Hmong Families and Education: Partnership as Essential Link to Discovery

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Cover Photo: Participants in a youth soccer program created for Hmong children through the work of CURA’s Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizers (MCNO). Photo courtesy of Jay Clark.
Hmong Families and Education: Partnership as Essential Link to Discovery

By Heidi Barajas, Kari Smalkoski, Margaret Kaplan, and Yia Yang

Abstract: This article provides an account of how innovation is achieved when mutually beneficial partnerships are established as an ongoing and essential component of the discovery process. The authors describe the research undertaken jointly by the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO) and University of Minnesota researchers, but focuses on the unique partnership between MCNO and University researchers that has been sustained because of the investment all sides have made in Hmong families in North Minneapolis, as well as in the outcomes of the research. A key component to the ongoing success of this partnership is that University researchers have invested with the MCNO in working with Hmong families in North Minneapolis. MCNO is a program of CURA.

It is often difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when the relationship between an organization and a community begins to take shape. With the ongoing relationship between the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO; see sidebar on page 5) and the North Minneapolis Wat Tham Krabok (WTK) Hmong community, that exact moment occurred at a water fountain in an elementary school in North Minneapolis. MCNO’s work with the newly arrived Hmong community began in the spring of 2005 when two Hmong boys, wanting to practice speaking English, approached MCNO staff member Jay Clark at a water fountain and said hello.

The two boys described above are a part of the approximately 15,000 Hmong refugees who were resettled in the United States shortly after their unofficial refugee camp on Wat Tham Krabok Buddhist temple grounds in Thailand were closed by the Thai government. In 2004 and 2005, Minnesota received 4,972 “Wat Tham Krabok” refugees, with Hennepin Country

receiving 29% and Ramsey County receiving 63% of these refugees. Families resettled in Hennepin County were housed primarily in North Minneapolis in predominantly African American neighborhoods, where they had to deal with isolation, high levels of poverty, and challenges with the public schools that their children found themselves attending shortly after their arrival.

The initial meeting between Clark and the boys led to a conversation about what the WTK Hmong kids liked and did not like about their neighborhoods. In their first contact with WTK Hmong kids, MCNO staff found educational issues they were unwilling to leave unresolved: kids were having a difficult time in school because many were getting hit on the playground, on school busses, and at bus stops, and were housed all day in English language learner (ELL) classes speaking to one another in Hmong, but were not learning English. According to MCNO staff, the students and parents, unable to speak English and not knowing how the system worked or what their rights were within that system, had not been successful in their attempts to demand changes.

MCNO staff formed a boys’ soccer team and later a girls’ volleyball team as a practical way to respond to the situation WTK Hmong kids and families described. These spaces became safe places for kids to come together and talk about their lives in an active environment. Through the soccer program, MCNO learned that the students faced other problems:

- Many of the K–8 Hmong classes had 40–50 students in one classroom, representing the biggest class size in the Minneapolis Public Schools.
- At the high school in North Minneapolis, all students living within two miles were excluded from school transportation. The exclusion caused Hmong families to worry, because students had to walk to school past known drug houses and areas known for prostitution.
- Not enough Hmong-speaking teachers were available in the Minneapolis Public Schools in north Minneapolis.
- All newly arrived Hmong high-school students were required to go to one

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How do urban Hmong students and their families define and negotiate success in a suburban school? How do teachers and staff at the school define and negotiate success for Hmong students in comparison with the rest of the school’s population?

Partnership and the Discovery Process
One of the key components of engaged research design is to gain the support and trust of multiple stakeholders, which in this case did not just include Hmong families and school staff. Internal University of Minnesota partners, such as the Institutional Review Board (IRB), second-generation Hmong American students with expertise to act as cultural informants, and partners such as MCNO and CURA, were all important to the research design required for the project. For example, it took several months for IRB approval to be granted because working respectfully with recent immigrant groups did not always align with traditional University IRB requests. Several conversations with the IRB occurred to discuss the underpinnings of an engaged research-study design with a particular population.

3 The University of Minnesota IRB reviews research projects that involve people to uphold two broad standards: that people are not placed at undue risk; and that they give uncoerced, informed consent to participate.
A similar process was required to gain support and trust with the suburban school district where the WTK Hmong students were attending school through the CIY program. The school district approval was immediate and, while working through the University IRB process, the researchers met with the principal of Suburban Junior High (SJH). SJH received the first wave of WTK Hmong students placed through the CIY program, and continues to serve many WTK Hmong students. As part of a predata-collection process, Barajas and Smalkoski engaged with the school and home communities by visiting SJH, talking with MCNO staff to gather more detailed information, and attending Hmong girls’ volleyball events so that they became familiar faces connected to the work with WTK Hmong families.

The process for obtaining consent took into consideration the engaged nature of the research, the comfort of the community members involved, and the requirements of the IRB. Community-engaged research requires time because it is an investment in the community. Community research partners have their own rules that University researchers must follow—not the other way around. In this case, Hmong families gave trust to those already working within the community. Yia Yang, a second-generation Hmong American and community organizer at MCNO, already had well-established relationships with newly arrived Hmong families, and the research team agreed that it would be best if he obtained consent from Hmong parents to interview their children who attended SJH.

Yang, Barajas, and Smalkoski worked as part of a research team and made decisions about the best possible situation in which community members would participate. The relationships developed by the team driven by a common goal provided incentive for Yang to invest his time. As part of the research team, he participated in meetings about the construction of research questions, the protocols, and a plan for obtaining consent, which included a lengthy three-part process of meeting with families. In addition, to comply with IRB regulations, he completed a required online training program regarding protection of individuals participating in research projects. The commitment to complete this training was at his discretion rather than a directive.

Four second-generation Hmong American undergraduate students—Linda Yang, Pa Yang, Nae Ree Yang, and Ashley Yang—joined the team as cultural informants, interpreters, and translators. As non-Hmong researchers, Barajas and Smalkoski discovered all four women had expertise in areas they had not considered. For example, at a team meeting the undergraduates shared that working with community elders required using formal language and established who was most comfortable translating in that situation. Each member of the team played a strong role, contributing to the project in unexpected and important ways. The undergraduates were included in research meetings where they discussed research questions, protocols, and general direction of the data collection. In addition, the undergraduate team members conveyed that the opportunity to interact with newly arrived Hmong immigrant families was personally beneficial.

As the work progressed, the team heard from the community that the engaged process of discovery was important and appreciated. For example, a second-generation Hmong American attorney who resides in North Minneapolis and is a former soccer coach to many of the WTK Hmong boys included in the research project confirmed how necessary the research is, indicating that “besides MCNO, nobody is paying attention to these boys or their families.” A seasoned skeptic of any outsider coming in to do “research” on the Hmong community, he has been appreciative of the ways in which the study has been conducted by two non-Hmong researchers. He also relayed to Smalkoski that he feels certain that the research team’s commitment to the WTK Hmong community in North Minneapolis is genuine.

Research Findings

Barajas and Smalkoski first completed their interviews with the SJH principal, associate principal, and 15 teachers, along with general observations about the school. As Yia Yang continued the three-part process of obtaining consent with parents, Barajas and Smalkoski began interviewing parents and conducting focus groups with their children who attend SJH.

The data collected provided some interesting findings. Overall, teachers’ perceptions of Hmong students were overwhelmingly positive. They described WTK Hmong students as hardworking, organized, respectful, and polite students who value their education. However, the team observed substantial differences in the ways teachers described Hmong girls in comparison with Hmong boys, as many teachers noted verbalism, “Hmong girls just know how to do school.” The achievement data support this finding. In overall grade point average (GPA) and on standardized tests, Hmong girls almost always outperform Hmong

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4 Suburban Junior High is a pseudonym used to protect the privacy of students and others involved in the research project.
boys; however, as a group, they still lag behind many of their non-ELL classmates. By looking at course-taking patterns, GPA, and teacher comments, the findings suggest that WTK Hmong students are making steady academic progress. In addition, all students interviewed stated that their academic English is continuing to improve.

Research findings also indicate that WTK Hmong students particularly thrive in ELL and science classes. ELL classes are considered “safe spaces” for students, where they can express themselves in a supportive environment and are taught by competent, well-qualified teachers. At the time the interviews took place, SJH was offering innovative pedagogical practices such as paired coursework and content-based instruction. In a paired course, for example, an ELL teacher is paired with a science or civics teacher so that students are able to develop both academic language and knowledge in the course content at the same time. Although expensive, the principal at SJH at the time saw the value for such courses and supported them by shifting resources. In general, WTK Hmong students took advantage of the abundance of free academic activities and programs, and almost all of them participated in the school’s badminton program, which serves as an important social and peer connection. Overall, data indicated many positive school practices were in place at SJH to support WTK Hmong students’ educational success.

Findings also indicated that opportunities existed to consider additional supports for educational success. During interviews with parents, it became clear that WTK Hmong parents were not only disconnected from other WTK Hmong parents, but that they were disconnected almost entirely from SJH teachers, staff, and families who live within the boundaries of the school district. An unexpected benefit of the interview process occurred when one of the first WTK Hmong fathers interviewed expressed an interest in talking with other WTK Hmong parents who also had children attending SJH—something he had not considered before the interview and what could result in a critical school connection for all WTK Hmong parents. In this case, collecting data for a research project provided a reflective process for a parent who formulated an idea to help support his family and neighboring WTK Hmong families.

Discovery and the Benefits Beyond Research Findings

Part of the overall discovery process was continued observation of SJH students participating in everyday activities; these observations often led to beneficial outcomes not directly related to research findings. One activity was a Sunday-night tutoring program at CURA, from which students continue to benefit. This program is one of the few available for students who cannot get tutoring help at home from family members, and it gives students an opportunity to connect with many second-generation Hmong American tutors who are undergraduates at the University of Minnesota. Discussions between Barajas and Clark about the benefits of bringing WTK Hmong students to campus led to a brainstorm of ideas about additional opportunities that could benefit the students. One of these ideas was to provide a workshop on going to college. With the support of colleagues in CEHD, Hmong junior-high and high-school students participated in a workshop focused on the college-application process, financial aid, and general strategies for preparing for college. The workshop was well attended and students enthusiastically asked insightful questions about their current and future college applications.

During the workshop, one student indicated she had applied to the University of Minnesota but the application was a standstill. She and her family did not know what to do or who to contact. Because she was now connected with individuals from the University, she was able to obtain guidance from those individuals and complete the needed information, and was admitted. She has now successfully completed her first year of college in CEHD. A second session was created the following fall semester, which was also well attended. Barajas and Yia Yang are currently in conversation with staff at SJH to collaborate these efforts. Providing workshops and creating future opportunities for this group of students has had immediate and future benefit for both the WTK Hmong community and the University of Minnesota. The process of engaged discovery provided the necessary perspective that an observed community need, if responded to, was understood as a mutually beneficial venture.

Unexpected outcomes connected to the discovery process also occurred for many of the second-generation Hmong American research assistants. For example, Pa Yang said that listening to the ways in which one of the teachers in an interview talked about WTK Hmong students brought up unexplored feelings for her. Nae Ree Yang had always wanted to connect with newly arrived immigrant families, but was never sure how. She was unaware of the CURA Sunday-night tutoring sessions and was immediately interested in volunteering. Her experiences with the project also sparked new conversations with her parents and grandparents about their own experiences as newly arrived
immigrants to St. Paul, Minnesota, in the mid-1980s. As a college student, this experience contributed in new ways to her own identity process as a young Hmong American woman.

The research team also gained insights not directly related to the research questions. For example, Smalkoski attended a community event organized by MCNO staff to discuss the imperative need for a Hmong police officer in North Minneapolis. She witnessed what the WTK Hmong community was experiencing and began to understand the vital role of MCNO in advocating for WTK Hmong families and providing a platform for them to advocate for themselves. Experiences such as this provided additional levels of commitment to the project as team members became linked to the overall concerns of the community. Smalkoski also relayed that when talking with her fellow graduate students throughout the University about the project, they often noted the research design provided a structure of built-in mentorship that encouraged equal contribution that appeared to be a unique aspect of an engaged-discovery process.

One activity was more directly impacted by the availability of the research findings than by the discovery process in general. Clark requested data from the study to support his efforts in advocating for WTK Hmong families with the state legislature. Due to the efforts of MCNO staff, the WTK Hmong students who attended suburban schools through the CIY program had, over the past three legislative sessions, participated in state-capitol visits and spoken to legislators. Armed with preliminary data from the University-community research effort, students were able to successfully argue for the continuation of transportation so they could attend CIY schools. Pictured here are students talking to Senator Patricia Torres Ray (DFL).

Over the past three legislative sessions, WTK Hmong students who attend suburban schools through the Choice Is Yours program have participated in state-capital visits and spoken to legislators. Armed with preliminary data from the University-community research effort, students were able to successfully argue for the continuation of transportation so they could attend CIY schools. Pictured here are students talking to Senator Patricia Torres Ray (DFL).

Hmong American in the United States to receive tenure at a top-tier research (Research 1) university, as well as a respected leader in the Hmong community. He has been invited to partner with the University of Minnesota’s Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC)—a place-based organization in North Minneapolis that links the University and community in vital partnership—as a faculty affiliate to work with the project. An outreach effort resulted in an event with Xiong and Hmong families at UROC to share information from this project, as well as Xiong’s research on school achievement and the Hmong.

Looking Ahead
Community engagement, according to O’Meara et al., “has been one of the major innovations within higher education over the last 20 years.”5 At the center of this innovation is the benefit of partnership and reciprocity—innova-

tion that is not a precursor to research activities, but rather an essential part of the discovery process. As a Carnegie-identified institution, the University of Minnesota has taken great strides through its Office for Public Engagement to define engaged scholarship and to provide faculty with professional development opportunities. Engaging with community in discovery can provide mutual benefit for communities and the University, yet this process is often identified simply as “outreach.”

A dominant image associated with research is a “scientist” going through a process of discovery in a laboratory setting. In this project, discovery occurs in the context of building trust and getting to know a community. Engagement is not a precursor to the work of research, but is an essential step in engaged scholarship. The willingness of community members to answer questions, share information, and be honest when the answers to questions can be at times difficult is enhanced by including people with community relationships who can operate as connectors to the University.

MCNO staff understood early on that in order for community-identified research issues to be addressed, it would require a bridging of a relationship between researchers and families. Because the relationships between MCNO and the WTK Hmong families were the result of years of work and effort, and were critical to the ongoing work with the WTK Hmong community, MCNO staff had to be confident that the work of the researchers would enhance and not compromise community relationships. This confidence was developed through conversation with researchers and the reputation that preceded them. In addition, MCNO was not merely passing off a relationship, but taking an active role in an ongoing process.

MCNO and the research team continue to strengthen their partnership through an established partnership with UROC. Work with WTK Hmong families in North Minneapolis provided a rationale for MCNO to be officially affiliated with UROC. MCNO has utilized the UROC building for events related to outreach to WTK Hmong youth and families and has assigned office space in the building. In addition, the MCNO-UROC partnership was able to identify and provide specific outreach to Hmong families immediately following the May 2011 tornado in North Minneapolis. Barajas and Smalkoski continue their scholarly work by presenting their findings at conferences and other academic venues (oftentimes with MCNO staff members Margaret Kaplan and Yia Yang). The team also has plans for public presentations and coauthorship of multiple publications, including journal articles.

As with dissemination of appropriate documents for community use, disseminating findings to academic audiences provides a benefit to future research, and informs practice and policies for Hmong children and families. Sharing outcomes in the frame of an engaged research project provides an opportunity to show academic colleagues that engaged research is a scholarly endeavor that employs specific and rigorous methods for discovery. The effort to build and maintain partnerships is essential to the discovery process and, as a model, may contribute to the sustainability of the work between the research institution and the communities with whom it works.

There is no immediately obvious connection between a large public institution like the University of Minnesota and a couple of Hmong boys informally discussing what they think about their neighborhoods and schools after a chance encounter at a school water fountain. However, programs like MCNO, centers like CURA and UROC, and colleges like CEHD have the ability to rewrite the terms of engagement between public institutions and communities. In this case, researchers and community organizers came to the table with specific skill sets and expertise that separately do good work. Aligning the work and sharing expertise can create a partnership that is doing work that would not likely have occurred in their separate areas. In its own ways, and now as a new partnership, the research team will continue to connect with families to address the issues that people care about most, and ensure that the University and communities continue to work in partnership to respond to the city’s most pressing urban issues.

The Carnegie classification acknowledges significant commitment to and demonstration of community engagement that improves teaching and learning, and generates socially responsive knowledge to benefit communities. To be selected, institutions must provide descriptions and examples of institutionalized practices of community engagement that show alignment among mission, culture, leadership, resources, and practices.

6 The Carnegie classification acknowledges significant commitment to and demonstration of community engagement that improves teaching and learning, and generates socially responsive knowledge to benefit communities. To be selected, institutions must provide descriptions and examples of institutionalized practices of community engagement that show alignment among mission, culture, leadership, resources, and practices.
Exploring the Potential for a More Local Food System in the Western Lake Superior Region

by David Syring

Abstract: Local and regional food has emerged as an important arena for economic development and for social change. The western Lake Superior region offers significant opportunities and unique challenges for the redevelopment of a robust regional food system. This article summarizes research on several key elements related to possibilities for expanding the local food system in the region. It presents data about the available land base that could contribute to food production in the region; insights based on in-depth interviews with farmers who already grow food in the region, including policy ideas that they offered to support the work of growing more local food; and findings from a regional survey of citizens regarding their willingness to purchase local foods. The author concludes with a discussion of policy possibilities for supporting the regional food system. The research upon which this article is based was supported by grants from CURA’s Faculty Interactive Research Program and the University of Minnesota’s Healthy Food, Healthy Lives Institute.

Every day, we make a collective decision supporting food systems that challenge our physical, economic, and social health. We are more overweight, less wealthy, and less connected as a community than we could be if more of our food was produced closer to home.

With a population of just under 480,000 people, the western Lake Superior region¹ (Figure 1) generates nearly $1.2 billion a year in economic activity from food purchases.² Of course, most of that money goes to companies with no connection to the region, so these purchases do not contribute as much to the local economy as they could. In addition, the current global food-production model emphasizes large-scale commodity production that results in immense quantities of apparently cheap raw materials for the industrial creation of processed products. The resulting system, rich in calories but unbalanced in nutrition, contributes to a growing set of health problems in the United States, as well as around the globe.

National statistics on obesity and diet-related health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and others, are not promising. In 2009, an astounding 63.4% of U.S. citizens were categorized either as overweight or obese (36.2% overweight, 27.2% obese). This health crisis translates into considerable costs, as obese individuals pay 42% ($1,429) more per year for healthcare than normal-weight individuals. The mean cost is even higher for recipients of Medicare who are obese ($1,723). In 2006, extra medical spending due to obesity in the United States was $40 billion, with projected growth in medical costs due to obesity to grow to $147 billion per year and beyond over the following few years.³

¹ The western Lake Superior region is a 15-county area located in northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. This regional designation follows the one developed by the Lake Superior chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association. The rationale for including these counties in the study described in this article is that they share similar climate, cultural histories, and geographic focus distinct from that of more distant urban centers.


Minnesota and Wisconsin and to national numbers. In 2010, 51.2% of respondents in the region reported being overweight or obese (33.6% overweight, 17.6% obese). Although this is better than the national average, still more than half of the region’s population fits into a category of people with the potential for diet-related medical problems.4


Our food system is not an accident, but rather the ongoing outcome of a set of policies that serve multiple interests. As Lang, Barling, and Caraher write:

The best way to understand food policy is as contested terrain, where
actions and implications are tussled among interest groups and social forces from the state, supply chain and civil society … Flood policy is inevitably contested space; it is made not ordained; its possibilities open for negotiation. It may be imposed or inherited from the past, but it can be re-shaped, made more democratically accountable, and made appropriate for the times in which we live, a time of environmental and health threat, yet with great promise and opportunity.  

A number of scholars have explored the economic, health, social and environmental costs of this global industrial system, as well as begun to explore alternatives. The fact is, we can do better than our current system by raising some important questions: What is food for? What kind of food system do we want? How can we improve our health, our economies, and our communities by re-envisioning how we grow, distribute, prepare, and eat the foods that sustain us? How might that vision be supported through creative local policies and practices? In other words, how can we come to remember that eating is one of the most important acts of both agriculture and culture?

The Role of Local in a Global World

Like the concept of “organic” in the 1990s, the word “local” when associated with food has acquired a buzz. Bestselling books have extolled the virtues of eating from a circumscribed area, while acclaimed films have criticized the global, industrial food system. In the popular press, Time magazine proclaimed on its cover in 2007, “Forget Organic. Eat Local.” Even First Lady Michelle Obama has weighed in on the value of growing your own food.

Collectively, this interest is well-deserved, as many scholars have demonstrated that small-scale production for primarily local consumption has a better ratio of energy returned for energy input, can result in up to five times as many jobs as large-scale farms, can reduce the energy and environmental impacts of food by reducing processing and shipping requirements, and can improve the freshness (and therefore nutritional content) of food.

Although the benefits of local production, distribution, and consumption of food are numerous, as suggested above, only the most vociferous supporters of localism see local food as an absolute answer to the food needs of any nation, state, or region. The reality is that the globalizing economy will not be replaced by local production; rather, local, national, and international production and distribution of food must be considered as part of a continuum of possibilities and choices for communities. For decades, the overwhelming emphasis of food-related policies has been on consolidating production in large-scale growing and processing of food. This emphasis has created an unbalanced system that favors large, profit-driven players, and the health, economic, and social impacts of subsidized commodity production have appeared in our expanding waistlines and rural-community economic decline, as well as in the disconnect from food sources that many people experience. Current interest in local food, and calls for public support for local food, emerge as means of democratizing the playing field for food production. The idea is not to replace all industrial-scale food production, but to enhance the range of options for policies that support diverse approaches to food production.

Foodshed Assessment for the Western Lake Superior Region

In 2009, my collaborators Stacey Stark (GIS specialist) and David Abazs (farmer and community organizer) and I received funding from the University of Minnesota Healthy Food, Healthy...
Experiences of Regional Growers

To further assess the western Lake Superior region foodshed, we interviewed a nonrandomized group of 26 (13 conventional and 13 organic or certified organic) producers of meat, dairy, fruit, grain, community-supported agriculture vegetables, greenhouse vegetables, and wild-harvested foods. We chose farms and interview sites that were distributed across the region (Figure 1). In addition to geographic distribution, we included size of operation, type of product (vegetable, meat, dairy, etc.), organic or conventional grower, and gender diversity as criteria for selecting growers to interview. The interviews revealed a wide range of perspectives and some common threads. Producers identified several strengths of existing food production in the region, including:

- Dedicated producers who have years of commitment and knowledge of their soils, customers, and climate;
- Independent and experimental producers who learn effectively both from trial and error and by using available educational resources (i.e., agricultural extension, publications, nonprofit agricultural groups [such as the Sustainable Farming Association], fellow farmers, etc.); and
- Diverse lands, soils, and microclimates that lend themselves to a variety of crops, production scales, and approaches.

Producers also identified several constraining conditions on the local/regional food system, including:

- Cool, short growing season and challenging soils;
- Meager economic benefits of producing food under current commodity-market driven system;
- Limited labor resources for intensive production;
- Minimal presence of infrastructure for processing and distributing foods;
- Limited access to mass-consumer markets; and
- A population of producers without clear plans or fiscal means for their own retirement and/or succession for their operations.

Growers/producers who have been in business for more than a few years have carefully honed their production to focus on products that they know do well under their conditions, and for which they know they have a viable market. Although certain crops (for example, potatoes) historically have been grown at larger scales in parts of the region, current producers largely focus on higher value products (i.e., greenhouse tomatoes, raspberries, and smoked fish) that can be directly sold to consumers in order to maximize the return on their labor. Most of the producers interviewed reported that they are at or near maximum productive capacity for their circumstances, and few reported intentions to appreciably expand their operations. In fact, many regional food sectors have seen significant decline in the numbers of producers (for example, the number of commercial fishermen on western Lake Superior has fallen from a reported early/mid-20th century peak of several hundred to less than 20, with only a few making close to a full-time living from fishing).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Acres Meeting Criteria</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aitkin</td>
<td>125,976</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td>81,445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>40,914</td>
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<tr>
<td>Itasca</td>
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<tr>
<td>Koochiching</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>52,209</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pine</td>
<td>251,299</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>384,293</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashland</td>
<td>43,505</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bayfield</td>
<td>93,171</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burnett</td>
<td>100,044</td>
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<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>83,248</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>12,723</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>51,942</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washburn</td>
<td>75,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,692,150</td>
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</table>

* Soil and land-cover data were not available for Koochiching County.
Policy Suggestions Offered by Regional Growers to Support a Stronger Regional Food System

- Create a tax incentive for people to buy local—perhaps a tax on food based on miles it has traveled, with more locally produced food receiving a tax break (proceeds could be used to support other initiatives to build local food systems).
- Create a community grain mill to store and grind locally grown grains to be sold to the community.
- Provide a revolving low-interest loan fund for local farmers to purchase land, equipment, etc.
- Provide local-government support for creating a meat-processing facility in the region.
- Establish zoning policies that reserve the best agricultural land for agricultural uses, even in cities.
- Identify tax-forfeited land with agricultural potential and offer it at reasonable rates to farmers.
- Support farmer-education programs for new farmers.

Table 2. Desire for Local Foods and the Perceived Gap between Local Food Supply and Demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question/Response Categories</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you look at labels to see where a product is made or grown? (Percentage of respondents indicating “Sometimes,” “Frequently,” or “Always”)</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you actively seek local foods? (Percentage of respondents indicating “Yes”)</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When purchasing food, I do not care where it is grown. (Percentage of respondents indicating “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”)</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to buy more food that is local but find that this is too difficult? (Percentage of respondents indicating “Yes”)</td>
<td>80.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it easy to find local foods at the place where you primarily buy food? (Percentage of respondents indicating “Yes”)</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitudes of Consumers in the Region

During 2010 and 2011, we conducted research into what the consumers of food in the region think about the idea of local food as a priority. We used surveys at locations in Minnesota (Duluth, Grand Marais, Ely) and Wisconsin (Ashland, Poplar, Superior) where people purchase food and collected responses from 156 citizens. Although our sample was not randomly generated, and therefore cannot be generalized to the regional population, we did endeavor to secure a wide range of opinions by offering the survey in varied locations throughout the region, including conventional grocery stores, convenience markets, and cooperative grocery stores, as well as an urban shelter that provides hot meals to in-need individuals and families. Our sample fairly evenly represented households with mean incomes from across the economic spectrum (ranging from less than $15,000/year to more than $100,000/year). The sample was 75% female and 25% male, with 93% of respondents indicating they are the primary food buyers in their households. Our sample was more highly educated than the regional average (73% indicating that they had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 33% of people with such a degree in the Duluth metropolitan area, according to numbers presented by the Duluth city government). Our sample self-identified as 94% white, which corresponds with the ethnic demography of the region.

The survey consisted of four sections, including: current practices/behaviors related to food purchasing; attitudes and ideas about local food; willingness to make changes related to purchasing more local food; and demographics. In this section, I present only a sample of the findings as related to the potential for developing policies to meet the needs of the region’s citizens.

We asked several questions designed to assess access and desire for local food. Our data suggest that people pay attention to and care about where their food comes from (Table 2). Approximately half of our respondents said it was easy to find local food where they shop, yet 8 out of 10 respondents indicated that they would like to purchase more local food, but find it difficult to locate a supply. This apparent dichotomy may be due to a few specialty items marked local being displayed prominently, whereas staple foods produced locally appear more rarely. For example, a local pickle maker has successfully promoted her products, gaining highly visible display space in a number of regional stores.

These findings suggest that room for growth in the regional food system clearly exists. Findings from a question designed to assess whether people are willing to pay a premium for local foods suggest that local foods are a priority for consumers, even at a cost.
and regardless of income level (Table 3 provides a nuanced look at these data). The data indicate that more than two-thirds of respondents would be willing to pay at least a 10% premium for local food, and about half would be willing to pay a 50% premium for local items.

### Local Food Policy Potential for Local Units of Government

In many communities, the food economy is second only to healthcare in terms of size, so cities and regions should consider food systems as critical arenas for policy work. The Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (www.fns.usda.gov/wic/fmnp/fmnpfaqs.htm) offers a highly visible, successful example of a public policy that simultaneously supports local growers, provides increased food security to low-income families, and improves nutrition. In 2011, this $20-million federal program provided food vouchers to low-income households for purchases to be made at farmers’ markets, resulting in $15.7 million in revenues for growers. Although this scale of program may only be possible at the national policy level, the model implemented by the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program was pioneered by state-level policy in Massachusetts that cost only several thousand dollars.13

Few communities have created coherent or meaningful policy approaches to food. However, some innovative local governments around the country have been active experimentalists with policies to support local food systems.14 We surveyed the literature available regarding local policies throughout the United States and Canada and found the following:

- **A growing number of communities have created food-policy councils as advisory bodies to consider the impacts and policy possibilities related to food production, distribution, and consumption. Food-policy councils are effective for bringing together a large group of stakeholders to chart strategic directions for local policies related to food in terms of health planning, economic development, education,**

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Table 3. Response Rates to the Question: How Much Would You Be Willing to Spend on a Local Food Item if the Same Item Costs $1.00 for a Nonlocal Option?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than $15,000</th>
<th>$15–24,999</th>
<th>$25–34,999</th>
<th>$35–44,999</th>
<th>$45–54,999</th>
<th>$55–64,999</th>
<th>$65–74,999</th>
<th>$75–99,999</th>
<th>More than $100,000</th>
<th>Pct. of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0.90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1.10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Amount</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table Note:** Column headings are household income level. Numbers given are total number of respondents in each category who chose the indicated amount (13.5% of total respondents indicated “Other,” and the amount they listed was usually more than $1.50). Total number of respondents = 156.

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A concept related to food-policy councils is a connecting body, sometimes identified as a “good food network,” to bring together growers, local- and sustainable-food advocates, entrepreneurs, and large community anchor institutions to develop new business models to increase the scale and availability of local, sustainably produced food. The National Good Food Network (www.ngfn.org/) serves as an umbrella resource and incubator for regional and local networks. Community members in the western Lake Superior region have recently created a good food network (www.goodfoodnetwork.org/) as a focal node for regional food-system development. This effort would benefit by local and regional government bodies offering support and partnership to this network. Since 2008, the National Network has been supporting the work of “regional lead teams” throughout the country. A regional lead team located at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University (www.leopold.iastate.edu/) supports work in the Upper Midwest. The Center has a policy initiative (www.leopold.iastate.edu/policy) that local governments and nonprofits in the Upper Midwest should consider as an essential resource for developing local food systems.

Food security for underserved communities also offers an important arena for policy development. The Community Food Security Coalition (www.foodsecurity.org/) provides support for such groups. Examples of community groups working on this include the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (detroitblackfoodsecurity.org/) and the Hartford Food System (www.hartfordfood.org/). University of Minnesota Duluth professors Adam Pine and John Bennett have studied the problem of limited food access in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Duluth, and offer several policy recommendations in their report.16

Public schools offer a unique arena for effective policy making related to food and nutrition. Children must be fed while in school, and locally produced, highly nutritious foods improve health for children, while strengthening local economies. Overlapping rules and programs at the federal, state, and local levels make change in school food offerings complicated, but opportunities for change do exist. The Food Policy Council of the City of New Haven, Connecticut, for example, has created “A Primer on Federal, State and Local Policies that Impact School Food” (www.cityofnewhaven.com/Government/pdfs/NHFPCSchoolFoodPolicyPrimer.pdf). It includes four recommendations for action. The first two relate only to federal policy, but the second two offer suggestions applicable to the western Lake Superior region. First, at the state level, encourage schools in the state to participate in the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program and the state’s Farm-to-School Program (www.farmtoschool.org/MN/programs.htm; www.farmtoschool.org/WI/programs.htm). Second, at the local level, establish and implement a plan to successfully transition to a self-operating school food-service program that optimizes existing resources, infrastructure, and expertise to economically serve fresh, healthy food.

Conclusions
Findings from the research described in this article indicate that the western Lake Superior region has both high interest in local foods and adequate land resources to grow a large amount of the food consumed in the region. The data indicate that a clear opportunity exists in the region. The primary obstacle to expanding local food is a lack of supply, which is tied to the low rate of economic return for growers—the fact is, farming at present in the region requires dedicated idealism to a way of life. Although such idealism is to be commended, it cannot be the only reward for the risk and hard work required to grow food in the region. The most obvious leverage point for expanding local food production would be in increasing the potential for farming to be an economically viable livelihood for regional growers. The region lacks a middle infrastructure to get food from growers to consumers at a rate of return that rewards growers for their work. Creating a policy body to systematically address this problem would help move the region toward more local options for healthy food, and toward creating economic opportunities for current and future growers.

David Syring is associate professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota at Duluth. His research includes regional food systems, ethnographic study with the Saraguro people of Ecuador, cultures of place, and digital storytelling.

The author would like to acknowledge co-researchers David Abazs and Stacey Stark, without whose collaboration and encouragement he would not be on the research path suggested by the data in this article; Randel Hanson, lead organizer of the Sustainable Agriculture Project at the University of Minnesota at Duluth, who has been a major inspiration; and Dylan Savall, who provided useful research assistance for the survey and review of food policies across North America. He also thanks the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association for the photos provided, and for their collaboration in identifying farmers willing to be interviewed.

The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA’s Faculty Interactive Research Program. The program was created to encourage University faculty to conduct research with community organizations and collaborators on issues of public policy importance for the state and community. These grants are available to regular faculty at the University of Minnesota and are awarded annually on a competitive basis. Additional funding was provided by the University of Minnesota’s Healthy Food, Healthy Lives Institute.

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15 Examples of particularly effective food-policy councils can be found in the following communities: Toronto (www.toronto.ca/health/t LPC/), Chicago (www.chicagofoodpolicy.org/), Cleveland (cccfoodpolicy.org/), and Minneapolis (www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/homegrown/dhfs_hg_Food_Council).

Abstract: Population change in Minnesota between 2000 and 2010 resulted from a reshuffling of people who lived here in 2000 or children who were born over those 10 years, because the state had a modest net gain by in-migration of only approximately 56,000 people (a mere 1% of its population) during the decade. Hennepin and Ramsey Counties actually lost nearly 100,000 net out-migrants to other counties, mainly those in the perimetropolitan-suburban ring and in the lakeshore resort and retirement areas of north-central Minnesota. The prairie counties west and south of Interstate 94 continued to lose out-migrants, as they have for half a century.

People are born, they move, they die: these simple facts explain all population change. The migration of people played a major role in the way populations grew or declined in Minnesota’s counties between 2000 and 2010. We have used data on natural increase of population and cohort-survival ratios to gain more detailed insight into these changes.

The decennial U.S. Census of 2010, on whose data we have largely based our analyses, reported that the counties that grew most rapidly from 2000 to 2010 were in a perimetropolitan ring of suburbs around the Twin Cities (Figure 1). Counties with smaller metropolitan centers (Moorhead, St. Cloud, Rochester) and larger cities (Mankato, Brainerd) grew almost as rapidly. Mankato and Rochester were the apices of a triangle of growth counties south of the Twin Cities, and Brainerd was the metropolis for a cluster of growth counties in the lakeshore resort and retirement area of north-central Minnesota. Conversely, many counties in the northern tier and in the prairie areas of western and southern Minnesota actually lost population, as did Ramsey County in the metropolitan core; in the same timeframe, Hennepin County barely held its own.

Natural Increase in Population and Migration Patterns
We used the natural-increase technique to calculate the net number of people who migrated to and from Minnesota and to and from each of its counties. The natural increase is defined as the surplus of births over deaths. In the years from 2000 through 2009, for example, 703,879 children were born to residents of Minnesota and 375,881 residents of the state died, for a natural increase of 327,998 persons (Table 1).

Between 2000 and 2009, the number of births in Minnesota jumped by more than 50,000 over the preceding decade, after having dropped by more than 17,000 in the 1990s. This increase may be attributable in part to the state’s ability to attract in-migrants (who come from other states) as well as immigrants (who come from other countries). Many of these newcomers speak a different language, have a different cultural heritage, and have higher birth rates than native-born Minnesotans. The state will continue to depend on these newcomers to maintain the growth of its population, as it always has.

The decadal number of deaths in the state during the 2000s continued to increase slightly as it did in previous decades, and it can be expected to increase dramatically in the next decade,
when the baby boomers who were born during the late 1940s and 1950s begin to turn 65. The state’s natural increase during the 2000s rose to its 1980s levels, but that too can be expected to drop dramatically as the number of deaths increases.

The counties with the highest rates of natural increase during the 2000s were in the metropolitan belts from St. Cloud through the Twin Cities to Rochester (Figure 2), and the surrounding counties also had respectable rates. Rates in the northwestern and southeastern parts of the state were low, however, and the number of deaths actually exceeded the number of births in many counties in the southwestern and northeastern parts of the state. These counties actually suffered a natural decrease of population, and their demographic outlook is bleak.

The natural increase (or decrease) is the population change that would have occurred if no migration had taken place. In order to estimate migration, we subtracted the natural increase from the change that actually did occur in order to calculate the net number of people who moved into and out of the state and each county during the decade. Between 2000 and 2010, for example, the population of Minnesota grew from 4,919,479 to 5,303,925, for an increase of 384,446 persons (Table 2).

The difference between the total increase of 384,446 persons and the natural increase of 327,998 persons can only be explained by a net migration of 56,448 persons into the state from other states and countries during the 2000s (Table 2). The total number of persons who moved into Minnesota obviously was much larger, but their numbers were offset by persons who moved out of the state. The 2000s were a reversion toward the 1980s, when the state lost nearly 30,000 net out-migrants, and a decline from the 1990s, when the state welcomed more than a quarter of a million net new in-migrants.

In summary, net population change in Minnesota counties between 2000 and 2010 resulted primarily from a reshuffling of people who were already residents, rather than from an influx of new people. The perimetropolitan-ring counties and the lakeshore resort and retirement counties attracted the greatest numbers of migrants during the 2000s (Figure 3), with the more sparsely populated lakeshore counties having the greatest rates of increase (Figure 4).
Loss by out-migration was more widespread; more than half of the counties in Minnesota actually lost migrants during the 2000s, exacerbating a trend of depopulation that has persisted for more than half a century.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the migration maps is the high net out-migration from the two metropolitan core counties: Hennepin County lost slightly more than 50,000 persons, and Ramsey County lost just under 40,000 residents. If we only examined the natural increases in our analyses of population changes in Minnesota counties (as illustrated in Figure 2), the high rates of natural increase in these two counties neatly camouflaged their high net out-migration rates. Although in-migrants to these two counties had high birth rates, young and early middle-aged couples decamped from these counties to the suburban-ring counties, and older residents retired to their winterized lakeshore cottages. In simplest terms, population change in Minnesota counties during the 2000s can be attributed to migration from the aging metropolitan-core counties to the perimetropolitan-ring counties and the lakeshore counties.

**Cohort-Survival Ratio Analysis**

We used cohort-survival ratios to further analyze migration in and out of Minnesota counties. Cohort-survival ratios provide insights into the ways in which life-phase changes influence population change. An age cohort consists of all persons born during a five-year period. Its members are 10 years older when a census is taken 10 years later. The number of people in any given cohort can change only if people of that age enter or leave the area, whether by migration or by death. Death is not a significant factor in population change below the age of 65, so we may assume that changes in the numbers of people in younger age cohorts result almost entirely from migration.

Numbers from Hennepin County illustrate cohort-survival ratio analysis (Table 3). Each row in the table shows the number of people in each cohort in 2010 and in 2000. The first column lists age cohorts in five-year categories, the second column lists the number of people in each cohort in 2010, and the third column lists the change in the number of people in that cohort from 2000 to 2010. The survival ratio* for each cohort is calculated by dividing the 2010 population by the 2000 population and multiplying by 100. A ratio above 100 indicates net in-migration of that cohort, and a ratio below 100 indicates net out-migration of that cohort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Cohort in 2010</th>
<th>Number of Persons in the Cohort</th>
<th>Survival Ratio*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–4</td>
<td>76,226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1 to 5.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9</td>
<td>(165,026)†</td>
<td>(+16,381)†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–14</td>
<td>69,438</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>72,672</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>84,231</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–29</td>
<td>100,913</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–34</td>
<td>86,610</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>76,196</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>78,108</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–49</td>
<td>85,932</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–54</td>
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<td>55–59</td>
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<td>60–64</td>
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<tr>
<td>65–69</td>
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<td>70–74</td>
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<tr>
<td>75–79</td>
<td>22,626</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–84</td>
<td>19,850</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85+</td>
<td>21,822</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Cohort-Survival Numbers and Ratios for Hennepin County, 2000 and 2010

* Survival ratio for the decade is calculated by dividing the 2010 population by the 2000 population and multiplying by 100. A ratio above 100 indicates net in-migration of that cohort, and a ratio below 100 indicates net out-migration of that cohort.

† We used the number of births in Hennepin County between 2000 and 2009 as a surrogate for the cohorts that had not been born in 2000 (shown in parentheses). The (+16,381) value represents the difference between the 2000–2009 number of births figure and the sum of the 2010 0–4 and 5–9 age-cohort values.

Source: U.S. Census data.

Figure 3. Migrants by County, 2000–2010, per 100 Persons in 2000

Figure 4. Migrants by County as a Percentage of Population Growth, 2000–2010
number of people in that same cohort in 2000, when they were 10 years younger; it begins with the 10–14 age cohort, because people aged 0–4 and 5–9 had not been born in 2000. The fourth column in Table 3 shows how the number of people in each cohort changed during the decade from 2000 to 2010. For example, the 25–29 age cohort in 2010 gained 28,158 people, a clear indication of net in-migration, but the 15–19 age cohort lost 3,108 people, an indication of net out-migration. The fifth column lists the net survival ratio for the decade. A cohort-survival ratio greater than 100 indicates net in-migration of people in that age cohort, and a ratio less than 100 indicates net out-migration of people in that cohort. Therefore, the 25–29 age cohort had a survival ratio of 133, indicating substantial in-migration, but the survival ratio of 96 for the 15–19 age cohort shows slight out-migration.

Cohort-survival data indicated that Hennepin County still lured young people during the 2000s. The county had high in-migration ratios for the cohorts between 20 and 34, but high out-migration ratios for all other cohorts (Table 3). Death was an increasingly important form of out-migration in the older age cohorts, but we could not adjust survival ratios to account for deaths, because even though we do know the total number of deaths in the county during the decade, we cannot allocate them to specific age cohorts.

We cannot calculate survival ratios for the 0–4 and 5–9 age cohorts, because these children had not been born when the U.S. Census was taken in 2000, but we do know the total number of births between 2000 and 2009 in Hennepin County (shown in parentheses). These two youngest cohorts seem to have enjoyed in-migration, which patently was related to the in-migration of their parents in the cohorts between ages 20 and 34.

We next compared the survival ratios for Hennepin County with the survival ratios for the median Minnesota county for each age cohort (Figure 5).1 The 10–14 cohort had a ratio of 95, which rose to 96 for the 15–19 cohort, then soared to 112 for the 20–24 cohort and 139 for the 25–29 cohort, but after the age of 34, out-migration became dominant. Then we added statewide context to this graph by plotting the profile of the survival ratio for the median county in Minnesota for each age cohort (Figure 5). For each cohort we ranked the ratios for all counties, from highest to lowest, and identified the median, which is the middle value in this array.

1 For each cohort, we ranked the cohort-survival ratios for all counties, from highest to lowest, and identified the median, which is the middle value in this array.

The composite median county had in-migration in the two youngest age cohorts, massive out-migration in the 20–24 and 25–29 age cohorts, and the greatest in-migration in the 30–34 age cohort. In-migration then slowly tapered off until the age of 69, after which death began to take its toll. This pattern of migration is closely related to changes in life phase. For Hennepin County, conversely, younger people moved into the county, but people above age 35 moved out to the suburbs with their children or retired to their winterized cottage on the lake.

Most Minnesotans make their first major migration when they graduate from high school and go off to college, enter military service, or head for the city. One of the oldest clichés in outstate Minnesota is that the usual high-school graduation present is a suitcase, because teenagers expect to leave when they finish high school. Cohort-survival data indicate that roughly one-third of the state’s 20–24 and 25–29 year-olds troop off to college, and roughly one-fifth of those who left will eventually straggle back with their young families (Figure 5).

Between 2000 and 2010, Minnesota counties with four-year colleges had massive net in-migration of the college-level cohort aged 20–24 (Figure 6). Noncollege counties with cities of 10,000 or more did a slightly better job of retaining members of this cohort, but most other counties lost one-third to more than one-half, and the counties on the western side of the state lost especially heavily.

We might posit that most Minnesotans lend their young people to one of the “college counties” for four years or so, and then struggle mightily with the challenge of trying to lure them back home again. During the 2000s, they were moderately successful, because most counties had gratifying rates of in-migration of the 30–34 age cohort, and most of those that lost were college counties that lost 30–34 year-olds who had been 20–24 year-old students in 2000 (Figure 7). The heaviest rates of 30–34 age cohort in-migration were in the suburban ring around the Twin Cities. The lakeshore counties of north-central Minnesota attracted fewer numbers of this cohort, but they did attract them, because young people are needed to serve the

(continued on page 21)
older people who had retired to their winterized cottages.

Between 2000 and 2010, the people in the cohorts aged between 30 and 59 initially moved to the suburbs (Figures 5 and 7), settled down and raised families, with little subsequent migration until they reached retirement age (Figure 5). These individuals brought their children with them, based on the large influxes of 10–14 year-olds into the suburban ring and the lakeshore counties (who presumably did not make this move on their own) (Figure 8).

The in-migration of young couples with children, who presumably would move only to areas where jobs were available, indicates that the economy of north-central Minnesota lakeshore resort and retirement counties has matured and stabilized, and it is served by an intriguing new kind of metropolis that seems to be emerging north of Brainerd.2

The continuing migration of people in the 60–64 and 65–69 age cohorts into these lakeshore counties is noteworthy, and is indicative of people continuing to winterize their cottages and turn them into permanent retirement residences (Figures 9 and 10).

Cohort-survival ratio profiles for a core Twin Cities county (Ramsey), a suburban-ring county (Washington), and a central Minnesota retirement county (Aitkin) show how migration reflects changes in life phase (Figure 11). Ramsey recruited 20-year-olds, lost 30-year-olds (and their children) heavily, and older cohorts less heavily until the age of 65, when death became a significant factor. Suburban Washington was nearly the mirror image of Ramsey, with huge in-migration of 30–34 year-olds (with their children), and then a slow shift from in- to out-migration after the age of 54. Aitkin lost more than one-third of its 20-year-olds, but enjoyed substantial in-migration of all cohorts between the ages of 30 and 70. The huge in-migration of the cohorts between the ages of 55 and 69 reflects people who were retiring to their winterized cottages, and the earlier humps for the 30–44 and 10–14 age cohorts reflect in-migration of young couples (and their children) who moved to Aitkin County to haul the garbage, put in the docks, maintain the properties, and otherwise serve the elderly retirees.


Conclusion
Population change in Minnesota counties between 2000 and 2010 resulted from a reshuffling of people who already lived in the state in 2000 or were born here over those 10 years, because the state had a modest net in-migration of only approximately 56,000 people during the decade.

In that decade, the two metropolitan-core counties, Hennepin and Ramsey, were prime magnets for young people between the ages of 20 and 34, but leaked out-migrants in older cohorts. They lost nearly 100,000 net out-migrants to other Minnesota counties, but their high birth rates camouflaged this loss.

People between the ages of 30 and 40 migrated to suburbs in the
perimetropolitan-ring counties as they got married and started to raise families, and stayed there until they neared retirement age, when many migrated to winterized cottages in the lakeshore resort and retirement counties of north-central Minnesota.

The teeming perimetropolitan-ring counties had a substantial surplus of births over deaths, but the lakeshore counties had low or even negative rates of natural increase, and the growth of their population depended on their ability to recruit retired folks and the young families who tended to their needs. More than half of the state’s counties, including many in the northern tier and in the prairie counties south and west of Interstate 94, are demographically challenged. They had more deaths than births during the 2000s, and their natural rate of decrease was aggravated by their loss of young people, who leave when they reach college age and have not been enticed back.

Many of the prairie counties still are dominated by farming, whose labor requirements are shrinking as farming is becoming more efficient. These counties have created few alternative employment opportunities that would enable them to retain their own people, much less to attract anyone new. The population of these counties continued to shrivel slowly during the 2000s, as it had for more than half a century, and these counties’ inability to attract new in-migrants makes their demographic prognosis grim.

One must question the wisdom of continuing to invest private and public resources in areas that continue to lose their population. Should public policy strive to stimulate population growth in these areas, or should we allow them to continue to wither away?

John Fraser Hart is a professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota. Mark B. Lindberg is director of the Cartography Laboratory at the University of Minnesota. The authors are grateful to Minnesota State Demographer Susan Brower for providing data on resident births and deaths.
Recent Project Awards

E ach issue of the CURA Reporter features a few capsule descriptions of new projects under way at CURA. The projects highlighted in this issue were made possible through one of CURA’s community-based research programs, which provide graduate-student assistance for community-based applied research projects, program planning and development, program evaluation, and other short-term projects. These projects represent only a portion of those that will receive support from CURA and its partners during the coming year.

■ Developing a South Minneapolis Neighborhood Index

Founded in 1977, Hope Community is a community-development organization that stayed in Minneapolis through neighborhood devastation and disinvestment to create a healthy, stable, culturally diverse, and mixed-income neighborhood for the long-term. South Minneapolis, although not as devastated by the foreclosure crisis as other neighborhoods, continues to be a diverse, economically challenged community. No major initiatives to develop a comprehensive strategy or vision for South Minneapolis, or even to look at how the area has fared through the economic upheaval of recent years, exist. The South Minneapolis Neighborhood Index would help paint a picture of the area’s commercial, workforce, education, transportation, and other key indicators, providing insight for area groups in developing their work strategies. Renan Snowden, a Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning student at the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, will gather data and aid in the creation of the index. The results will be used to help guide Hope Community in assessing future development and revitalization in South Minneapolis, and as a focal point to develop partnerships with area organizations. **Program:** Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Working with Men to End Violence Against Women: A Qualitative Exploration

Casa de Esperanza is the National Latino® Domestic Violence Resource Center, whose mission is to mobilize Latinas and Latino® communities to end domestic violence. Domestic violence has become a silent epidemic, and it is important to address the issue with holistic prevention and intervention strategies that include everyone in the community. As the movement to end violence against women has progressed, most activists have come to believe that the involvement of men as allies of women must be a key part of the solution. However, very few approaches to ending domestic violence that involve Latino men and boys in a culturally relevant way exist. Martha Hernandez-Martinez, a Master’s of Public Affairs student at the Humphrey School, will interview Latina women and Latino men. The results of the research will be used to develop a toolkit and provide a much-needed addition to the field of domestic and sexual violence in Latino® populations. **Program:** Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Racial Equity in the Hospitality Industry

The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is a coalition of organizations advocating for public policies that promote equity in urban and suburban development. HIRE Minnesota believes that hospitality jobs in Minneapolis, especially the well-paying high-end hospitality jobs, are disproportionately filled by white workers. In other job sectors, such as construction, community-based training programs exist and are successful in placing people of color in the industry. HIRE Minnesota would like to explore ways in which this paradigm can be replicated in the hospitality industry. In particular, the research will look at community-based training programs in other parts of the country to see how they train for this industry and examine their impacts in the community. Kristin Cici, a doctoral student in Evaluation Studies, will examine existing training programs for the hospitality industry. The results will be used to make the case that community-based training can have an impact in the hospitality industry and to advocate for public funding of community-based training programs. **Program:** Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Understanding Strategies and Tactics in Commercial-Corridor Revitalization

The Selby Avenue Action Coalition is a diverse group of neighborhood stakeholders who came together in 2010 to find ways to inspire enterprise and investment on nine underutilized blocks of Selby Avenue. The goal of this project is to help the group better understand strategies, tools, and tactics that have been used in other commercial corridors outside the Twin Cities to encourage economic investment while leveraging cultural assets. It will summarize both foundational and contemporary literature on general strategies, practices, and tools used to advance corridor revitalization. Diana Dyste, a Master’s of Architecture student in the College of Design, will perform a literature review, conduct and summarize interviews, and write a final report on effective commercial-corridor revitalization. The results will be used to directly shape and inform the activities outlined in Selby Avenue Action Coalition’s strategic plan for the corridor. **Program:** Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Planning for the Future of Cleveland Park

The Cleveland Neighborhood Association is a long-established nonprofit
organization seeking to improve and promote the quality of life in that North Minneapolis neighborhood. Cleveland Park is one of the main recreational and public spaces in the Cleveland neighborhood and sits between Lucy Craft Laney School and the neighborhood shopping/transit node of Penn and Lowry. Development plans for Lowry and Penn include mixed-use buildings that would include pedestrian connections to Cleveland Park. The Cleveland Neighborhood Association wants to be proactive in engaging its community residents to bring together key stakeholders to envision Cleveland Park as a true community-gathering place. Amber Hill, a Master’s of Landscape Architecture student in the College of Design, will engage with stakeholders and residents, create design concepts and priorities, and compile a final vision that will reflect the needs and desires of residents. The results will serve as tools that the Cleveland Neighborhood Association can use to engage stakeholders, such as the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, as well as potential funders for additional park development. 

Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Work Aspirations and Career Expectations of Somali Youth and Young Adults
Confederation of the Somali Community (CSCM) is a nonprofit mutual-assistance association created in 1994 by Somali leaders to assist in meeting the self-sufficiency needs of Somali refugees. This project will collect basic work interest data from out-of-school and unemployed Somali youth. The data will be useful to document the need for training, specify the types of desired work/career, and provide an empirical base rather than anecdotal information. Ubah Hirsi, an undergraduate student in Psychology, and Kubra Dire, an undergraduate student in Family Social Science, will survey Somali youth in the Cedar-Riverside area of Minneapolis. The results will be used to develop funding proposals and to increase training and employment options for young Somali adults. 

Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Twin Cities Environmental Justice Mapping Project
The Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy is a research and advocacy organization that supports environmental solutions that are democratic, sustainable, and socially just. The purpose of the Twin Cities Environmental Justice (EJ) Mapping Project is to document EJ issues in the Twin Cities and create a model for data collection and mapping that works proactively to support EJ community-planning and -organizing efforts. Fukhrudin Maalim, a Master’s of Science graduate student, will collect EJ data across the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The results will be used to develop EJ-oriented maps around urban agriculture and energy to be used for community organizing in EJ neighborhoods and to advocate for policy change. 

Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ GIS Modeling of Impervious Surface Coverages on Crow Wing County Shoreline Properties
The Crow Wing County Land Services Department is committed to protecting, preserving, and improving water resources in Crow Wing County. Development, stormwater runoff, surface water pollution, and groundwater pollution are all issues that need to be considered in order to protect the valuable water resources of the county. High-resolution Lidar and aerial photography through county GIS mapping will be used to determine impervious surface percentage and phosphorus content for all riparian properties on lakes in the county that are more than 500 acres in size. Robert Backes, an undergraduate student from St. Cloud State University, will georeference the shapefile to the accurate location using existing aerial imagery and add attribute information to the newly created features. The results will serve as a historical record, be used to continue to develop and improve the goals and strategies for the 2012–2013 Crow Wing County water plan update, and aid the sheriff’s office/dispatch in identifying 911 call locations. 

Program: Community Assistantship Program (CAP)

■ Overcoming Barriers, Celebrating Successes: Municipal Sustainability Efforts in Northwest Minnesota
Minnesota GreenStep Cities is a voluntary challenge, assistance, and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability goals through implementation of 28 best practices. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more specific actions from a list of four to eight actions. These actions are tailored to all Minnesota cities, focus on cost savings and energy-use reduction, and encourage innovation. The program is administered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Clean Energy Resource Team is one of the project partners. 

Luke Welle, an undergraduate student from Bemidji State University, and Tashi Wougdi Gurung, an Environmental Science undergraduate student at the University of Minnesota at Crookston, will identify challenges to implementing Minnesota GreenStep Cities and how to overcome them. These results will be used to celebrate completed sustainability best practices by cities, identify implementation barriers for additional best practices, and improve the CERTs program for cities in the Northwest region. 

Program: Community Assistantship Program (CAP)
Supporting Diversity in Community Development through the Krusell Fellowship

Charles Krusell was a pillar in the Twin Cities development community who left an indelible mark on every effort he undertook. He was a champion for public housing and ardent advocate for urban renewal in the neighborhoods that needed it most. Krusell founded the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation to address the critical need for affordable housing in the Twin Cities. Named in his honor, the Charles R. Krusell Fellowship in Community Development is designed to prepare students of color in the University of Minnesota Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning and Master’s of Public Policy programs to be Minnesota’s next leaders and change makers in community development.

Krusell fellows receive full tuition support and graduate research assistantships with three community-development or -planning agencies during the course of their academic program. The program is a partnership between the University of Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs and CURA. The Humphrey School recruits students and delivers the academic program for the fellows. CURA manages the placement and mentoring of fellows with community-development or -planning agencies and administers the assistantships.

CURA director Ed Goetz was closely involved in creating the program. He notes:

The Krusell fellowship is the culmination of efforts over many years to provide support to students of color interested in housing and community development. The impetus for the fellowship was the recognition that the community-development field lacked diversity, especially compared to the communities in which it worked. We felt from the beginning that this should be a partnership between the University and the community and that the program should provide a way for students to take what they were learning in the classroom and apply it in real community-development settings.

The three narratives from former Krusell fellows that follow illustrate how the program makes academic work more meaningful, enables fellows to be more purposeful in designing their academic program, teaches practical skills, and builds relationships and networks with professionals in the field.

From the Private Sector to Public-Service Community Development
by Noel Nix

I credit the Krusell fellowship with providing me the grounding and experience needed to pursue a career in community development. Before attending the Humphrey School, I was working in market-rate housing management and had a strong interest in directing my career toward working on affordable-housing issues. In the multifamily housing sector, many landlords prefer that prospective renters meet specific requirements regarding income, credit worthiness, and criminal background. Consequently, I personally had to turn down rental applications from individuals and families facing serious hardships who were simply seeking a decent place to call home. I was attracted to the Humphrey School because the Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning program offered a concentration in housing and community development which I hoped would equip me to better serve people like those who I had not been in a position to help.

The Krusell fellowship allowed me to take courses where I was able to dig deep into issues of housing policy, and the placements with community-based organizations enabled me to immediately apply what I was learning in the classroom. More importantly, I was able to get involved right away in working with affordable-housing and neighborhood-development organizations, gaining first-hand experience on high-level projects while having an immediate impact in the community. It was through this experience that I gained an appreciation and passion for the broader aspects of community development, including economic development, workforce development, and neighborhood improvement.

This newfound passion for the full breadth of community development ultimately led me to a position as the legislative aide to Councilmember Melvin Carter III in St. Paul. In this role, I am able to help lead, support, and facilitate efforts to build and preserve affordable housing, leverage regional investments in transit to create new businesses and jobs, build a competitive workforce and extend the ladder of opportunity through efforts to close the achievement gap in our schools, and advance capital projects that enhance the quality of life in our neighborhoods. At the same time, I am able to work one-on-one with individual constituents to ensure the city is a partner in making their lives a little bit better.

Every day in my work, I draw on knowledge and experiences from my time as a Krusell fellow at the Humphrey School. Whether it is bringing together city staff and community stakeholders to solve a neighborhood issue or advising the councilmember on what
policies might help address an issue facing the city, I often find myself thinking back to a case study I have read or a project I worked on for a community organization or in class, to identify how to move forward in a way that will benefit the citizens of St. Paul. In addition, the relationships I developed with classmates have endured as we have all transitioned from students to leaders spread throughout the community.

The Krussell fellowship has been critically important to my career transition from the private sector to public service at a time when increased diversity among the ranks of government and nonprofit professionals is greatly needed. My experience as a Krussell fellow has equipped me to be a strong and effective voice and partner for members of the community who are often underrepresented during critical conversations regarding the direction of our city. I am extremely grateful to the philanthropic partners, faculty, and staff at the Humphrey School and CURA for working to make this possible.

Noel Nix is a graduate of the Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning program at the University of Minnesota. He is currently the legislative aide to St. Paul City Councilmember Melvin Carter III.

Community Development for Affordable Housing
by Miranda Walker

In 2005, I returned to the University of Minnesota to finish my undergraduate degree. I graduated in 2008 with a bachelor’s degree in Studies of Cinema and Media Culture and left Minnesota, weeks thereafter, for the Mississippi Delta for a year-long volunteer placement through AmeriCorps VISTA. During my year with AmeriCorps, I was immersed in community-outreach, -engagement, and -development efforts. My professional objectives became more refined in that year, with community development emerging as my primary focus. After returning to the Twin Cities, I began volunteering with Project for Pride in Living (PPL). While volunteering at PPL, my interest in housing—specifically as a catalyst for community development—grew. Certain of the type of work in which I wanted to engage, I applied to the Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning program at the University of Minnesota. A previous Krussell fellow who was working at PPL as a project manager told me about the Krussell program and her experiences. I applied for the fellowship program and, just weeks before my September 2010 enrollment at the University, learned that I had been awarded the fellowship.

All of my Krussell fellowship internships were concentrated in housing. My first internship was with Aeon, a nonprofit affordable-housing developer in Minneapolis. From this experience, I became acclimated to housing development—the pace of the process, the daily work involved, the skills necessary to work through the process, and the language of the industry. My internship highlighted the gaps that existed between my classroom learning and the real-life work of affordable-housing development. From my first-year experience at Aeon, I was able to choose courses that best fit the work I wanted to engage in after graduation. I was also able to learn alongside Aeon staff members who taught me from their experiences as practitioners and who offered me insight into their own professional trajectories.

My second internship experience took me to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, a state agency where I was able to learn about the financing of affordable-housing developments from the funder’s, or underwriter’s, point-of-view. Here again I was able to apply what I had learned in the classroom to actual development work and to build valuable relationships with those already practicing in the field. My final internship experience took me back to St. Paul, where I was able to take on more day-to-day tasks after a learning-filled rookie season there and my time with the state.

The Krussell fellowship made all of the classroom learning, on-the-job training, and relationship building that I gained over the course of my graduate program possible. The tuition coverage that the fellowship provides allowed me to focus my time and efforts in the classroom and provided an incentive to complete the academic work. However, the greatest benefit of the fellowship was the opportunity to complement my learning in the classroom with learning in the workplace. The Krussell fellowship gave me a chance to learn in a professional setting alongside individuals that often became mentors. The professional experiences I gained as a result of the fellowship, I believe, translated into not only an immediate job offer after graduation, but a professional focus, skill set, and network that I am using in that position.

Miranda Walker is a graduate of the Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning program at the University of Minnesota. She is currently a housing-development associate with Aeon, a nonprofit affordable-housing developer in Minneapolis.
Making a Difference through Community Development
by Carlos Espinoza

My experience with the Krusell fellowship program was a perfect combination of peer networking and professional experience in community-development organizations. Inclusion in the group of other Krusell student fellows gave me a resource for ideas, support, and enthusiasm for community development. Guided through the program by the late Kris Nelson, each of the fellows successfully completed internships that both assisted Twin Cities community-development agencies and helped in our professional development. My Krusell professional internship experiences included time at the City of New Hope Community Development Department, Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services (DBNHS), and Model Cities, a community-development corporation in St. Paul. These experiences allowed me to see community development from the lens of a local government and two nonprofit agencies.

New Hope is an inner-ring western suburb of Minneapolis with a population of 20,339. At the City of New Hope Community Development Department, I experienced the City’s work in redeveloping homes for low- and moderate-income people. I saw how the City was able to connect with individuals and enrich their lives by providing homes that they could actually afford.

DBNHS is a nonprofit organization that finances the rehabilitation and development of homes for low- and moderate-income families in St. Paul. My time there was spent with two construction managers that supervised home-rehabilitation projects. In each project I was able to see the agency’s dollars at work—fixing roofs, replacing windows, abating lead, and making homes better for people who needed assistance.

Model Cities is a multifaceted St. Paul nonprofit that provides a number of services, including supportive housing, youth programs, and family-support services. My time at Model Cities was spent assisting in the development of two apartment buildings that were being renovated to serve as permanent support housing for young homeless families. Model Cities recognized that providing this type of housing was essential to reduce repeated episodes of homelessness. Working on this development showed me how community-development agencies can help stabilize lives and neighborhoods.

I credit the Krusell fellowship with helping me gain the professional experience instrumental in being hired by the City of Winona immediately after graduating from the Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning program. Perhaps more importantly, the Krusell fellowship opened my eyes to the tremendous difference that community-development activities can have on people’s lives. Overall, the Krusell fellowship professional experiences allowed me to “get close to the action” and understand that when you work for a community-development department or organization, your daily work has a direct and beneficial impact on local people and places.

Carlos Espinoza is a graduate of the Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning program at the University of Minnesota. He is currently the assistant city planner with the City of Winona.
Abstract: This article describes ways in which aspects of young children’s development—most notably, their acquisition of early academic skills and competencies, and their physical health and well-being—may be related, and the consequences for understanding and serving young children in high-poverty communities. The authors describe Five Hundred under 5, a place-based initiative launched in North Minneapolis, as well as characteristics of the children, families, and communities that participated in this initiative. The article concludes with some possible directions for future comprehensive, community-based interventions that support child development and overall community development. The research upon which this article is based was supported in part through funds provided by Scott McConnell’s appointment to the 2008–2009 Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs. Additional funding was provided by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, the University of Minnesota, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board, and Way to Grow.

As citizens and parents, we want the best for children. We want them to be happy, smart, healthy, and to live lives full of opportunity, adventure, and fun. As researchers and policy makers, we want to understand what helps children be happy, smart, healthy, and at the door of opportunity, and how to use this information to provide nurturing experiences for all children. These two perspectives—that of the citizen/parent and the researcher/policy maker—are perhaps most present when talking about young children living in poverty.

During the latter part of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, we have seen significant advances in our knowledge of developmental outcomes for young children living in high-poverty neighborhoods.
in the United States, as well as in the causes and conditions associated with those outcomes. Findings from this research are clear: growing up in poor families or neighborhoods increases the risk of disparities in behavioral, linguistic, cognitive, social, and physical health outcomes for individuals of all ages, including preschool children. Further, disparities in one area of development—say, language skills associated with school readiness—may be related to current and future status in other domains (say, health status, social competence, and mental health).

Although these outcomes are in and of themselves troubling, they take on special significance when observed over the life course: many developmental outcomes for preschool children are early warning signs of poor health, behavioral, and academic outcomes in later years. In addition to the moral and logical imperative to address issues as soon as they appear and when they are presumably easier to resolve, economic analyses routinely report substantial public and private return on investment for effective interventions provided to preschool children. For two reasons, then—to address problems in front of us today, and to prevent long-lasting and more extreme problems in the future—it is imperative that we understand the roots of these disparities, and design comprehensive, effective, and well-regarded approaches to eliminating them.

School readiness and physical health and well-being are both key aspects of child development (see sidebar). In recent history, little attention has been paid to the ways these different domains of child development are related; the result has been artificially distinct research and theory and fragmented analysis and action in the development and evaluation of prevention and intervention services. Over the last few years, however, leading researchers and influential policy makers have begun laying groundwork for examining overlaps in the causes, conditions, interventions, and outcomes related to both school readiness and children’s physical health. Federally, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services have launched both consensus meetings and funding initiatives to better integrate perspectives and service-delivery systems addressing these seemingly separate domains of child development.

This increasing integration has led us to ask: Are there common causes and conditions associated with good or poor outcomes across a variety of areas of child development? If there are, can we begin to think about interventions and policy initiatives that “multiply” their impact by affecting development in what have previously been thought of as separate domains? In other words, can existing interventions be adapted and integrated to more efficiently produce effects across the multiple but interrelated domains of school readiness and physical health and well-being?

These questions were the focus of the design, operation, and evolution of Five Hundred under 5, a research and service program for young children and their families in North Minneapolis. We had the opportunity to design and evaluate foundational elements of this program with generous support from

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1 A number of review texts address this topic. For example, see G.J. Duncan and J. Brookes-Gunn (eds.), Consequences of Growing Up Poor (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999) and B. Hart and T. Risley, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children (Baltimore: Paul Brookes, 1995).


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**School Readiness and Child Health—Two Sides of One Coin?**

School readiness and physical health and well-being are two key aspects of preschool development. Researchers and policy makers tend to describe these key aspects of children’s development in conceptually narrow ways that most likely reflect core interests in their various disciplines rather than the real and natural inter-relationships in children’s lives. School readiness has been described as the sum of a child’s language, social, pre-academic, and behavioral competence that is directly and importantly related to success in elementary and secondary education. The topic of considerable attention and debate in Minnesota and throughout the United States, school readiness is often described as an issue best addressed through intensive classroom or program-based intervention, including interventions that support parents’ child-rearing practices.

A child’s physical health and well-being has been defined in terms of robust physical status, absence of disease and birth defects, and access to preventive services (e.g., immunizations). Researchers interested in these outcomes tend to be affiliated with schools of medicine or public health, and the intervention services addressing these issues often have a focus on primary care, medical-service delivery, or provision of government-funded supports (e.g., the Women, Infants and Children program).

In recent years, researchers and policy makers have suggested that school readiness and health and well-being may be closely entwined and related in important ways. The relationship may reflect that common characteristics and conditions contribute to development in each of the seemingly separate domains, or it may reflect that growth (or challenge) in one domain will necessarily affect opportunity and development in the other. To the extent these two important aspects of child development are indeed related, it will be essential to align research, intervention, and policy development in ways that account for, and take advantage of, these relationships.

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the lead author’s appointment as the 2008–2009 Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs. This article describes the Five Hundred under 5 program, characteristics of participating families that illustrate the interconnected nature of development, and how this work has been embedded in the Northside Achievement Zone, an ongoing and comprehensive “cradle to career” initiative in North Minneapolis.

**Five Hundred Under 5**

Five Hundred under 5 (FHu5) started through the shared interests and objectives of neighborhood leaders in North Minneapolis; University of Minnesota faculty; and child-, family-, and community-serving organizations with an operational presence in North Minneapolis. The overall intent of FHu5 was to identify preschool-aged children in two North Minneapolis neighborhoods, learn about their development and their lives, share this knowledge with parents and program operators, and use this information to enhance services to help these children enter kindergarten ready to learn. We also hoped this work would help us identify ways to revise and improve services and supports for children in all low-income communities. FHu5 was in the field, recruiting and serving children and families from 2008 to 2010; in 2011, the Northside Achievement Zone (see sidebar next page) assumed much of FHu5’s operation and mission as part of its larger efforts.

Five organizations—the University of Minnesota, the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board, Way to Grow, Minneapolis Public Schools, and the Hennepin County Office of Planning and Evaluation—worked collaboratively to design, implement, and manage the initial effort. These organizations came together as a loose collaborative, with each maintaining its own mission and operational autonomy, but jointly articulating a shared effort, seeking funding, and managing program development, operation, and evaluation.3

We drew FHu5 families from two different areas in North Minneapolis—areas in the Bethune and Farview neighborhoods (Figure 1). We selected these areas after intensive consultation and discussion with community leaders and service providers, as well as reports of school achievement and social risk (including child abuse or maltreatment and abandoned or vacant housing). We then drew boundaries that, based on recent birth records, suggested about 100 children would be born in the two areas each year. In the two focus areas, more than 50% of the population was African American, 16–20% White, 15–18% Asian, 1–2% American Indian, and 4–6% other groups (including growing Latino and Somali communities that likely exceeded those estimated by the 2000 U.S. Census). U.S. Census data for 2000 indicated that the median income in North Minneapolis neighborhoods was half of the median income for the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area ($33,542 compared with $63,600), with nearly one-third of the population living below the poverty line.

Children of color in Minneapolis and in our focus areas in North Minneapolis start kindergarten behind their white peers. According to Minneapolis Public Schools’ Beginning Kindergarten Assessment, 2005 total literacy scores by race showed “startling disparities: 25% of Hispanic children are on track compared to 36% of American Indians, 49% of Asians, 52% of African Americans and 84% of whites.”4 Hennepin County’s Survey of the Health of All the Population and the Environment (SHAPE) conducted in 2006 revealed that children in North Minneapolis also had poorer health outcomes and health behaviors compared both with other neighborhoods in Minneapolis and Hennepin County overall.5 Across both domains—school readiness and physical health—we had reason to believe that young children in our focus areas were starting school with significant challenges that, if not addressed, might limit future academic and life-course opportunities.

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5 Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department, October 2008.
FHu5’s overall program design reflected principles recommended by community members and service providers over a two-year planning period that started in 2006. Based on these conversations and planning sessions, FHu5’s leaders identified what they thought would be three key pillars of our effort: engagement of families and communities; expansion and improvement of formal and informal services and supports for children’s school readiness and health and well-being; and systematic assessment of child development in ways that informed parents, service providers, and policy makers about child outcomes and factors that affect these outcomes.

Family Engagement. Like other efforts in high-poverty communities, our discussions and planning suggested that families of young children felt rather distant or disconnected from the information and resources available to promote their preschoolers’ development. Further, we learned that many of the service organizations working in the neighborhood had relatively little capacity for closing this gap. We were particularly interested in families’ reluctance to participate in Early Childhood Family Education and other open-enrollment resources available in the community. Through a series of focus groups with parents and providers and follow-up individual interviews, parents identified a variety of participation barriers, including: lack of transportation to, and inconvenient location, day, and time of, classes; concerns about harsh judgment by teachers and other class members; promotional literature that featured white individuals rather than people of color; and planned topics and discussions that had little apparent relevance to their own families’ lives. Parents discussed their own fears about education based on previous negative experiences, perceived racism, and worries about contact with child protection. Parents also reported that it was difficult to prioritize school readiness and parenting activities when they faced emergency crises such as lack of food, housing instability, violence, and unemployment. Under these circumstances, parents also worried about the guilt and the emotional toll if they received information about what they should do only to discover that they were not able to act on that knowledge. Finally, high rates of serious family systems issues—problems such as maternal depression, drug problems, and family violence—made it difficult for some families to focus on parenting and early-childhood parent education.

Based on our discussions and the experiences of the partner organizations, FHu5 hired a small group to serve as Family Support Advocates (FSAs). These were individuals we recruited from the service area, who reflected the demographics of area residents, and who we trained, supported, and tasked with recruiting families, providing liaison services, facilitating access to resources and options, and maintaining contact with families to promote ongoing engagement and as-needed support. FSAs served both as mentors and information-referral resources for parents and families.

These FSAs proved to be instrumental in facilitating ongoing contact with, and engagement of, participating families. Based on our experience, we believe the FSAs reduced some of the perceived barriers to initial and ongoing participation and, through regular contact, provided an ongoing resource for families to identify, and begin to address, some of the challenges that would otherwise prevent their attention to issues affecting their preschoolers’ development and well-being.

Expanding and Improving Services and Supports. The FHu5 leadership team also worked to expand services and supports available to families of young children in the service area. In particular, we worked to expand access to high-quality early-childhood programs and to provide access to specially designed parent-education and -engagement programs.

Access to high-quality early care and education programs has become a major focus of advocacy and policy development in Minnesota in recent years. Spurred in part by Art Rolnick and Rob Grunewald’s argument that such intervention produces a strong return on investment, philanthropic organizations and state government have expanded both parents’ capacity to identify high-quality programs (through Parent Aware, Minnesota’s early-childhood quality-rating system) and their resources to enroll children in these programs (through scholarships and other policy innovations).

In fiscal years 2008 and 2009, Minnesota created a Pre-Kindergarten Allowances program that, in turn, benefitted FHu5 families. This program, authorized and funded by the state,

The Northside Achievement Zone

The Northside Achievement Zone (www.northsideachievement.org) is a comprehensive, cradle-to-career initiative that began operation in 2011. Comprising 255 square blocks in North Minneapolis, the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) received a federal Promise Neighborhood Implementation Grant to launch an initial operation of the effort. Modeled broadly after the Harlem Children’s Zone, NAZ and other Promise Neighborhoods bring together citizens in high-poverty neighborhoods, organizations and individuals who serve them, and a shared vision for coordinated, improved, and comprehensive services and supports to promote early and lifelong accomplishment for children in a particular geographic area. NAZ engages families and children, arrays parent and child education services from birth through high school (including early childhood services, support for school improvement, out-of-school academic and youth development programming, and mentorship) to promote academic achievement and attainment, and extends its assistance to children and families with other “whole-family” supports (in housing, behavioral and mental health, career and financial stability).
participating families, whether their children were enrolled in early care and education settings or not, were invited to attend an eight-week program. Family Academy took place on Saturday mornings at Mona Moede Early Learning Center, a Minneapolis Public Schools facility. Parents and children participated in early childhood family education—including activities for parents and children, both together and apart—that has been designed specifically for FHu5 families.

Systematic Assessment of Child Development. FHu5’s third program goal was to gather assessment data that described individual children’s school readiness and physical health. We wanted this to be actionable information for parents, service providers, and policy makers in at least two ways. First, as part of Family Academy, we developed and implemented an assessment of school readiness specifically designed to give parents and guardians understandable information about whether their child was “on track” to enter kindergarten ready to learn. This assessment was not comprehensive, but rather was focused on significant components of school readiness that can be addressed through early intervention—most notably, children’s development of language and early literacy skills (including vocabulary, very early rhyming, and other phonological awareness skills) and social-emotional development. Second, we developed and completed a pilot assessment of health and physical well-being (with a specific focus on socially determined health outcomes) for participating families.

Methodology
From the outset, we were interested in comprehensive perspectives on developmental outcomes, and factors affecting those outcomes, for FHu5 children. We took two approaches to investigating the integration of children’s school readiness and health development: gathering information about health behaviors and school-readiness development in our formal and informal interactions with parents, and surveying families about past and current health status and factors associated with physical well-being for their children.

We used data from a variety of sources to understand the ways that school readiness and healthy development may be related. To describe neighborhood-level characteristics, we relied primarily on administrative data from local and national existing data sets on health, social, environmental, and school-readiness factors. To describe our child participants, we also tested children while at Family Academy. Finally, we surveyed parents about activities and behaviors at home. Our assessment of school readiness included measures of language and literacy development (using Individual Growth and Development Indicators and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary to assess vocabulary and overall language development, as well as preschool-relevant skills of hearing and “playing with” the sounds of language) and social-emotional status (using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire–Social Emotional, a parent-completed tool that provides reliable assessment of possible concerns in children’s social behaviors and emotional status). To assess physical health, we developed a survey with input collected from focus groups and key-informant interviews. Based on this input, we assessed poverty and mental-health concerns among the children and families, as well as issues related to health insurance, hunger and food access, transportation, general neighborhood social and physical conditions, and housing. We field-tested the surveys prior to use. Parents completed the surveys with assistance from FHu5 staff. We made surveys available to parents in English, Spanish, and Somali.

Findings: A Data-Based Picture of FHu5 Families
As we have noted, families in the FHu5 service area faced a number of stressors and challenges. Our families had many disparities in economic, social, and environmental factors that relate to both health and school readiness when compared with families throughout the city and across the state (Table 1). These data confirm that youngsters in our service area were at risk literally before birth, with infant death and low-birth-weight rates higher than those for the city of Minneapolis and Hennepin County. In addition, adult health outcomes—including rates of diabetes, obesity, and smoking—suggest risks beyond childhood.

We completed child assessments for 191 children and gathered complete health surveys from 72 families. From these data, several interesting issues emerged (Table 2). More than 80% of our families reported yearly incomes of less than $10,000 per year. Almost 60% did not speak English at home (with approximately 40% of the sample speaking Spanish and approximately 20% speaking Somali). The families in FHu5 were largely renters, with just more than half of all respondents reporting the condition of their housing to be good or excellent. A third of our families reported not always having enough food to eat in the house (compared with approximately 9% of Hennepin County residents being “food insecure”).

These findings—that disparities exist in a variety of measures of family

Children’s interactions with their parents provide opportunities for development across many domains and help children to learn critical life skills.
well-being in high-poverty communities—were not surprising. However, these findings build the foundation for understanding and exploring the common causes and conditions associated with these outcomes as they relate to both “health” and “school readiness,” particularly among resource-poor families.

From parents’ reports of child social-emotional status on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire–Social Emotional, we estimated that 26% of children under the age of 3 years and 23% of children 3 years and older might be in need of social-emotional or mental-health services; further, more detailed information would be needed to confirm individuals’ need. Although from our interactions with FHu5 families it was clear that they loved and valued their children, raising children in these neighborhoods is difficult, and additional support may be needed. Unfortunately, discussions among FHu5 leaders and community colleagues indicated that formal sources for such social-emotional assistance generally are not widely available; anecdotally, professionals worry that access and appropriateness of these services may be even lower in neighborhoods like those in FHu5.

Regarding physical health, parents reported that nearly 65% of the children were breastfed during infancy (compared to 84.2% in Hennepin County as a whole). Parents described 76% of their children as having “very good to excellent” health (compared with 86% in Hennepin County), although 17% had asthma (compared with 15% in Hennepin County). Almost a quarter of the children had a gap in health-insurance coverage during the past year (compared with 4–6% in Hennepin County as a whole), and a large fraction of the children (13%) were uninsured (compared with only 4% of children throughout Hennepin County). Most parents felt their child was at a healthy weight (FHu5 = 86%; Hennepin County = 83%), although 38% of our preschool children had a television in their bedroom, contributing to future obesity risk due to sedentary behavior.

We also examined the development of the FHu5 children’s school readiness. In summer 2009, we assessed school readiness for 27 FHu5 children headed to kindergarten that fall. Ten of these children spoke English at home, eight spoke primarily Spanish in the home, and nine spoke primarily Somali in the home. We tested these children on Minneapolis Public Schools’ Beginning Kindergarten Assessment, with “benchmarks” (scores that help assess progress toward elementary-grade academic success, especially in reading) for desired development in each of several areas. More than half of the FHu5 children met or exceeded the Minneapolis Public Schools benchmark for both knowledge of letter names/sounds and phonemic awareness (hearing and identifying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Health- and Development-Related Data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus Area</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health Variables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. Infant Deaths (2006)(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. Low Birth Weight (2006)(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. of Adults Overweight (2006)(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. with Diabetes Mellitus (2006)(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. Who Smoke Every Day (2006)(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. in Crowded Housing (2000)(^c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. in Poverty (2000)(^c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. of Individuals Unemployed (2000)(^c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-Readiness Variables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. Proficient, Beginning Kindergarten Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. Enrollment in Early Care and Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: To better understand circumstances for FHu5 families, we have gathered data at different levels of geographic scale, including our focus area, North Minneapolis, and city, county, and national levels. As a result, data are not available for all measures for all levels of analysis presented in this table.

\(^a\) Data for North Minneapolis are drawn from assessments in Hawthorne and Near North neighborhoods, neither of which included any part of FHu5 focus areas. These data are included to allow for some description of North Minneapolis families when information for FHu5 participants is not available.

\(^b\) Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department, 2006

\(^c\) American FactFinder, U.S. Census, 2000
sounds in words), but only about 10% scored at or above the Minneapolis Public Schools benchmark for oral language. We also asked children to complete the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, a test of oral language skills; 15 of the 25 children completing this test (or 60%) scored in the normal range (although the entire group's mean standard score was almost a full standard deviation below the national mean). Ten English-speaking parents also completed the Developmental Observation Checklist System, a parent checklist of developmental skills important for later school readiness and success. As a group, parents described their children at or above national means in measures of language, motor, social, and cognitive development.

Across all the data sources, we found a mixed set of findings for children's school readiness. Parent ratings of development suggested that children were largely on track. On several parts of our direct assessments, results indicated that FHu5 children were learning some important early-literacy skills (particularly skills in producing the sounds of letters and in phonemic awareness, or skills like rhyming and combining sounds that serve as building blocks for early reading). However the group appeared to be lagging somewhat in English-language development (remembering that 63% of the 27 children who we assessed spoke Spanish or Somali at home), an essential building-block for many aspects of future competence. Recent research on language development suggests that oral language (vocabulary, complexity of language, ability to speak and listen) is a distinctly important skill for later academic success (both in decoding written text and understanding that text, but also in other academic domains) and overall competence.

Table 2. Select Parent and Home Characteristics from Child Assessment and FHu5 Family Health Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent, Home, and Neighborhood Characteristics</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**Yearly Income ($)**a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$10,000</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000–19,999</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home Language</strong>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong>b,c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own car</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else in household</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 or more children</strong>b</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food insecurity</strong>b</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rent housing</strong>b</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>House quality good or excellent</strong>b</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages within categories may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

a Income data available for the assessment sample (n=164 with complete records)
b Household data from health survey (n=72)
c For this item, n=70.

Perhaps more important were the variations in skill development within this group; some children were meeting and exceeding benchmarks for their upcoming entry to kindergarten, while others were not yet able to meet these levels of desired development. This variation is important—some families are finding ways to support their children's development, whereas children of other families may need greater support to meet school-readiness goals. In particular, this variation in children's performance points to the potential importance of “tiered interventions” where we identify children not meeting important goals, and provide them the services, supports, and experiences needed to help them meet these goals.

We also examined relations among measures. The relatively small sample led us to look for broad trends rather than individual correlations or associations, and several potentially important findings emerged. For example, as family income increased (even among families living in poverty), parents' ratings of their entering kindergartner's cognitive, language, social, and motor skills increased; similarly, as income increased, it was less likely that parents would rate children's social-emotional status to be an area of concern. In addition, children's scores on developmental and social-emotional measures were associated with parents' satisfaction with the quality of their neighborhood—as perceived quality of neighborhoods went up, so too did parents' ratings of children's developmental competence. In turn, parents who were satisfied with their neighborhood also had more social support and feeling of cohesion among their neighbors.

Several other striking trends emerged in our early analysis. As child health increased from poor to excellent among FHu5 families, parent ratings of all major aspects of child development trended higher. Children who watched less television and had on average more nightly sleep performed better on several of our school readiness assessments. Children whose parents reported more days of poor physical health also had lower scores on school-readiness assessments. In addition, development-assessment results decreased if the family was food insecure.

These relations between children's scores in "different" domains and the relation of children's acquired skills with measures of their parents' or families' circumstances are particularly
important. These findings point to the role of a constellation of family, neighborhood, and community resources that create nurturing environments, and that in turn support children’s health and development. Throughout our FFHuS design and development work, informants and family members talked to us about the importance of, and the difficulty to arrange, social connections and a sense of belonging in their neighborhoods. As a result, it may be especially important for child- and family-development efforts to focus not only on resources and experiences for the individual and family, but also on promoting and facilitating social connection and engagement as well as more general community-wide development as central features of the initiative. Our early results, and the initial experiences of the Northside Achievement Zone, suggests that greater engagement, and a resulting increase in a sense of connection and community, may support the health and school-readiness development of young children—as well as the ongoing development, competence, and health of adolescents, young adults, and adults in the community.

These findings also start to tell us some important facts about the nature of the relationship between health, school readiness, and the social and environmental conditions associated with each. Although we have long known that poverty is associated with poorer health outcomes and lower levels of school readiness, data gathered here start to demonstrate how characteristics of family, home, and community environments—characteristics that we may be able to influence and support—may support improved health and school readiness despite the presence of poverty. First, families that can provide for the basic needs of their children—access to sufficient food, regular medical care, restricted screen time (and, perhaps, associated greater physical activity), and sufficient sleep—also appear to be more likely to raise children who are on track to entering school ready to profit from instruction. Second, families who are more satisfied with their neighborhood or have a stronger sense of community and social connection also appear to have children with fewer physical health issues and greater degrees of behavioral competence—again, important foundations for later school and life success.

As researchers and program developers, we also have been interested in how some seemingly simple interventions—promoting social connection, or encouraging more nurturing child-rearing practices by providing access to both information about one’s child and the capacity to act on that information—can have a profound and far-reaching effect for preschool children, in some cases with lasting benefit for years thereafter. Attention to “nurturing environments,” or home and community characteristics that effectively promote development and competence across important domains


A young child’s development—including both their physical health and well-being, and their language, school readiness, and social skills—sets the foundation for lifelong success.
produce lasting and sustained change. We are continuing to learn—from data like these, from other research and program-development efforts around the country and internationally, and from ongoing work with families and the individuals who serve them—about ways to better ask questions that help us understand the connections between academically distinct ideas like “school readiness” and “health.” The goal is to develop and evaluate interventions—and the cultural, political, and programmatic mechanisms that support them—that provide meaningful, effective, and desired information, resources, and assistance to families such as those living in FHu5’s focus areas and improve child well-being outcomes throughout life.

Scott McConnell is professor of educational psychology and child psychology and was the 2008–2009 Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. He is also an affiliate of the Center for Early Education and Development. His research interests include the design, evaluation, and implementation of general-outcome measures of young children’s development, and the design and evaluation of comprehensive community-based interventions. Mary Hearst is associate professor and director of public health at Saint Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Previously, she was a research associate in the Division of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, at the University of Minnesota. She has long studied social determinants of prenatal and neonatal health outcomes, and health outcomes for young children and families living in poverty. Lauren Martin is a research associate and director of research at the University of Minnesota’s Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center. Trained as an anthropologist, she is currently working on the design and evaluation of a parent-education program for families living in poverty, and on research and policy related to local sex-trading. She is particularly interested in community-based participatory action research.

The research upon which this article is based was supported in part through funds provided by Scott McConnell’s appointment to the 2008–2009 Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs, one of four endowed chairs and two named professorships made possible through a generous contribution to the University of Minnesota by David and Elizabeth Fesler. The Fesler-Lampert Endowment in Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies was initially established in 1985 to stimulate interdisciplinary research and teaching through the appointment of distinguished, broadly learned scholars to endowed faculty positions at the University of Minnesota. Additional support was provided through a Healthy Children, Healthy Communities grant to FHu5 from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation; operations funding from the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation; and in-kind support from FHu5’s partners, including the University of Minnesota, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board, and Way to Grow.

The photos that accompany this article are of Northside Achievement Zone Family Academy parents and children. All photos are used with their permission.
The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs supports research and technical assistance through a number of individual programs, each with their own deadlines and application procedures.

- **The Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (ANPI)** is intended to increase the long-term involvement of underrepresented constituencies in the leadership and priority setting of a neighborhood, organize people leading to neighborhood change, and provide opportunities for artists to form partnerships with community-based organizations with the goal of strengthening neighborhoods. Grants up to $10,000 will be awarded to successful applicants for a grant period of April through November 2013. Partnerships applying to ANPI must include an organization serving a neighborhood geographic area and an individual artist. Only projects within the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are eligible. Arts organizations should apply under the Neighborhood Partnership Initiative program (see below). A letter of interest is due by January 11, 2013. Promising projects will be invited to submit a full proposal, due by March 1, 2013. For additional eligibility requirements, terms of the award, and application procedures, visit www.cura.umn.edu/ANPI, or contact Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu.

- **The Community Assistantship Program (CAP)** matches community-based nonprofit organizations, citizen groups, and government agencies in Greater Minnesota with students who can provide research assistance. Eligible organizations define a research project, submit an application, and, if accepted, are matched with a qualified student to carry out the research. The application deadline for summer semester 2013 assistantships (early June through August) is March 15, 2013. For more information, contact CAP coordinator Will Craig at 612-625-3321 or wcraig@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cap.

- **The CGIS program** provides technical assistance in mapping, data analysis, and GIS to community-based organizations and nonprofits in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Staff at the CGIS program specialize in parcel-level mapping, demographic analysis, and Internet-based GIS technologies. The CGIS program has no formal application process or deadline to apply. Project requests can be made by phone, e-mail, or online at tiny.cc/CGIS-help, and generally can be turned around within two weeks. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with data needs, contact CGIS program coordinator Jeff Matson at 612-625-0081 or jmatson@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cgis.

- **The CURA Dissertation Research Grant** provides one year of support to a Ph.D. candidate in good academic standing at the University of Minnesota for the purpose of completing dissertation research on a significant issue or topic related to urban areas in the upper Midwest region of the United States. Recipients must have passed the preliminary exam stage and have approved dissertation proposals by March 1 of the year in which they apply for the award. The application deadline for the 2013–2014 award competition is February 11, 2013. For application guidelines or more information, contact CURA director Ed Goetz at 612-624-8737 or egoetz@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/Dissertation.

- **The Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program** (the Nelson Program) provides student research assistance to community and neighborhood-based organizations and suburban government agencies in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area. Priority is given to groups serving diverse communities. Projects may include any issue relevant to a neighborhood or community’s needs and interests, including planning, program development, or program evaluation. Applications from organizations collaborating on a project are encouraged. The application deadline for summer semester 2013 assistantships (early June through August) is March 15, 2013. For more information, contact UMN community programs assistant Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or curacbr@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/nelson-program.

- **The Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO)** trains people to work effectively in organizing and staffing neighborhood organizations. It trains new organizers and increases the skills of existing neighborhood staff, leaders, and volunteers through internships, workshops, and other programs. For more information about MCNO and the training opportunities available, contact Jay Clark at 612-625-2513 or clark037@umn.edu, or Ned Moore at 612-625-5805 or nedmoore@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/mcno.

- **The Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (NPI)** promotes vibrant neighborhoods that engage their diverse residents, build neighborhood resiliency, and increase the collective efficacy and action in a place. NPI supports place-based organizing partnerships that increase the long-term involvement of underrepresented constituencies in the leadership and priority setting of a neighborhood and organize people leading to neighborhood change. Grants of up to $10,000 will be awarded to successful applicants for a grant period of April through November 2013. Partnerships applying to NPI must include a resident-driven organization serving a neighborhood area in Minneapolis or St. Paul and at least one of the following: a Minneapolis or St. Paul organization serving arts, youth, communities of color, disabled, or immigrant constituencies. A letter of interest is due by January 11, 2013. Promising projects will be invited to submit a full proposal, due by March 1, 2013. For additional eligibility requirements, terms of the award, and application procedures, visit www.cura.umn.edu/NPI, or contact Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu.

- **The Resilient Communities Project (RCP)** is a year-long partnership between the University of Minnesota and one local community in Minnesota. Through the partnership, students...
and faculty from across the University collaborate with the partner community to address its self-defined sustainability-related needs through course-based projects. This collaboration results in on-the-ground impact and momentum for a community working toward a more sustainable and livable future.

RCP is now accepting proposals from communities interested in being the community partner for 2013–2014. Cities, counties, and clusters of communities along a transportation corridor, around a regional center, or within a watershed are eligible to apply. To minimize travel time and costs, applicant communities should ideally be located within a two-hour drive of Minneapolis. Communities located farther away from Minneapolis may be considered if the applicant contributes additional funds for overnight travel costs. The deadline for proposals is February 15, 2013. The partner community will be selected and notified in March 2013. For a complete application packet and more information about how to apply, contact RCP program director Mike Greco at mgreco@umn.edu or 612-625-7501, or visit the RCP website at rcp.umn.edu/home/communities/apply-to-rcp/.

The Faculty Interactive Research Program is designed to encourage University of Minnesota faculty members to carry out research projects that involve a significant urban-related public-policy issue for the state or its communities, and that include active engagement with groups, agencies, or organizations in Minnesota involved with the issue. CURA is now accepting proposals for the 2013–2014 competition. Regular faculty members from all University campuses are invited to apply. Each award will provide support for two pay periods of the faculty member’s time in the summer of 2013 and a half-time graduate research assistant for the 2013–2014 academic year. Where appropriate, limited support for miscellaneous research expenses can be provided. The application deadline is February 11, 2013. Grant recipients will be notified in March 2013. For additional eligibility requirements, terms of the award, and application procedures, contact CURA director Ed Goetz at 612-624-8737 or egoetz@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/FIRP/announcement.

The Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs is an endowed position that supports the research activities of a University of Minnesota faculty member for work on a project related to urban and regional affairs in Minnesota. The award is made possible through the generosity and vision of David and Elizabeth Fesler. Funds may be used to obtain release time or other support for the project, and may be used for either new or current projects. The application deadline for the 2013–2014 academic year competition is February 11, 2013. Grant recipients will be notified in March 2013. For additional eligibility requirements, terms of the award, and application procedures, contact CURA director Ed Goetz at 612-624-8737 or egoetz@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/Fesler-Lampert/competition.

Hennepin County Aging Initiative Findings Available

Increased longevity, the large Baby Boomer population, and declining birth rates are producing a unique shift in the age structure of Minnesota. Serving a growing number of older adults in the years ahead will create challenges and opportunities for local governments and community organizations throughout Hennepin County, the Twin Cities metro area, and the state.

Through reviews of recent research, analysis of current local data, and focus groups with county residents, the Hennepin County Aging Initiative aims to help county leaders and stakeholders understand these changes and respond with effective public policy.

The Hennepin County Research, Planning and Development Department has created a web page to share information compiled by its research analysts. To access the page, visit www.hennepin.us/about and select the link to Aging–Research Findings under Research & Data on the lower left side of the page.
Program and Staff Updates

The Community GIS (CGIS) program partnered with the U-Spatial (uspatial.umn.edu) office at the University of Minnesota this fall to offer trainings in web mapping to community residents and program staff at the Urban Research Outreach and Engagement Center (UROC) in North Minneapolis. The first two trainings were held in November, and CGIS anticipates conducting more sessions in January and February of 2013. The trainings are first-come, first-served, and each session has room for 15 participants. Contact CGIS staff at jmatson@umn.edu for more information.

CGIS Program Director Jeff Matson was recently elected to serve on the National Neighborhood Indicators Project (NNIP) Executive Committee for 2013–2015. NNIP is a collaboration of the Urban Institute and local partners in 37 cities to further the development and use of neighborhood-level information systems for community building and local decision-making. In November, Matson was invited to teach two workshops titled Online Resources for Employment and Economic Development Data at the Knowledge for Equity conference held November 13–14 in Silver Spring, MD. Following the conference, Matson gave a presentation on his foreclosure research and the North Minneapolis Housing Market Index at the Community Indicators Consortium Impact Summit held November 15–16 in College Park, MD. Matson will be teaching a course in Urban GIS and Analysis at the University of Minnesota during spring semester 2013 and is currently seeking community-based mapping projects for his students. Projects begin in early February and will be completed by mid-May. Contact Matson (jmatson@umn.edu, 612-625-0081) if you have a proposal for a project.

In December, the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO) bid a fond farewell to Americorp VISTA volunteer Brooke Henderson, who lent critical support to MCNO’s communications and neighborhood organizing efforts during the last year. She returns to her native Ohio to pursue future endeavors. With training assistance from MCNO, student members of the Food Justice Coalition at St. Catherine University organized a Second Annual Food Week November 26–30. Intended to mobilize students, staff, and faculty to promote food justice and increased access to local food, the week’s events included a presentation from Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, as well as a gathering of student leaders from other campus across the Twin Cities. As a result of the week’s activities, organizers hoped to gain momentum in demanding a university-wide commitment to 30% local, affordable, fair trade, humane, and racially equitable food on campus.

The CURA Housing Forum sponsored three programs this fall. In September, CURA co-sponsored an event with the Sabo Center for Citizenship and Learning at Augsburg College that featured George Galster, Clarence Hilberry Distinguished Professor of Urban Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit, talking about his most recent publication, “Neighborhood Social Mix: Theory, Evidence, and Implications for Policy and Planning.” In October, Josh Dye and Dan Hylton discussed what is happening in the Twin Cities rental market based on data in HousingLink’s award-winning quarterly report Twin Cities Rental Revue. In December, William Weber and Dan Handeen from the University of Minnesota’s Center for Sustainable Building Research discussed the development of the Minnesota Sustainable Housing Initiative’s Upstream curriculum, a set of tools and training that build the capacity of housing developers to assess and optimize potential building sites. Learn about upcoming CURA Housing Forums, view summaries and materials from these and other past forums, or sign up to receive announcements of future forums at www.cura.umn.edu/housing-forum.

In December, Resilient Communities Project (RCP) Program Director Mike Greco provided an overview of RCP’s 2012–2013 pilot partnership with the City of Minnetonka at a brownbag event sponsored by the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association. The partnership will continue into the spring 2013 semester. By the end of the academic year, RCP will have matched 24 courses and 300+ students across 7 colleges at the University of Minnesota with more than a dozen sustainability-related projects proposed by Minnetonka city staff. RCP recently issued a request for proposals from municipalities interested in being the 2013–2014 community partner. See the announcement on page 37 or visit rcp.umn.edu for more information.

The Hennepin-University Partnership (HUP) is working with a committee of Hennepin County middle managers on a number of initiatives to streamline the connections between Hennepin County and the University. One initiative involves Hennepin County’s Human Resources Department, working with CURA, to advise County staff about how to hire and effectively work with students. The initiative will help County staff sort through the options in hiring a student and optimize chances for a good fit for both the County and the student. HUP is also working with County and University staff to select themes for 2013 HUP-sponsored events. The group is currently considering three possible event themes: environmental justice issues in Twin Cities; what human services staff need to know about infant brain development; and bridging the “digital divide” in an era of E-Government. HUP staff will be working with County and University contacts to organize and sponsor events on these topics during the next several months.

CURA Associate Director Will Craig was recently inducted into the University YMCA Hall of Fame. He was honored for many years of service including chairing the U-YMCA Board of Management and founding the Legacy Committee for planned giving. The U-YMCA engages University of Minnesota students with the community in many ways, including tutoring children in the Minneapolis Public Schools. As part of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association’s (URISA) 50th annual conference, Craig (a past president of URISA) contributed a chapter to an e-book, Foundations of Urban and Regional Information Systems and Science (www.urisa.org/files/Foundations_FINAL2.pdf), which illustrates the many contributions the organization has made to GIS.

Esther Wattenberg, CURA’s policy and program coordinator in family and child welfare, has completed the sixth in a series of reflective seminars for child-welfare supervisors and practitioners. “Codes of Silence, Confidentiality, and Secrets: Implications for the Child Welfare System,” was held on December 14th, 2012. Professor Wattenberg’s spring seminar will focus on “Defining Excellence for School-Lined Services.” Summaries and other materials from all reflective seminars are available at www.ceph.umn.edu/swc/cascw/events/past_events/.