The removal of a child from a family is the most intrusive action that a state can take in infringing upon the privacy of a family and the cherished right to rear children without surveillance or interference. However, in exceptional situations—when a child is found in circumstances that endanger his or her health and safety—the law allows for a child to be removed. Minnesota, along with other states, has enacted a series of laws to limit the power of the state to separate children from their families. For example, a child may only be separated for 72 hours (known as the 72-hour hold), unless a court order allows an extension. Furthermore, only a law enforcement officer may physically remove a child from a family. Although out-of-home placement is an indispensable component of the child welfare system and often is essential to protect a child’s health and welfare, it is always a stressful event for a child, even if it is only for a brief period of time.

With support from the University of Minnesota’s Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare and a New Initiative grant from CURA, we examined the circumstances of 1,306 children who were removed from their families under emergency situations and held for seven days or less in out-of-home emergency shelter care in Hennepin County in 1999. Two research questions guided our study: Is placement in a shelter the least-intrusive response for the safety needs of children in emergency situations? And, can we capture and clarify the working relationship between child protection workers...
and local law enforcement officers? Our research suggests a number of ways to improve protocols that guide emergency placements.

**Emergency Care in Hennepin County**

Minnesota’s 87 counties vary widely in the arrangements they make for emergency care. Typically, for younger children, counties have developed emergency foster homes. These are regularly licensed family foster homes that are typically paid an extra amount each month to compensate them for being on call. Shelters specifically designed for adolescents who run away or who are in a disruptive placement situation have also been developed throughout the state. Hennepin County, the most populous county in the state, had one central location for its emergency shelter intake at the time this research was conducted—St. Joseph’s Home for Children in Minneapolis, which is under contract with the county.

The data used in this study were based largely on administrative information collected at St. Joseph’s Home during 1999. Intake forms were examined to provide information on age, address, race-ethnicity, placement authority, reasons for placement, and disposition. Data from St. Joseph’s Home were augmented by group interviews with Hennepin County child protection workers and supervisors and with staff members and administrative staff from St. Joseph’s Home. Individual interviews with the Minneapolis chief of police, the supervisor of the Community Based First Response unit, child protection workers based in a police precinct, St. Joseph’s Home intake workers, and Hennepin County Community Based First Response workers also informed this study.

Children arrive at St. Joseph’s Home via four methods. The majority of children arrive under the auspices of the 72-hour hold, which is authorized under Minnesota statute when a child is in immediate danger and police believe that emergency protective care is indicated. Children also enter St. Joseph’s Home through court order after findings of maltreatment have been made by a court and the child is adjudicated as a “Child in Need of Protection or Services”; through a voluntary placement, which occurs when a parent chooses to place a child in St. Joseph’s Home for a short period of time; or through a juvenile warrant, which occurs when a warrant is issued for a child’s arrest, often for failing to attend a court hearing.

Although St. Joseph’s Home serves the entire Hennepin County region, the vast majority of children come from Minneapolis and, more specifically, from the neighborhoods of Minneapolis’ north side, which comprise the Minneapolis Police Department’s Fourth Precinct. The Fourth Precinct has distinct demographic characteristics, including the highest proportion of African Americans in the county; an increasing number of Somali, Asian, and Latino families; and an extremely high concentration of children (as many as 60 children per square block in some neighborhoods).

The Fourth Precinct also has the highest adult arrest rate among Minneapolis’ five precincts. This is particularly noteworthy because it does not have the highest ratio of reported crime (a record that belongs to the Third Precinct, which encompasses part of east and south Minneapolis and includes the University of Minnesota’s Minneapolis campus).

Children also enter St. Joseph’s Home through court order after findings of maltreatment have been made by a court and the child is adjudicated as a “Child in Need of Protection or Services”; through a voluntary placement, which occurs when a parent chooses to place a child in St. Joseph’s Home for a short period of time; or through a juvenile warrant, which occurs when a warrant is issued for a child’s arrest, often for failing to attend a court hearing.

This inconsistency suggests that the large number of children brought to the attention of child protective services in this geographic area may be a result of increased surveillance rather than increased child maltreatment. In this connection, it should be noted that the Fourth Precinct has been designated as a CODEFOR (computer optimized deployment focus on results) “hotspot.” This designation makes it possible for police to target resources to neighborhoods they deem at risk for serious crimes, increasing the presence of police and allowing for significant discretion on the part of individual officers in stopping people and making arrests.

According to data from St. Joseph’s Home, more than 2,463 children passed through the child protective system in Hennepin County in 1999. Of this group, 1,306 (53%) were in shelter for seven days or less. Of those in shelter for seven days or less, 23% (301) of these children were aged 0–3, 16% (211) were aged 4–6, 27% (350) were aged 7–11, and 34% (444) were aged 12–17. Although African American children 18 years of age and younger represented 13.9% of the youth population in Hennepin County at the time of this study, they represent 55% (708) of the children entering the shelter for a stay of seven days or less (Figure 1). This is nearly four times their representation in Hennepin County’s population. White children make up the next largest group at 19% (254), followed by American Indian children (10% (132), and all biracial children at 9% (121). Latino, Asian, and “other” comprised fewer than 6% of the total short-stay population. As Figure 2 illustrates, African American children are also overrepresented in every age group in the St. Joseph’s Home’s population.

The reasons for placement of children in St. Joseph’s Home were varied. The home’s intake forms provide 26 “reasons for placement.” However, overlap and indistinct definitions ultimately suggested 12 distinct categories, which were constructed with input from St. Joseph’s Home intake workers. Those categories were abuse (which encompasses both physical and sexual abuse), neglect, parent substance abuse

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1 It should be noted, however, that a large portion of the children in this study were from Minneapolis, and in Minneapolis, African American children 18 years of age and under made up 31% of the population at the time of this study, somewhat reducing the dramatic nature of the disparity.
After reviewing the various and overlapping reasons for emergency care, such as abuse, neglect, and parent abandonment, a striking fact emerged: Children of color were far more likely to be placed due to “parent incarceration” than were White children. Approximately 17% of African American children, 10% of American Indian children, and 10% of all biracial children were brought to St. Joseph’s Home as a result of “parent incarceration,” versus 1% of White children.

To offer a more consistent basis for comparison among groups, the remainder of this section offers profiles of children in various age groups who were admitted to St. Joseph’s home.

Profile of Children Aged 0–3 Years.

Of all children admitted to shelter in 1999, 301 were aged 0–3 years. They comprised nearly one-fourth (23%) of the total admissions to shelter for the year. More than 90% of these children had not experienced an admission to shelter within the previous year. A little less than half of the children were admitted as part of a sibling group. African American children aged 3 years and younger comprised 53% of all admissions to St. Joseph’s Home, followed by 18% White, 10% American Indian, and 10% biracial children. “Parent incarceration” was the primary reason for placement, accounting for 21% of all admissions in this age group. “Parent abandonment” (15%), “physical abuse” (12%), “parent substance abuse” (11%), “need to locate parent” (10%), and “neglect” (8%) were the five next largest categories.

The majority of infants and toddlers were brought in under a 72-hour hold (83%), and the rest were under court order (15%). Only 2% of the emergency placements were voluntary. Finally, 85% of children aged 0–3 were released to their parents or relatives, and 8% were placed in foster care.

Profile of Children Aged 4–6 Years.

Children aged 4–6 years comprised 16% of the total shield admissions at St. Joseph’s Home in 1999. As with all age groups, children of color were dramatically overrepresented among this age group. More than half (54%) of children aged 4–6 were African American, 9% were American Indian, 8% were biracial, 3% were Asian, and 2% were Latino. White children accounted for one-fifth (20%) of the population of children 4–6 years of age. More than four-fifths (83%) of children entered St. Joseph’s Home under a 72-hour hold. Another 13% entered through the

Figure 1. Admissions to St. Joseph’s Home for Children for Seven Days or Less by Race/Ethnicity, 1999

Figure 2. Admissions to St. Joseph’s Home for Children for Seven Days or Less by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 1999
authority of a court order. Only 3% of children aged 4–6 were placed voluntarily by a parent or caretaker, and 1% entered as a result of a juvenile warrant. The vast majority of children 4–6 years of age were reunified with family when they left St. Joseph’s Home. Roughly 86% of children were returned to their parents or relatives, 5% went to foster care, 4% experienced a transfer of custodial care (likely between foster care placements), 3% fell into the disposition category of “other,” and 2% were released to “friends.”

Profile of Children Aged 7–11 Years. Children aged 7–11 represented 27% of all children admitted to St. Joseph’s Home during 1999. More than 90% of the admitted youth had not experienced an admission to shelter within the previous year, and slightly more than 60% of the children were admitted as a part of a sibling group. Again, children of color were overrepresented among the children aged 7–11 admitted to shelter care. African American children represented 63% of those admitted, American Indian children represented another 10%, followed by 6% of children identified as biracial, 3% who identified as Latino, and 2% Asian. White children accounted for 16% of the population of children aged 7–11 at St. Joseph’s Home. “Physical abuse” was the primary reason for placement among children aged 7–11, accounting for 18% of all admissions in this age group. “Parent incarceration” (17%), “abandonment” (14%), “need to locate parent” (12%), and “neglect” (10%) were the next largest categories. The majority of children aged 7–11 entered St. Joseph’s Home under a 72-hour hold (74%), whereas 19% entered under a court order and 6% entered on a voluntary basis. Of these children, 70% were released to their parents or relatives and 8% were placed in foster care.

Profile of Children Aged 12–17 Years. Of the children admitted to St. Joseph’s Home in 1999, 34% were aged 12–17 years. For 61% of these children, this was their first admission to shelter within the last year. Approximately 19% of the children were admitted as a part of a sibling group. Once again, children of color were overrepresented among the children aged 12–17. African American children represented 52% of the population, American Indian children represented 12%, biracial children 6%, and both Asian and Latino children represented 2%. White children accounted for 24% of the population of children 12–17 years of age at St. Joseph’s Home. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of older adolescents entered St. Joseph’s Home through the authority of a court order, and 27% entered under a 72-hour hold. The top five reasons for placement among children aged 12–17 were “runaways from placement” (33%), “runaways from home” (16%), “asked to leave placement” (9%), “physical abuse” (8%), and “parental incarceration” (5%). For one-third (33%) of these children, there was no record of where they had gone after their shelter placement. It is assumed that these children left as runaways. Only 24% of the older adolescents were reunified with family, the lowest rate among all age groups.

Discussion
This study of children removed under emergency situations who experienced shelter care for a brief period disclosed three distinct but interrelated issues: the nature of the relationship between police and child protection; the impact of parental arrests on children; and factors of race and ethnicity in the emergency removal of children from their families.

Police–child protection relationships. Police powers that can be used in response to child maltreatment reports have been greatly expanded during the past two decades. Generally the removal of children from their families takes place when imminent harm is likely because of physical or sexual abuse, egregious neglect, abandonment, or the arrest of a parent or caretaker. As in other states, only police, sheriffs, or other agents of law enforcement are now legally empowered to remove children from their familial households in Minnesota and many other states (Minn. Stat. 260C.175, 2000).

Furthermore, reports of child abuse and neglect may be made to either police or child protection workers. Although the law does require “cross-reporting”—that is, each party must exchange information at the reporting stage (Minn. Stat. 626.556, subd.3[a], 2000)—joint responsibilities in the investigation stage are discretionary (Minn. Stat. 626.556, subd.6, 2000). Working arrangements vary, but joint investigations when caseworkers and law enforcement officials go to the household together are exceptional in Hennepin County. When they do occur, the roles are negotiated. Joint investigations generally occur when egregious harm related to sexual and physical abuse is perceived, and where the neglect is of a criminal nature.

Police powers allow arrest during the investigation if there is reason to believe that a crime has been committed. Law enforcement officers and social workers respond within their professional contexts. Typically, law enforcement concentrates on gathering evidence and caseworkers assess the family and child circumstances.

Local- and state-level administrative reviews generally give good marks to the partnership between child protection social workers and police. However, tensions do arise at the level of direct service in terms of cross-reporting, investigation of cases, and case planning. Clearly, child protection and law enforcement operate under different professional ideologies. Similar issues of differing professional ideologies have been found to be present in working relationships between social workers and advocates who work with battered women, and police. Law enforcement standards of child removal and placement are embedded in a criminal model centered on the perpetrator and documentation of case-specific evidence. For the law enforcement officer, gathering evidence is the preeminent concern, and a quick removal to the shelter is the convenient action. The social work perspective is absorbed with reasonable efforts directed toward family and child interests. For social workers, the search for options, when emergency removal is required, is guided by concerns for the “least disruptive placement.”

Reconciling these points of view requires negotiation and mutual respect. Incidents of tension and misunderstanding inevitably arise. Illustratively, there are differing assessments of “imminent harm” and the conditions under which children are returned to parents. Supervision, administrative reviews, and cross-training are important elements in solving issues in these ambiguous partnerships.

It should be noted that 80% of children are reunified with parents. The children do not reappear in the shelter in the year under review. The extent to which the children are reunited with parents/kin under protective supervision, a closely supervised arrangement, was not revealed in the disposition data. What transpires at the time of the child’s return to parents/kin was also not available within the administrative data. Whether the event of the child’s brief stay in emergency shelter is used to conduct risk assessment or to refer to voluntary services is open to question.
Law enforcement and social work operate under different professional ideologies. For police involved in child protection cases, gathering evidence is the primary concern. For social workers, comforting the child and ensuring the least disruptive placement are paramount.

In a 72-hour hold, time is of the essence. The interview data reveal that the rapid assessment of the family's capacity to care for the child is the most contentious issue between police and child protection workers. Understandably, the crisis nature of emergency placement does not generally allow reflective decisions. Sorting out the capacity of parents to care for a young child in a large sibling group brought to a shelter under stressful circumstances is a daunting assessment assignment.

The length of time social workers and police have worked together appears to be the key to a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities. To encourage a knowledgeable and stable working relationship, each law enforcement precinct has an officer with special training in child protection. The assignment of a specialized officer trained in child protection issues does increase the opportunity for cooperative decisions. The Fourth Precinct, the source of the greatest number of emergency removals, has two social workers on-site and on-call throughout the night. This arrangement has encouraged cooperative decisions based on the safety and best interests of the child.

The Impact of Emergency Removal on Children. This study reveals that a primary reason for very young (aged 0–6) children, particularly African American children, to be removed in emergency situations is parent incarceration. In most cases, the removal of a child from parents is a traumatic, grief-laden event. This event exacts an even more devastating toll when the child witnesses the arrest of a parent. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor expressed this quite vividly in her dissenting opinion in *Atwater v. City of Lago Vista* (532 U.S. 318 [2001]), when she warned of dire long-term consequences when children witness “gratuitous humiliation” and “the pointless indignity” that sometimes accompanies arrest. Interview data cited in the *Atwater* case reveal that handcuffing, shackling, and being shoved into the back of a squad car occurred during parental arrest, when “resistance” or “aggressive behavior” were encountered. Justice O'Connor warned that “unbounded discretion” for the police in the manner of arrests “carries with it grave potential for abuse.” It is these events that incite children to feelings of helpless rage, humiliation, and fear. The police response to children is of key importance. Justice O'Connor, in her dissent, noted that children may harbor throughout their lifetimes either respect for or dread and hostility toward law enforcement, depending on what they witness when parents are arrested.

It is important to remember that the circumstances of parental arrest may often be entirely unrelated to child maltreatment. The most common circumstances involve warrants of arrest for excessive parking fees, forged checks, shoplifting, faulty cars, substance abuse, or narcotics. Arrests for child endangerment, neglect of a child, or malicious punishment of a child are far less common. In domestic violence situations, arrests may occur if the child is used as a shield, or if the parent is deemed unable to protect the child from an abusive partner.

According to one observer, from the child's point of view, emergency placement is a euphemism for arrest. For the child, there are no benign motives for the removal. It is perceived as an involuntary separation with painful and confusing consequences.

Under urgent circumstances, police may or may not attempt to locate parents or guardians to take custody. Typically, children are “detained.” The extent to which police respond to children's anxious questions—“Where is my mom?” “When will we see her again?”—depends on the officer's comfort level in playing the role of the social worker. It is by no means consistent.

The decision to await the arrival of a child protection worker prior to placement is up to the police, and this is an ambiguous arrangement. Yet, it is crucial for someone to explain to the child the various options that might be considered, including being reunited with parents, placed with relatives, or placed in a shelter while a decision is made regarding their disposition.

At the time of this study, clear protocols did not exist to guide police on the treatment of children. Thus, a police officer's interaction with a child is dependent upon the officers' sensitivity to the needs of children. If a child is not present when a parent is arrested, the police may not know about the existence of the child and thus may not be concerned about the child's safety and well-being.

Race and Ethnicity in Emergency Care. The data from this study reveal a substantial overrepresentation of children of color in shelter care. A discussion of the factors that contribute to this disparity are beyond the scope of this article. However, inasmuch as a high proportion of emergency placements arise from the Minneapolis Police Department's Fourth Precinct, the neighborhood data for this precinct provide an opportunity to speculate about these factors. Do the neighborhoods suffer from factors of poverty, disorder, and mobility, all of which might reduce the capacity of community members to care for children in emergency situations? Does the CODEFOR program result in increased surveillance that encourages increased parental arrests? Is the reporting of maltreatment subject to racial or ethnic bias? Regardless of the reason, the subject of racial overrepresentation is troubling and demands study beyond the data presented here.

Conclusions
The disproportionate number of children of color in emergency placement has raised concerns about police and child welfare procedures and the consequences of these procedures. Since this study was conducted, many of the police

2 Since this study was conducted, both protocols and training for Minneapolis police have come under review.
and child welfare procedures have been reviewed. The training component for police officers when parental arrest involves children is also under review.

Best practices for police involvement with children and families at the time of parental arrest include the following: asking parents about their children; allowing the parent time to reassure the child about what is happening; allowing the parent time to take care of a few “loose ends” such as notifying a workplace or finding a caregiver for the child; allowing the child to bring personal belongings such as a stuffed animal or book from home; and providing information to the child (at a developmentally appropriate level) about what is happening to the parent and what will happen to the child. To improve the likelihood of best practices occurring, a protocol should be adopted for dealing with children in cases of parental arrest. Police should be given training on how to talk to children in times of trauma. Police should also be informed that the manner in which they treat parents during an arrest is something that a child will remember forever. Treating parents with respect during an arrest could provide one venue for improving the relationship between police and the public. Police should also adopt simple efforts to increase the comfort of children, such as carrying children’s toys or other comfort items in their squad cars.

Officially, the relationship between law enforcement and child welfare services is favorable. Administrators from both departments in Hennepin County reported good working relationships and similar goals. The problems appear to be at the level of direct service, specifically cross-reporting and investigation of cases. Police do not always notify child protection of child welfare concerns. Similarly, police and law enforcement report frustration with the procedures of child protection, such as the screening criteria for placement and the rapid return of children to potentially unsafe homes.

To reach the goal of fewer removals to emergency shelter care, the introduction of a community worker should be considered. This individual would be someone who has detailed knowledge of the supportive networks in the community. The community worker’s major task would be to focus on the child and identify resources (such as relatives, close friends, faith establishments, school, or other community connections) to minimize shelter placements. The fact that there are few repetitive placements within a calendar year indicates that most children can be safely maintained within kin and extended family networks while the emergency conditions are assessed.

Finally, we believe it is important for child welfare advocates and others to use the information gathered through this process to advocate for increased attention to the disproportionate number of African American children in child protective services and in emergency shelter care.

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This report is based on the following article, which provides a more complete discussion of emergency placement and this study: Esther Wattenberg, Katherine Luke, and Molly Cornelius, “Brief Encounters: Children in Shelter for 7 Days or Less,” Children and Youth Services Review 26 (2004): 591–607.

**Forum on Work and Retirement Set for April 22**

A research and policy forum titled “Resetting the Clockwork: Possibilities for Healthy Employees, Retirees, Families, Businesses, and Communities,” will be held Friday, April 22, 2005, at the Hubert H. Humphrey Center on the University of Minnesota’s West Bank campus. The purpose of the forum is to stimulate conversations among business leaders, policy makers, community leaders, scholars, and students about the needs of the state’s changing workforce and growing retired labor force, and to identify and assess best practices and possible innovations designed to create more flexible workdays, work weeks, career paths, and retirement opportunities for Minnesota residents.

Cosponsors of the forum include the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; the University of Minnesota’s College of Liberal Arts; the Department of Sociology’s Life Course Center; the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs; the Carlson School of Management; and the President’s Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families. The forum is made possible by generous financial support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the McKnight Foundation.

For more information or to register, visit www.soc.umn.edu/clockwork/, or contact Phyllis Moen at phylmoen@umn.edu or Jane Peterson at jampeter@umn.edu.
The Twin Cities Training Program for Neighborhood Organizers (TCTPNO), a program of CURA, has a strong commitment to Twin Cities’ neighborhood organizations and a belief that they can have a powerful impact on the condition of neighborhoods and the quality of life of families living there. However, many neighborhood organizations either lack sufficient citizen involvement in community efforts or lack sufficient organizational leadership capacity (i.e., staff and volunteers) to design and implement strategies for community improvement. Jay Clark, TCTPNO director and trainer, uses in-depth group training, individual follow-up sessions, and networking groups to prepare neighborhood community organizers to build community leadership and a solid foundation for neighborhood organizations. He works side-by-side with organizers, modeling skills covered in his trainings, to help them reach a broad spectrum of their constituents. Training techniques and content address the specific needs of the organizers, including increasing the participation of under-represented groups, recruiting volunteers, and building volunteers’ leadership skills.

From January to May 2003, I studied four neighborhood organizing efforts that occurred in the Twin Cities, two in Minneapolis and two in St. Paul. All four community organizers who led the projects were students of TCTPNO, and Clark identified these four organizing efforts as a purposive sample of best cases based on knowledge of the community organizer and the project. My analysis of these case studies was focused on one key question: What do effective community organizers do to successfully develop neighborhood involvement in projects that address key concerns of the neighborhood? Using the context of specific community projects, the four case studies presented here answer this question by describing how, in each case, organizers worked to successfully encourage citizen involvement in their community. Although each community has unique needs and issues, these case studies can provide organizers in other communities with specific ideas, strategies, and techniques they can use in similar community work.

The qualitative data on which this article is based were collected from multiple sources to capture the complexity and essence of the organizing efforts. Data collection procedures included informal informational interviews with project staff, observation of individual organizer sessions with Jay Clark, observation of project meetings and events, review of neighborhood meeting minutes and written materials (such as flyers and meeting agendas), and formal in-depth interviews with organizers and community members.

Case Study I: Light-Rail Transit
Longfellow Community Council (LCC)—which represents the Longfellow, Cooper, Howe, and Hiawatha neighborhoods in Minneapolis—faced some unique challenges from the light-rail transit (LRT) project. The large geographic area encompassed by LCC, as well as the individual identities of the member neighborhoods, makes it difficult to organize residents, particularly on an issue such as LRT, which has the force of a regional transportation plan.

The LRT line was built along Hiawatha Avenue (Highway 55), on the western edge of this community, from the Mall of America in Bloomington to downtown Minneapolis. Although residents and business owners in the area had been talking about the LRT project for several years, few decisions had been made about how to respond until construction actually started. The annual LCC survey of participants at the 2002 Longfellow Summer Street Fest, which attracted approximately 3,000 people, identified LRT as one of the main concerns of area residents.

A specific concern was that LRT planners had made no accommodations for parking. In response to the survey, LCC organizer Patricia Patche and a team of volunteers created a plan to help residents further articulate their concerns about LRT.

Staff and volunteers from LCC began by forming an organizing team that went door-to-door surveying residents most likely to be affected by LRT, namely those within a two-block radius...
of the three planned rail stations at Lake Street, 38th Street, and 46th Street. The survey included general questions about the neighborhood, as well as the specific questions about the proposed LRT line. In all, the team surveyed 35 residents, most of whom believed that people would drive from other areas of the city or from the suburbs to board LRT in their neighborhood.

In response to resident concerns, organizers planned four community meetings. Three identical meetings were to be held near the location of each proposed station, about eight blocks apart. The planners hoped that smaller, more informal meetings would encourage more input and discussion from participants. The goals of these meetings were to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of LRT, voice concerns about LRT, brainstorm solutions to anticipated problems, and identify the priorities of residents. The fourth meeting was intended to bring together neighbors of all three LRT stops to talk with their elected officials about their concerns.

Communication is key to involving the people most likely to care about a particular issue. Several methods were used to identify and communicate with citizens who were likely to be most concerned about the LRT project.

- Residents who had indicated at prior community meetings that they wanted to be kept informed about community issues by e-mail were sent an e-mail about the meetings.
- Neighbors who had asked to be kept informed about the LRT issue, such as many of those contacted during the door-to-door survey, were notified of the meetings by phone.
- A meeting announcement flyer was created that included the top five concerns of residents identified through the door-to-door survey: commuter parking, economic development near the stations, traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, and crime.
- A “buffer zone” was identified that included those most affected by LRT, defined as six to eight blocks around the planned rail stations. Three groups of youth volunteers helped deliver flyers door-to-door to residents in the buffer zone.
- The evening of each meeting, the LCC team went door-to-door delivering flyers and talking with people within a one- to two-block radius of the meeting location.

At each meeting, LCC staff asked attendees if they would help distribute flyers in their neighborhood on related issues. For a later meeting, 120 volunteers helped distribute flyers to more than 7,000 households.

At each of the station-specific meetings, facilitators led brainstorming sessions to identify resident concerns and possible solutions to the problems. Everyone who attended these meetings was also invited to the fourth meeting, at which residents had an opportunity to meet with their elected officials, ask questions, and voice their concerns. In preparation for the fourth meeting, Patche compiled a 35-page packet of information for elected officials that included resident feedback on various options for parking management, minutes and fact sheets from the station-specific community meetings, results from the LRT community survey, and sample letters received from residents concerned about the LRT plan. Six elected officials attended the meeting, including two state representatives, a state senator, and the Hennepin County commissioner who represented the district. Also in attendance were staff from Metro Transit and two representatives from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). More than 45 residents attended the meeting, giving elected officials an opportunity to speak directly with residents about their concerns and possible solutions.

Since this study was conducted, the LRT line along Hiawatha Avenue has been completed. A park-and-ride lot was constructed near the Lake Street LRT station on the west side of the intersection, meaning that LRT riders must cross Hiawatha to get to businesses located in the Longfellow neighborhood. The Longfellow neighborhood has not reported significant parking problems to date, probably because most riders likewise do not want to cross Hiawatha Avenue to board LRT and thus prefer to park on the west side of Hiawatha. Neighborhoods located on the west side of Hiawatha have reported more serious parking and traffic problems as a result of the LRT line. The Longfellow neighborhood continues to negotiate with officials about pedestrian traffic, and LCC is currently working with researchers from the University of Minnesota to identify possible solutions. One option being discussed is a walkway over Hiawatha Avenue.

Case Study II: Emergency Language Interpretation Card

North Minneapolis has a large Southeast Asian population, predominantly Hmong. In 1998, an organizer for the Hawthorne Area Community Council in north Minneapolis realized the neighborhood’s Hmong residents were not becoming involved in neighborhood issues. When he met with organizers from the Cleveland Area Neighborhood Association and the Jordan Area Community Council to discuss the problem, he found these organizations were experiencing similar difficulties getting Hmong residents involved.

The organizers contacted the executive director of the Southeast Asian Community Council (SEACC), a social service organization with a reputation...
for serving the needs of the Hmong community in their neighborhoods, to discuss the problem. After several meetings, the group obtained funding to form a new coalition called North Minneapolis Southeast Asian Initiative (NMSEAI). Among other things, the funding paid for a Hmong organizer, Friendly Vang, whose first assignment was to contact and interview 150 Southeast Asian residents in north Minneapolis to identify their needs and concerns and begin developing relationships within the community. Vang’s second assignment was to hold informational forums on four topics identified most frequently during the interviews: housing, education, crime and safety, and business opportunities. Advertisements for these meetings included public service announcements on KFAI Hmong Radio, personal phone calls to those who had been interviewed, bilingual flyers distributed to Hmong children through their schools, and a mailing to the SEACC mailing list.

A key to encouraging attendance at these informational forums was providing information and inviting guests who could help with issues of concern in residents’ lives. For the meeting on crime and safety, for example, the advertisements announced experts would be present to discuss gangs, the 911 emergency system, property crime, and personal safety. City council members and the precinct police inspector were also present. When asked why people came to these meetings, Nhia Lee, the NMSEAI organizer in spring 2003, said that Hmong elders came because SEACC had established relationships with many of them already, which had created a level of trust that is particularly important in Hmong culture.

In keeping with Hmong tradition for social gatherings, a traditional Hmong meal was provided. Organizers showed government representatives to tables interspersed throughout the room, and placed at each table a bilingual volunteer who had prepared a few questions ahead of time to stimulate conversation between residents and officials during dinner. These meetings were perhaps the first opportunity for many Hmong residents to speak directly with their council members and police about issues that concerned them. For example, residents shared stories about being awakened in the middle of the night by police who took a family member away, the difficulty of getting information the next day from police because no one at the precinct spoke Hmong, and dialing 911 in an emergency only to have someone arrive hours later.

Again and again, both in the initial interviews and at the crime and safety forum, Hmong residents voiced serious concerns about communication problems with police. The fact that 120 residents attended the forum on crime and safety indicated to NMSEAI staff that this was an issue people cared about deeply and would respond to. Consequently, the NMSEAI organizer, volunteers, and community leaders planned a series of community meetings to involve residents in developing solutions to the problems identified by residents. In these subsequent meetings, participants identified four possible ways to improve communication with police:

1. have a 911 emergency line in Hmong;
2. provide training for police on Hmong culture;
3. translate documents into Hmong, such as the 911 Emergency Packet and the Community Crime Prevention (CCP) Safe Accident Report Form; and
4. develop a card with information about legal rights and defense.

Staff and volunteers from NMSEAI decided to begin with an adaptation of the legal rights card. The card would be printed in both Hmong and English, would list ways to contact a Hmong interpreter, and would be made available to residents free of charge. Eventually the card was funded and developed with the help of elected officials. The card has a place to write the name and phone number of a close relative who speaks English, and includes phone numbers for the NMSEAI interpreter and the AT&T Language Line (which is for police use only). A major distribution campaign was conducted to distribute the new Minneapolis Emergency Language Interpretation Card. As of June 2003, 300 people had signed up for the card.

As NMSEAI continued to listen to the Hmong community, however, people began reporting that police and other emergency workers were not responding to the card, often refusing to use it. In response, NMSEAI invited elected officials and police to a series of events to talk to residents about the use of the card. At one of these meetings, police officials and city council members heard residents share stories of officers refusing to use the card. At another meeting with the Minneapolis mayor and chief of police, the mayor signed a memorandum of agreement pledging to work with the Southeast Asian community to overcome cultural and communication barriers, and to hold police accountable for using the Emergency Language Interpretation Card. Once again, these meetings were tailored to encourage the participation of the Hmong community.
and to build trust in community relationships through persistence, respect, and consistency.

Since this study was conducted, the Minneapolis Police Department hired a new chief of police, who issued an administrative order requiring officers to use the language interpretation card when it is presented by a citizen. In addition, the Minneapolis mayor continues to be supportive of the initiative. Community organizers for NMSEAI continue to go door-to-door registering residents for the card. In the process of talking to residents, organizers have heard no complaints of non-use by police officers. Currently, NMSEAI is working with police departments in St. Paul, Richfield, and Bloomington to have the card officially accepted.

Case Study III: Job Corps Property Use
The Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center encompasses an entire city block of the Como Park neighborhood. The Job Corps is a federal program to teach job skills to young people who have difficulty finding a job. When the Humphrey Job Corps Center first moved into the neighborhood in 1980, neighbors protested because they thought the young people were criminals. Difficulties also stemmed from racial/ethnic differences between the center’s neighbors, who were mostly white, and the Job Corps participants, who were mostly young people of color. During the 1980s, there were many complaints from neighbors of the center about partying, drinking, and break-ins. The mayor of St. Paul eventually created a Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) composed of residents from the surrounding community to act as a conduit for neighborhood input regarding problems between the Humphrey Job Corps and the surrounding neighborhood. Through NAC, resident concerns were brought to the attention of the Humphrey Job Corps site director, and things began to settle down. Having achieved a measure of success, NAC’s membership steadily dwindled and the committee’s leadership stagnated.

In spring of 2002, neighbors began contacting Sue McCall, community organizer for the District 10 Community Council, one of 19 community councils in St. Paul designed to facilitate citizen participation. They were concerned about rumors that construction plans for the Humphrey Job Corps site called for replacing the tennis court park with a parking lot. McCall and the District 10 Community Council investigated and confirmed that the rumor was true. Unfortunately, NAC had not shared this information with the neighborhood. In response, the council expanded their regular board meeting agenda to include the Humphrey Job Corps green space issue, relocated the meeting to the Humphrey Job Corps site, and invited Job Corps staff to attend to share its construction plan with the public.

To get neighbors involved, McCall and District 10 leaders built on established relationships and practices. Initially, McCall went door-knocking at houses across the street from the Humphrey Job Corps property to identify the closest neighbors’ main concerns. In a letter sent to all residents within a 10-square-block area around the Humphrey Job Corps site, McCall explained the Job Corps redesign plan, framing the issues strategically to motivate people to attend the meeting. About a week before the meeting, McCall posted signs near the meeting location, and the evening of the meeting, volunteers stood on the street holding signs encouraging people to attend.

More than 100 residents and many Humphrey Job Corps staff attended the June 2002 District 10 Board Meeting. Residents’ concerns ranged from bad upkeep of the property to $52,000 of available federal money for communications that NAC never used. Emotions flared when the Humphrey Job Corps assistant director said he had instructions not to share certain details of the reconstruction with the public and refused to answer most neighbors’ questions. The meeting ended without a constructive resolution.

In the weeks after the first meeting, McCall worked with the District 10 Community Council leadership, neighbors, and the neighborhood’s city council representative to develop a strategy to involve elected officials and decision makers in addressing the Humphrey Job Corps issue. McCall and the District 10 Community Council planned a second neighborhood meeting for early July, with the goal of bringing together elected officials and residents to define and prioritize the neighborhood’s concerns. The Job Corps regional director, the area’s city council representative, District 10 Community Council members, and 58 residents attended the meeting. Notably absent were members of NAC. At this meeting, the Job Corps regional director and his staff were more cooperative and responsive. Neighbors voiced their concerns and identified their priorities. After the meeting, residents’ concerns and priorities were summarized in a letter to the
Job Corps regional and national directors, the mayor of St. Paul, the District 10 Community Council, the area’s Congressional representative and two U.S. senators, and the U.S. Secretary of Labor.

The District 10 Community Council called a third meeting in November 2002 in response to a letter from the Assistant Secretary of Labor. The letter explained that the Job Corps had conducted a technical review of the redevelopment plans for the Humphrey Job Corps Center and had several options to present to the neighborhood. The Job Corps regional director attended the meeting, along with representatives from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Chicago Job Corps director, a representative from Senator Paul Wellstone’s office, and 60 neighborhood residents. Once again, no members of NAC attended.

At the meeting, the Job Corps regional director announced that the groundbreaking schedule had been pushed back to 2004, that the Job Corps would rework the design to address neighbors’ preferences, and that the redesign plan would be submitted to the City of St. Paul for a Site Plan Review, a step not required by law for federal projects.

From June to November, McCall sent out five mailings to residents who had attended any of the meetings or who had expressed interest in the issue. After each meeting, she published updates on the Job Corps issue in the District 10 newsletter, Como Park News. At the first meeting in June, McCall also identified 12 volunteers willing to play the role of “point person.” Whenever anything happened on the Job Corps issue, McCall sent an e-mail or made a phone call and the volunteers spread the word around the neighborhood. They also kept McCall informed about what residents were saying about the issue.

Since the time the research for this article was conducted, the Humphrey Job Corps presented a site plan based on the proposal negotiated with the neighborhood to both the City of St. Paul and to the Neighborhood Advisory Committee, and construction on the project has begun. McCall continues to keep neighbors updated through the Como Park News.

Case Study IV: School Change
In the fall of 2002 when West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO) hired Rainbow Hirsh, she was given the task of organizing in the Latino community on St. Paul’s West Side. Although she’s not Latino herself, she speaks Spanish fluently and had worked in the neighborhood while she was in college. Her first weeks with WSCO were spent conducting one-on-one interviews with people from a list of contacts she received from WSCO and other neighborhood nonprofits. During her interviews, Hirsh discovered three people with very similar missions. Derek Johnson worked for Neighborhood House, a community center with a long and successful history of providing services to the Latino community in West St. Paul and, more recently, to Somali, Hmong, and other immigrant residents. Nan Kari was one of the founders of Jane Addams School (JAS) for Democracy, a place where immigrants of all backgrounds—especially Latino, Hmong, and Somali—come to learn English and to study for the American Citizenship Test. Kari Denissen worked at the Neighborhood Learning Community, an organization that helps to develop learning opportunities for families and youth on the West Side.

These three organizations—Neighborhood House, Jane Addams School, and the Neighborhood Learning Community—shared WSCO’s commitment to the immigrant communities in the area, and Johnson, Kari, Denissen, and Hirsh began to meet weekly. As they talked, an issue and an opportunity around schools quickly presented itself. The St. Paul School District had announced neighborhood forums all around the city to collect public opinion from parents about “school choice,” the policy of allowing students to attend any school, not just their neighborhood school. Two years previously, Nan Kari had been involved with a neighborhood group that had attempted to engage neighborhood parents of all ethnic backgrounds in a discussion about the education of their children. The effort had lost steam, and Kari, Johnson, Denissen, and Hirsh thought the district forums might offer an opportunity to revive the effort.

During the next few weeks, the four began asking neighborhood parents of all ethnic backgrounds about their concerns regarding schools and education. After sharing what they had learned, they decided to look for ways to help parents bring their concerns to the District School Choice Forums. The group devised a plan to hold a pre-forum workshop just before the neighborhood’s district forum on February 27. During the next few weeks, each collaborator sought ways to spread the word about the pre-forum workshop. Hirsh connected with the Latino community in a few key ways. The pastor of San Martin Lutheran Church invited her to share information about the workshop and district forum with his congregants. While attending a Spanish-language class offered through Chicanos Latinos Unidos En Servicio (CLUES), another West Side service organization, Hirsh worked with her teacher to develop an in-class discussion on school choice and civic engagement. When it was time to promote the workshop, Hirsh attended all the Spanish classes at CLUES to talk about the pre-forum workshop and to distribute flyers. Kattia, one of the women in Hirsh’s class, volunteered to talk to people she knew about the forum and workshop, and Ana, a

Pre-forum workshops helped many parents to become more comfortable expressing their opinions and asking questions at the District School Choice Forums.
Spanish early childhood family education teacher, posted notices in her building. The Jane Addams School members discussed the pre-forum workshop and district forum at their Wednesday evening Spanish circle groups and distributed the workshop flyers. In addition, members of JAS talked personally with their Hmong and Somali participants, especially elders, about the events. Johnson of Neighborhood House said, “I think the key to people attending was . . . personal invitations that connected the meetings to peoples' self-interests. . . . People did seem interested in issues around education.”

Forty-five people (including children and trainers) participated in the pre-forum workshop. Dinner and childcare were provided, as was transportation home after the meeting. The training was conducted in three languages: Hmong, Spanish, and Somali. The main purpose of the workshop was for participants to learn and practice the basic public skill of framing a personal concern as a public issue. After dinner, participants broke into smaller groups called “sharing circles” where parents introduced themselves, explained why they were there, and shared their biggest concerns about their school or their child’s education. After demonstrating that other people shared these personal concerns, the trainers talked about what to expect at the district forum and how parents could connect their concerns to the district agenda on school choice. Volunteers were assigned to ask a specific question or to make a specific comment on the issues discussed in the training.

Johnson said the vast majority of people who came to the district forum had attended the workshop. The planners agreed at their evaluation meeting that conducting training in people’s first language proved very helpful. At the district forum, the people who had participated in the training seemed to be comfortable expressing opinions, asking questions, and generally speaking with school administrators. It seemed important for parents to realize they were part of something larger and that there were other parents who also cared about the issues and were willing to work for change.

**Conclusion**

Neighborhood/community organizing is the practice of developing and nurturing civic involvement. Organizers use techniques and skills to bring people together around issues that affect their personal lives and their community. Although these case studies represent quite different neighborhoods, all the organizers successfully faced the challenge of how to get new people involved. The details of each project reflect similar techniques that were key to their success and that can be replicated in other situations as well.

First, because relationships are critical in working with people, when an organizer lacked relationships with particular community members essential to an organization’s work, the organizers used their existing networks and collaborated with other organizations, organizers, or community leaders that had relationships with those essential members. When the three north Minneapolis neighborhood associations collaborated with the Southeast Asian Community Council to form NMSEAI, for example, the trust and relationships that had previously been established were critical to getting people involved.

Second, cultural differences were respected. For example, the neighborhood organizations respected what SEACC brought to the partnership and followed SEACC’s lead to involve Hmong community residents. When people with limited English skills were asked to participate, interpreters were always provided. Organizers had interpreters present for meetings even when they were not certain they would be needed. This cultural sensitivity extended to providing culturally appropriate refreshments, childcare, or transportation when appropriate. In short, successful organizers did everything they could to make everyone feel welcome and comfortable when they participated.

Third, organizers are communicators who rely on a wide range of methods to communicate with citizens, including public service announcements, flyers, posters, newspapers, letters, e-mails, door-knocking, and phone calls. They collect names of stakeholders using sign-in sheets, partner networks, organizational mailing lists, and contact lists obtained from related organizations. For the LRT project, the LCC staff successfully used a volunteer sign-up form to identify participants willing to distribute flyers four times a year, while the organizer in the Humphrey Job Corps project had 12 “point persons” to assist with communication. This range of communication methods is the very essence of the creative resourcefulness that typifies successful organizers. No single method was ever relied on to bring out people for a public meeting.

Finally, each of these projects was successful at connecting people with each other. Neighbors were brought together and then worked through their differing concerns to arrive at some consensus on issues. Participants were taught how to take many different concerns and find at least one common, specific issue on which they could agree and act together. Then, organizers helped to connect participants to the appropriate policy makers, such as government staff or elected officials, for the purpose of influencing decision making. Hmong residents on the North Side were connected to the mayor and to the chief of police; Longfellow residents were connected to city council members and transit authorities on the LRT issue; Como Park neighbors were connected to the mayor of St. Paul, Congressional leaders, and the U.S. Secretary of Labor; and West Side St. Paul residents were connected to St. Paul School District officials.

In summary, organizers deliberately teach people the skills that are required for civic engagement. None of these case studies demonstrated this as explicitly as the case of the school choice organizers. Their pre-forum workshop curriculum was designed to teach the concept of how public issues arise from private ones. Other organizers relied entirely on teaching these skills experimentally through talking and interacting with public officials—for example, by hosting forums with city officials as NMSEAI did. People’s confidence that their newly acquired skills could make a difference was increased because all these projects ended with some measure of success for the people involved. Each project is living proof that people do want to be involved in making their communities better places to live. As these case studies illustrate, the organizer’s craft is empowering people to learn that their concerns are valid and that, together with their neighbors, they can make a difference.

Bina Thompson Nikrin was a student in the Master of Public Affairs program at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the time this research was completed. She has since completed the program, with a concentration in the theory and practice of public participation.

by Mary Martin, David Hollister, Jessica Toft, Ji-in Yeo, and Youngmin Kim

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is the state’s current response to the 1996 federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, commonly referred to as “welfare reform.” This legislation ended the historic commitment of the federal government to guarantee economic assistance to families in need by requiring states to administer programs with mandated work and time-limit requirements. Minnesota, like all states, receives a block grant from the federal government to fund economic assistance to families in need, with the flexibility to design its own program. The Minnesota Department of Human Services characterizes the MFIP approach as “tough but fair reform,” with a focus on quick job placement. Participants can only be in the program for a lifetime total of five years. In addition, MFIP uses sanctions that reduce or eliminate participants’ financial grants if they do not adequately meet the program’s requirements for job training, work, or reporting in on their job search efforts. Finally, MFIP has a stated commitment to increasing the availability of childcare and to providing inexpensive health insurance for children in MFIP families.

This study was conducted to assess the impacts of MFIP on the well-being of families in Hennepin County, Minnesota, from 1998 to 2002. The research on which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA’s New Initiatives program, with additional support from the Hennepin County Department of Economic Assistance, the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare and the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, and private contributions.

Methodology
This study of Hennepin County MFIP participants focused on the 42-month experience of 84 of the 9,638 MFIP participants who had completed orientation and were eligible for a referral to work and training programs as of September 1, 1998. A random sample of the participants was selected based on their racial/ethnic identity. It was therefore possible to capture the unique experience of the racial/ethnic groups that were most highly represented in the MFIP population: African American (5,259), American Indian (859), Hmong (458), Latino (81), Somali (341), and White (2,615). In an effort to get a broad representation from the communities of color and the larger immigrant groups, the sampling design purposely oversampled Hmong, Latino, American Indian, and Somali participants.

The 84 participants who were interviewed were selected using sampling procedures that occurred at two different times. In 1998, 498 participants were randomly selected from a total of 9,638 MFIP participants, with deliberate oversampling by racial/ethnic group and the level of compliance with MFIP requirements. These 498 participants were contacted by mail and phone, and 123 ultimately completed interviews. In 2002, 47 (38%) of the original 123 participants were successfully contacted and re-interviewed. An additional 37 participants were then randomly selected and interviewed, again with deliberate oversampling to maintain the diversity of the study. The interview procedures used with the two sample groups in 2002 were identical.

Interviewers and participants were matched linguistically and, whenever possible, racially/ethnically. Participants were compensated with $40 gift certificates for the interviews, which typically took place in their homes. The participant and interviewer worked together to complete a life history calendar on which important events—such as finding or leaving a job, participating in job training, or enduring a health crisis—were recorded for each month during their three-and-a-half-year MFIP experience between September 1, 1998, and February 28, 2002. By completing the life history calendar and answering structured interview questions, the participants provided a wealth of information. The Hennepin County Economic Assistance Department also provided detailed information from their databases about the 84 participants.
The Participants

The typical MFIP participant in this study was a woman (86%, 74 participants) who worked between 6 and 35 months (50%, 42 participants) during the three-and-a-half years of the study, and who had completed high school (56%). She had two or three children (mean = 2.79), and was apt to have health insurance throughout the study period (71%, 59 participants). It is important to note that this description of the “typical” participant does not begin to capture the experience of the actual participants, which varied dramatically depending on their work patterns and racial/ethnic identity.

A Worker Typology. Moving parents in need of economic assistance into the workforce is central to Minnesota’s so-called “tough but fair” welfare reform program. Thus, it is important to be clear about the definitions and measurements of the work in which MFIP participants engaged. For the purposes of this study, work was defined as participation in the paid labor force full-time (35 or more hours per week) or part-time (more than 5 hours per week and less than 35 hours per week). Participants were placed into different categories based on how long they held a part-time or full-time job in the labor force during the study period. Of the 84 participants, 30% (25 people) qualified as extensive workers who worked full-time or part-time for 36 months or more. Another 50% (42 people) qualified as moderate workers who worked full-time or part-time for anywhere between 6 and 35 months. Finally, 20% (17 people) qualified as minimal workers who worked full-time or part-time for less than 6 months.

The participants could have been divided into more numerically equal groups. However, the groups were purposely defined as they were to distinguish between those who are rarely working, those who are frequently in and out of the labor market, and those who are successfully employed in the labor market long-term. The strength of these categories is demonstrated by the many substantive and statistically significant (that is, unlikely to have occurred by chance) findings that emerged from this analysis.

Comparative Racial/Ethnic Groups.

One of the primary ways that societies label, categorize, and differentiate individuals and groups is by identifiable physical characteristics such as skin color and hair type. In the United States, the primary way groups are divided is by race—that is, by physical characteristics such as skin color. This rigid and biologically inaccurate division by skin color has resulted in each major “racial” group having a shared ethnicity characterized by similar values, customs, behaviors, and language. It is in this sense that the term racial/ethnic groups is used throughout this article. When findings are presented in this report, the three immigrant racial/ethnic groups that have recently come to the United States (Hmong, Latino, and Somali) are combined to highlight their experiences.

Due to oversampling by racial/ethnic groups, it was possible to attain a relatively diverse sample of study participants: 22 (26%) African Americans, 12 (14%) American Indians, 23 (27%) Whites, and 27 (32%) immigrants. The immigrant group included 11 Hmong, 11 Latino, and 5 Somali participants. Although these three different racial/ethnic groups have had different experiences in the United States due to their diverse histories and cultures, their shared immigrant status is important to this study. Specifically, members of each of these racial/ethnic groups experienced dislocation, were learning new customs, and were being exposed to unfamiliar work expectations. That these immigrants are people of color also means that they share exposure to societal color-based discrimination.

Patterns of Work

The work patterns of the 84 Hennepin County MFIP participants were influenced by a range of pre-existing personal characteristics and resulted in both positive and negative impacts on their families.

What Kind of Workers? MFIP participants came into the program with major differences in education, family patterns, and time spent in the United States (Table 1). The participants who worked extensively (36 months or more of the 42-month study period) had the fewest children, had received the most education, and had lived in the United States more than twice as long as the minimal workers. The workers who were employed less than 6 months of the 42-month study period stand in sharp contrast to the extensive workers. Minimal workers had the least education, had the greatest number of children, and had come to the United States most recently. Clearly the participants who worked the least were those who had the greatest family responsibilities and came to MFIP with significant disadvantages in terms of education and, given their recent arrival in the United States, perhaps language as well.

Work and MFIP. The MFIP participants had very different experiences during the 42-month study period based on the intensity of their employment (Table 2). The extensive workers received the highest salaries and were
more likely to have full-time rather than part-time jobs, to have participated in less training, to have moved less frequently, and to have the lowest level of continuous health insurance. In contrast, the minimal workers had much lower hourly wages, moved more frequently, had much more training, and spent fewer months without health insurance coverage.

It is clear that the participants who worked the most were vulnerable in terms of their families’ health. Their insurance coverage was more likely to be disrupted, and more than half of them (52%, 13 participants) reported that they had been unable to receive medical services for their families because of affordability. The percentage of extensive workers who lacked continuous medical coverage was more than twice the percentage of moderate workers (26%, 11 participants) and nearly three times the percentage of minimal workers (18%, 3 participants). Moving into the world of work was far more likely to result in loss of health security for extensive workers.

**Racial/Ethnic Patterns**

The experience of the 84 MFIP participants differed in important ways depending on their racial/ethnic identity. The differences presented in the following discussion call for differential interventions within MFIP, as well as through health, education, and social service policy and programs.

**Personal Characteristics.** The number of children and the amount of formal education that participants brought to their MFIP experience were significantly different across the various racial/ethnic groups (Table 3). American Indian families had the fewest children, while the size of African American and White families hovered right around the average for all families (2.70 children). Immigrants had significantly larger families, with an average of 3.74 children. It is important to note that within...
the immigrant group, the Hmong had an average of 5.60 children, whereas Latino and Somali families were closer to the other groups with 2.72 and 2.40 children, respectively.

The patterns in formal education mirror the findings for family size with respect to the barriers facing immigrants who enter MFIP. Although Whites were the only group who, on average, had completed high school (12.39 years of education), American Indians and African Americans were roughly only one year behind Whites with 11.33 and 11.36 years of schooling, respectively. By comparison, immigrants had exceedingly low levels of formal education, having completed slightly more than 6 years of school on average.

### A Varied MFIP Experience

The emphasis in MFIP’s “tough but fair” approach is on quickly moving participants into the labor market. Given the previously mentioned advantages that accrue to being White in terms of family size, a lifetime in the United States, and higher levels of education, it is not surprising that Whites were also the group that moved most quickly and successfully into the job market. Nearly half of the White study participants (48%, 11 participants) were extensive workers (Table 4). American Indians were most apt to be moderate workers (83%, 10 participants), as were African Americans (46%, 11 participants). Not surprisingly, immigrants, who have significant disadvantages in terms of education and familiarity with U.S. culture and language, worked the least. They were by far the most frequently represented in the minimal worker category (37%, 11 participants), compared with African Americans (27%, 6 participants), American Indians (8%, 8 participants), and Whites (0%, 0 participants).

Differential patterns based on race/ethnicity emerged with respect to other findings as well, with Whites having the most positive experiences in terms of MFIP’s work goals. Whites were more likely to work in an office or business setting (48%, 11 participants). Nearly one-third of immigrants (31%, 13 participants) worked in factories, and the majority of African Americans (57%, 14 participants) and American Indians (58%, 21 participants) were in service positions such as nursing assistant or food server. Whites participated in MFIP for the shortest amount of time. They also worked the most, and they received the highest hourly wage ($11.90) compared to African Americans ($9.74), American Indians ($9.49), and immigrants ($8.04). Whites were much more likely to get to work by automobile (57%) rather than by bus or by getting a ride from others, compared to African Americans (38%), American Indians (32%), and immigrants (21%).

There are some complex patterns within the MFIP experience that are not so beneficial to White participants. Whites, who worked the most, were also the most likely to lack continuous health insurance. Roughly 43% of Whites (10 participants) reported

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<th>Racial/ethnic group</th>
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<th>Type of job</th>
<th>Average full-time hourly wagea</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>African American (n = 22)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<td>American Indian (n = 12)</td>
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<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<td>White (n = 23)</td>
<td>48%</td>
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a p <0.001

b This group includes 11 Hmong, 11 Latino, and 5 Somali participants.
periods when their families were uninsured. Nearly one-fourth of immigrants (22%, 14 participants) and one-third of American Indians (33%, 8 participants) reported periods when their families were uninsured. African Americans were the least likely to lack insurance coverage (18%, 4 participants). Although Whites were the most likely to lack insurance, the immigrant group experienced the longest periods without healthcare coverage—on average, more than two years (27.2 months). In contrast, African Americans had the shortest periods without insurance (5 months), while American Indians lacked insurance for an average of 11.8 months and Whites for 7.8 months.

These findings make it clear that Hmong, Latino, and Somali immigrants were seriously disadvantaged, both when they entered MFIP and while they participated in the program. Immigrant MFIP participants had been in the United States for a relatively short period of time, had the greatest family responsibilities, and the least education—an average of half as many years of education as Whites. They were most likely to work in factory service positions rather than business or office jobs. Although only 22% of immigrants reported lapses in health insurance coverage, those who did have their coverage interrupted endured this situation much longer than other groups, on average more than two years.

The experience of African American MFIP participants varied from other groups in unexpected ways. As a group, African Americans participated in training activities at a significantly higher level (11.95 months) than all others (4.07 months for immigrants, 2.33 months for American Indians, and 2.21 months for Whites). They were the most likely to maintain continuous health insurance coverage. In addition, they were much less likely to use childcare than all of the other participant groups (Table 4), even though they were close to having the average number of children reported for all groups. In addition, African Americans stood out from the other participant groups in that they were the most apt to move their children from school to school (Table 3).

The 12 American Indian participants came into the program with fewer children than others, took less part in training, were the least apt to work extensively, and earned relatively low salaries. They were most apt to take a bus to their jobs and were the most likely to have their children in childcare.

**Work Concerns**

This study found that almost one-third of MFIP participants were extensive workers, and that another one-half were moderate workers. That means roughly 20% of the participants were minimal workers who barely worked at all. Those who worked the most had the highest salaries, were the most apt to get to work in their own car, and were the most likely to have childcare for their children. The State of Minnesota provides a majority of MFIP participants with health insurance coverage, which is no small accomplishment. However, contrary to expectations, those participants who worked the most under the program were also the most likely to lack continuous healthcare coverage. Many of the hardest working parents also indicated that MFIP had changed their relationship with their children negatively in terms of scheduling issues and time spent with their children. So the advantages of working and earning more income were a mixed blessing when it came to health security and day-to-day family life. The fact that all the participants who worked the least had health insurance coverage indicates that there is a clear health risk for MFIP participants in the job market.

Participants who had fewer children, the most education, and a lifetime living in the United States worked more than other MFIP participants. It is possible that their employment success does not result from the nature of MFIP, but rather from these participants’ relative advantages and employability. Fewer children, greater skills acquired through formal education, and familiarity with U.S. language and customs are pre-existing characteristics that

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**Table 4.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/ethnic group</th>
<th>Average number months in MFIP&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Average months of job training&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Percentage childcare users</th>
<th>Transportation&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Healthcare experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11.95</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 22)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 27)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>c</sup> p <0.05  
<sup>d</sup> p <0.05  
<sup>e</sup> The number of participants (n) was different for this question because some participants held multiple jobs during the study period and answered this question separately for each job they held. For African Americans, n = 37; for American Indians, n = 24; for immigrants, n = 42; and for Whites, n = 67.  
<sup>f</sup> p <0.05  
<sup>g</sup> p <0.05
may be the best long-term intervention points for poor parents.

**Race/Ethnicity Concerns**

Our comparative racial/ethnic analysis of MFIP provides insight into the ways in which racial/ethnic identity impacted participants’ pathways into and through the program. Our findings raise fundamental questions about the capacity of MFIP to respond fairly to the culturally diverse population it serves. In this section, the questions that emerge from our findings are discussed in relation to each racial/ethnic participant group. The groups are discussed in order of their relative representation in the total MFIP population as of September 1998, the beginning date for this study. Thus, the discussion begins with African Americans, who represented more than half of the 1998 MFIP population. The next section, “Steps Toward a Fair and Inclusive MFIP,” presents strategies and recommendations for finding answers to these questions.

**African Americans.** Of the 9,638 MFIP participants in 1998, more than half (55%, 5,259 participants) were African American. Not only is this percentage disproportionate to the representation of African Americans in the total Hennepin County population, but it also indicates the importance of acknowledging and understanding why their experience differed so markedly from that of other MFIP participants. Most African Americans came into the program with less than a high school degree and had lived in the United States for their entire lifetime. Most of them did move into the job market while enrolled in MFIP. Nearly half were moderate workers, and African Americans were second only to Whites among extensive workers. They were most likely to work in service jobs, and on average earned $8.16 per hour less in wages than their White counterparts. African Americans participated in training activities at a rate of 27% compared to Whites. The White experience is unique in terms of the general advantages they demonstrated as a group—both in their entry characteristics and in their paths through MFIP. It is clear that Whites came into the program with the fewest years of education, the highest level of education, and the advantage of a lifetime of residence in the United States. They also emerged at the end of the 42-month study period with the most extensive work history and the highest and most highly paying jobs. Compared to other racial/ethnic groups and in spite of their relatively low employment level, more Whites reported that they had been without health insurance.

These findings raise the following questions about White MFIP participants:

1. Why do African Americans not use childcare as frequently as other participants, even though they work as much or more than other participant groups? Is existing childcare culturally unacceptable? Do African Americans have community and family resources that enable them to make what they consider to be better arrangements for their children?
2. Are African Americans more interested in maintaining family health stability, even if it means that they may have to work less? Is there a cultural family focus that is different from the assumptions underlying welfare-to-work policies?
3. Are African Americans concentrated in service positions because of their slight educational disadvantage compared to Whites, or because of other factors such as discriminatory placement decisions by MFIP or discriminatory hiring practices by employers? Is their educational disadvantage a function of inadequate public education?
4. Why do African Americans move from their place of residence more than any other group? Is this a cultural pattern? A manifestation of housing discrimination?
5. Why do African Americans take part in so much MFIP training? Is it a reflection of their lack of skills and experience? Is it an instrumental decision to take advantage of the opportunity to upgrade their skills while they maintain MFIP benefits?

**Whites.** Whites were the second largest segment of the MFIP population in 1998, comprising more than one-quarter (27%, 2,615 participants) of the 9,638 participants in the program. The White experience is unique in terms of the general advantages they demonstrated as a group—both in their entry characteristics and in their paths through MFIP. It is clear that Whites came into the program with the fewest children, the highest level of education, and the advantage of a lifetime of residence in the United States. They also emerged at the end of the 42-month study period with the most extensive work history and the better and most highly paying jobs. Compared to other racial/ethnic groups and in spite of their high employment level, more Whites reported that they had been without health insurance.

These findings raise the following questions about White MFIP participants:

1. Can the difference in the White MFIP experience be explained by their relative education, life in the United States, and family size advantages, or are other factors at work that were not captured by this study?
2. Are the differences related to the fact that White participants are more apt to work with an MFIP professional of the same racial/ethnic identity than are other MFIP participants? Are MFIP policies and practices as a whole more culturally compatible for White participants than for those of other racial/ethnic groups?

**American Indians.** American Indians accounted for less than one-tenth (8.9%, 859 participants) of the total MFIP participant population in 1998. Their experience was comparable to African Americans in that they were primarily moderate workers in service jobs with a comparable income. However, they were much more likely to use childcare than any other group (75%, 9 participants), participated in the least amount of training of any of the groups of color (on average, 2.33 months), and were most likely to take a bus to work of all participant groups (67%).

These findings raise the following questions about American Indian MFIP participants:

1. Do American Indians have a particular level of cultural comfort with institutional childcare? Do American Indians use culturally specific childcare? Has the American Indian community created culturally specific childcare facilities that meet community preferences and needs?
2. Why do American Indians have a relatively low participation rate in training when they have relatively low work intensity? Is the training unavailable or culturally undesirable to American Indians?
3. Does the high percentage of American Indians using a bus to get to work speak to a financial or a cultural reason for not having a car? Is proximity to work location the reason for this finding?

**Immigrants.** The 905 immigrant MFIP participants in 1998 included 458 Hmong, 366 Somalis, and 81 Latinos, and accounted for 9% of the total MFIP population. The experiences of this group were clearly one of disadvantage in terms of MFIP expectations and
requirements. As discussed previously, most immigrants entered the program with little formal education, significant family responsibilities, and substantially fewer years living in the United States, having emigrated on average during the last 11 years. That they were relatively infrequent participants in MFIP training and were the most likely to be minimal workers suggests a fundamental disconnect in the MFIP program as far as immigrant participants were concerned. That they also had many months of disrupted health insurance suggests that this group was particularly disadvantaged in this regard.

The following questions emerge about the three racial/ethnic groups within the larger immigrant group:

1. Are rigid work requirements appropriate for a population that does not have strong English language skills? Does the movement into jobs that often do not require English proficiency (factory and service positions) decrease their acquisition of English and their general job advancement potential?

2. Does the low participation rate of immigrants in training programs indicate a lack of MFIP’s commitment to increase their employment options? Is it a commentary on the lack of ESL opportunities in MFIP training? Or could it represent a cultural preference for work as opposed to training?

Steps Toward a Fair and Inclusive MFIP

The questions and concerns that emerge from our findings are serious, but not without opportunities for resolution. The following recommendations suggest specific modifications of MFIP that flow from our two sets of findings—those about the relationship of work intensity and progress, and those related to the racial/ethnic differences that appeared from our comparative racial/ethnic analysis.

1. Policies and procedures regarding healthcare should be examined and modified to address the disincentive that is inherent in the potential loss of insurance coverage upon movement into the workforce.

2. County agencies should assertively assist MFIP participants who are moving into work to retain their health insurance coverage. Medical assistance is no longer restricted to people on economic assistance, and has been expanded to cover low-wage workers such as most of the study participants.

3. The Minnesota Family Investment Program should develop strategies for increasing the rate of long-term employment for MFIP participants by relaxing recent MFIP proscriptions against formal higher education in favor of short-term training, substituting educational opportunities and requirements for work requirements for parents with low educational levels, and offering culturally appropriate family planning services.

4. The deep cultural differences in MFIP experiences among different racial/ethnic groups that our findings have uncovered should be addressed by a publicly funded, intensive examination of the program, ideally by MFIP participants and community leaders from each racial/ethnic group. After each community explores and begins to consider solutions to these issues, public dialogues between representatives from each racial/ethnic group, the Hennepin County Commissioners, and MFIP staff can determine ways in which MFIP programming can best build on each community’s strengths and better meet their particular needs. The Hennepin County African American Men’s Project is an excellent model in this regard.

Conclusion

The Minnesota Family Investment Program prides itself on being “tough but fair.” Clearly MFIP is tough in its imposition of time limits, sanctions, and pressure for quick job placement, regardless of salary or advancement potential, as well as in its emphasis on training rather than formal education. The program does attempt to mediate its toughness with efforts to provide child-care, transportation, and health stability to parents moving into the workplace. Nonetheless, the ways in which participants experience MFIP differently based on their capacity to work extensively and on their racial/ethnic identity calls into question the degree to which the program is “fair” as well as “tough.”

Our study has raised as many questions as it has answered. As our analysis has shown, participants entered MFIP with racially/ethnically specific advantages and disadvantages, and their
experience in MFIP was similarly varied based on their racial/ethnic group. Most participants worked moderately or extensively during the 42-month study period, but racial/ethnic differences emerged in relation to nearly every dimension we studied. Salary, type of job, years in the United States, resident mobility, insurance coverage, use of childcare, and participation in MFIP training all varied significantly among the participant groups.

The policy recommendations we have presented are specific in addressing the disincentives inherent in the MFIP health insurance policies and practices, and call for a formal public examination of and dialogue about racial/ethnic-group strengths and needs, and their implications for MFIP policy and practices. No one group is more important than another. No group was immune to systematic disadvantages and advantages. Our findings suggest that continuing to write and implement welfare reform policy as though race/ethnicity does not matter is a disservice to current MFIP participants, to their families, and to society as a whole, and calls into question the fairness of Minnesota in its creation and implementation of the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

Mary Martin is professor emerita at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul. David Hollister is professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota. Jessica Toft, Ji-in Yeo, and Youngmin Kim are doctoral candidates in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota.

The full report of the findings discussed in this article can be found in David Hollister, Mary Martin, Jessica Toft, Ji-in Yeo, and Youngmin Kim, The Well-Being of Parents and Children in the Minnesota Family Investment Program in Hennepin County, Minnesota, 1998–2002, Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2003. The report is available online at ssw.che.umn.edu/CASCW/papers_reports.html, and is also available in hard copy from CURA upon request.

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**Project Awards**

To keep our readers up-to-date about CURA projects, each issue of the CURA Reporter features a few capsule descriptions of new projects under way. The projects highlighted in this issue are made possible through CURA’s Communiversity program. This program awards grants twice each year to grassroots organizations in the community. Each grant supports the extra personnel needed by local organizations, usually by providing an advanced graduate student who works directly with the organization receiving the award. The grants are competitive and organizations working with people of color are favored. The projects described here represent only a portion of those that will receive support from CURA and its partners during the coming year.

- **Children’s Defense Fund Work Supports Initiative.** Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) Minnesota, a state office of the national Children’s Defense Fund, is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan research and advocacy organization with a mission to provide an independent voice for children. The organization’s goal is to educate the nation about the needs of children, and to encourage preventive investment before children become ill, drop out of school, or suffer family crises. Although public “work supports” programs that offer tangible resources can make a significant difference in the lives of those in poverty, many eligible families do not access work supports such as childcare assistance, healthcare coverage, food support, and earned income tax credits. With assistance from Andrea Egbert, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, CDF is engaged in a multiyear effort to increase eligible Minnesotans’ participation in each of the work supports. Working closely with the Director of Research and Outreach, the student helped identify potential existing local partners such as leading service providers, local community organizations, religious organizations, public officials, and business and community leaders within several Minnesota communities. The student also assisted in preparing and delivering presentations regarding the benefits and local impact of greater participation in work support programs.

- **Division of Indian Work Family Violence Program.** Since 1952, the Division of Indian Work (DIW) has pursued its mission to work with American Indian individuals and families in Minneapolis through culturally based education, counseling, advocacy, and leadership development. The Family Violence Program sponsored by DIW provides comprehensive services to American Indian women and children who are victims of domestic abuse, child abuse, and sexual assault. Sarah Wittrock, a graduate student in educational psychology at the University of Minnesota, worked with the Family Violence Program staff to implement a transition to a more professional data collection/evaluation system, create a procedures manual, and track the recidivism rates of former clients.

- **HIRED Rewards Program Development.** The HIRED organization operates a variety of employment programs that help its clients—which include at-risk youth, dislocated workers, refugees, low-income adults, and individuals making the transition from welfare to work—get good jobs. Every year, HIRED assists more than 7,000 people through its 11 offices in the Twin City area. Although HIRED has demonstrated the effectiveness of its placement services, the organization believes it can improve client placements by more actively engaging employers. To that end, HIRED is developing a Rewards Program designed to engage its partner employers in ways that will bring clients and alumni greater employment and networking opportunities. Meaghan Fosbury, a graduate student in educational policy and administration at the University of Minnesota, is assisting HIRED staff members engaged in developing the
Rewards Program by conducting market research. The student will research similar programs around the nation; interview HIRED clients, alumni, and employers; and develop print and Web-based materials for the program.

■ Gateway Phase II Marketing Plan. Hope Community, Inc., is a nonprofit organization in the Phillips Neighborhood in south Minneapolis that began as a shelter for women and children. In the early 1990s, Hope Community expanded its central vision as a community builder and housing developer, and it currently owns and manages 90 units of affordable rental housing. The recently completed Gateway Phase I project was minimally marketed and totally leased within one month to low-income tenants. Gateway Phase II is a mixed-income project (60% affordable housing and 40% market-rate units) that will begin construction in spring 2005. Future phases of Gateway will introduce more market-rate units. Cara Ibrahim, a graduate student in the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota, will work with staff to develop a marketing plan to market the neighborhood development to middle-income renters. The student will create a community profile by gathering data about the neighborhood, identifying trends, engaging in community mapping, and research community history. The student will also develop marketing goals and objectives, and identify outside resources to help market units, including area churches, employers, and community organizations.

■ Penumbra Theatre Black Nativity Production. The nationally recognized Penumbra Theatre Company is dedicated to presenting artistically excellent productions that depict emotional, relevant, and valuable experiences from an African American perspective. Since 1988, Penumbra’s annual holiday show, Black Nativity, has been a powerful and uplifting production in the Penumbra season. Because of mounting production costs, Penumbra chose not to stage Black Nativity in 2003. Artistic Director Lou Bellamy conceived of a new production of Black Nativity, one that purposefully simplifies the visual aspect of the stage presentation to let the spirit of the gospel music—which is the foundation of the play—sing loudly. This past fall, Malin Palani, a graduate student in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance at the University of Minnesota, worked under the direction of Bellamy to research, collect, and prepare the images necessary for the new 2004 production of Black Nativity.

■ Minnesota FoodShare Strategic Planning. Minnesota FoodShare, a program of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, was created in 1982 to address the tragedy of hunger in the state. Minnesota FoodShare is the primary interfaith response to the issue in Minnesota, and one of the most important nonprofit organizations when it comes to actually feeding the hungry in Minnesota, including raising more than half the food distributed annually by food shelves throughout the state. The volunteers and scattered staff who run these food shelf operations face a variety of challenges and needs in their daily work. As part of a larger strategic planning process to identify these challenges and needs, Emily Larson, a graduate student in the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, contacted food shelf staff by mail and phone, analyzed material from these discussions and other sources, and produced a written report of findings.

### Project Funding Available from CURA

■ Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR) provides student research assistance to Minneapolis and St. Paul community organizations involved in neighborhood-based revitalization. Projects may include any issue relevant to a neighborhood’s needs and interests, including planning, program development, or program evaluation. Priority is given to projects that support and involve residents of color. Applications from organizations collaborating on a project are encouraged. Applications are due July 11 for fall 2005 assistance. For more information, visit www.npcr.org, or contact NPCR program director Kris Nelson by phone at 612-625-1020, or by e-mail at nelso193@umn.edu.

■ The University Neighborhood Network (UNN) links community organizations to college and university course-based neighborhood projects that students carry out as part of course requirements. For more information about support for course-based projects, visit www.unn.umn.edu, or contact UNN coordinator Julie Bluhm by phone at 612-625-5584, or by e-mail at unn@umn.edu.

■ The Faculty Interactive Research Program is designed to encourage University of Minnesota faculty to carry out research projects that involve a significant issue of public policy for the state or its communities, and that include interaction with groups, agencies, or organizations in Minnesota involved with the issue. Ideal projects will have an applied orientation, as well as serve the research interests of the faculty member. Awards cover the faculty member’s salary for one month during the summer, and support a half-time graduate research assistant for one year. Applications for the 2005–2006 academic year competition must be received by 4:30 P.M., Thursday, March 24, 2005. For more information, visit www.cura.umn.edu, or contact CURA director Tom Scott by phone at 612-625-7340 or by e-mail at scott001@umn.edu.

■ The Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs is an endowed position that supports, for one year, the research activities of a University of Minnesota faculty member for work on a project related to urban and regional affairs in Minnesota. Made possible through the generosity and vision of David and Elizabeth Fesler, the endowment generates approximately $40,000 in support. Funds may be used to obtain release time or other support for the project, and may be used for either new or current projects. Applications for the 2005–2006 academic year competition must be received by 4:30 P.M., Friday, April 15, 2005. For more information, visit www.cura.umn.edu/chairapp.html, or contact CURA director Tom Scott by phone at 612-625-7340 or by e-mail at scott001@umn.edu.
Many school and community leaders in the Twin Cities are alarmed by the significant racial disparities in public school suspension rates. According to a joint report by the Minneapolis Foundation, the Minneapolis Public School District, and the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce titled *Measuring Up 2002*, African Americans account for more than three-fourths of all suspensions in Minneapolis schools. In addition, more than one-third of African American students and one-fourth of American Indian students were suspended at some point from 1998 to 2001. Some parents and administrators have speculated that the racial gap in student test scores is linked to the disproportionate suspension rates among students of color. In addition, significant disparities in suspension rates across racial groups is cause for alarm in its own right.

As part of a long-term, ongoing research project on community-based strategies for improving minority student test performance, the Wilkins Center at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs conducted an analysis for the Minneapolis Foundation on the impacts of suspensions, parental involvement, and textbooks in four Minneapolis public schools. The larger Wilkins Center project received start-up funds from a CURA Faculty Interactive Research Program grant, with additional support provided by the Minneapolis Foundation; the Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Richfield Public School Districts; the United Way; the St. Paul Foundation; the St. Paul Companies Foundation; the Bigelow Foundation; the General Mills Foundation; and the American Educational Research Association. This update focuses on the findings from the Minneapolis Foundation Study regarding the impact of school suspensions.

Our study included both a qualitative review of suspension policies in Minneapolis public schools, and a quantitative analysis of the relationship between sixth-grade suspension rates and seventh-grade scores on the practice Minnesota Basic Skills Test (MBST). The Minneapolis Public School District provided three sets of data for the study: (1) the results of an MBST practice test administered in February 2002 to seventh graders at 26 schools; (2) suspension data for sixth graders at these schools during the preceding school year (2000–2001); and (3) detailed demographic data for seventh graders during the 2001–2002 school year. Of the 1,217 students who were suspended during the 2000–2001 school year, 542 took the MBST practice test and 675 did not.

**Disparities in Suspension and Disciplinary Policies.** Our qualitative analysis focused on the Minneapolis Public School District’s “City Wide Discipline Policy” (Policy 5200). The policy outlines the types of infractions for which students can be suspended. These infractions include weapons possession, assault, sexual harassment or sexual violence, indecent exposure, possession of alcohol or other drugs, tobacco use, verbal abuse of or disrespect toward school staff or students, personal theft, school property damage, improper activation of fire alarms, trespassing, bus discipline infractions, truancy, and tardiness. Penalties for these offenses vary depending on the seriousness of the offense, the age of the student, and the number of times the student has been charged with the offense. The district policy also outlines requirements for school personnel in the event a student is suspended, including documenting the suspension using a district-provided form, conducting an informal administrative conference with the student, preparing a written readmission plan, and sending a notice of suspension to the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s).

The district policy allows a wide degree of interpretation and flexibility that can result in important differences in classroom management and disciplinary approaches at individual schools. For example, one school we studied has a written policy that stipulates what types of misbehavior teachers should attempt to handle in the classroom, and teams of teachers identify other types of interventions that can be used to change a student’s behavior while keeping them in class. Once these interventions are exhausted, a teacher can send the student to a behavioral room, where a school administrator decides what additional action (e.g., a lunchtime detention, additional time in the behavioral room, an in-school...
suspension, or an out-of-school suspension) is necessary. Another school we examined has no formal policy regarding classroom management and no team behavior modification plan. If a teacher sends a student to the principal’s office with a behavioral referral, it becomes the responsibility of the school administrator to investigate the incident and decide what action should be taken. Instead of a behavioral room, this school has only an in-school suspension option. In the case of the first school, if a student is sent to the behavioral room for a half day or whole day, this action is not reported as a suspension. In contrast, teachers and administrators in the second school who send students to the in-school suspension room for a half day or whole day must report it as a suspension, causing their suspension rates to appear higher than those at the first school. Other differences between schools such as the degree of cultural diversity training provided to staff or the amount of time staff are given to review and discuss discipline and classroom management policies may also affect how district-wide policies are implemented at the school level.

**Disparities in Suspension Rates.**
Most of the previous research on school suspension has found that the suspension rates of students of color are disproportionate to their representation in the school population. We used racial disproportionality ratios to determine whether this is true for the Minneapolis Public School District. At the national level, African American students are suspended at a disproportionate rate to their population in schools (2 to 1) compared to White students (0.8 to 1).\(^1\)

Disproportionality at the state level in Minnesota is even more marked, with African American students suspended at a rate of 5.6 to 1 compared to 0.7 to 1 for White students. Based on our analysis, the disproportionality ratio for Minneapolis public schools is lower than both the national and state ratios—one to 1 for African American students, and 0.4 to 1 for White students. Although racial differences in suspensions are clearly present in Minneapolis public schools, the racial disproportionality ratios are lower than the national ratios for all students of color except American Indians. However, these comparisons should be viewed with caution. Definitions of suspension and reporting requirements vary among school districts. Moreover, the data for the state of Minnesota report the number of suspensions, whereas the data for Minneapolis refer to the number of suspended students, potentially inflating the state ratio by comparison.

Previous research on school suspension also indicates that African American students are typically suspended for less serious offenses and for longer periods of time than other students. In our study of Minneapolis public schools, we found that African American sixth graders were suspended in essentially equal numbers for fighting and lack of cooperation. In contrast, students of other races were much more likely to be suspended for fighting than for lack of cooperation. Furthermore, although the five most common reasons for suspension were consistent across all racial groups, their prevalence in each group varied.

For Minneapolis sixth graders, the average length of suspension was not that different from one racial group to the next, with each group having an average suspension length of two days. African American students had marginally longer average suspensions (2.04 days) and White students had the shortest (1.87 days). No White, Asian, or Latino student received a suspension longer than five days. There were 16 suspensions longer than five days for the whole district; 14 of these students were African American, and 2 were Native American.

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\(^1\) Based on data from the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) and the 1997 cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY).
math portion of the test, but there was no statistically significant difference in reading scores. We observed no statistically significant differences in either math or reading scores for Latino or Asian students who had been suspended compared with those who had not. After controlling for other factors, our analysis revealed that the overall effect of suspension on test scores was very small. After combining math and reading scores, a 1% increase in suspensions resulted in a 0.15% drop in the mean score. Attendance, in general, had a larger effect, with a 1% increase in attendance resulting in a 0.48% increase in test scores. In short, although there is a statistically significant relationship between suspensions and test scores, the impact is very small, and too small to make the claim that the racial disparity in suspension rates is the cause of racial gaps in test scores.

Although our analysis found that suspension itself is not a significant contributor to racial gaps in test scores, this finding does not mitigate the fact that there are large racial disparities in suspension rates in Minneapolis Public Schools, and that suspension policies are not applied uniformly throughout the district. The nature and causes of those disparities are significant, and merit further inquiry and policy consideration. Specifically, school districts and policy makers should evaluate existing suspension regulations with a focus on how specific these policies are, how schools impose and manage suspensions, how school staff interpret different student offenses, how clearly schools communicate the consequences of suspension to students, and how consistently schools report disciplinary action to the district. In addition, school districts and policy makers would do well to continue to monitor the linkage—even if it is a weak one—between academic achievement and suspension among individual racial and ethnic groups. We recommend a longitudinal study of the academic impact of suspensions that examines this issue beyond the seventh grade.

—Charlotte Voight, Julia Blount, and Mary Lou Middleton, contributing writers. A copy of the complete Wilkins Center report to the Minneapolis Foundation, Measuring Up: The Impact of Suspensions, Parental Involvement and Textbooks in Four Minneapolis Public Schools, can be found at www.hhh.umn.edu/img/assets/9680/measuring.pdf.

New Hennepin County Relations Liaison Will Advance Collaborative Efforts

Hennepin County and the University of Minnesota are jointly funding a new liaison position that will strengthen the long-standing relationship between these two entities, bringing University research and technical support directly to bear on service delivery and decision making in Minnesota’s largest county. The position will be administratively housed at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), and is being supported in part by funds from Hennepin County, the University’s Office of the President, and CURA.

Hennepin County initiated efforts with the University in early 2002 to develop a strategic program to foster deeper collaboration around three pressing issues: truancy, uncompensated care, and developmental disabilities. A group of Hennepin County staff and University faculty were brought together to explore possibilities for joint projects around each of these issues, but it became apparent early in the process that the interchange was potentially “boundless in scope” and required a full-time position to direct the effort. After a series of meetings between county and University administrators, the idea was born for a liaison position responsible for fostering collaborations on issues of mutual concern and benefit.

Kathie Doty, a University employee who will report to both CURA director Tom Scott and Hennepin County deputy administrator Richard Johnson, has been chosen as the new liaison. Doty formerly worked at Hennepin County, holding positions of increasing responsibility in several county departments.

Most recently, she was a public policy consultant working with metropolitan counties, the Metropolitan Council, and other governmental units.

Hennepin County Commissioner Linda Koblick was a key player in developing the joint initiative. “For some time we have felt it was important to establish a strategic alignment between Hennepin County and the University,” Koblick explained. “This initiative formalizes the exchange of ideas and dialogue between county staff who provide services and academic staff who conduct research on public policy issues. It makes sense that the state’s largest county and largest educational institution strategically coordinate our efforts to find the best solutions in this era of shrinking resources.”

Tom Scott called the new initiative “an important step in helping to implement the University’s increasing interest in and commitment to stronger engagement with various communities in Minnesota.” He also noted that this is likely the only such formal liaison arrangement anywhere in the country between a major university and a county government.

The county and University have worked together successfully in the past, including program collaborations, county participation in University advisory groups, and fellowship and internship programs that provided on-the-job learning experiences for students in county programs. In addition, the University has worked with Hennepin County on such issues as the effectiveness of out-of-home placement for children, and the University’s Medical School has a long-standing partnership with Hennepin County Medical Center.
In July 1967, President Lyndon Johnson formed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to investigate the causes of the urban riots that had plagued cities across the nation every summer since 1964. The commission’s findings were published in the now-famous Kerner Report, which concluded that the nation was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal,” and that a large proportion of Americans considered themselves permanent outcasts from the American Dream of opportunity and equality. In response, the Johnson Administration’s “War on Poverty” was created to change the nation’s social systems and repair the inequities of the past.

The New Careers program, which emerged as one strategy in that war, was perhaps the most daring and socially innovative government program to appear during this period. The program was the brainchild of sociology professor Frank Reissman, who in 1965 published a book (with Arthur Pearl) titled New Careers for the Poor. Reissman and Pearl argued that poverty resulted not from personal inadequacies or past injustices, but rather from a lack of educational opportunities that were essential for advancement in the new “credentialed society.” Moreover, they observed that as a result of the technological advances of the twentieth century, the nation’s need for unskilled labor had been replaced by a rising demand for workers in the fields of education and the social services.

Reissman and Pearl called for a national program that would simultaneously provide both employment in public and private human service agencies, and educational opportunities through on-the-job and college classroom training. Such an approach, they believed, would provide a career ladder for low-income and unemployed people to advance into professional jobs. In addition, because these individuals would themselves be drawn from the disadvantaged communities being served, they could act as a “bridge” between poor and minority communities and the social service agencies working in these communities.

Legislation for the New Careers program was introduced by Rep. James Scheuer (D-NY) in a 1966 amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA). The legislation provided roughly $3.5 million for programs to employ and train nonprofessionals for jobs in public human services, to be administered through the Department of Labor’s Office of Economic Opportunity. In May 1967, the University of Minnesota became the first major institution of higher education in the nation to agree to participate in the New Careers program. Initially the program was administered through the Hennepin County Community Action Program. In fall 1969, the program was relocated to the University’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), with School of Social Work professor Esther Wattenberg as its director.

In all, more than 200 people participated in the University’s New Careers program during its two-year tenure. The participants, all of whom were unemployed or underemployed residents of Hennepin County, ranged in age from 22 to 59. More than half were ethnic or racial minorities, mostly African American or American Indian. Enrollees spent half of their workday employed as paraprofessionals at agencies that agreed to provide career mobility in the human services. During the rest of their workday, the New Careerists took college classes, primarily as students enrolled in the University’s General College. By the end of the program, 105 participants had completed a 45-credit certificate program (equivalent to one year of college), 22 had completed an associate in arts (A.A.) degree, and 2 had received a bachelor’s degree.

The University of Minnesota’s New Careers program became a nationally significant model. On two occasions, congressional testimony was invited about the program, once in 1972 before the House Select Subcommittee on Education and Labor, and again in 1990 before the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and Humanities. The hearings reaffirmed the success of the New Careers approach, and the importance of work-study generally as an effective model for worker training programs.

This past October, CURA and the General College hosted an informal luncheon at the Coffman Union’s Campus Club to mark the inauguration of the New Careers program nearly four decades ago, and to celebrate and honor the many New Careerists who participated in the program. In her introductory remarks, former New Careers program director Esther Wattenberg recalled the groundbreaking nature of the New Careers program at the University of Minnesota—the only one of more than 200 such programs in the country that was hosted by a university—as well as its “innovative approach to breaking the cycle of poverty in the Twin Cities.”

David Taylor, Dean of General College,
praised the program for its emphasis on “what could be as opposed to what exists,” which he called a “hallmark of General College” and in the true spirit of a public land-grant institution. Special guest former Vice President Walter Mondale, who attended the first New Careers graduation ceremony in 1969, recalled the program as a “quin-essential example of the principle of social justice—the idea that the nation has an obligation to use its resources to help everyone become a full participant in society and share in the American Dream.”

The most poignant remarks at the celebration, however, were the testimonials offered by the New Careerists in attendance. Most noted that the program had provided them with a unique opportunity to achieve basic skills, earn a college degree, and transition from paraprofessional positions to professional careers. Some shared the personal significance of their professional work, which had allowed them to give back to their communities and, in many cases, create new modes of service delivery to reach those traditionally underserved. Others discussed the significance of the New Careers program being located on the University campus, rather than in a church basement, as was first suggested. Not only did this mean that participants had to negotiate the University and learn how the system worked, but it also meant the University had to create new educational models to serve those whose life and learning styles were different from the traditional student’s, as well as new support systems—such as the General College’s HELP Center—for those who had been excluded from the opportunities of higher education and career development. Many recalled the importance of the social networks that arose from the program, the mutual support and encouragement these networks provided to participants, and the lifelong friendships that emerged. Most significant, several New Careerists noted the intergenerational effect of the program by sharing how their experiences had become an inspiration to children and grandchildren to attend college or graduate school.

The New Careers program undoubtedly changed the lives of many participants, the agencies in which they worked, and the curriculum and counseling services at the University of Minnesota. More than 35 years after the issuance of the Kerner Commission Report, racial tensions continue to plague our nation and unemployment is at crisis levels in many inner-city areas. It is our hope that the story of the New Careers program can inspire new efforts to confront poverty and frustration in our changing world.

For those interested in learning more about the history of the New Careers program at the University of Minnesota, Marilyn Peterson Armour’s “Alternative Routes to Professional Status: Social Work and the New Careers Program under the Office of Economic Opportunity,” Social Service Review (June 2002): 229–255, offers an excellent discussion. In addition, archival materials about the program are now available at the Social Welfare History Archive, which is housed at the Elmer L. Andersen Library on the West Bank of the University of Minnesota’s Twin Cities campus.
New Publication from CURA


CURA is pleased to announce the publication of a new print edition of the Directory of Nonprofit Organizations of Color in Minnesota. Traditionally one of CURA’s most popular publications, the directory lists more than 600 not-for-profit organizations in the state of Minnesota that primarily serve communities of color. For each organization listed, the directory provides contact information, the main activity the organization engages in, and a brief description of the organization’s mission and the programs or services it provides. The publication is indexed by organization, by main activity, and by community served, and includes preformatted mailing label matrices for each community of color.

The directory is also available on the Web as a searchable database at www.cura.umn.edu/publications/npoc.html. Visitors can search for specific organizations by community served, main activity area, and keyword, and can generate customized mailing labels based on the results of their search. Visitors can also limit their search to only those organizations whose listings have been added or updated since the print version of the directory was published in January 2005. We will attempt to update information in the database at regular six-month intervals.

To request a print copy of the Directory of Nonprofit Organizations of Color in Minnesota, simply detach, complete, and mail the attached postcard (no postage is required). Orders will also be accepted by e-mail at cura@umn.edu or by fax at 612-626-0273. Be sure to include complete mailing information and phone number with your order. Orders are limited to one copy of the directory per address. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.
Please send one copy of the Directory of Nonprofit Organizations of Color in Minnesota (5th edition, 2005) to the individual listed below. I understand that the directory is sent free of charge, and that the mailing information I provide below will not be shared with others.

Name: ______________________________________________________________________
Organization: ______________________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________
City: __________________________ State: _______ Zip: ______________
Phone: ( _______ ) _______ - ______________ ext. _________

For what purpose(s) will you or your organization use the directory? (check all that apply)

☐ As a phone book of nonprofit organizations in Minnesota
☐ To locate organizations that provide specific programs or services
☐ To locate organizations that work with specific groups or communities of color
☐ To mail information about grant opportunities or requests for proposals
☐ To mail information about educational or not-for-profit services
☐ To mail information about commercial or for-profit services
☐ Other ______________________________________________________________________
☐ Other ______________________________________________________________________

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