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A CULTURAL STUDY OF THE HISPANIC POPULATION IN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

by

Diane M. Rodriguez

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts Department of Anthropology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 1987

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A CULTURAL STUDY OF THE HISPANIC POPULATION IN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

Diane M. Rodriguez, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 1987

The purpose of this study was to detail the cultural diversity of the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo, Michigan, so as to enhance the efforts of social and government agencies in dealing with the social and economic needs of these people.

While other studies have been conducted on Hispanics, this project was unique in that (a) data were collected while the researcher was in the role of advocated as an employee of the Hispanic-American Council, and (b) emphasis was placed on the cultural components of each Hispanic group in Kalamazoo. The discussion centers on the Mexican-Americans, Cubans, and Panamanians, with briefer consideration given to other Latin American groups in this area.

Recommendations are made regarding the need for more social science studies and for an expanded awareness of the diversity and complexity within the Hispanic population on the part of public administrators, policy makers and social agencies, who would promote social change effectively.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving family, especially my father, José, whose support and guidance during the early stages of this study until the very end have made this endeavor worthwhile. Pa, siempre tuvistes fe en mí.

I would like also to express deep appreciation to my special friends who never doubted once that I would one day complete this project. Thank you for your encouragement, faith, and understanding.

Diane M. Rodriguez
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A cultural study of the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo, Michigan

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Western Michigan University, 1987

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PREFACE

This thesis is a study of the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo, Michigan. It is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an outline of the researcher's methodological framework and a discussion of the roles I played while conducting field work in the Hispanic community. The second chapter briefly mentions general characteristics of Hispanics living in different geographic areas in the United States. Its purpose is to give the reader a general understanding of the different ethnic groups that exist within the Hispanic population in this country, and to contrast them with the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Chapters three and four will focus primarily on the economic, educational, and ideological characteristics of the Hispanic groups in this area. Finally, the fifth chapter is a summary of the data along with a presentation of the researcher's conclusions and recommendations. Supplementary information is included in the Appendices.

My primary objective for conducting this research was to improve our understanding of the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo so that community agencies in Kalamazoo are able to better understand and service them. Such an understanding is a need that should be especially pursued by members of the Anglo community in Kalamazoo.

The researcher would like to note that this study is not to be treated solely as an ethnography. It is not written in the same format or with the same intentions as one would find in the

v
anthropological literature, (e.g., Hostetler & Huntington, 1980; Safa, 1976). The purpose of these studies is to describe the different "richness and complexity of human life as it is lived in different places - the physical, biological, social, and spiritual environment of the groups" (Hostetler and Huntington, 1980:5). Only parts of this study (Chapters II, III, and IV) may be considered ethnographically traditional in form. The remainder is concerned with the effects of the researcher's advocate role while conducting fieldwork, and how this in fact altered somewhat respondents' responses and final conclusions of data.
CHAPTER I

RESEARCHER'S ROLE AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter I includes a discussion of the methodological framework and the researcher's role while conducting field work. My role was mostly that of advocate. There are strengths and weaknesses in being in such a position that will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter. The research was divided in two phases: (1) preliminary research, and (2) from researcher to advocate.

Phase I: Preliminary Research

Research in Phase I lasted approximately one year. The objectives were: (a) to investigate the role of the Hispanic-American Council (HAC) of Kalamazoo, (b) to gather general information on the socio-cultural composition of the Hispanic population, and (c) to understand the problems and needs facing Hispanics in Kalamazoo.

During this phase information was collected by interviewing members of the HAC and investigating secondary sources such as government documents, the HAC proposal submitted to the City of Kalamazoo, and previous research (e.g. Flachler 1979). First contact was made with the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo County via the Hispanic-American Council.

The HAC is a non-profit organization funded mainly by the City of Kalamazoo. Its membership is comprised of Hispanic volunteers.
from the community and one salaried worker, the Hispanic Service Coordinator, who serves the population. The purpose of the organization is to work for the well-being of Hispanics in Kalamazoo County in employment, housing, health, education, and legal services. In addition, it aims to nourish and enrich the cultural heritage of the Hispanic people, as well as to unify them.

In 1983, the Council set forth a proposal to the City of Kalamazoo, requesting monies to develop a center for the Hispanic population. (A copy of the proposal is in Appendix A.) The proposal was general and did not provide detailed information explaining the reasons for having such a center. Furthermore, a needs analysis had not been conducted with Hispanics in the community to see if, in fact, they were aware of or interested in the development of such a project. Therefore, I decided to investigate the Council's organizational structure, its role with the Hispanic population, and the reasons for wanting to develop a Hispanic center.

Members of the Council were interviewed. In general, the questions were designed to assess the members' viewpoints concerning reasons for having a center, priorities and implementation of the center, its organizational structure, and the location of the center. (These questions are included in Appendix B.) Based on the Council members' aspirations, doubts and perceptions, certain problems needed to be addressed before an assessment could be made. For example, there were insufficient data on the composition of the Hispanic population, their perspective on having such a center, logistics on the time and cost effectiveness of a center and its location, and whether
such a center would, in fact, be the best alternative for solving some of the problems facing Hispanics here. In order to assess their needs better, it was decided to investigate the composition of the Hispanic population, gathering information about attitudes, feelings, and concerns present there.

The HAC was not able to provide clients' names and addresses; they directed me to Michigan Economics for Human Development (MEHD). MEHD is a social agency that provides services mainly to the migrant population in Kalamazoo and Van Buren counties. Their goal is to resettle migrants in Michigan by providing them with temporary housing, skills training, and other services in order that they may find employment and become economically independent. MEHD's clients are mostly Mexican-Americans and Mexicans, who have migrated from Texas, New Mexico, Florida, and Mexico and are residing legally in the United States.

The people at MEHD agreed that they would talk to some families they felt would be willing to cooperate. In addition, a statement of purpose, written in Spanish, was submitted and distributed to the families regarding the intentions and purposes for interviewing them. Using the organization proved to be advantageous for a number of reasons. They introduced me to the community as a student researcher whose objective or purpose was to help Hispanics. MEHD solved the problem of my being seen as a stranger by the families; they enabled me to establish an initial acceptance that would otherwise have been very difficult. It must be mentioned that my own Hispanic descent
and my having the ability to speak Spanish fluently often stirred curiosity and hastened my acceptance.

Five families were recommended by MEHD as providing possible interviewees. During this phase, the researcher was not preoccupied with any particular family characteristics (e.g., numbers of members or migration history). The primary concern and objective was to gain entree to the population without creating a sense of invasion. Two of the families agreed to be interviewed. Because interviews were conducted in Spanish, respondents were quick to accept and trust me.

Respondents were interviewed in their homes. According to Agar (1980), people usually are more comfortable in their home territory, instead of an office or laboratory setting. The families were informed prior to being interviewed that I was Hispanic and of my intentions and reasons for interviewing them. This made them feel comfortable and willing to cooperate.

A questionnaire was developed based on the data collected as a result of interviews with HAC members. During this stage it was essential to create a feeling of respect and trust between Hispanic families and the researcher. The need to establish rapport with informants has been expressed by other researchers, (e.g., Agar 1980, Edgerton and Langness 1964). Accuracy of data often is directly related to how respondents initially perceive and think of the interviewer.

The questions were not developed to test any hypotheses. Agar states that "the variables, operationalizations and sample specifications must grow from an understanding of the group. One cannot
specify the questions you are going to ask when you move into the community" (1980:75). Specific question formation develops further along in research.

In this initial phase, I proceeded with an "open-ended" interview format. According to Edgerton and Langness (1964), this interviewing technique permits the field researcher to achieve an emic or "insider's" understanding of the culture. It was formal in that I had developed a list of questions based on my preliminary research regarding concerns of Hispanics in Kalamazoo. However, it was informal in that the survey questions were presented so as to permit the informant to talk at length, elaborating, volunteering, and pursuing whatever was of interest to him/her.

The intent of the questions was to gather information regarding the following: family's place of origin, reasons for moving to Kalamazoo, feelings about Kalamazoo and its Hispanic organizations, the need for a community Hispanic center, and knowledge of other Hispanic groups living in Kalamazoo. In addition, and most essential, it was to create a friendlier approach by talking to them in general terms, making them feel that the researcher had a genuine interest in their experiences and feelings about living in Kalamazoo.

Note-taking was done after each interview. Notes were taken on any facts that seemed relevant, e.g., description of household, number of children. I realized two things: first, I had forgotten some of the questions I wanted to ask; secondly, sometimes I noticed that some of the respondents evaded some of the questions by changing the subject. This did not create a problem. As mentioned previously,
the purpose of these interviews was to gather general information, and most importantly, to establish a relationship between the families and me based on trust and respect.

Most ethnographers (e.g., Edgerton & Langness, 1964; Safa, 1980) tend to use equipment such as tape recorders, note-taking and cameras in their field research. Edgerton and Langness (1964) state that this contributes to objectivity in this researcher's data. However, the researcher chose not to use these techniques because it would have been intrusive in those homes. This would have made them feel uncomfortable, which might have been reflected in their responses, and consequently, would have provided inaccurate results.

At this point in the project, I submitted an application for the position of Service Coordinator for the HAC. Knowledge of this spread throughout the community agencies and Hispanic population. It was here that I began to be viewed by Hispanics not as a student field researcher, but as one of their advocates.

Phase II: From Researcher to Advocate

When hired as the new Hispanic Service Coordinator, the opportunities for participant observation with the Hispanic population increased significantly. I was not only the student researcher but had taken the non-traditional role of advocate. Mexican Americans saw me as a policy maker and initiator of action. I continued to win their trust, as well as that of other Hispanic groups, e.g., Cubans, Central Americans.
Research objectives in Phase II were: (a) to establish trust between population and researcher, (b) to gather information specifically on the population's viewpoints and concerns, and (c) to increase participant observation instead of just conducting interviews.

As Coordinator, some of the responsibilities include interpreting in courts, police stations, lawyers' office, and hospitals, translating written documents, and referring clients to other service agencies, such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Department of Social Services, and Immigration. I was assisting in providing emergency needs such as housing, food, and clothing, legal assistance, assisting with employment training, and education and community outreach. Serving the community through more outreach, instead of working primarily in the office, proved to be beneficial for my field research. It allowed me to become more of an active participant observer and to see Hispanic families' life "as it is being lived and to understand it by actually living it as much as possible" (Edgerton & Langness 1964:32).

As Service Coordinator, I continued doing field research approximately another two years. I contacted the following Hispanic groups: Mexican-American, Mexican, Cuban, and Panamanian. Data were collected primarily through participant observation. However, I relied on some individual interviews. I became more successful using the former technique because it was easier to gather information. Families no longer saw me as the student researcher; I was no longer seen as an outsider. In addition, it proved to be advantageous
because I was able to observe families' behavior in more diverse settings, e.g., Bilingual Parents Advisory Board, Hispanic fiestas, school activities, MEHD, and the HAC meetings. At times, the researcher chose to use the formal interview. However, this was initiated by Mexican-American families that had personal interests in sharing their thoughts and opinions with me.

Because of my familiarity with the families, I began to rely upon certain individuals for much of the detailed and specialized information. Edgerton and Langness (1964) state that by spending time with some of these informants, a relationship results that affects the fieldworker's social status. I not only was their advocate due to my position as Service Coordinator, but had become their friend.

The interviews became more formalized and structured than in the previous phase. Reasons for this were (a) familiarity with the community during Phase I and early part of Phase II provided the researcher with an overall understanding of the Hispanic community in Kalamazoo, and (b) playing the advocate role in the Hispanic community established friendlier relationships between families and myself. This allowed the researcher to obtain answers to specific questions which focused mainly on the families' historical background and their present living situation.

Approximately fifteen families were contacted. Most of them were Mexican-Americans. Only three were Mexican. They were usually interviewed at their homes, since they tended to avoid the office for either a social visit or even if they needed assistance. Instead,
they would call the office and I would visit them. This became advantageous for the researcher because it increased the opportunity to talk and observe them in their own environment. The Cuban population, on the other hand, tended to behave differently.

Cubans were eager to have the new Coordinator hired. This was quite evident, when they appeared at the office the first week I was hired. They came immediately, seeking economic assistance such as food, clothing, and transportation. However, I began to notice that many came for social reasons. It was a place where they felt comfortable. Barriers of discomfort and mistrust were “broken down” immediately. Unlike in Phase I, there was no need to introduce the researcher to them. They accepted me as their advocate. Cubans visited the office on a daily basis. Thus, I had ready access to them and I was able to observe and study them more intensively than the Mexican-American and Mexican populations.

Only three Cuban families were formally interviewed, since respondents showed a lack of interest or willingness to participate in formal interviews. Therefore, information on the Cuban population was gathered primarily through participant observation and informal interviews, often initiated by the Cubans themselves. The topics dealt mostly with their own experiences, e.g. oppression in Cuba and their arrival in the United States. This usually took place in informal settings, e.g., hospitals, agencies, their homes, and sometimes at the HAC's office.

The final group studied was the Panamanian group. Prior to Phase II, the researcher had no indication that a Panamanian
population lived in Kalamazoo. Discovery of their existence was accidental. A Panamanian woman came to the HAC seeking employment. In our conversation, I mentioned the research I was conducting on the Hispanic community and asked her if she would be willing to introduce me to other Panamanian families. She agreed and invited me to a social gathering at her house, which I later discovered was a baby shower.

Those who attended the event were mainly Panamanian females, except for one male. I began to interview some of the females informally; but they did not show much interest. However, when others became aware that I was Puerto Rican, they began to be more receptive and participated in the conversation. Questions were targeted to each of those present. They mainly concerned their background, reasons for coming to the United States, attitudes towards living in Kalamazoo, and their relationship with other Hispanic groups in the community.

Participant observation continued with the Panamanian community throughout my field research. However, the data were more sparse than I had experienced with previous groups, since the Panamanians were not in contact with the HAC as regularly as were the other groups. For example, they did not participate in any of the HAC's activities, e.g., monthly meetings, except for the HAC's annual Hispanic Fiesta, nor did they use any of the Council's services or become involved in any of the Hispanic community affairs.

Other Latin American groups such as Nicaraguans, Equadorians and Puerto Ricans, were not researched individually as were the other
groups. The few interviews that occurred took place primarily in the preliminary stage with the HAC members.

There were advantages and disadvantages during my field research in playing an advocate role with the Hispanic population. In contrast to Phase I interviews which proceeded slowly, there was an immediate acceptance and trust by most of families during Phase II. The researcher was no longer seen as an outsider. I had established a place within the community. Furthermore, the position of Coordinator allowed me to observe more closely the families' daily patterns at their homes, as well as in other settings. However, there were disadvantages. For example, for the most part respondents saw me as their advocate. Because of this, it was often difficult to play the role of field researcher. Whenever I began to ask specific questions, some respondents would change the subject or talk about a problem they had. I often found myself in conflict with my own role. Many times I felt uncomfortable, because there was not enough time to converse and only enough time to take care of their immediate needs. Also, as advocate, the researcher observed only those persons that were dependent in some ways on the HAC services. Seldom did I have the opportunity to study the non-disadvantaged Hispanic.
CHAPTER II

PROFILE OF THE HISPANIC POPULATION IN THE U.S.

This chapter provides a brief summary of the general characteristics of Hispanic groups living in the United States. It should be noted that, for the most part, the information provided describes Hispanics who live in economically disadvantaged environments. Data are not readily available on those who come from educated or middle or upper class backgrounds, people who have adapted very well economically in the United States. Primary emphasis is on the Mexican American, Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban populations. Since data on the South and Central Americans were more limited, the latter groups are not discussed at length.

In this chapter, I wish to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the cultural, economic, and social traits that Hispanic groups share in general throughout the United States and to explain the qualities that make each unique. In Chapter III, I will contrast this with the Hispanic population living in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Presently, "the growth of the United States Hispanic population is one of the most startling phenomena in American social history, and if anything it is likely to speed up" (Church 1984:36). This is due primarily to continued migration and a high birth rate.
According to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1976) one out of every twenty persons in the U.S. is a Hispanic-American.

In 1950, there were approximately four million Hispanic residents on the U.S. mainland. Since then, the population has grown to an estimated 17.6 million, 60% tracing their descent or ancestry to Mexico and the rest to Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other Central and South American countries such as El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. Analysts predict that by the year 2000 Hispanic Americans will probably number 30 to 35 million, or 11% to 12% of the U.S. population vs 6.4% in 1980. Thus, they will constitute the largest minority group in the U.S. (Church 1984:36).

Generally speaking, Hispanics share some common characteristics. They speak the same language with slight colloquial variations and can trace their cultural heritage back to the Spanish empire. Many have migrated from a rural to an urban environment, seeking economic prosperity. Today, as many as 90% of the Hispanics reside in cities or suburban towns. "They congregate in communities seeking companionship and in response to discrimination, where they can preserve their language, customs, and tastes" (Church 1984:37). Nevertheless, though Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexicans, Dominicans, and Central and South American groups share some common traits, differences among them are as distinct as those among Australians, British, and other English-speaking peoples.

To understand further the complexity of the Hispanic culture, one must first study where they initially migrated, and finally, where they settled in the United States.
Mexican-Americans

The Mexican-American is the largest Hispanic group residing in the United States. They have settled in the Midwest (e.g., Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, and Ohio) and are concentrated heavily in the Southwest region (e.g., California, Texas). Their history is unlike that of any other American minority group, excluding the American Indian (Moore 1976:11). They became a minority not by immigrating, but by being conquered. Their history as Americans began in the early 19th century when the United States, through war and finally purchase, acquired from Mexico all of the Border States, i.e., Texas, New Mexico, parts of Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California.

There are various characteristics within the Mexican-American group that make them quite diverse. Reference may be made to a foreign born, a native born "Chicano," an indocumentado or "mojado" (a Mexican without proper legal papers who crosses the border), to those who live in the city or a rural environment, who live in Los Angeles as opposed to Texas, in the Southwest instead of the Midwest.

Each subgroup will provide a different profile of the Mexican-American. Nevertheless, they maintain cohesively one critical cultural element, the concept of "la raza," (meaning identity or a feeling of belonging). Mexican-Americans do not have a clear consensus on whether they are a racial or cultural group, or if they are white or nonwhite. However, in recent surveys, individuals interviewed about what they wanted Anglos to call them, responded by either saying "Mexican," "Mexican-American," "Spanish-American," or
"Chicano." It is an understandable rejection of derogatory terms such as "greasers" or "spics," and "it is a re-development of self definition and self awareness, and the need to define their heritage and their people" (Moore 1976:8).

Presently, it is a population that continues to migrate and grow due to the economic advantages and social opportunities in the United States; however, according to Moore (1976), it is still a group that is severely deprived economically. The chances of earning a livable wage are relatively low and have not increased much with the passage of time. In 1970, the U.S. Census reported that about 24% of all Spanish surnamed families fell below the "poverty line" (Moore 1976:63). Some of the primary contributing factors were the lack of English skills, large numbers of dependent youth in the household, and lack of educational background and job training needed to remove them from low paying jobs and improve their economic status.

In 1970, on an average, adults over 25 years of age had attained less than nine years of schooling in comparison with more than twelve years for Anglos (Moore, 1976). There have been improvements, especially with younger adults in the urban areas. However, studies have shown that there are variations in their educational attainment, depending on where they live. In South Texas, for example, Mexican Americans attained 5.3 years of schooling, while in San Francisco it was 10.3 years.

Social scientists argue that the situation is more severe among the foreign born and indocumentados (Moore, 1976; Borjas, 1985). On the average, third or later generation Mexican-Americans are more
educated and tend to make more money than those who were foreign
born. According to Census data collected after World War II, the
foreign born consistently appeared considerably worse off. Moore
(1976:59) states that "they are well below the educational level of
the native-born; participate far more in farm labor and other
unskilled jobs; and consistently appear to show signals of some
stress in adaptation to this society." This is not true for other
foreign born Hispanic populations, such as post-Castro Cubans and
some Central and South American groups.

In 1972, the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S. House of
Representatives indicated that "one to two million aliens were in
this country illegally and that the number was steadily growing"
(Toney, 1977:1). They come seeking employment and economic
opportunities; nevertheless, because of their status, they encounter
cultural, social and political problems that other Hispanics groups
living here would not face. In 1976, Browning and Rodríguez conducted
a study entitled "The Texas Indocumentado Project" (Borjas, 1985).
Their findings demonstrated that indocumentados who settled in the
United States without going back to Mexico underwent a loss of
cultural identity. For the children born or brought up in this
country, the question of identity—Mexican or Chicano—inevitably
produced uncertainties and tensions within the family.

Furthermore, they conclude that unlike the Mexican-American
family that maintains the family and kinship structure which is so
critical for the individual's existence, the Mexican indocumentado
lacks this close network. This is also true for the migrant farm
worker. The migrants' success depends on two variables: (1) the demand for crop pickers, and (2) the number of dependents in the family. Sometimes, depending on how good is the crop season, one will find them moving as many as five or more times. Due to continuous moving, they are not able to maintain a close family network. Therefore, it is the nuclear family that enhances the possibilities for survival and economic betterment for members of the family. Numerous dependents, regardless of their age, will be profitable for the family, because there will be more hands to pick the crops or contribute in the daily household chores. Unfortunately, young members of the household are disadvantaged. Though they provide economic stability for the family, they are not provided with educational opportunities that other children their age would have. Once they become adults, they become restricted to inferior, low-paying manual jobs such as shoveling, custodial jobs, and field picking. They are trapped in a vicious economic circle.

Some migrant families do stay longer in one area. This benefits the children because many are enrolled in school; however, as soon as the season is over or they are told they are no longer needed, they move. This creates conflicts with the children's schooling, because most often when they migrate to another state, the schools are not able to keep track of the children, and the parents usually fail to enroll the children in another school.

Mexican-Americans continue to see themselves as a distinct people, "rather than as a people or stock fully merged with an all-encompassing American identity" Moore (1976). However, there is a
concern among social scientists that segments of their culture are disappearing slowly (Moore, 1976; Spielberg-Benítez, 1986). They argue that at present, Chicano families barely speak Spanish, and the situation is likely to get worse. This is particularly apparent in the Midwest region, where Mexican Americans are geographically, socially and culturally isolated from Mexico and the Bordering States. "The declining isolation of Mexican barrios or communities implies increased assimilation of American values, behavior and attitudes, and probably less use of the Spanish language" (Moore, 1976:126). Some argue (e.g., Spielberg-Benítez, 1986) that by year 2000, Spanish will become obsolete in the Midwest region.

Puerto Ricans

Over the last several decades no other Hispanic group has been as extensively studied as the Puerto Rican population. Puerto Ricans have been living on the mainland for over 140 years, beginning during the time Puerto Rico was under Spanish colonial rule. In 1917, they were granted citizenship, and since World War II, their migration to the mainland has continued to increase rapidly. In 1940, fewer than 70,000 Puerto Ricans lived on the U.S. mainland. Ten years later the migrant community had more than quadrupled, to 300,000 persons, and in the following decade, that population nearly tripled, to 887,000 (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976:19). Presently, there are approximately two million Puerto Ricans living here, with approximately half living in New York City and New Jersey.
Reasons for migration have been mainly economic. In the 1950s Puerto Rico was experiencing a major industrial and modernization phase, called "manos a la obra." An agreement between the United States and the Puerto Rico called for the introduction of American enterprises in the island. For many Puerto Ricans, especially those living in the urban areas, it provided jobs. Even farmers left the fields to seek higher pay and better opportunities. However, for many it was still hard to find prosperity and move upward on the social and economic ladder. Many decided to migrate to the U.S., especially to New York City. They came to this country hoping to earn enough money so as to return one day to their island. Some were able to reap some of the economic and educational opportunities needed to be successful in this country; however, research continues to show that the majority has been the least successful of the Hispanic populations, showing a high incidence of poverty, unemployment and underemployment (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976).

The U.S. Census Bureau stated in 1975 that, in comparison to other Hispanic groups living in the U.S., Puerto Rican families were the poorest among all Hispanics (U.S Commission on Civil Rights, 1976). A Puerto Rican family earned about $7,629, compared with $9,498 for Mexican-American families and $11,410 for Cuban-American and other Hispanic groups. Borjas (1985) argues that, even now, more than 40% live below the official 1983 poverty line of $10,778 for a family of four.

In education the same relationship is evident. Puerto Ricans are at the lowest educational scale regarding years completed in
school. Furthermore, the dropout rate is more severe among younger groups. This is particularly true for those born on the island. Studies have shown that 25% of Puerto Ricans 25 years or older completed less than five years of school, in contrast to 19% of Mexican Americans and only 3% of Cubans (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976).

According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1976), this situation is primarily due to feelings of boredom and the schools' unresponsiveness to their cultural backgrounds. More important, however, has been their lack of English language skills. Approximately 30% of the 437,000 Puerto Ricans students enrolled in mainland schools were born in Puerto Rico; the language spoken for more than 83% is Spanish. The Commission showed that in 1970, out of 362,000 Puerto Ricans under age 18, 80,370 had been born in Puerto Rico and spoke English poorly. Problems also exist with those that are born in the United States. They speak what many call a "survival English"; however, many have not developed some of the basic grammar skills. This is also true for other Hispanic youth born in the U.S.

Furthermore, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1976) concluded that their racial and ethnic background has caused problems in being socially accepted in the United States. In 1970, nearly 93% of the mainland Puerto Ricans were described as white, while 5% were classified as Negro and the remaining 2% fell into the category of "other." However, many who came to the U.S. did not fit either category. They considered themselves "trigueno," which does not fit the simple white/black dichotomy commonly used in the United States.
Puerto Ricans do not see themselves as black or white, but as Puerto Ricans. Rather, "their racial identification was and continues to be subordinate to cultural identification" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976:28). The Puerto Ricans see themselves as constituting a different culture but not as a different race. They are offended when a black considers them his "brothers" or an Anglo considers them black.

In addition, some Puerto Ricans face social rejection within their own culture. There are inter-cultural tensions between Puerto Ricans who are raised in New York (Newyoricans) and those who are born and raised in Puerto Rico. The latter group is offended when an Anglo stereotypes all Puerto Ricans as a "Newyorican." Some Puerto Ricans consider Newyoricans to be Americans of lower status and refuse to socialize with them.

Other analysts state that the island's political status has not improved the self image and acceptance of Puerto Ricans by the Anglo population. Because the island is neither a state nor independent, "we are regarded as neither Hispanic nor as American. We are Puerto Rican outsiders" (Church, 1984:39). These conflicts continue to create for the Puerto Rican feelings of separation and inferiority in the U.S.

Cubans

The Cuban-American migration pattern has been of two types: (1) the post-Castro migration of 1960, and (2) the "Marielito" migration of 1980 (Church, 1980:36-37). The former group fled as political refugees, seeking most importantly political freedom. They came from
middle and wealthy classes and settled heavily in Florida and also in New Jersey. In Florida, the population has increased so rapidly that oftentimes people refer to the 25 mile stretch from Miami to the Everglades as "Calle Ocho" and often one will hear Miami referred to as "Little Havana" (Church, 1984:38).

It is a population that in comparison to other Hispanic groups has done the best; family incomes average $25,000 (Church, 1984:38). They migrated as a minority; however, against the Anglo will, they have become a very powerful, aggressive, and cohesive group that has increasingly become the majority in areas in which they live.

On the other hand, the Cubans who fled in the 1980 boatlift from the port of Mariel, Cuba, came to the United States for different reasons. Most were released from prison cells and mental institutions, uneducated and poor, without any knowledge of the English language. They arrived in Miami and were assisted by Catholic organizations, which sponsored and resettled them in different geographic regions in the United States. It is a group that not only faces social alienation from the Anglo community but from the post-Castro Cuban population as well.

Central and South Americans

The Central and South Americans represent about 7% of the Hispanic population. They have mostly settled in the West (47%), with 17% living in the South. Similar to the post-Castro Cuban population, it is largely foreign born, economically stable, and well educated (Borjas, 1985:7). This does not include the Salvadorans, a
group that continues to increase in this country. Most of their early educational training was acquired abroad; however, many come seeking a post secondary education. Little research has been conducted on this population. The reason for this is that their numbers are not as large as the other Hispanic populations, and more importantly, they have learned to adapt more easily without undergoing such social pressures as other Hispanic groups.

In conclusion, one can see from the data presented that a large proportion of the Hispanic population continues to be economically, socially, and educationally deprived in this country. There are still no clear solutions; however, Borjas (1985) argues that continued research on the socioeconomic standing of the Hispanic populace and workings of the labor market, "should lead to better opportunities for all minorities, which will mean greater progress for the entire community."
CHAPTER III

HISPANIC POPULATIONS IN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

The following chapters (III and IV) present a discussion of general characteristics of the Hispanic groups (i.e., Mexican-American, Cuban, Panamanian and other Latin American groups) which were studied in Kalamazoo. This chapter focuses on the Mexican-American population, while Chapter IV concentrates on the Cuban and Panamanian groups and includes consideration of some of the other, smaller Latin American groups (i.e., Puerto Ricans, Ecuadorians, and Nicaraguans). Included in both chapters are sections discussing some of the cultural traits, such as economic, educational, and ideological, for each population.

In comparison to the abundance of information written on Hispanics living in other major areas in the United States, the data on Hispanics living in the Midwest are rather sparse and sometimes misleading. This is particularly true of Kalamazoo. For example, Flachier’s (1979) study and the census tracts show different figures for the Hispanic population size of Kalamazoo. As of 1981, official census data indicated approximately 2,605 Hispanics as living in the County of Kalamazoo (see Appendix C). Flachier (1979), on the other hand, argues that there are 2,800 Hispanics living here. I would concur with Flachier’s estimates since the Census Bureaus often admit to losing a certain percentage of its counts. His forecasts from the
population's settling rate suggest "there will be about a 15% increase in the number of Hispanic households for 1980-83" (Flachier, 1979:190). He states this is due primarily to the fact that most of his respondents were in the 18-33 age group, and therefore, most likely to have children in the future. The result will be a high population growth rate.

The majority of Hispanics in Kalamazoo share some general socio-cultural traits with other Hispanic groups living throughout the United States, such as economic conditions, education, and language. Flachier (1979:197) mentions that similar to the national average, Hispanics in Kalamazoo are economically deprived, he reports about 36% living below the poverty level. He argues this can be primarily traced back to a lack of basic English skills and low levels of educational achievement that prevent them from seeking and maintaining employment. However, it must be mentioned that this is not true for all Hispanics. Some Hispanic families living in Kalamazoo have high levels of educational training and some have incomes of $30,000 or more.

This is a population that continues to struggle with its identity, especially the Mexican-American population. (This will be explained later in this chapter). These people are American citizens, and many have been living in the community for over 20 years. Despite this, they face feelings of alienation and isolation. Several problems exist that are attributed to their lack of cohesion and family and community support.
The population's sporadic and dispersed settlement should be noted first. It is not common to find a neighborhood or ghetto that represents the Hispanic population. They do not constitute a unified body sharing common interests, as one would find with Hispanic communities in larger cities such as Chicago, Miami, New York City, or San Antonio. Instead, one finds individual pockets of families, unevenly distributed in different sectors of Kalamazoo. The city is divided into neighborhoods, and Hispanics can be found in many of these neighborhoods, rather than clustered in one or two. The Edison neighborhood, for example, has about 80 Hispanic families or 3% of 12,200 residents. The Northside has about 42 Hispanic families or 2% of the 950 residents. The Stuart area has 23 families or 3% of the 3,500 residents and the rest are scattered in different Census tracts. Secondly, many who migrated here, seeking economic betterment, left their relatives elsewhere. The "extended family" concept which is important in maintaining family cohesion and tradition, especially during economic struggle, was lost once they settled here. Some Mexican-American and Cuban families stated that they often felt lonely because they lived so far away from their families. Flachier (1979:61) notes that Hispanics are supportive of the extended family; however, "only 12% of the households have grandparents, relatives other than married couples living in the same household."

Thirdly, social and cultural exchange does not exist between Hispanic groups. For example, one may find Cuban and Mexican families living on the same street who never communicate with one
another. Some families responded that they were aware they had Hispanic neighbors, but they did not really know who they were. In general, each group maintains complete isolation from the other. On some occasions, however, I observed that this was not the case. At times, there was some interaction between Cubans and Mexicans, but not for social reasons. There was one Mexican woman who was known throughout the Cuban population. She asked some of the Cuban males to commit illegal acts (e.g., robbery and fraud), and in return, offered them sexual favors. Two other examples of involvement among different Hispanic groups were observed at the Annual Hispanic Fiesta and at the HAC meetings. These were the only times that there was significant interaction or sharing among groups. The population as a whole does not share community-like characteristics as noted in other larger cities. However, each individual group manages to find ways to preserve its culture and to act as a community.

Mexican-Americans and Mexicans

Mexican-Americans were the first Hispanics to migrate to Kalamazoo and presently constitute the largest Hispanic group in the area. Flachier (1979:190) notes that about 47% came from the Southwest and only 13% from other Midwest areas. Very few are Mexicans, except for those who have crossed the border without legal papers (indocumentados). Those who came from the Southwest indicated that they had been migrant workers who, with the help of MEHD, settled permanently in Kalamazoo. Currently a small population continues to work as migrants; this is a life style as well as a mode of work. Some
families noted that the welfare system did not provide enough for their families. Therefore, some of the family members worked in the fields during the summer to earn extra money to buy clothing, shoes and other miscellaneous items for the children. Many leave Kalamazoo to return to Florida and Texas; however, some stay, hoping and striving for economic success.

Economics

There is a minority of Mexican-Americans who have prospered financially. Some, with family support and public assistance, have managed to find employment as unskilled laborers in paper mills (e.g., Simpson or Mead) or auto factories (e.g., General Motors). Others came with educational training and have established careers in fields such as nursing, social work, counseling, or teaching. The majority of Mexican-Americans, however, remain economically disadvantaged. While they sometimes work in the fields, they remain largely unemployed, dependent on the welfare system.

Migrant families continue to come to Kalamazoo and, with the help of MEHD, they try to develop some of the necessary job and educational skills needed to find and maintain employment. However, after failing to gain steady employment after a year, or even after only a few months, they tend to leave Kalamazoo and return to migrant work, maintaining their pride because they are at least employed.
Flachier's (1979) data show that Mexican-Americans in Kalamazoo have the ability to speak both English and Spanish. Furthermore, English is generally the main language spoken in the household. However, similar to the national average, educational attainment levels are low, and the basic English skills necessary for seeking and maintaining employment are lacking. Of all primary wage earners, "54% have less than a 12th grade education, and 3% have had no formal education" (Flachier, 197).

Unfortunately, poor attitudes toward education are instilled in the children. Although the young adults speak English fluently, there are problems with keeping them in school. According to spokespersons at the Kalamazoo Migrant and Bilingual Programs, the Hispanic drop-out rate continues to increase steadily, especially in the seventh and eighth grades. This is primarily due to family migration to another state, lack of student incentive because of underachievement and non-motivational attitudes from parents, or a loss of identity and inability to cope with the environment.

The Bilingual Program and other organizations are trying to develop solutions to alleviate these problems. One way is to find jobs for adults in order that they need not move so frequently. One may occasionally find a family that moves from one state to another four times in one year, then returns to the original state during the spring harvest season. In addition, these programs have tried to involve parents in their children's education by having them...
participate in parents' meetings and counseling them regarding their responsibilities with regard to their children's educational future.

**Ideology**

Both Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, regardless of their country of birth, still maintain their cultural heritage. Maintaining their traditions is an important part of their lives, and many continue to do so in both their homes and in the community. This is sometimes seen by others as restricting their ability to assimilate into the larger community.

Mexican-Americans continue to depend on the nuclear family for economic and emotional support. However, due to the loss of the extended family, they find themselves seeking temporary economic assistance from other support services, for example, MEHD, HAC, Dept. of Social Services, and the church. Others have accepted their current economic situation as permanent, since doing so is their only means of survival. It is seen as a "design for living", with a ready-made set of solutions for human problems. Their attitude is somewhat akin to what Oscar Lewis (1969:79) describes as "fatalistic, helplessness, dependence and inferiority" of "the culture of poverty."

Approximately 82% of Mexican-Americans speak Spanish, which symbolizes their legacy from Spanish culture. However, only 41% responded that Spanish was the main language spoken at home. Unfortunately, the youth of today have lost many of these language skills. It is a problem that continues to persist not only in Kalamazoo, but throughout the entire nation.
Families continue to cook some of the traditional dishes, like menudo, tamales, tacos, mole, frijoles, and tortillas, that are part of their main diets. Although one can see children eating a burger with fries at a fast-food establishment, they continue to eat the traditional dishes at home.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Mexican-Americans lack community cohesiveness. Some families noted that this was somewhat due to the Mexican-American adapting to a more independent lifestyle. The need to share and socialize with other Mexican-Americans families was not seen by some to be as strong as in neighborhoods elsewhere, for example, San Antonio or Dallas. In addition, culturally relevant recreational opportunities do not exist for them. However, the church has played a major role in Mexican-Americans' daily lives. Instead of other organizations, it is the churches (both Catholic and Protestant) that play a key role in disseminating information about programs, as well as providing social and recreational activities, such as dances.

The Bilingual and Migrant Programs and the HAC have now begun to play a role in involving Hispanic families with the rest of the community via activities such as the Annual Migrant Awards Banquet, the Brotherhood Program, and the Annual Hispanic Fiesta. These have served not only to increase community awareness in the general population, but also to develop community cohesiveness and a sense of belonging within the Hispanic population. However, the HAC has not been as successful as the Bilingual Program in achieving this.
Often, respondents were quick to share their feelings about the Council. Some stated that at one time the Mexican-American population was very united and involved with the livelihood of their people. They had created the Spanish-Speaking Steering Committee to address some of the populations' needs and concerns to The City of Kalamazoo. Some agree that a number of positive changes have resulted, and may be attributed to the HAC.

However, people do not give HAC much credit. Two members of the Council stated that at one time most of the elderly were very active in the community. However, now they have isolated themselves completely from the HAC. Other members mentioned that many perceive HAC to be an elitist group comprised of and serving only the economically and educationally successful. The Council is seen as more concerned with the needs and issues of importance to its members than with those of the people generally. Others interviewed agreed with these comments. They stated that they didn't see how participating in the HAC could improve their own lives.

In addition, the Council is viewed as an organization that provides services primarily for the Cuban population, since the HAC was one of the organizations that played a key role in helping Cubans adjust when they arrived in Kalamazoo. This affiliation of the HAC with the Cuban population continues today.

Mexican-Americans, on the other hand, have become more involved with the Bilingual and Migrant Programs over the years. Without being asked specifically how these programs helped them, they made it quite evident that they actively participate in parents' meetings.
associated with these programs. Some teachers and administrators commented that it was apparent that parent participation in these meetings had increased in the last three years. This is due primarily to similar interests and objectives that both groups share, such as education of the youth. Many parents come to the meetings and talk about their children's educational problems. However, the meetings also serve as a means for socializing and at times as an outlet for expressing their frustrations.

On the whole, the Mexican-Americans community continues to live in a deprived environment. However, even the poorest among them often demonstrate continued hope that the time will come when they, too, will realize the economic opportunities already attained by other Mexican-Americans since arriving in Kalamazoo.
CHAPTER IV

CUBANS AND OTHER LATIN AMERICAN GROUPS
IN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

This chapter begins with a discussion of the economics, education, and ideology of Cubans living in Kalamazoo. Next, smaller Latin American groups, including Puerto Ricans, Nicaraguans, and Ecuadorians are mentioned. The largest of these groups in Kalamazoo is that of the Panamanians. Their economics, education and ideology are discussed in the final section.

Cubans

The Cuban population is the second largest Hispanic group in Kalamazoo. This group is comprised mostly of the 1980 boat people, many of whom are referred to today as the "Marielitos." However, there are a few Cubans living in Kalamazoo who came after the 1959 Castro takeover. The only commonalities that one finds in both groups are language, place of origin, and a dislike for the Castro regime. The Marielitos left a country where they were perceived as a degenerate, unskilled, uneducated, and low-income class. Some were brought to Kalamazoo by Catholic Family Services. Nevertheless, it was mostly the HAC and Department of Social Services that helped them economically and socially.

Since their arrival in Kalamazoo, they have continued to be perceived in this fashion by the Hispanic population, especially the
post-Castro Cubans, and the Anglo community. Some Hispanics, especially Mexican-Americans and 1960s Cubans, mention that the Marielitos project a bad image of Hispanics to the rest of the population. It is noted that they are often arrested due to their social misconduct. One Cuban female stated that although she actually came in the 1980s as a part of this group, she always claims to have arrived in the 1960s in order to avoid social stigma.

Economics

According to Flachier (1979), approximately 40 Marielito Cubans came to Kalamazoo County. Although some women and children came with this group, the majority were male adults who left their families in Cuba. These people have barely managed to survive economically. They came poor and continue to depend on the welfare system and other social organizations for economic assistance. However, compared to their disadvantaged situation in Cuba, many feel that at least they have freedom and are being provided for economically. Those that I interviewed said that they feel lucky to have come to a country where they have liberty, since they had been kept in either prison cells or mental institutions in Cuba.

For many, there is no desire to find employment, learn the English language, or go to school. The few adults who do go to school are there because they have been forced by the Department of Social Services to participate in some program that will enhance their opportunities for finding a job and finally get off public
assistance. This remains a population generally lacking in education.

**Education**

In 1980, Flachier noted that at the time of their arrival, the Marielitos completely lacked English language skills. The situation has not changed very much to this day. They may manage to say some English words and sometimes some phrases, but wherever they go, to hospitals, courts, or DSS, they need assistance from a translator. Very few have as much as a sixth grade education; others have never even gone to school.

Many other Cubans have gone to school and studied English as a second language. However, very few succeed. Only one of the Marielito Cubans I interviewed had learned English well enough to be readily understood by non-Hispanics. However, their children, mostly born in Cuba, do speak English and do well in school. Because Spanish is spoken in the household, the children have managed to maintain their native language as well.

**Ideology**

Marielito Cubans continue to live a life isolated from the rest of the community. Their lack of money and education, as well as their low social status, have made it extremely difficult for them to adapt to their new environment.

Compared to the rest of the Hispanic population, they have maintained more of their traditional beliefs and attitudes. They
continue to eat their traditional foods, like arroz con pollo, carne, empanadas, and moros con Cristianos, and would not even think of cooking an American dish. Many have complained that the soup lunches that churches provide for the community should include some Cuban food.

They continue to socialize only among themselves. Everyone knows everyone else's business, and their lives are intricately interwoven. Since there is no special meeting place or organization which would bring them together, the Hispanic-American Council office has become the social gathering place for many of them. They not only come for assistance, but sometimes just to sit down and talk. They may often be found socializing at a friend's house, with food, rum and "salsa," a form of dance seen in many Latin and Caribbean countries.

Latin American Groups

It was very difficult to draw comparisons between Central and South Americans living here and those living in other parts of the United States. One will seldom find data on either Central or South Americans. This is due to their small concentrations in comparison with the larger Puerto Rican, Mexican-American and Cuban-American populations one often finds in a community. When noted, they are generally described as Central Americans or South Americans; rarely is there any mention of their cultural background or national origin.

In Kalamazoo, individual pockets of Latin Americans from Nicaragua, Ecuador, Guatemala, Puerto Rico and Panama live dispersed
throughout the city. The group from Panama was the only group researched, utilizing both individual interviews and participant observations. Research on the former groups was based only on general observations.

Initially, most Latin Americans came as students seeking educational as well as economic opportunities. Today, they are generally highly skilled and because of this have been successful in finding careers in such professions as medicine, psychiatry and counseling. Therefore, many have managed to maintain a higher standard of living than that found among the Mexican-American and Cuban populations.

In general, this population has adapted well economically and socially to Kalamazoo, while maintaining and continuing to practice some of their traditional customs and beliefs. They have done this successfully by maintaining a small network of Latin American families within the University as well as in the larger community environment, which provides a social and cultural means for interaction.

For many the HAC has provided a social means for interaction with their own people as well as with other Hispanic groups. They feel that the Council provides some of the basic needs, like clothing, food, housing, and advocacy. In addition, they state that more needs to be done for the Hispanic population.

Panamanians

Panamanians are the largest Central American group and the third largest Hispanic group living in Kalamazoo. Ten Panamanian families
living in Kalamazoo were identified in this study. Those interviewed indicated that the Panamanian population encompasses two cultural backgrounds. The female adults were born Panamanians, whereas the male adults were of American descent. During the Vietnam War a large number of American men serving with the U.S. forces were sent to the Panama Canal Zone. While stationed there, some Americans married Panamanians and later returned to the United States.

Economics

Panamanians are generally not considered to be economically disadvantaged. Indeed, due in large part to their educational training, they are quite successful. In addition, many from Panama come from a middle class background which has enhanced their chances for success.

Education

Panamanians represent a large component of the educated Central American population. Many came seeking educational opportunities at Western Michigan University. Today, many of them, especially the female adults, have earned bachelor's degrees and some have even earned master's degrees. This emphasis on education has been extremely important to the younger adults. With reference to the generally high Hispanic high school drop-out rate, Panamanian youth are the exception to the rule. They are instilled at an early age with the importance of getting an education and continue to be successful in school.
Ideology

Similar to other Latin American groups, the Panamanians value maintaining their traditions. This is evident in the household as well as in the community. They continue to eat their traditional foods, practice their Catholic beliefs, and speak their native language; however, this is less true for the younger adults. The children face the same problems as one would find with other Hispanic youth. Many have lost a large part of their oral and writing skills.

As a whole, Panamanians, especially the women, have been successful in protecting their children from assimilating completely to the American culture. One would not have predicted this, given the fact that many of their fathers are Americans. In fact, many of them have adapted to a Panamanian lifestyle. They make certain that the children are expected to learn the Panamanian beliefs and customs throughout their lives. The children are taught the traditional dances and customs and participate in different community activities or events, such as the Hispanic Fiesta.

Panamanians have very actively sought different ways to identify themselves specifically as Panamanians rather than part of a general group of "Hispanics." This is evident in their involvement with and participation in the Annual Hispanic Fiesta, as well as other cultural functions at Western Michigan University. For example, they are the only Hispanic group living in Kalamazoo that actively performs in the Fiesta. They present a series of varied, artistic performances, including traditional and modern dances, modeling their native clothing and leading a parade around Bronson Park, where the
Fiesta is held. The parade is particularly successful in highlighting the Panamanian traditions. Many Mexican-Americans at the Fiesta commented that they would like to present a similar event, based on their own traditions, in future fiestas. Even though the number of Panamanians in Kalamazoo is relatively small, the nature and extent of their participation in the Fiesta might lead one to believe that they represent the largest Hispanic group.

They have also sought to maintain their cultural distinctiveness by creating The Sociedad Panamena (Panamanian Society), the main purpose of which is to maintain the unity and identity of the group as well to provide a means for social interaction. The entire Panamanian population is involved in the Society, which meets at least once a month. Unlike the HAC, the Society is not intended to represent the entire Hispanic population, although non-Panamanians frequently participate in their meetings. Their primary financial support comes from member dues.

These activities enhance the pride Panamanians feel in who they are and where they come from. This has contributed to their continued success in Kalamazoo.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Many of the general social, cultural, economic, and educational traits of the over two thousand Hispanics in Kalamazoo which have been discussed throughout this study are shared with the rest of the Hispanic population nationwide. They migrated to this area seeking economic opportunities, but they lack appropriate education and skills, and thus continue to be economically disadvantaged. The number of Hispanics in Kalamazoo continues to increase, reflecting national population trends among Hispanics.

Hispanics in Kalamazoo continue to practice their traditional customs and traditions. In addition, they have developed and maintained unique traits that are particularly characteristic of having lived in this area. For example:

1. The Kalamazoo Hispanic population is smaller than that found in other, larger cities in Michigan, including Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Detroit, and smaller than that found in other cities throughout the country. Because they are so few, their needs are less apparent to community agencies, city or county officials than are those of other minority groups, for example blacks.

2. The Kalamazoo Hispanic population is comprised primarily of Mexican-Americans, Mexicans, Cubans, and Panamanians.
3. They are not found in particular geographic clusters, that is, in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods or ghettos. Rather, they live in dispersed pockets throughout the county.

4. The local population does not have the community support often found in larger cities where there are more Hispanics, and where otherwise diverse populations (e.g., Cubans, Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and other Latin American Groups) often join together in Hispanic community endeavors. This is illustrated by the absence of a centralized Hispanic center.

5. They lack the economic and emotional support provided by an extended family.

6. There is little interaction among the Hispanic sub-groups.

Based on these characteristics, I conclude that the Hispanics' adaptation process in Kalamazoo has not only been different from that of Hispanics in other, larger cities, but that it has been more difficult. Generally, most Hispanic immigrants to Kalamazoo came from environments where Spanish was the main language spoken in their neighborhood as well as in their homes, and there was a communal acceptance of their Hispanic identity. After their arrival in Kalamazoo, many faced feelings of alienation, making it difficult for them to find sources of companionship and security in the wider community. Therefore, many had to find alternative ways to adjust, depending mostly on themselves. Each Hispanic group has tended to develop different adaptive mechanisms to secure a successful livelihood.
The Mexican-Americans are the largest Hispanic population and have lived here the longest. Their successful adaptation to Kalamazoo has been accomplished in part with the help of the Bilingual and Migrant Program, MEHD, and the churches. Though they have been successful in many ways, I would argue that this success has been accompanied by a loss of their cultural heritage greater than that experienced by other groups who have perhaps been less successful in adapting. For example, many of the young adults do not speak or write Spanish. In addition, the role of the family has diminished and no longer plays a major role in their daily lives. Instead, they have adapted to a more independent lifestyle characteristic of the wider, non-Hispanic Kalamazoo community.

The Cubans' adaptation process has been quite different. This may be because they have not been living here as long as the other Hispanic groups. They rely mainly on their own people, the Department of Social Services, and the HAC for emotional and economic support. For some, the adaptation process has been very rapid, although for others it has been slow and very difficult. This is demonstrated by the reluctance of some to learn the English language and by their continued dependence on the HAC and other Cubans.

The Panamanians, Nicaraguans, Puerto Ricans and Ecuadorians have been the most successful, both in adapting to life in Kalamazoo and in maintaining their traditional cultural heritage. This is primarily due to their economic prosperity and the high levels of education that most of them possessed prior to coming to the United States generally, and Kalamazoo, in particular. These are the only Hispanic
groups in Kalamazoo which have been successful in adapting to Ameri­
can life while simultaneously maintaining their cultural beliefs and
traditions. The Panamanians have even created their own membership
organization, the Sociedad Panamena as a symbol of their identity.

On the whole, the Hispanics in Kalamazoo have had to learn to
adapt more quickly than those in other places in order to survive.
Some have done so more successfully than others. However, they all
have managed to maintain some level of group cohesion through one
critical cultural element—the concept of "la raza."

Conclusions

The intent of this research was to improve our understanding of
the intricate cultural variations of the Hispanic population in order
that the social agencies (e.g., HAC, DSS, and MEHD) and city offi­
cials might be better able to improve the social and economic condi­
tions of the Hispanic population at large in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Other studies aimed toward these goals have been conducted.
These include: the U.S. Census Bureau summary of Hispanics in Kalama­
zoo County, produced by the Community Information System for Human
Services (see Appendix C); and especially Flachier's needs assessment
of the Hispanic Community in Kalamazoo County (1979). These studies
have provided specific data on the economic and social problems faced
by the Hispanic population; they informed the present study, and my
observations concur with the findings of both studies.
However, this study has two major characteristics that set it apart from those, as well as from other ethnographic studies mentioned earlier.

1. Data were collected primarily while the researcher was playing an advocacy role for the Hispanic population.

2. The study concentrated on the cultural components of each Hispanic group in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

The Role of Advocate: Advantages and Disadvantages

The opportunity to observe the Hispanic population while serving as Advocate can be advantageous. It gives one the opportunity to participate and observe the population more closely and for a longer period of time. Because I was in this position during this research, I had adequate time, as well as an "insider's" view, to test the assumptions about and observations of the Hispanic population which I had made previously in Phase I. In addition, more options are available regarding the number and type of people to interview or observe. For example, some documents, personal addresses and other sensitive information about the population are more readily provided to an advocate than to one who is seen in the role of basic researcher.

Also, and more importantly, an advocate is better able to establish relationships with members of the groups being studied which are based on trust. Since those being studied know that the advocate's primary concern is to help them and facilitate the solution of their problems as they, themselves perceive them, they welcome his or her participation and are likely to be more honest and open in pro-
viding information than if they have doubts about the intentions of the researcher. In contrast to the "outsider" image which is often that of the basic researcher, the advocate is in a position to perceive the shared problems, hopes, and life experiences of those studied through their own eyes, and, perhaps, portray this world to others.

The dual role of advocate and researcher also has some potential drawbacks, however. It is difficult to separate the two roles on a day-to-day basis. When the primary role is one of advocacy, the objectivity valued by the research community is compromised. The very real and pressing social and economic problems faced by those being studied may begin to take precedence over research-related concerns. At times, when I conducted interviews, I discovered that people began to talk about their personal problems; for example, their son had dropped out of school, their husband had left them, or they were out of work. Ignoring these concerns in order to progress with the research would have compromised my role as advocate, yet postponing the research until all such problems were solved would mean that the research would never be completed. At times, I became more of a counselor than an interviewer, and at other times, it seemed as though I was purposely limiting my efforts to address these immediate problems in the interest of furthering the research. How to achieve an appropriate balance between the dual roles of advocate and researcher, and how to know when such a balance is being achieved, are continual problems for many social science researchers,
and these are especially acute for those who openly acknowledge their attempt to fulfill both roles simultaneously.

The cultural component

One advantage of the current study was its focus on the economic, educational, and especially the cultural variations that occur among the several Hispanic sub-groups living in Kalamazoo. In order to provide better services for Hispanics, it is essential that those involved in social service agencies become aware of the diversity as well as the unity of the Hispanic population.

The HAC, DSS and other social organizations are trying to focus on this. Many HAC members are aware that they must begin to do more outreach with the Mexican-American population because the Council is perceived by some as an agency that serves only the Cuban population. The HAC is also aware that there is discontent among those Hispanics who feel that their organization does not address their needs.

Despite these efforts, however, a tendency to view the Hispanic community as homogeneous persists. Non-Hispanics, especially, may be unaware of the diversity of problems, values and beliefs which characterizes the "Hispanic community." When an official city or county agency appears to listen only to the voices of one or two sub-groups, the other Hispanics may become discouraged and alienated. In order to provide services which truly respond to the needs of the entire Hispanic population of Kalamazoo, a recognition of its heterogeneity is essential. Members of the Hispanic population, their representatives, and those who provide them services must continually work to
achieve this. This study offers an example of such an effort.

Recommendations

Recommendations based on this study are offered to three groups: (1) social scientists, (2) policy makers and those who implement policies affecting Hispanics, and (3) members of the Hispanic population, and, especially, their representatives.

1. There is a need for social scientists to increase the number of Hispanic community studies done in this country. In order for policy makers and administrators to respond to the needs of the growing Hispanic population, they must be provided with sound information regarding the complexity, dynamics, and idiosyncrasies of the Hispanic culture. Furthermore, to understand better the nuances of Hispanic groups, a more accurate picture of the range of social, economic and cultural variations within the community must replace the tendency to focus solely on those groups that represent a large number or those who are the most severely economically disadvantaged.

2. Recognizing and responding to such diversity is also essential for public administrators, policy makers, and social agencies who wish to promote social change effectively. In addition, their decisions must be informed not only by census data and other statistical information, but also by cultural studies that express the emotional and social needs— from the loss of a husband to the need for a Hispanic community center for the people.
3. In Kalamazoo, there is a need for the Hispanic-American Council to reach out to the entire Hispanic population and persuade them to become more involved in Council activities by demonstrating the benefits of such involvement. While attempts to do so have been made by some of the members, as well by some of the service coordinators, limited resources, budgets, and minimal support by the City of Kalamazoo have hindered their efforts.

If changes are not introduced, the economic, educational, and cultural deprivation prevalent among the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo will continue. Policy makers, social agencies and administrators must begin to pay more attention to the needs of the Hispanic population, and can most effectively do so if they recognize the diverse values, beliefs, and cultural identities represented among members of that group. If they take action, they will, in the long term, reap the benefits by having a population that will reciprocate and contribute to the welfare of the entire community.
Appendix A

Hispanic American Council Proposal for
A Hispanic American Center
NARRATIVE

HISPANIC AMERICAN CENTER

PURPOSE

There are mainly two delivery systems for Hispanics in the City, Michigan Economics for Human Development and the Hispanic American Services (under the Hispanic American Council, Inc.) There are other services which came through voluntary groups, the Hispanic American Council, the group "El Rosario", and other grass roots services. In order to provide a delivery of coordinated services, a centralized location is at this point more cost effective and efficient.

POPULATION

The population being served will be low income Hispanic American residing in Kalamazoo. Also, some non-Hispanics will be served due to existent mixed marriages. In addition, various Hispanic ethnic groups will be served, i.e., Caucasian, Black, Mulatto, Indo-caucasian, and Indian. The core of those served are the low-income, unemployed, undereducated, ones with language barriers, etc.

SERVICES

Consolidated services will include migrant services, relocation, emergency (food, housing, energy), interpretation, referral, advocacy, employment, etc. Some functions in the Center will be directed at cultural and educational activities as well as an Activity Center for youth.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The proposed funding will not directly result in the hiring of workers, though the remodeling will serve as a source of employment. The consolidation of services will free up operating funds which will be used to hire direct service individuals.

PROPOSED BUDGET

In addition to the $50,000 asked for the purchase of the facilities for the Center, the Catholic Diocese is interested in collaborating in the purchase of such a facility. The Diocese is interested in providing Mission services to those in need.
Furthermore, the Hispanic American Council has been involved in fund raising activities (e.g., dances, banquets, the Fiestas in Bronson Park) to develop such a Center.
Proposal Title: Hispanic American Center
Applicant: Hispanic American Council
Non-Profit Corporation No: 883-100
Address: 231 East Ransom
Kalamazoo, Michigan  2449007
Contact Person: Dr. Roberto Plachier
Telephone No: (616) 343-6185

Project Description: Hispanic American Center will provide delivery of coordinated services to Hispanic of city, county agencies.

Circle Census tracts In Which the Proposed Project would Operate:
1, 2.01, 2.02, 3, 4.01, 4.02, 5, 6, 8.01, 8.02, 9, 10, and 16.03

Specific Services to Be Provided:
1. Advocate - Liaison for Hispanic-Americans
2. Conduct cultural activities
3. Educational activities
4. Consolidation of Hispanic agencies and services

Employment Opportunities: N/A at this time - see narrative

1) List Jobs That Will Be Created: (i.e. description of job/positions, how many part-time, full-time, prevention jobs, term of employment: 1-6 months, 6 months - 1 year, 1 year and above)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Jobs</th>
<th>Job Descriptions (note if apprentices positions)</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Employment Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of Benefit:
1) Describe one service benefit (i.e. that activity which typifies your project):
A centralized place to provide services needed by the Hispanic population of the Kalamazoo area.

2) Quantify the service benefit on an annual basis: not applicable

Project Implementation Schedule (Funds anticipated to be available 8/83)
Starting Date: N/A  Date when 50% of Project is Completed: N/A  Ending Date: N/A

ADMINISTRATIVE DETAIL
1. Location of Project Office: Downtown area
2. Number of staff to be used in project: ( ) Existing  ( ) Additional
3. Name of Independent Auditor for Project: Mr. Lon Fraizer  C.P.A.
4. Agency's experience in operating federally funded projects: 0 year(s).

(Over)
BUDGET DETAIL

Indicate your agency's total current budget: Total $19,700

Name sources and amounts: City of Kalamazoo - 16,400.
Kalama zoo county - 3,300.

PROPOSAL BUDGET:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount Requested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries/Fringes for ____ employees ____ months Fringe benefit is ___% of base salary</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies (e.g. office supplies, xerox, postage)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services (e.g. rent, insurance, telephone)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment Purchase(s)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Repair Materials/Other - purchase</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus Agency or Private Sector contribution to project/actual dollars</td>
<td>($10,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When implemented this project will generate private sector funds at a ratio of _________ Jobs Bill funds to _________ private funds.

Anticipated Cost per service unit: $ N/A
Anticipated Cost for Administration only: $0

I certify that ___ Hispanic American Council _______ is either a private non-profit entity duly organized to promote and undertake community development activities on a not-for-profit basis, a local development corporation or a Small Business Investment company. I further certify that I possess legal authority to apply for funding and to execute the proposed project and that no conflict of interest will arise from the acceptance of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Jobs Bill Funds.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. PRESIDENT AND/OR DEPARTMENT HEAD’S SIGNATURE(S) PEG CHEM

If Questions Contact: PEG CHEM 385-8225

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE: May 25, 1983 at 5:00 p.m. to
COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION - HOUSING AND PROGRAMS SECTION -
City of Kalamazoo - Room 305 - 341 W. South Street - Kalamazoo, MI 49007
Appendix B

Questions for Interviews with Members of the Hispanic American Council
Questions for Interviews with Members of the Hispanic American Council

1. Are you aware of the HAC's proposal to have a center that can better coordinate social services to the Hispanic population in Kalamazoo county than are provided at the present time?

2. Have they contacted you to discuss the feasibility of such a center?

3. Do you think that the center could be more efficient and cost-effective in providing the necessary services to the Hispanic population than various organizations are at the present time?

4. Would there be equal representation among the organizations in this center?

5. Do you have a preference concerning the location of the center?

6. Would the establishment of this center reduce some of the responsibilities that your organization already has with the Hispanic population?

7. If this center were built, what would be some of the priorities that your organization would suggest that the center should accomplish first?

8. Do you think that having a Hispanic Center would increase the participation of the Hispanic population in HAC activities?

9. If there were a center, would the government allocate more money to help the Hispanic population than they currently do?

10. What type of Hispanics would you primarily serve?
Appendix C

1980 Census Data for Hispanic Population of Kalamazoo, Michigan
Enclosed are the data you requested on the number of Hispanics in Kalamazoo County. Two sources from the U.S. Bureau of the Census were used to obtain this information. The general characteristics tables (included in xerox form) were taken from the published report entitled, 1980 Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts, Kalamazoo-Portage, Michigan, issued August, 1983. The remaining tables were derived through the Bureau's computerized Summary Tape File 3 (STF3), maintained through CISHS.

The final count for each of these two sources differs slightly due to the methodology used by the Census Bureau to produce each report. The higher figure is from the printed report, the lower figure, or STF3, is sample data. Therefore, the total population figures shown on the general characteristics tables are slightly higher than those used with the remaining tables (e.g., language, school, income, housing). A table has been included which illustrates this difference.

Overall, approximately 57% of the Hispanic population resided within the City of Kalamazoo in 1980. Slightly more than half of these residents were male. Of the 403 Hispanic households in the City, 281 or 70% were families with children. Half of the total Hispanic City residents' annual family income in 1979 was less than $10,000. Of the remaining Hispanic population, 14% resided within the City of Portage and 29% lived elsewhere in the County.

When comparing income, the City has 33.4% of its Hispanic population below poverty with an average family income of only $12,326, while in the balance of the County only 4.5% are below poverty and the average family income is $23,037.

I hope this information is sufficient to meet your needs. Please do contact us if additional assistance is required.

Sincerely,

Lyndell R. Bleyer

Enclosure

cc: Sheryl Sculley
## Years of School Completed (age 25 & over)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kalamazoo County</th>
<th>Kalamazoo City</th>
<th>County Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>958</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary (0-8 years completed)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Subtotal</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Subtotal</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years or more</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>49</td>
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</table>

## Sex by Labor Force Status (age 16-64)

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<th></th>
<th>Kalamazoo County</th>
<th>Kalamazoo City</th>
<th>County Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,544</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>638</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed Subtotal</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not In Labor Force</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Subtotal</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not In Labor Force</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Hispanic Population
#### Kalamazoo County
#### 1980*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age by Spanish Language Spoken at Home</th>
<th>Kalamazoo</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,605</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>714</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-17 Years</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>211</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Years and Over</td>
<td>1,219</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>503</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Enrollment (age 3 and over)</th>
<th>Kalamazoo</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>422</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursery School</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten &amp; Elementary (1-8 years)</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School (1-4 years)</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Based on total population figure of: 2,434 1,375 1,059

*Based on total population figure of: 2,434 1,375 1,059

---

HISPANIC ORIGIN
by
U.S. Census Sources
Kalamazoo County
1980
### Families with Income in 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Kalamazoo County</th>
<th>Kalamazoo City</th>
<th>Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>259</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than $5,000</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>$5,000 - $7,499</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7,500 - $9,999</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>$10,000 - $14,999</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 - $19,999</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 - $24,999</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $34,999</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 or more</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aggregate Family Income in 1979**: 9,393,110 3,426,645 5,966,465  
**Average Income per Family**: $17,492 $12,326 $23,037

### Poverty Status in 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Kalamazoo County</th>
<th>Kalamazoo City</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL FOR WHICH POVERTY STATUS WAS DETERMINED</td>
<td>2,318</td>
<td>1,287</td>
<td>1,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Poverty Level</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Poverty Level</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Below Poverty</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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### Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<th>Kalamazoo City</th>
<th>Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Occupied</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>121</td>
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</table>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Lewis, Oscar

Moore, Joan W.

Safa, Helen I.

Spielberg-Benitez, S. J.
Toney, William T.

United States Commission on Civil Rights.