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Spreading the Wealth: Understanding Inadequate Housing and Family Resource Centers

Danielle Cervantes

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### Abstract

For this project, we worked with a local Family Resource Center that provides resources to help families. Four families were interviewed to understand how they view poverty related issues and their impacts on mental health and what they think could be done to address the issues. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researchers used what they learned to formulate an action that responds to the focus issue. More specifically, the data suggested the importance of informing families about the benefits they can get from utilizing their local family resource center.

### Spreading the Wealth: Understanding Inadequate Housing and Family Resource Centers

I grew up in a low-income Latino community in the Eastside of Salinas. My father is an immigrant from Mexico and my mother was born in the United States. My parents are hard workers and worked long hours to provide for their families. As I grew up in the area and switch schools a few times and I saw the difference in the community. Eventually moving out of the Eastside of Salinas to the Northside of Salinas then moving to Soledad and where I now work for a low-income apartment complex. One of the main reasons that I wanted to do this topic on this project is because I experienced first-hand living in poverty and working in it.

Growing up my family and I lived in a one bedroom apartment on the Eastside of Salinas. It was my mother, sister, my two brothers, and myself that lived in this apartment. My parents were not together while I grew up but my father visited me often. I saw the struggle my mother faced having to work and take care of four children and maintain a household together as a single parent. I did not learn until I was older talking with my mother how hard it was on her and the struggles she faced providing for us.

My mother told us as we were all older how she nearly lost our home multiple times because there were other bills to be paid. We did have to move a couple times while I grew up and my mother had told us it was difficult to maintain an apartment by herself with four young children. I did not understand at the time why lived in a one bedroom apartments when it was a total of five people live in an apartment. My mother wished that there was places that she knew about where she could go get help and guidance on better housing.

Our housing situation did not become stable until I was in the eighth grade where my mother had a job that provided an apartment. It was a four bedroom apartment where it was now my mother, my aunt, two brothers, and myself. We lived in the north side of Salinas for two

years where we eventually moved to Soledad. When we moved to Soledad we ended up living in a house that my mother rented and my mother eventually was able to save money and buy a house of her own.

My mother has spoken freely about her struggles and how hard things were for her being a single parent. I know if there were resources available for her to help her get the assistance she needed. As where I currently work at a low-income property many people come in constantly needing the assistance to find housing. There are no Resource Centers that nearby to get these assistance or direct people to a place where they can get the assistance they need. I know if my mother had available the assistance to her then she would be able to find a stable place that she could afford and not struggle like she did.

### **Literature Review**

Latinos have many obstacles that they face living in the United States especially when they migrating to the country. Many of them end up in poverty communities and work jobs that have long hours and can barely make ends meet. Children of these families are the ones that suffer the most and are highly impacted by trauma from these events. Often, their school work gets affected and may begin to start acting out. What teachers may not realize the reason as to why students may be falling behind in schools is because they might have stress going on at home that they are dealing with. Many of these families may not know that there are services out there to help them or are afraid to get help if they are undocumented.

### **What is the problem?**

The issue in our local community is that poverty has an impact on low income communities and it affects the student's mental state. In schools many students may not perform successful academically because issues that they may have to deal with at home. In Salinas,

particularly on the eastside, it is a Latino based community when numerous immigrants from Mexico. Many of these families worry if they are going to be deported, have to work long hours to support their family, and have housing issues. Families do not have resources centers that are available to them if they are unaware resources available they do not know about them or are afraid to go get help.

When Latino immigrants come to the United States, some may avoid getting help due to the fear of getting deported. As stated by Cecilia Ayon (2014), “As Latino immigrant families transition and adapt to the United States, they experience a range of adverse experiences, including substandard housing, abuse, trauma, stigma, discrimination, and poverty.” This shows that they struggle to adapt to the lifestyle here in the United States and all of the suffering they experience as an individual and family. The article also pointed out that they may not have the means or are not eligible to have access to the resources as undocumented immigrants.

Many of these families may not realize that they and their families may need help, especially the children who seem to suffer the most. They do not know how to deal with the issues they are facing and therefore, they act out in school or may not be successful. Most school faculty may think that the student may be acting out for no reason, but many times it because they may have experienced some kind of stress in their home life. These students may need some kind of mental help support to help them process their problems they may be facing at home. Due to the fact that many low-income communities do not have much services provided for them, they are unable to get the proper help they need. Housing crisis in poverty makes it difficult to provide a stable home for a family, especially since it is so expensive to pay for the rent.

Some essential terms like resource center, which is a facility that provides services to those in need of assistance. Low-income communities, communities that meet below the poverty line. Latino, an ethnic group where they have descents from South America or Latin region.

### **Why is it an issue?**

This is an issue because our country has millions of immigrants that live in the United States and this brings children from other countries or first time generations into this country. Families that come to the country and are not aware of their rights and do not know how to get help or even ask for help. The society that we live in has a stigma when looking at different ethnic groups and have this stereotype against them. This is where racism started to play a role in their lives because people often believe the stereotype that they are bad people when that is not the case. Many come to the country to have a better life and live “the American Dream” and to have a better life for their children so they can succeed.

This affects the children because the problems they may face at home gets carried with them with them to school and that is where their school work starts to become affected. They may even start to act out and cause trouble and the schools may fail to see the reasoning behind it may be from issues going on at home and not because they are just a bad kid. In the article from Jonathan Silin, “Home visiting programs, parent-teacher conferences, and other parent engagement efforts, when done without the intention to learn from families, can easily push schools into further disconnected from parents and communities.” (2018) This is a problem because families and the schools should have a strong connection to build open communication to make sure the child is doing well in school.

Having a strong relationship with the community and schools is important, especially in poverty areas. Stated by Waters, Boyce, Eskenazi, and Alkon (2016), “When young children’s

home environments are fraught with harsh conditions and adversity, as in the case with economically impoverished, low-socioeconomic status population, children are at significant risk for a host of difficulties including externalizing behavioral problems.” The environments outside of the school walls can affect students and their school work. Teachers may not realize that there are underlying issues that students may be facing, if they are not performing well in school.

“Poverty restricts the housing choices of low-income families to the most impoverished neighborhoods, where public housing and low-rent apartments are prevalent.” (Eauth, R., Leventhal, T., Brooks-Gunn, J., 2007) The authors point out the barriers that result in being in poverty and how there are not many choices for those in poverty.

Many of these families may not realize that they and their families may need help, especially the children who seem to suffer the most. They do not know how to deal with the issues they may have faced and therefore they act out in school or may not be successful. Most school faculty may just think that the student may be acting out for no reason but many times it may be because they may have experience some kind of trauma in their home life. These students may need some kind of mental help to help them process their problems. Due to the fact that many low-income communities don't have much services provided from them they are unable to get the proper help they need.

### **What should be done?**

To resolve the issue, there needs to be communication with the families and letting them know that there is resources available for them and that they can get help. The families should at least be informed about what is available to them to decide what kind of help they can get. It is unfortunate that many Latino immigrants are afraid of being deported and that is why they are not asking for help. There should also be teacher training so that teachers could learn and



understand how to communicate with the families. In the article, González, Kula, González, and Paik (2017) stated, “Given the given prevalence of immigration separation experiences for many Latino families, professional development opportunities offered at schools can arm teachers with knowledge and strategies to assist students who may be struggling due to their family situation.” If teachers are able to get training and are educated more on what Latino families go through and try to understand then they can help make a difference in their lives. They will understand that the students may need more assistance in the classroom when they are not doing well or acting out in class. Instead of punishing them, they can do something else that may help the student succeed instead of setting them up for failure. In the article it also stated, “It is helpful for teachers to understand that immigrant children are often simultaneously dealing with adaptation issues (to a new caregiver, a new culture, a new language), a sense of loss of family left behind, and possible trauma from the immigration experience itself.” (2017) The article also talked about school-based mental health services, school-caregiver and school-family partnerships, teacher-student relationships, peer relationships and other supports.

A policy in California is that a stable and safe housing provides a learning environment. (HCD, 2013) It states that, “Studies indicate that stable home environments are critical to educational outcomes. From a secure roof over heads to providing safe conditions, educational achievement is directly related to housing stability.” (2013) They believe that a healthy living household does matter when it comes to a student’s education and that it can have an effect on them in school. Housing play a significant role in a child’s life and whether it is a crowded home or moving from home to home it can have an significant impact on them. This is one of the problems in poverty that families struggle with. In Figure 1, shows just in California what percentage of children face living in overcrowded households in different counties.

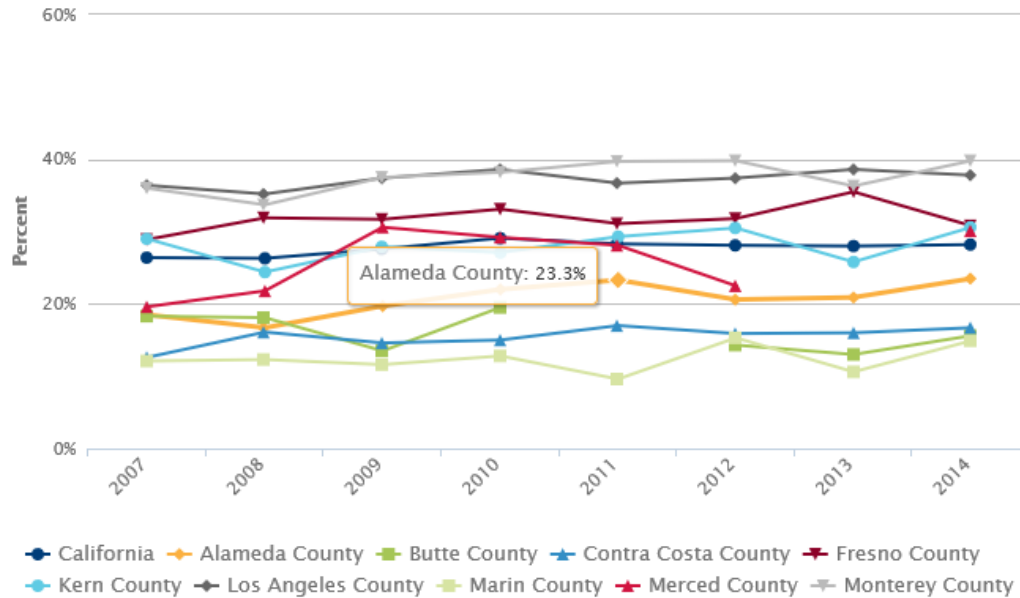


Figure 1. Shows the percentages of children living in a crowded household by county. (2014)

If there were more information for the Latino community about services available to them, it is possible that they may go seek the assistance they need. One way thing that would help is to form a strong relation between the schools and community. Latinos face many barriers in the United States so for them to be informed that there are services to not only help them but especially for their children can help the stress on both ends. There needs to be change in order for families to be able to have a stable living for them themselves. The author Shelia Crowley (2003) stated that “Some families are forced to move in with friends or family members, resulting in overcrowding and the accompanying stress.” Housing is an difficult issue for families to deal with especially for children because this can effect them in many ways.

**Method**

Inadequate Housing continues to affect children's living conditions and academic performance. They are living in overcrowded and unfit conditions that interfere with their educational attainment and impact on opportunities in education and adulthood. Throughout this

research my partner and I have initiated interviews within the community. We have analyzed the interstate patterns of low-income households and the effects of living in poor, uncomfortable and unsafe living conditions. According to the city of Salinas, there are many people living here that live in these inadequate circumstances and that live below the poverty line. Many of these unkempt dwellings reside in the inner east side of the city, which consists of a high population of migrant families.

### **Context**

Our research took place in East side of Salinas, California. This area of the city is predominantly a Latino based community. The city is surrounded by agricultural fields and many of the people are migrant workers that live in the community. These family resource centers are located within a specific perimeter, making it only available to those who live within that region. The centers are located within school premises, granting reachable access to families who are in need of social determinants. According to the Cesar Chaves School District<sup>1</sup>, the three family resource centers, serve thousands of families each year (2018). These centers provide adult education, basic computer literacy, family support groups, housing assistance, and unemployment and implement other forms of aid. The demographic of this particular district served 8,918 students, in the 2017-2018 school year, assisting an outstanding 91.5% of Hispanic students (Cesar Chaves School District, 2018).

### **Participants and Participant Selection**

The participants in this study were narrowed down to four Hispanic families within this area that frequently obtained housing assistance. These families were selected to provide insights

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

of their inadequate living conditions that precipitate their children's academic effort to de-escalate in the classroom. This is relevant to the study because these families continue to experience poor living circumstances and face varying levels of stress. In relevance to this issue, community supporters continue initiate actions that will result in possible accommodations.

**Ida Lopez<sup>2</sup>**. An unemployed, thirty two year old mother of four, was confidentially interviewed in person at the one of the family resource centers. She was a great participant as she appropriately answered all the interview questions in great detail. Ida and her four children reside in the east side of Salinas, with an annual income of nearly 34,000-36,000. She expressed her living conditions as, poor and uncomfortable, due to the limited space in her single bedroom home.

**Norma Martinez<sup>3</sup>**. A young mother of six children, inhabits in a small studio within the Alisal region. She described her living accommodations as stable, but in need of a bigger place for her children. She stated that certain barriers such as her immigration status limits her employment opportunities, financial budget and the long housing process. Her and her family receive financial assistance and are currently seeking an affordable living arrangement.

**Jessica Cortez<sup>4</sup>**. A forty nine year old woman, resides in a two bedroom apartment with another family of three, her husband and four boys; ages 15, 11, 9 and 6. She described her living circumstance as poor and unstable. Her and her husband are both currently employed and make an annual income of 37,700 combined. Her part time job allows her to contribute towards their living expenses, but must manage her time wisely as she must also take care of her children. Her

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

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and her family have been living in this complex for approximately 5 years now and cannot live on their own due to financial problems.

### **Researcher**

As having grown up in similar situations and in the area I understand how it can be difficult to make it on your own when financial cannot afford it. This project is important because students academics are affect from outside factors that happen away from school. We do not consider the poverty that also plays a role in immigration, health, and housing. These are just some of the things that we do not think about all the time why students in low-income communities may have to deal with and why they may be failing or falling behind in school. The concern is also personally meaningful because growing up in different sides of Salinas and saw the difference in the economic classes. Also because we are going to be future teachers and know that we should be aware of issues that are going on that are not in school and know how they correlate with the student's education. We may not be able to fix their issues at home but we can give guidance in some way for the students and families if we have that relationship with them to get the help they need.

As for experiences, background knowledge, and skills will allow us to carry this project because coming from this community has allowed us to build on connections that has impacted our perspectives on this issue. Our community consists of low income Hispanic families with limited English proficiency. Being bilingual will allow us effectively communicate and understand psychosocial issues that affect their everyday lives. Some other experiences we have is that we work in a low-income community in an afterschool program with elementary school age children. We have grown up on the eastside of Salinas and move to other parts of the town and seen the differences in the race, economic, and social classes. Some of the other personal

qualities we have is that we come from a Latinos backgrounds and can relate to some of the struggles that the participants in our study have/are going through. We feel like these things will help us carry our project out and get the data we need.

What separates us is our educational background where we are coming in from the outside looking in on the ongoing issue. Many of these are immigrants that are not familiar with their rights they have, whereas we were born as citizens and know what they are. Many do not have the information to know what rights they have as a parent or student in the education system. We may not be able to relate by work or on an education level because they may not have the same work experience or education as we do so when analyzing we may view thing a little differently.

### **Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions**

1. How do you think housing crisis may affect your child and their education?
2. Are you currently satisfied with your current living arrangements? In which type of housing do you currently live?
3. Do you feel like these issues are being address in your community?
4. What are the barriers, if any, that keep you from living in another part of your community?
5. What are the main reasons why you haven't move yet? Is there anything you would like people to know about these issues?

### **Procedure**

In order to conduct this study we were able to participate in the housing application workshop that was help at a local Elementary school in Salinas. Most of the attendees were female and were interviewed one at a time. When it was not possible to interview participants in

person, they were invited to complete a phone interview. These interviews took less than thirty minutes and we typed and noted everything down according to what they would share with us. The three main interviewees have varying levels of stress and different opinions on their living conditions, which we knew would be considerable data analysis to compare and contrast.

### **Data Analysis**

The emergent themes that came across the interviews allowed us to see and analyze the potential need for resource centers and community advocates for housing. All three women overwhelming agreed that their inadequate living conditions was associated with their children's academic success. We have compared and contrast living arrangements, annual income, children's academic point, future living accommodations and future educational plans for their children. It was quite notable that students who do not have the proper resources at home to effectively engage with school responsibilities, tend to lose focus and fall behind. In addition to the interviews, these women agreed that these family resource centers have helped many families overcome housing issues and have managed to help with application information and assistance.

### **Results**

For this Capstone Project, families who receive application assistance from any of the family resource centers were interviewed to analyze their results and conclude the possible actions that could be initiated to improve and facilitate these circumstances. Veronica Gaitan (2017) stated, "This is important because the central importance of housing gives children in low-income households many opportunities to improve and succeed academically, maintain their health and well-being." Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: time, cost and probability of impact. Based on

the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified. Based upon the review of literature on the issue on socioeconomic inequalities in inadequate housing, the three criteria listed will evaluate the three action options provided and help ease the ongoing issue. It is important to keep in mind that the time is an important factor we must examine before we commence on this issue. The cost of these actions is also important, because there would be a need of more district funding to these public schools. Finally, the criteria of the probability of impact is relevant because it can be an effective source of assistance throughout the community. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

*Evaluation of Action Options*

	Time	Cost	Probability of Impact
More Resources Centers	Moderate	High	Moderate
Evaluate how many students have access to an after school program	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Advocating for more low housing	High	High	Moderate



### **Evaluation of the Action Options**

In Table 1, the three actions that we emerged from an analysis of the found after interviews in of 3 families at the Resource Center in regards to minimizing the impact of improving poverty on and academics success with students. These options are:

1. More resources centers available in all school districts;
2. Evaluate how many families/students have access to after school programs where they live; and
3. Advocate for more low income housing.

These three actions will be evaluated by time, cost, and the probability of impact. We have to remember how much time will be needed to do and these actions. The cost of these actions is also important, because there would be more people needed and funding is always an issue in high poverty areas. Lastly, the probability of impact would need to be evaluated the probability of impact. The goal for this research project is to educate the community and have them come together to address the issue of the ongoing poverty issues with housing.

#### **Option1: More Resources Centers**

The first option that will be discussed is having more family resource centers. These Family resource centers offer assistance to families in need of adult education, unemployment application aid, housing application assistance and other social determinants. These sources are available to the public and free of charge and are funded by the city of Salinas. During the interview with one of the mothers, Norma Martinez states, that her citizenship status limits her possibilities to grow and she is very grateful that these centers offer adult English classes and housing application assistance because she is undereducated and has a hard time comprehending

various questions (Personal Interview, November 15, 2018). This indicates that many fellow members of this community can also benefit from these resources but for other various necessities. This is another positive aspect of this center, as it allows various members of its community to come together, help build each other up and empower one another without feeling left out or undervalued. Author Nancy Barcelo (2010) discusses the ways in which economic and social imperatives shape society and how that can have an impact on cultural heritage, identity, family background and personal beliefs. Economic and education advancement is closed to most immigrants and this sense of acknowledgment and acceptance within these family centers, encompasses comfort and support. One of the crucial aspect of these resource centers is that even though it is available to the public, the majority of the people who need help do not drive or have any sort of transportation.

A contradictory is that these three resource centers are not placed throughout the city and only reside in the east side of Salinas, only being easily accessible to residents in the area and not everyone receives the proper help. Ida Lopez mentioned that the resource center has been assisting her for the past four months on all her housing application requirements and translations and is currently waitlisted for approximately two years but hopes the process speeds up because her children need space and tranquility to complete all their educational responsibilities (Personal Interview, November 27, 2018). In accordance to the criteria's listed above, time is an important factor because it can take some time to build and fully staff these resources. Cost is a factor that will be highly expensive due construction and staff wages. Probability of impact will be moderately effective as it is a developing nonprofit organization. In addition these Resource Centers, every other school district throughout the city or even the county should establish these

centers to help families with inadequate housing issues as it will continue to maintain or improve student success.

### **Evaluation of after school programs available**

The second option provided would be to make sure after school programs are being provided in case students do not have the proper space, resources or help at home to complete homework or other academic responsibilities. Most children when living in overcrowded homes with multiple families have limited space to do homework comfortably. This way, students are able to attend to after school programs at their corresponding school. According to Afterschool Alliance (2015), after school programs are really the component in learning, a bridge that offers access to additional learning opportunities, access to mentors and resources to help them reach their highest learning potential. It is evident that these programs are around to serve students throughout the community and can be very reliable to those who do not have the proper resources or space at home. In regards to our data, Jessica Cortez mentioned that her children attend to their after school programs, not only for the extra access to mentor and resources, but because at home they are unable to complete their homework assignments (Personal Interview December 4, 2018). On the other hand, many people agree and disagree with these after school programs. According to author Mark Dynarski (2015) not every after school program is funded billions of dollars to improve school resources and more than 12 billion of federal tax money has been spent on a program that a preponderance of evidence that doesn't help students (Brookings Institution). Clearly, it emphasizes that these programs are not always beneficiary, due to inconsistency and lack of funding, which can be an issue in this community.

This points out one of the criteria mentioned above, cost can be the ultimate factor from limiting this option because not enough funding will be available to initiate and successfully

accommodate all students. Time, is also an important asset that must be looked at in order to properly provide the resources and mentors that these students will need, so it can take months to implement and initiate these programs. On the other hand, the probability of impact will definitely be that these programs have a higher probability of benefiting all those students that are consistent and use their time efficiently. Nevertheless, these after school programs have possible negative and positive attributes.

### **Advocating for More Low-Income Housing**

The third option provided is advocating for more low-income housing. Within this community there are many families who fall under the low-income or poverty level and have difficult times accommodating to their housing conditions. During the interview process, Ida Lopez, described her living conditions as poor and uncomfortable, residing with her family of five in a single bedroom apartment (Personal Interview November 27, 2018). As mentioned throughout our research many if these low-income families are not able to afford adequate living conditions within their community. Author Matthew Lynch (2016), discusses housing struggles and how socioeconomic differences come into play, they have always had an effect on our families and on children's education. On the contrary, community advocates understand the need to provide housing opportunities for all economic segments of the community, but most of these general housing plans provide negative drawbacks due to these income levels. To mention the evaluation criteria's, time and cost will be extensive factors that can take years to accomplish. In accordance to the probability of impact, these affordable housing plans can significantly benefit many community members who look for these affordable housing plans.

Due to the outrages number of agriculture jobs in this county, it is evident that many migrant families decide to move, establish and adopt normalizing living conditions. By means,

many low-income families adapt to low quality living conditions and get accustomed to this particular life style. Like many communities, Salinas needs to invest and develop affordable housing accommodations for low-income residents and workers. Advocating for low-income housing will ensure that low-income families are not excluded from opportunities. This community should promote environmental and economic sustainability throughout the county. It is important that the community addresses these problems and encourage developers and citizens to fight for public policies and demand funding necessary to build more affordable homes.

### **Conclusion**

For this section it justify the action we recommend to improve poverty and academic success. We will also discuss some of the concessions, limitations, and possible negative outcomes of our recommendations.

### **Recommendation**

Out of the three action options we recommend that there are more Resource Centers placed in all the school districts to help families throughout Monterey County. The Resource Center that we worked with helped many families out in so many ways and there should be more centers like these. If there were then families would have somewhere to go get the assistance they need with health care, immigration issues, unemployment, and housing. If families have assistance with these issues then it could take away some of the stress in dealing with living with poverty. This could help parents reduce that stress in the home for their children since problems related to poverty can affect a child's academic success.

### **Concessions**

As for the other two options, Advocating for Low-income housing and Evaluation of Afterschool Programs Available, these are great because it gives those in poverty more

opportunities for getting help for both adults and students. As previously stated that many factors of poverty contribute to student's academics. If students were to live in a complex where they provide an afterschool program for them there then they could have the space and help with their homework and not have to struggle with it at home. Students struggle with homework at home, especially when no one else in the household can read or speak the language the child is taught in and end up not doing well in school. Students therefore would not fall behind in school and their work if they had access to these types of resources also.

Advocating for low-income housing is important because many families cannot afford a house by themselves or afford market rate rent with one income coming in. If families have quicker access to housing instead of waiting on a waitlist for years, students could have their own space to do homework instead of working on it in a cramped house. If there were more low-income housing available many families would not be crammed in a single bedroom for a family of six. These are issues that have been on going in poverty affected areas and it is unfortunate that there is not a faster solution for this. Bring attention is what is needed because the community is growing at such a fast rate that finding housing is difficult for many.

### **Limitation**

Based on our action options, we best identified and concluded that developing and establishing more Family Resource Centers will be the best option. However, our choice has its limitations. There are only three resource centers that are established and operated in Salinas only, which are part of the Cesar Chaves School District. This option has its limitations due to funding that is available and the time that would need to be put into establishing these centers throughout the county. Some districts may see this as a burden and more work that they would have to do. Another limitation would be people will not take advantage of these centers. Some

may be afraid to seek the help from these centers. Building a strong relationship with the community could be a struggle and could take a long time for a trusting relationship to happen.

### **Potential Negative Outcomes**

Some negative outcome of these are that there could be push back from the community and districts that do not want resource centers at to help those in need. Certain communities, specifically higher income communities may not see the need of having resource centers available in their area. They may feel that it should not be their responsibility to provide resources like such because they may feel that the money could go somewhere else, like to the schools in those districts and this could draw tension between parents and districts.

In Salinas, majority of the population are Latinos and many of them are immigrants that have come to work and live in different parts of the city. Although this is true, certain parts of the community would not want encourage providing these resources because they think that they do not deserve it or have that mentality of thinking the stereotype labels of those in poverty. This can discourage people to want to go ask for help. Housing is and will always be an issue because then there comes an increase of population in the area. People may feel that this can bring more crime into the communities. Evaluating after school program access could draw back apartment complex management because then they would have to budget and hire someone for that job. It may not be helpful getting help for the students in their academics getting that extra help.

### **Conclusion**

Even with possible negative push back from the community, improvement in poverty and academic success with students is important. Providing more resource centers could make a difference in the community. Students should not have to worry about their living situation, immigration, or health care, as children they should just focus on their academics but

unfortunately that is not always the case. Each of these actions could help benefit not only the students but their families as well. It is unfortunate that not all school districts across the county provide resource centers for the families in their districts. In a perfect world housing would never be an issue but it will and always be an issue and something needs to be done about it. Housing crisis can cause families to move multiple times causing the children to move from school to school and fall behind on their school work. Or the fact that they may not be able to even focus on homework because they may not have a designated area to work without distractions. Poverty and academic success have a strong correlation between the two and educators may not always think or realize that they can affect a child's schooling.

### **Action Documentation and Critical Reflection**

The focus of this issue is poverty and academic success, narrowing it down to the housing crisis. The participants we interview were three Hispanic women with families that attend the resource center and that are not satisfied with their housing situation. The action options that emerged with this project was needing more family resource centers, evaluating how many have access to after school programs, and advocating for more low-income housing. The one that we choose to focus on was having more family resource centers available throughout the county making it accessible for all. We felt that many different families from the community could benefit from them considering transportation to the current Resource Center is tough for those that live across town. It is a struggle for many to find a way to get help by implementing more resource centers then families can have a place they can go to get the assistance they need.





Figure 1. Handouts that were used to give out and educate the community to inform them about the benefits of them.

### **Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection**

What we did was create a flyer to pass out to the community and inform them about Family Resource Centers. Figure 1, was the flyer used to pass out. What we did was posted them around the communities in Monterey County where people would be able to see them. Like bus

stops, bakeries, and poles on the streets and passed some out to the people. What was surprising was that many people did not know that there were such resources available for them. What changes I needed to make while doing this project was redirecting our focus on the project. There were many issues that my partner and I wanted to cover but eventually were able to narrow it down. What I know now that I wished that I had known from the start is how to find a more approachable way to speak to the interviews and make them feel more open to speaking with us. What I learned about myself in this project is what I was capable of even when it was a struggle. It was a difficult project but in the end was able to push through and accomplish getting it done. Know that we were informing the community felt like we were doing something positive to help get people involved was a good feeling.

### **Synthesis and Integration**

The Liberal Studies MLOs, the required coursework, and this Action Research Project impacted my professional development by learning to think, write, and speak critically, being involved with diversity and the multiculturalism in the community. The MLOs that related were MLO 1: Developing Educator, MLO 2: Diversity and Multicultural Scholar, and MLO 4: Social Justice Collaborator. I was able to collaborate together these three to create a meaningful project and work with a diverse setting. Working in a multicultural setting and dealing with social justice issues made this project work by pointing out what issues arise in Latino communities.

What I see as the necessary steps that I need to take in order to become the professional that I envision being is getting more involve with the community. Having that relationship can make all the difference, especially when becoming an educator, having that connection with the parents is important because of the students and making sure they succeed. Without that

everyone all around are failing the students and the educational system will not change. I want to be the person that can help make a difference in the profession I am going into.

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