the third grade. Then sex is more important than the kids."
- 3) "It disturbs me, the number of pregnancies at such a young age. And also the number of children being raised by grandmothers. This happens a lot to white kids--not Mexicans."
- 4) "Society is sick."

In his own words, Peter admitted that his views were very middle class and "somewhat puritanical."

Peter M. said that there were only thirty to forty Spanish-surnamed students at King.* He continued:

"Only one or two have problems with English. We used to pair these non-English speakers with children that were bilingual. This is the only thing we ever did. Eventually the kids did very well and caught on to everything. The Spanish-speaking students here have always done well."

*The investigator's survey showed 62 students of Mexican descent attending King that year. See Table 12.

They score in the top one-half of the class on aptitude tests. We had one other program here about six or seven years ago--the Miami Linguistic Program (the Talking Page). It failed miserably because none of the children really needed the program.

The principal felt that a bilingual program was also not needed at King Elementary. The reason he gave for his lack of involvement in the bilingual education organizational meetings (he had been ordered to attend), was that he was soon retiring and felt he did not need to become involved. Peter continued his views on bilingual education by adding:

It simply is not needed here. As I understand it, the woman who is chairing the bilingual committee, or spearheading the drive for it, is not even Mexican--by any means! She doesn't even live in this area. I think that bilingual education is only an excuse to hire people from the outside because currently there is no teacher in Joe's Corner who is certified as a bilingual teacher.

Peter M. stressed that he had always had "great cooperation from the Mexican community." "Only a couple of parents have ever complained against me, and only one or two families have taken their kids out of King and enrolled them in Catholic schools." He stated that all parents in the King Elementary area were invited to school functions and PTA meetings in the same manner--by letter. However, he added that the PTA did not really function at King any more. "It used to, a long time ago."

The principal also had very definite views on the relationship between the school and community and the administrator's role in that relationship. The following responses were obtained from Peter M. when the investigator asked, "What advice would you give an administrator coming in to replace you?"

Community liaison

"An administrator needs parents interested in kids. Select key people for committees, groups, etc. I wish they would voice how they feel more often. They don't get prejudice from any of the staff. We had a lady who created ripples about six or eight years ago, but we ran her off."

Humanism

"Humanism is an extremely important factor in school. Sometimes we get too tied up in meeting objectives. I feel that if we teach these kids nothing but 'getting along', it's OK. Sometimes we need to forget about the 3 R's and emphasize values."

Discipline

"Children need control in order to learn to respect others' rights."

Teachers

"Teachers pass the buck quite a lot. It's been made easy for them. They are unwilling to admit problems exist in their classrooms. They are never home when you call them."

Administrators

"A good administrator leads by example. Teachers receive sensitivity from his modeling. If you're not involved with the youngsters, you don't know the real situation. Any administrator should be involved at the personal level--not only with the finances."

Central Administration and
the School Board

"Administrative decisions down there are based on how many votes go with you. The superintendent has been here nine years and never come into my school. The assistant superintendent snobs the school board and shows them only the positive side of things. The school board should have more lay people from the community on it, or at least someone who understands kids."

Peter M. told the interviewer that he wished there were more Mexican parents in the neighborhood because "I love those Mexican kids." His interviews ended after one last reflection--"Whoever takes over is going to have a hell of a job."

The Educational Decision-Making
Process

It is apparent that all of these issues, events, meetings, and the ideas, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings presented in them are extremely complex. It is difficult to establish who did what to whom and at what point. In order to clarify this, the investigator has compiled a month by month description of the events, people, issues, and results involved in the community-school confrontation. This description will also illustrate the decision-making process for community leaders and school administrators in Joe's Corner. The investigator was involved as a participant-observer in nearly all meetings.

April, 1975

Ms. Gloria Steiner, Director of El Centro Latino (a Manpower program), approaches officials of the Joe's Corner School District. The specific officials involved were:

Nora P., Director of Instruction
Don W., Director of Special Projects and
Compensatory Education
Ted A., Assistant Superintendent and Federal
Programs Officer

The four discuss ways in which the school district can comply with the state's bilingual education law. The four agree that the deadline for submitting new federal proposals is only ten days away and that nothing can be done due to a lack of school district funds at the present time.

May, 1975

Another meeting is held by the four subjects involved. No new directions or responses are given by either party.

June, 1975

Nora P. appoints Bonnie M. as Director of Bilingual Education, one-half time. Bonnie's summer duties are to screen the records of Mexican-American children in order to establish which ones need language remediation. She is quickly demoted to the status of teacher because of financial reasons.

Two factors become significant. First, appointing a Director of Bilingual Education did not mean that the school district was going to implement a bilingual program. It means that Bonnie M. would serve as a remedial tutor for those students identified by her, when school resumed in September. Secondly, the Mexican-American community leaders reacted negatively to an "Anglo" being given that title and job, and also to the school district calling it bilingual education.

July, 1975

A position for a bilingual teacher is opened at the Skills Training Center through school district funds. Mexican-Americans are not given a chance to interview and consequently the position is given to an Anglo. Ms. Juanita Rodriguez, community leader and an employee of the State of Michigan Civil Rights Commission threatens to file a discrimination suit. The school district admits an error was made but will not change its decision. Community leaders are angry but decide not to pursue the matter. Instead they decide to pursue the implementation of bilingual education by the school district. The initial drive to form the Mexican-American Parent's Group is begun at this time.

August, 1975

The Mexican-American Parent's Group begins to hold open meetings with officials of the State Department of Education. The officials' role was to "educate" parents on the merits of bilingual education. The group elects officers and divides into differing committees.

Lloyd D. is appointed to replace Nora P., retiring Director of Instruction for the Joe's Corner School District.

September, 1975

An angry letter of protest is sent to the Intermediate School District by the Parent's Group. The letter demands bilingual education. The response by the intermediate superintendent is that the matter should be taken up with the Joe's Corner School District.

In mid-September, 40-45 Mexican-American parents confront the school board of Joe's Corner. The school board instructs the assistant superintendent to "look into" the matter. Parents feel that "some good" was accomplished. One community leader threatens a Mexican-American student boycott. Both parents and school board are put-off by the idea.

In late September, school officials and community leaders meet to discuss educational problems among Mexican-Americans in the community. Also present is the Assistant

Director of Personnel for the school district.

The discussion centers around bilingual education, hiring Mexican-American personnel, and the lack of money in the district. The school officials report that funding bilingual education with school finances is impossible. The hiring of professional staff is also reported to be impossible at this point. The school officials agree to hire some teacher's aides for the immediate need and to review their hiring policies. The community leaders appeared very satisfied. A meeting to include State Department of Education officials was agreed to for the following month.

October, 1975

Three representatives from the State Department of Education (bilingual education specialists), Lloyd D., Don W., Bonnie M., two community leaders, and the investigator met to again discuss the possibilities of bilingual education. The meeting was stressful in that one state official tried to get a firm money commitment from Lloyd D. Lloyd appeared very nervous and committed nothing. The meeting ended in this fashion.

It was at the conclusion of this meeting (according to Bonnie M. and Don W.), that Lloyd D. removed himself from the responsibility of bilingual education. The

responsibility was given to Don, who had already begun to become concerned about the situation.

October 1975 - December 1975

Don W. begins the study of his compensatory and special education enrollment lists. He finds "far too many Latin names." He discusses the matter with the assistant superintendent. They agree that more information is needed.

December, 1975

Don W. calls the investigator to solicit his survey data. The investigator agrees to help and a meeting is set up for January.

January, 1976

The investigator and Don W. meet to compare information. In his own words, Don is "shocked" at the age-grade retardation figures presented by the investigator. Copies of the data are made and Don reports to the assistant superintendent.

The investigator was not present at the meeting between Don and the assistant superintendent. However, the result is that a decision is made to apply for federal money for a bilingual program. According to Don, the decision was made because of the severity of the problem

and the promise of monetary proposal support from a friend in Washington, D.C.

February, 1976

Don once again solicits help from the investigator's data and community contacts to establish which children are in the greatest need. Names and addresses of these students and their parents are obtained.

March, 1976

Don W. writes letters to these parents inviting them to attend a meeting with him to discuss bilingual education.

The first meeting with Mexican-American parents was held March 11, 1976. A brief summary of a bilingual education proposal was discussed. Many parents were hopeful. Mr. Peter M. the principal of King Elementary, did not attend.

March 1976 - April 1976

Subsequent meetings were held between Don W. and Mexican-American parents. Don wanted their input. Don confided to the investigator that he was very pessimistic about the proposal being funded, since Joe's Corner was not a metropolis with great numbers of Mexican-American students. However, he wanted "the record" to show that the school district was trying to help the community.

Patterns of Communication

It is apparent from this series of events and the subjects' responses to differing issues, that the relationship between the Mexican-American community and the Joe's Corner School District is quite complex. The communication patterns which exist between them appear to be spontaneous and haphazard. From the interviews conducted with both community members and school officials it appears that communication occurs only when there is trouble or dissatisfaction. This becomes especially clear when the principal of King Elementary states that "all parents are invited to school functions and PTA meetings in the same manner--by letter. However, the PTA does not function at King . . ." It seems that one of the most important channels of communication is not operating.

Another apparent characteristic of the communication between the community and the school system is that of confrontation. It appears that community leaders and school officials are constantly in one form of confrontation or another. It would perhaps be more correct to say that this communication pattern is one of "approach-avoidance". It seems that the community is constantly "approaching" and the schools are constantly "avoiding".

Summary

In summary, it is important to point out that there appears to be several distinct tendencies and patterns in the school-community relationship. These tendencies and patterns can be directly drawn from the interviews with school officials, their meetings with community members and leaders, and their behavior and reaction to ideas proposed by the Mexican-American community.

First, it appears that schools and school administrators have been unable to identify the specific problems among Mexican-American children in Joe's Corner schools. This gives the administration the label of being "unaware". The school officials appear to not use their research capability within their own system. They had to rely on this investigator's survey data for information concerning Mexican-American children. In this same vein, the schools also rely heavily upon community leaders who more than likely are not qualified to make professional educational needs assessments.

Second, there is a tendency exhibited by the Joe's Corner School District to react to Mexican-American community pressure, rather than plan ahead in a proactive manner. This reaction can be seen as negative because many times the schools are reacting to individual community leaders who may not accurately represent the problems

within the Mexican-American community. As pointed out in the first part of this chapter, Mexican-American parents are extremely diverse and heterogeneous in their educational views. The community leadership, however, is homogeneous in composition. Therefore, it would be difficult for a few leaders with the same general views and attitudes, to represent the diversity of community sentiments. This severely limits school administrators in that their solutions to the educational problems of Mexican-Americans become highly homogeneous themselves. A good example of this in Joe's Corner is the issue of bilingual education.

It became apparent that community leaders in Joe's Corner were demanding bilingual education for Spanish-speaking students. The administration's decision to write a proposal for bilingual education was based on what community leaders wanted. There was no assessment performed to actually ascertain the needs of the Mexican-American children.

Another factor which became apparent in this chapter was the seeming lack of organizational control expressed by administrators. It was clear that teachers were incorrectly utilizing a teaching tool, yet no one bothered to correct them. Also, a principal knowingly disobeys a directive from central administration ordering

him to attend a bilingual education meeting. There was also evidence suggested by school administrators that a principal and his teachers were "shirking" their responsibilities. All of this seems to have occurred with full knowledge of top-level central administrators, yet no action was taken.

Perhaps the most critical factor which appeared in this chapter is the complete lack of a "hard money" commitment from school officials. The decision to actually help the Mexican-American community seemed to depend on the availability of federal funds to implement new programs with. School administrators demonstrated a pessimistic view on the availability of such aid. However, they appeared to go "through the motions" of seeking aid--"for the record". Hardline money commitments were minimal, such as in the hiring of classroom aides. Also, the decision to apply for federal funds came about in part, because of a "friend in Washington, D.C."

Finally, it is apparent from this chapter that the Joe's Corner School District administrative personnel are very diverse in their personalities. Some teachers want to help but are restricted. One administrator finds the problem too "nerve-wracking", therefore, he delegates authority. The administrator who finally did accept responsibility did so with reluctance. He admitted that

he was afraid to fail and be blamed by the community as well as his colleagues. It would appear that this diversity could be an asset in solving critical school district problems, by allowing differing administrators to share their views and concerns. It appears, however, that the exact opposite occurred in Joe's Corner.

Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study has been on the relationship between a Mexican-American community and the social and public welfare agencies, as well as the educational institutions which serve it. More precisely, the study has examined in-depth, the mutual inner workings and attitudes of each. This final chapter will address itself to the results of the study, in terms of what the investigator feels should be gained by all concerned parties, and what the study in general should mean. Therefore, in keeping with the personal and descriptive nature of the study, the investigator will address his readers in an open and personal manner.

As is often the case with anthropological studies, this particular study is based on soft data. As the investigator, I can only point to patterns and tendencies observed in order to draw my conclusions. This being the case, it is difficult for me to point conclusively to any set of statistics or observations and say conclusively that "this, without a doubt, is the way it is." Instead, I will endeavor to point out patterns of interactions and raise

more macroscopic questions which will lead us to a better understanding of communities such as Joe's Corner.

The comments in the chapter will center upon ways in which similar communities can be helped by those in position to lend help. Therefore, I will try and restrict my conclusions to:

- 1) the overall general socio-economic situation in Joe's Corner;
- 2) what the study should mean to social service and public welfare agencies and their personnel;
- 3) what the study should mean to educators, school administrators, and curriculum planners; and,
- 4) what the study should mean to the Mexican-American community and its leadership.

Socio-economic Conditions

First, the macroscopic socio-economic situation in Joe's Corner, despite the apparent heterogeneity, is fairly poor. This is reflected in the overall statistics presented in Tables 1-6 in Chapter II. These tables show the general unemployment rate among Mexican-American heads of household to be approximately 26.5%. Also, two-thirds of all Mexican-American households had annual incomes of \$10,000 or less. Housing and property values also appear to be poor among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner.

By themselves, these statistics appear to show the Mexican-American community to be in a state of general

economic depression. However, I do not feel that this is totally the case in Joe's Corner. First, this study was conducted at a time when the entire country was in an economic recession--a fact that could not be avoided. Also, in the absence of hard evidence from the non-Mexican-American community, it is difficult to state conclusively that Mexican-Americans are at the bottom of socio-economic scale in Joe's Corner. It is my general feeling that in such a state of economic recession, perhaps higher unemployment and inadequate housing conditions, are more visible among minority groups. This, however, is pure speculation on my part.

Perhaps of most importance in looking at the socio-economic conditions among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner, is the question "why?" Why, for example, did 78.3% of the households interviewed, feel that their housing was adequate or satisfactory? Why were property values reported so low? Why were direct aid-types of public welfare, the most used by Mexican-American community members?

Obviously, the answers to these questions are difficult to determine--if at all possible to determine. I can only speculate as to what I feel are the answers. Working as a participant-observer one must rely on time and speculative "hunches".

In working in Joe's Corner, it took a great amount of interactive time with community leaders and members, before I began to "feel" that I knew the community. Based on these "feelings", I can only say that the Mexican-American community, in general, does not view their socio-economic condition in the same manner that perhaps others may view it. It is my feeling that these conditions have become in a sense "normative" for Mexican-Americans.

One should be careful in the interpretation of this word. I do not mean to say that poverty-like conditions are generally "acceptable" to Mexican-Americans. This would be erroneous. What I mean to say is that these conditions have perhaps become so familiar to Mexican-Americans, that only drastic economic changes could make a difference for many. It was my general feeling in Joe's Corner, that the apparent lower socio-economic conditions among Mexican-Americans were not "acceptable" by them. However, the means for self-correction were not easily available or accessible to many. Consequently, these socio-economic conditions may appear "acceptable" because of the futility in the change process. Perhaps this can be better illustrated by a question: "How does an unemployed Mexican-American laborer, with no special skills, improve his economic station in life?"

The answer to this question is not easy, and perhaps there is no answer. In all honesty, I do not have an answer. However, through my experience in Joe's Corner I was able to develop a "feeling" for such a situation. That feeling is that the average person in this situation does not drastically improve himself. Instead, this person hopes that his sons and daughters will have it better. If this sounds too much like the "American Dream," so be it. Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner also dream.

Despite these overall socio-economic conditions among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner, there is also a great amount of socio-economic heterogeneity. Not all Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner are poor. They don't all live in sub-standard housing. Many have had and will continue to have excellent jobs in business and industry. Perhaps this is an indication of partial needs among Joe's Corner Mexican-Americans. It is my feeling that more Mexican-Americans being absorbed into the economic mainstream of the community would alleviate some of the socio-economic problems which they face.

Social Service and Public Welfare Agencies

The scope of social service and public welfare agencies in Joe's Corner is extremely varied. Services range from child and drug abuse, to educational and

nutrition services. The overall impact of these services on the Mexican-American community, however, is minimal. This segment of the concluding chapter will try to examine four critical areas where I feel public agencies are failing, and ways in which the overall delivery of services can be improved.

First, it is important to note that Table 7 in Chapter II shows the need and use of social and public welfare services by Mexican-Americans. The most widely used services were those direct-aid type services such as food stamps, aid to dependent children, unemployment compensation, and social security. These statistics by themselves are not that significant. For example, people who are justifiably unemployed will probably receive unemployment benefits; and old people will probably receive social security benefits.

What is of significance in examining these statistics is not what aid people received, but rather what aid was not received. Services such as counseling, educational training, nutrition, adoption, and health were hardly used by the Mexican-American community. This can either mean that Mexican-Americans did not need these services and therefore declined them, or that social and public welfare agencies did not attempt or did not know how to service the Mexican-American community. After more than two years

of study in this community, I came to the conclusion that the failure of these agencies with specific regard to Mexican-Americans, was because of the latter reasons.

Generally, I found social service and public welfare agencies in Joe's Corner to be lacking in the Mexican-American community. The reasons for this vary and are complex. However, these are the general conclusions which I arrived at:

- 1) there is a general insensitivity and lack of understanding about Mexican-Americans by agency directors and personnel;
- 2) many agencies fail to recognize ineffective programs and measures aimed at the Mexican-American community;
- 3) there is a lack of commitment from local "hard money" funding sources, not only in hiring Mexican-Americans, but also in committing funds to meet Mexican-American community needs;
- 4) agencies appear to develop aid programs for the Mexican-American community only when political pressure is applied to them, or, when "soft money" incentives appear to help the overall agency's scope of work; and,
- 5) agencies in Joe's Corner exhibited no empirical means for helping determine needs within the Mexican-American community.

These five conclusions are based not only on my observations, but upon the actual practices among the agencies I examined. If one examines closely the operation of programs such as the Skills Training Center and Family Planning Project, one can see the insensitivity and general

lack of knowledge displayed by agency personnel. One also need not look very far to find a significant lack of Mexican-American agency personnel. Also, it is apparent from Table 7, that very few of these agencies can claim to be helping the Mexican-American community.

It is apparent to me that agency failures in Joe's Corner are a direct result of these five conclusions, with some agencies being at fault in all five, and others being at fault in only selected areas. These five conclusions should form the basis for any improvement these and other agencies wish to make in terms of delivering services to the Mexican-American community.

First, agency personnel must find ways in which they can better understand Mexican-Americans. The values and cultural differences of Mexican-Americans and "Anglo" agency staff are too far removed in many instances from each other. One way of improving understanding is by having more contact with Mexican-American professional staff. This professional staff need not come from the immediate community. If the immediate community has no persons with the particular skills sought by the agency, an effort must be made to recruit Mexican-Americans from outside the community.

Second, when programs appear to not be working in the community, input must be sought out, and new methods

employed. This was especially clear in the case of El Centro Latino's training programs. Other programs such as the Skills Training Center also have need for improvement in this area. Training programs should seek ways in which they can perhaps switch to competency-based models of operation.

Although my opinion is that politics will always play a role in social and public welfare agencies, this role should be minimized. This could occur if "soft money" programs were ended totally, and replaced by local funding sources. This would give the community a sense of "ownership". In this way, accountability for the manner in which funds are expended and decisions made, would become a major responsibility of the community and its elected officials. This would also serve to add some measure of security to the employees of such locally-funded agencies. As it is presently, many employees are uncertain as to their job status and this, in my opinion, affects job performance and the delivery of services.

Educational Institutions

Formal education among Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner appears to be low. Again, however, the absence of educational statistics among non-Mexican-American groups makes comparison difficult. The intent of this section is not to compare statistics. Instead, it will focus upon

the nature of the relationship between schools in Joe's Corner, and the Mexican-American population. Particular emphasis will be given to the decision-making process employed by Joe's Corner school administration.

From my observation of the relationship between Mexican-Americans and school administrators in Joe's Corner, I concluded that:

- 1) school officials were unaware of the problems faced by Mexican-American children in the Joe's Corner school system;
- 2) school administrators relied heavily on Mexican-American para-professionals and community leaders to advise them on children's school-related problems, instead of using their own research capabilities;
- 3) that the school administrators respond directly to community political pressure; and,
- 4) that school administrators in Joe's Corner were unwilling to use local "hard-money" funds to aid Mexican-American school children.

The nature of the relationship between Mexican-Americans and school administrators in Joe's Corner seemed more negative than positive. Many community members expressed dissatisfaction with their children's education, and although attempts to alter the situations were made several times, very little was gained by the community. Community members in essence, felt powerless to control or have input into their children's schools. This is evident from the interviews and descriptions presented in Chapter IV.

From all observations which I made, it seems that school administrators paid no attention to community concerns until the situation became critical. The school administrators in Joe's Corner were content to not disturb the status quo until direct community political pressure was applied to them. This pressure came in the form of the parent's group which confronted the school board, and when this group wrote the letter to the intermediate district superintendent.

The events leading up to the final decision to try bilingual education are a good example of the attitudes and fears of Joe's Corner school administrators. It seemed that no one wanted to take responsibility. Administrators were afraid of failure and academic, as well as community, repercussions.

When administrators finally decided to take action, it is my opinion that they went about doing so in the wrong manner. First, instead of using their internal research capabilities to identify the problems, they instead relied on community leaders' perceptions of the problems and their eventual solution.

This, I should add, is not a totally incorrect approach. There should always be allowances for community or parental input. However, Joe's Corner school officials used these community leaders as if they were experts in

the field of education. These community people were in fact not experts--a fact known to school administrators. The school administrators are supposed to be the "experts." School administrators should have taken control of the situation by 1) researching the problem; 2) formulating ideas for possible solutions; 3) implementing their solutions; and 4) evaluating the results. Each of these steps could have had community input. Consequently, instead of having community members making unprofessional decisions, school administrators could have taken the responsibility.

It seems to me, however, that the approach used by Joe's Corner school administrators was in many ways deliberate. It appears as if this was an expedient manner for dealing with a politically troublesome community. From all indications given me by school administrators, it appeared that they only wanted "shown on the record" that they were trying to help.

The decision to finally try bilingual education in Joe's Corner was motivated not only by the political pressure being applied by community leaders, but also by the incentive of obtaining a federal grant with which to start the new program. This became evident in meeting after meeting, where school officials were reluctant to commit internal or "hard monies". Indeed, the assistant superintendent gave his approval to the idea of bilingual

education, at least in part, because he had "friend in Washington D.C. who reads them."

Finally, I would like to say that school administrators must know the communities which they serve. In my opinion, Joe's Corner school administrators and the community as a whole, would have been better off if they would have admitted that problems existed and taken responsibility or "ownership" of these problems. They then could have gone about the business of trying to solve the problems. In this manner, they would have looked more credible in the eyes of community leaders and members. School officials could have conducted a needs assessment to gather empirical data, then, presented the community leaders and parents with viable options or alternatives. Instead, they further alienated a dissatisfied and angry community, and helped to further expand the existing credibility gap.

Community Leadership

In this section I would like to briefly address myself to the Mexican-American leadership of Joe's Corner. There are impressions and observations I made concerning leadership, which may perhaps prove beneficial.

The first impression I had of the Mexican-American leadership in Joe's Corner was that it represented the community in all phases of community life. This included

politics, legal affairs, socio-economic improvement, and education. After much closer observation, I came to the realization that this was truly the case in Joe's Corner. As time passed, however, I concluded that the Mexican-American leadership in Joe's Corner was not able to represent the community at large, in all phases of community life.

First, the Mexican-American leadership is a very homogeneous group of "older" population residents. This small group of leaders has been representing the community for years. This longevity in leadership status, in my opinion, does not mean that these leaders are necessarily qualified to lead in various specialized fields such as education. It merely points to a gap in the existing leadership. In essence, there are not enough Mexican-American community leaders in Joe's Corner with specific knowledge in specialized fields.

The most evident of these is the field of education. Community leaders articulated "the needs" of the community to school administrators, only as they perceived those needs. These perceptions were not based on empirical knowledge of children's problems. It is my observation that the articulated needs voiced by community leaders were based on political and economic considerations. Community leaders do understand that bilingual education programs

will need bilingual directors, teachers, and teacher aides. It is my distinct impression that these educational gains, are viewed by community leaders as political and economic advances. Education is merely a focal point of community organization, and therefore a secondary concern.

The real problem with community leaders in Joe's Corner is their lack of expertise in such fields as education, law, and social services. The present community leaders actually represent "social" leaders. What is needed is a diverse leadership which is knowledgeable in specific areas. This heterogeneous leadership would be better able to represent the diverse views and problems of the community.

Another point which should be made concerning the Mexican-American leadership in Joe's Corner is that of community responsibility. Once community political and economic goals are achieved, what responsibility do community leaders have in order to insure a "pay-off"? Community leaders must realize that they have a shared responsibility with community agencies and institutions in order to insure that programs aimed at the community actually work. The case of El Centro Latino illustrates this point vividly. How can community leaders mis-manage a program so badly, then expect to either be re-funded or remain credible to agencies and community alike?

In conclusion, the leadership of the Mexican-American community in Joe's Corner needs to be more diverse and representative of the various peoples and problems in the community. Political, educational, and economic goals can only be achieved if the leadership is willing to share the responsibility for their solution.

Summary

The Mexican-American community of Joe's Corner, Michigan, is not atypical. There exists a heterogeneity in its composition which transcends all socio-economic, political, educational, and social class levels. In my opinion, this heterogeneity is perhaps the single, most important variable to understanding the community. It is perhaps due to this diversity among Mexican-Americans, that social service and public welfare agencies, as well as the educational institutions, have not been able to understand or help the community. This diversity also has caused the community to not understand itself.

It was my experience to observe that the diversity within the Mexican-American population, was never acknowledged by either social and public welfare agencies, or the school system in Joe's Corner. These agencies and schools in essence treated all Mexican-Americans alike. The community's established institutions were constantly searching for a common denominator or solution, in order

to say that they were trying to meet the needs within the Mexican-American community.

This same heterogeneity hinders community leaders in their attempt to alleviate problems in the community. This is so because while the community is diverse in terms of values, attitudes, and socio-economic conditions, the leadership is homogeneous in composition. Mexican-American community leaders in Joe's Corner are essentially the same people who have represented the community for the past twenty to thirty years. Consequently, this leadership approaches educational problems in the same manner that it approaches any other type of problem.

What I am endeavoring to say about community leadership is that more diverse leadership is necessary in order to meet the diversity of community problems. Political leaders should be political leaders, and educational leaders should be developed to help meet the existing educational problems. In the absence of such leadership, it should be either developed by local leaders and institutions working jointly, or imported from outside of the community.

In my opinion, there exists no common denominator or miracle cure to solve all of the educational and socio-economic problems within the Mexican-American community. Schools and social service agencies are not agents for

social change. They are merely focal points for community organization. How good can a school or agency be, if the community in which it exists is in and of itself a hindrance to advancement?

The diversity found within the community completely negates the "common denominator" approach to the solution of problems. Mexican-Americans in Joe's Corner have many diverse attitudes, problems, and views which cannot be solved or even understood if one assumes a totally myopic position relative to the solution or understanding of those problems.

It is my hope that this study, although not without its flaws, will be of practical value to the reader. It was not my intent to make moral judgements. However, there were questions which needed to be asked and answered, and decisions made about the study's content. It is my feeling that this only shows the critical need for more research of this type. As one "older" resident of Joe's Corner said, ". . . aqui estamos y no nos vamos . . . we are here, and we are not leaving."

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