

# Coming of Age in Somerville: Youth Programs and the Negotiation of Space for Latino Teens



*Somos Unidos, We Are United*<sup>1</sup>

“They are an absolute treasure chest of potential [so] how do we help them unlock themselves?”

-Cynthia Tschampl

**Avantika Taneja**  
**Urban Borderlands**  
**Pacini-Hernandez**  
**Tufts University**

---

<sup>1</sup> Mural created by *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo*, youth and arts leadership program in Somerville, as an expression of biculturalism and the immigrant journey

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Project Description.....	4
1.2 Diversity in Somerville: the Growing Latino Population.....	5
1.3 Parameters of Research.....	6
1.4 A Note on Methodology: Authenticating the Narrator’s Voices.....	10
2. Background.....	14
2.1 History of the After-School Movement.....	14
2.2 Inadequacy of Existing Youth Programs.....	16
3. Specific Developmental Needs of Latino Teens.....	19
3.1 “Fitting in” in Somerville: Latino Youth as Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants.....	19
3.2 Forging an Ethnic Identity.....	20
3.3 Gang Hysteria and the Demonization of Latino Youth.....	22
4. Program Effectiveness.....	24
4.1 Cultural Diversity versus Exclusivity.....	24
4.2 Trickle-Up Effect: Youth Programming Debates in Local Politics.....	30
4.3 Depth versus Breadth: Issue of Scale.....	31
5. Cultural Sensitivity/Outreach to the Latino Community.....	34
5.1 Latino Representation .....	34
5.2 Cultural Sensitivity in Programming.....	35
6. The Individual Actor in Meeting Needs and Creating Opportunities for Latino Youth.....	39
7. The Role of the Latino Community in Meeting the Needs of Latino Youth.....	42
7.1 Barriers to Community Organizing and Advocacy.....	42
7.2 Community-Based Initiatives.....	43
8. Voice of Somerville’s Latino Youth: Focus Group with Teens.....	47
8.1 Focus Group Agenda: Interview as Intervention.....	47
8.2 Youth Perspectives.....	49
9. Conclusion.....	53
10. Acknowledgements.....	55
11. Bibliography.....	56
12. Appendices.....	58
A – Researchers.....	58
B – Narrators.....	60
C – Program Descriptions .....	62
D – Values Continuum Map.....	65
E – Upcoming Youth Forum .....	66
F - Summary Points of Assessments and Recommendations Conducted by the Center for Teen Empowerment for the City of Somerville.....	67

## **1. Introduction**

In 2003, two alleged gang members were arrested in connection with the rape of two young girls in Foss Park of East Somerville, Massachusetts. In August 2004, the City of Somerville implemented a gang-loitering ordinance that allows police to break up "suspicious" groups of youngsters seen gathering on the streets of Somerville. Around the same time, the mayor commissioned a Boston-based organization to run an assessment of the adolescent delivery system in Somerville. Recently, a Latina student at Somerville High was asked to change out of her matching blue t-shirt and bandanna because the colors were believed to represent gang membership. These seemingly disconnected events signal a highly complex and politically charged dialogue concerning the nature of youth, youth needs, and youth engagement in Somerville.

The heightened attention given to gang activity is impacting the process of coming of age experienced by Latino youth in Somerville. The stigma associated with the national Salvadoran gang, MS-13, colors the perception of Latino teens. This palpable fear-mongering around gang MS-13 has perpetuated the view of Latino teens as "unruly and destructive" (Durham, 2000). The view of Latino youth as destructive forces has been contested by a counter-view of Latino youth as "victims of circumstance and the manipulations of older people in power," subject to the politics and racist underpinnings of the gang-loitering ordinance.

These contrasting perceptions are manifest in debates between various actors in the City about whether youth programs should be preventive tools to "contain" destructive youth, or tools to provide services for underprivileged young people. Based on insights from interview-based research, I will explore the responsibility of youth

programs in shaping the experience of being Latino in Somerville. By documenting a youth-programming perspective, I propose an alternate conception of Latino youth, neither as "dangerous forces needing containment," nor as passive recipients of services, but rather as active agents who can benefit from opportunities to engage positively. In particular, I will explore how youth programs facilitate the negotiation of space by Latino teens growing up in a historically white, working class city.

### **1.1 Project Description**

Urban Borderlands is an undergraduate public anthropology course at Tufts University. This course deviates from a traditional undergraduate class structure: students produce knowledge as well as consume it. More specifically, under the guidance of Professor Deborah Pacini-Hernandez, students conduct a semester-long qualitative research project documenting the history and incorporation of the Latino community into Somerville, Massachusetts. The primary objectives are three-fold: to document the understudied Latino community in Somerville via topical projects, enhancing university-community collaboration, and transferring methodological skills to students. To help accomplish this, a mutually reinforcing partnership with the Welcome Project, a non-profit immigrant service agency in Somerville, pairs Latino high school students from Somerville with Tufts researchers. The Latino youth serve as gateways to the Latino community for Tufts students. In turn, they are exposed to higher education, mentorship, and opportunities for engagement within their own community.

Public anthropology entails an extension of the theoretical to communities as both the subjects and the setting of anthropological inquiry. Public anthropology is

furthermore an exercise in making anthropological findings palatable to a wide audience.

As both an emerging sub-field and a perspective, public anthropology provides a constructive lens through which to examine the demographic shifts and the relatively recent arrival and incorporation of Latinos into Somerville, Massachusetts.

## **1.2 Diversity in Somerville: the Growing Latino Population**

As a result of immigration, the City of Somerville has experienced immense demographic changes in the past few decades. Somerville has always been a city of immigrants, beginning with the Irish and Italians who arrived early in the twentieth century. In the late 1970's until the early 1980's, Somerville received a wave of primarily Portuguese and Cape Verdean immigrants. Beginning in the late 1980's until present, immigrants from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean began arriving in Somerville. These incoming populations were largely from Central America, which was suffering from civil wars. Subsequent migration has been motivated more by economic reasons and the desire for family reunification.

Somerville has approximately 77,000 residents, although according to Alderman-at-Large Denise Provost, an elected official in Somerville, this number is an underestimate, with the reality of the population probably closer to 100,000 residents (Provost, Denise, personal interview, 2004). 6,876 of these residents, a sizeable minority of 8.8 percent, identify themselves as Latino (U.S. Census 2000 data, City of Somerville website).

The Latino population of Somerville itself is internally diverse. Nelson Salazar, a Salvadoran long-term resident of Somerville, emphasized the diversity of nationalities

under the umbrella of "Latinos in Somerville," including primarily Salvadorans and Guatemalans, as well as Ecuadorians, Colombians, Mexicans, Costa Ricans, and Nicaraguans (Salazar, Nelson, personal interview with Dalia Palchik, 2004).

The majority of Latinos are residents in Somerville that commute to work in other cities, including Boston. The rise in property costs in recent years has caused some displacement of Latinos into other cities such as Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Lawrence and Lowell, a similar phenomenon that drove Latinos from neighboring Cambridge into Somerville. The highest concentration of Latinos is seen in East Somerville, where 40 percent of the population is foreign-born and 15 percent live below the poverty line (U.S. Census 2000 data, City of Somerville website).

Despite the 29 percent of residents who are foreign-born, the City and the Somerville community lack an administrative and ideological commitment to its increasingly diverse population. The absence of a deep-rooted history and presence in Somerville presents barriers to community organizing and provides little validation of Latino ethnic identities. As a result, little has been done to address the multiple occupational and social barriers encountered by first and second-generation immigrants. In light of the relatively recent arrival of Latinos into Somerville, it is crucial that this community's young people are effectively woven into the fabric of civic life in Somerville.

### **1.3 Parameters of Research**

In this investigation, my research is focused on the Latino teen population. Youth are cultural transmitters as well as tools of assimilation for immigrant families.

Positioned at the nexus of home and host cultures, Latino teens tend to experience pressure to assimilate in mainstream settings, such as school, and pressure to retain cultural practices and identity at home.

Within the broad spectrum of topics being explored among my classmates, the Urban Borderlands Fall 2004 cohort, many topics unexpectedly converged towards youth-related issues. In the case of Lindsey Nicholson and Adrienne Vannieuwenhuizen, their investigation of the history of human rights in the Latino community in Somerville is inextricably intertwined with youth: at present, constitutional issues surrounding potential racial profiling associated with the gang loitering ordinance adversely affect young people. In the projected future of human rights in the Latino community, issues related to differential privileges in the educational system might perpetuate the systematic marginalization of Latino youth. Sebastian Chaskel's documentation of a religious dance, imported by a transnational community from El Salvador, touches upon the degree to which this cultural behavior is inherited (or not) by immigrant children and second-generation Salvadoran youth. Similarly, Sara Arcaya's interest in the *quinceañera*, the coming-of-age ceremony for young Latina women, addresses identity formation in teenage girls.

In child development literature, adolescence is identified as the developmental stage in which ethnic identity is highly problematized, thus Latino teens as immigrant children or children of immigrants face the additional need of negotiating an ethnic/cultural identity. Youth are consistently politically underrepresented because, as a

non-voting population, they have no political voice themselves. Yanelly Molina's research exploring the relationship between Somerville City Hall and the Latino community and level of political participation also relates to Somerville youth. According to the Director of the Welcome Project, Nelson Salazar, many parents that come from situations of political unrest come to distrust governments. In his mind, there is greater hope for second-generation Latino youth, who will be better equipped to navigate and trust the political system through their education in this country, to affect positive change (Salazar, Nelson, personal interview with Yanelly Molina, 2004).

Lastly, and most pertinent to the context of Somerville, Latino teens are perceived to be adversely effected by the gang-loitering ordinance based on the association of visible Latino ethnicity with the Salvadoran gang MS-13, which is perceived to have a significant presence in Somerville. While this is a highly politicized issue and integral to a comprehensive exploration of youth-related needs for Latinos, I have deliberately approached this research not as an exploration of Somerville's gang "problem," but rather as an assessment of opportunities available to Latino youth alternative to gang membership. Although it is an issue of heightened consciousness among the narrators I interviewed and embedded in the plight of Somerville's Latino teens today, because there is so much media attention to this topic, I prefer to view this prominent gang issue in Somerville within the framework of the particular needs of Latino teens and how these needs are alleviated by youth programs. In early informational interviews, late teens (ages 14 to 19) were identified as the most underserved cohort with the fewest programs directed towards them. Consistent with a positive youth development model and the perspectives of my narrators, and contrary to much of the negative media attention placed

on Latino youth, this research attempts to ameliorate the conception of Latino youth as prone to delinquency. I will focus on the deficit of youth programming opportunities that engage and meet the particular needs of Latino youth. (For a more in-depth exploration of the civil rights issues associated with the gang-loitering ordinance, refer to the report of Lindsey Nicholson and Adrienne Vannieuwenhuizen, *Urban Borderlands* 2004).

Thus, through a series of interviews with youth program-providers and former administrators, elected officials, parents, and residents, this project investigates one, the specific developmental needs of Latino teens as compared to other minority populations; two, the varied levels of institutionalized cultural sensitivity and outreach in existing city-wide and community-based programs; three, the issue of diversity versus exclusivity in culturally-specific aspects of youth programming; four, the individual actor in effective youth programming, advocacy and outreach; and five, the underdocumented efforts of the Latino community in meeting the needs of its youth. Finally, through a youth focus group, this paper examines the perspective of youth on the above-stated issues in an attempt to unveil their expertise on youth needs. Both the methodology and product of this research are an effort to articulate the muted voice of Latino youth and their advocates. It is also intended to encourage a shift away from a deficiency-based conception of Latino youth. The documentation of perspectives from the youth-programming sector in Somerville might inform programs and policies directed at Somerville's teens

The broad nature of this topic necessitates multiple, interrelated, but varied research questions that were formalized in the process of research. Early questions involved background research and are more descriptive in nature, while later questions

evolved as certain issues and debates arose consistently across interviews. The research questions are stated as follows:

- What are the programs that currently exist, which are targeted towards Latino teens in Somerville?
- What is the level of effectiveness of these programs in terms of scale, outreach, cultural relevance/sensitivity, and youth engagement?
- What are the specific needs of Latino youth compared to those of other minority and/or immigrant populations?
- How culturally sensitive are Somerville's city-wide programs and community-based programs?
- Are culturally specific or generalized programs more effective in meeting the needs of Latino teens?
- What are the perspectives of youth as compared to those of program providers?
- What initiative is the Latino community taking in meeting the needs of its own youth?

Essentially, these varied issues converge towards the central issue: To what extent are the needs of Latino teens being met by youth programs in Somerville?

#### **1.4 A Note on Methodology: Authenticating the Narrator's Voices**

The Urban Borderlands project originated as an oral history project, documenting the arrival and incorporation of Latinos into Somerville in the last few decades through testimonials. While my topic deviates from an oral history methodology, the issue-based

interviews I conducted remain true to the richness of qualitative research and the nuances of individual perspectives.

Once I had secured my general topic of interest as Latino youth and youth programs, the former Director of Somerville Community Schools after-school programs served as my gateway to the network of youth workers in Somerville. In early interviews, the names of particular individuals consistently emerged as leaders in the youth serving community and Latino community of Somerville. One of the significant findings in the research (to be elaborated upon below) is the critical role of the individual actor in meeting the needs of and providing opportunities for Latinos through effective programming, advocacy and outreach. This trend undeniably speaks to the lives and work of my narrators.

Part of the rationale for taping oral history interviews is to retain the authenticity of the narrator's stories in order to understand the "multiplicity of experiences in a total life context" (Yow, 1994). In a similar vein, exploring varied views on the above-stated research questions, I obtained multiple perspectives that often derived from the narrators' personal experiences, their work with youth in multiple capacities, their interaction with local government, and the social and cultural space they themselves occupy in the Somerville community. I have attempted to incorporate their voices in direct quotes as much as possible. (Because it would be disruptive to the report to contextualize the words of each narrator within their background and the program they are associated with, please refer to Appendix B for narrator's biographies and Appendix C for program descriptions).

This report is consequently the outcome of a synthesis of multiple voices, including my own analysis and interpretation, through the lens of my background and experience, in assessing the needs, outreach and opportunities for Latino teens via youth programming in Somerville. My interest in the plight of Latino youth in Somerville stems from my own biases, and from my preliminary training as an undergraduate in the disciplines of anthropology and child development. My assumptions about positive adolescent development and cultural aspects of youth programming were confirmed by this research, however the interviews represent a skewed sample of individuals that are demonstrably committed to youth development and/or involved in this sector.

One of the salient feelings upon terminating the research is that it can never quite be complete. A common sentiment among my fellow researchers to which I ascribe is that we have only begun to scratch the surface of the arrival and incorporation of Latinos into Somerville. With youth programs and after-school engagement being a “hot topic” in the City of Somerville at present, it has proven difficult to do a thoroughly comprehensive analysis of how Latino youth fit into this framework. Much time was invested merely in understanding how things worked structurally and the current status of youth programming targeted at Latino teens. It is my hope that this opens the door to further inquiry, serving as a springboard for researching youth programs and the Latino community in Somerville. Many more perspectives are yet to be documented on the above-stated issues, particularly those of parents and residents. With these multiple voices and the added voice of interpretation, it is my hope that eventually the synthesis of this research can inform programs and policies in the youth-serving sector of Somerville.

Since the discontinuation of this research in December 2004, I attended a forum in January 2005 about the needs of Somerville's youth hosted by the Somerville Youth Worker's Network in concert with Mayor Joe Curtatone, the Youth Services Subcommittee of the Board of Aldermen, and Teen Empowerment in January 2005. Please see Appendix E for details of event. This forum demonstrated that the City understands the need to provide a space for youth to voice their needs and their proposed solutions for Somerville's youth services to help set the agenda for promoting healthy adolescent development. In the meantime, this paper is an attempt to qualify issues pertinent to all youth from a cultural perspective, exploring youth programs and the coming of age of Latino youth in Somerville.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 History of the After-School Movement**

How have Somerville’s young people figured into the City’s consciousness in recent years? Is attention to youth and youth programming merely a result of the gang-loitering ordinance? Susan Gross, a former employee of the School Department in Somerville, serving as the Administrator for Somerville Community Schools Program from June 2002 until September 2004, has witnessed the rising awareness of the need for after-school engagement for youth in Somerville. She delineated the history of the after-school movement in Somerville, characterized by a sudden stir centered around the importance of the improving and expanding after-school programming for youth that began in 2001-2002 and evolved into a focus on increasing programming for children of middle-school age that are traditionally under targeted. “Around 2000, 2001 in Massachusetts, there was a growing awareness of the importance of after-school programs, especially for middle-school kids.” Susan described this sudden high-priority agenda of after-school programming as the result of a number of cumulative factors, rather than any triggering event or phenomenon. Research institutes began to demonstrate high delinquent behavior rates in the after-school hours, thus the Keeping Kids on Track initiative<sup>2</sup>, sponsored by non-profit Mass 2020 and United Way, was created to expand after-school opportunities in the State. On the legislative level, the federal government jumped on the “after-school bandwagon” by providing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant. On a grassroots level, child-service providers worked with local mayors, city councils, and committees to put after-school

---

<sup>2</sup> Keeping Kids on Track: [ww.kkot.org](http://ww.kkot.org)

programming on the city's radar screen, eventually leading to the formation of an After-School Programming Committee (Gross, Susan, personal interview, 2004).

Consistent with this momentum, the current mayor of Somerville, Joe Curtatone, inaugurated in January 2004, commissioned a Boston-based organization, Teen Empowerment, to conduct an assessment on and make recommendations for youth services and the adolescent delivery system in Somerville. The report was completed in June 2004<sup>3</sup>. (Refer to Appendix F for a summary of the salient findings of this study). Supplementary to examining the survey report, I was able to investigate the rationale and follow-up of this report in an interview with Andy Haydu, the Program Coordinator for the newly formed Teen Empowerment program at the Somerville site. In response to my inquiry about why youth services and programs are presently on the mayor's agenda, Andy asserted that:

He's a new mayor, not too long on the job at all...he inherited a city that had a lot of people working towards really good things in a lot of good programs in terms of youth development and youth leadership and jobs for youth and that sort of stuff, but there wasn't really a coherent strategy that was really well thought-out, moving forward...I think he has a natural tendency towards supporting youth programming and understands the importance of first, youth jobs, and just basic youth programming and, you know, that commitment may or not be politically motivated, but I guess in my meetings with him, I get the sense that it's something that comes from his heart and it's something that he cares about and so he decided that there was a gap in some things that weren't being well funded and weren't being taken care of and weren't being supervised or looked after, being held accountable and moved on it.... (Haydu, Andy, personal interview, 2004).

---

<sup>3</sup> *Youth Services in the City of Somerville, Massachusetts: Assessment and Recommendations.*  
<http://www.provost-citywide.org/somervilleyouthservassessmt.html>

## 2.2 Inadequacy of Existing Youth Programs

While the above-stated initiatives are indicative of a concerted effort by the City of Somerville towards effective youth programming, several narrators presented a more nuanced account of the landscape of youth programming in Somerville, particularly in relation to how Latino youth fit (or don't) into this landscape. There is a general consensus from the multiple perspectives of program-providers, elected officials, administrators, community leaders, parents, residents and youth themselves that there is an overall deficit of available opportunities for Somerville's youth in general, and Somerville's teens in particular. There is an undisputed commitment from the City towards the needs of youth, but this is largely perceived to be inadequate. "Youth programs in Somerville have always been a problem. The City, for some reason, doesn't pay much attention to the youth. The need is there...the local government needs to pay closer attention the needs of youth" (Salazar, Nelson, personal interview, 2004). "What exists integrates the kids, but it's not, as with any community...what we have out there is not enough" (Bertholdo, Regina, personal interview, 2004).

Regina Bertholdo, the Director of both the Somerville Family Network and Parent Information Center<sup>4</sup> described the landscape of current after-school programming as being fixated on MCAS scores, which has placed weight on academic achievement as an objective in the after-school arena. The City gets State support to develop after-school

---

<sup>4</sup> The Somerville Family Network is an early childhood program, providing universal care for families with children aged 0 to 4 years, offering specialized playgroups for children and parents and workshops/support groups for parents.

The Parent Information Center is Somerville's centralized registration center for all new students entering public schools from pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade directed at incoming families.

support for children-in-need to meet certain MCAS standards; most of the kids that fall into this "need" category are ethnic minorities. Regina expressed her opinion that this is not optimal because, in her mind, "after-school" should be focused on other types of enrichment (Bertholdo, Regina, personal interview, 2004).

Some narrators alluded to the political nature of citywide youth programs, which often compromises their consistency, and thus their effectiveness. Marty Martinez, Program Director for the Boston Aids Consortium, and former Youth Director for the City of Somerville, as well as the first Latino to run for the Board of Alderman in Somerville, expressed his disappointment with the inconsistency of city-funded youth services. He is particularly dissatisfied because the existence, funding and leadership of these programs is extremely political and contingent upon who is mayor. In reference to the survey conducted by Teen Empowerment, Marty expressed skepticism towards the recommendations that Teen Empowerment implement its own program in Somerville. While the director of Teen Empowerment is a Somerville resident and was also Director at the Youth Department in Somerville 30 years ago, Marty felt that an outside program provider might not understand Somerville's particular needs, especially since Somerville has undergone immense demographic changes in the last few decades. He asserted that community-based programs, or those that are not commissioned by the City or School Department (usually independent non-profits), have an edge of continuity because they tend to keep the same programs and have less turnover in ideas, attributable to the fact that their work is not contingent upon a political agenda (Martinez, Marty, personal interview, 2004).

Amidst this inconsistency, the most at-risk populations become further marginalized from the City's services. The narrator provided the example of the program that was developed under his directorship of the Youth Department in 2002, targeted at Latino male teens as a preemptive response to his sense of stirring gang-related issues. This program dissolved with the change in leadership of Somerville's Youth Department. Marty contrasted this program to community-based programs that keep the same programs and consistently do the same kind of work, because despite turnover in staff, there is less turnover in ideas given that there is no political agenda.

I found that this politically charged dialogue about youth programming parallels a grassroots dialogue about the specific developmental needs of Latino teens. Understanding whether the needs of Latino youth are being adequately met involves documenting what narrators understood as the experience of being a Latino teen in Somerville.

### **3. Specific Developmental Needs of Latino Teens**

An element of the umbrella Urban Borderlands project has been an attempt to differentiate the Latino experience in Somerville from that of other ethnic and minority groups as manifested in migration stories, assimilation experiences, reception by the local community and local government, history of presence in the City, and pan-ethnic solidarity, among other factors. This report, as a microcosm for this larger comparative exercise, is an attempt to distinguish the particular needs of Latino youth that might be attributable to their ethnicity and to how Latinos are conceptualized in Somerville. Integral to assessing the gap between opportunities and needs of Latino youth, as well as investigating the nature of culturally specific versus integrated programs that meet some these needs is the exercise of delineating both how the needs of Latino teens are aligned with, as well as distinct from, other youth in Somerville.

#### **3.1 “Fitting in” in Somerville: Latino Youth as Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants**

Several of the narrators likened the needs of Latino youth to other immigrant populations, expressing that the root of all issues/needs are economic. Basic economic realities of immigrant families often present barriers that obstruct political participation, community organizing, parent-child communication, and academic achievement.

Distinct from other interviewees, Cynthia Tschampl, who works with Latino teens as Program Director of *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo*, a youth arts and leadership program, also discussed issues of trauma recovery as a salient need of her constituency. As a trainee of the Trauma Response Network in Somerville, she is conscious of identity

violence as one of the fastest growing forms of violence in the U.S. All participants in her program have Adverse Child Experiences (ACE's) in their background, ranging from belligerence to communication skills to substance abuse and suicidal tendencies. Each teen has experienced a critical incident that calls for intervention. Cynthia perceives many needs as similar among immigrant groups, including traumatic movement with families coming from war, famine, destitution, family separation that create multiple levels of trauma (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004). The specific needs of Latino youth as members of an immigrant community and a population of color are often aligned with the struggles of the economically impoverished.

### **3.2 Gang Hysteria and the Demonization of Latino Teens**

The most prominent need that is particular to Somerville Latino teens is situated in the current context of anxiety surrounding gang activity in Somerville. Andy Haydu of Teen Empowerment, who is fairly new to Somerville, observed that

One challenge that new Latino immigrants face here is this stigma of this quote, unquote Gang MS-13...I mean, there is a national gang that goes by that name...I'm not entirely convinced that...how it plays itself out here is the big bad wolf that everybody seems to think it is (Haydu, Andy, personal interview, 2004).

Most narrators that cited safety concerns in Somerville and the recent passing of the gang-loitering ordinance as an integral component of the experience of Latino teens in Somerville today perceived the problem to be overstated. Regardless of the reality of incidence of gang-mandated activity, narrators that discussed the gang issue asserted that it figures heavily in the perception of Latino teens in Somerville by the City and community, and heightens the needs of Latino youth for effective, and engaging, programming.

Cynthia Tschampl acknowledged the highly palpable fear-mongering around the MS-13 gang. She claims that the division of affluence in Somerville creates an environment ripe for gang prevention rather than for instilling fear. She feels that the City's implementation of the ordinance is a fear-mongering strategy that increases divisiveness in an already socioeconomically disparate city. (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004).

Like Cynthia, several narrators mentioned the need for engagement rather than enforcement, an idea that resonates with literature on positive youth development. Furthermore, many program providers were able to personalize this issue, as some of their constituency includes individuals identified as MS-13 members. According to Teen Empowerment Program Coordinator Andy Haydu, "you say the name of a gang, it kind of freaks people out. I mean, you could walk out there right now and meet some of them if you'd like to...there's several hanging out in the Center right now...and they're really polite guys...so I think it's overstated" (Haydu, Andy, personal interview, 2004).

Cynthia Tschampl was able to personalize and bring attention to the counter-demonization of the police force that results from critiques of the gang-loitering ordinance. She claims that many individuals on the police force are very much attuned to the needs of Latino youth because they have had conversations with MS-13 members and realize that they are "regular guys" who don't have families, jobs, or education (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004). In light of these perspectives, it appears that stereotyping is bi-directional in youth-police relations: cops are classified as insensitive and racist authority figures while Latino teens constitute a threat to the City's safety. The experience of the above-mentioned narrators demonstrates how personal

interactions might alter these unfounded perceptions and mitigate the demonization of both these populations.

### **3.3 Forging an Ethnic Identity**

Another aspect of the immigrant/second-generation experience is the formation of ethnic/cultural identity. From a developmental perspective, this process becomes particularly problematized during adolescence, forming part of my impetus for focusing on the needs of teens. “The issue of ethnic identity has always been particularly salient for the immigrant” (Waters, 1999, p.44). The adoption of a particular cultural identity or identities can be instrumental in response to economic and social marginalization within the host society, or symbolic, assumed for its ideological value of cultural connection to the country of origin (Levitt, 2001). I view the issue of ethnic identity as a constant process of negotiation rather than an achieved state of consciousness.

Regina Bertholdo, Director of the Somerville Family Network and Parent Information Center, alluded to issues that arise across all cultural communities, such as biculturalism, generational gaps, and cultural preservation. This is clearly most pertinent to teens negotiating an identity. Particularly when parents aren’t fluent in English, the rift between first and second-generation immigrants is widened because children are able to assimilate more readily and as a result lose contact with their parent's world. Regina was adamantly against loss of communication with parents, based on her experience raising a bicultural child. She posed the classic immigrant plight of parents lamenting the loss of their culture. She highly encouraged parental help in mediating an identity that allows

children to switch back and forth between their host culture and culture of origin, and thus promote self-esteem and academic success.

In relating this to youth programs, Regina expressed her concern that there is a lack of resources geared towards cultural preservation for youth that are grappling with their cultural identity. One scarce example in Somerville is the Massachusetts Alliance for Portuguese Speakers. At the same time, Regina acknowledged her position of privilege that allows her to think about more complex issues of identity, while she asserted that the reality for many families is attending to immediate economic needs, and therefore an inability to be present in their children's lives (Bertholdo, Regina, personal interview, 2004). While she didn't make it explicit, I sense that Regina feels that programming for Latino youth should contribute to filling this gap for children who can't be exposed to their culture of origin in ways that are meaningful or appealing to them.

Youth programs facilitate teens' negotiation process by providing the "ethnic option" of being Latino in Somerville (Waters, 1999). Child development literature states that time spent in youth programs is a "developmental asset" because it encourages qualities such as confidence, compassion, leadership, academic achievement, as well as healthy ethnic identity formation and community building. (Lerner, 2004) The role of youth programs to provide this space for Latino teens to negotiate their place in Somerville is crucial as an alternative to the community and ethnic identity validation offered by gang membership.

## **4. Program Effectiveness**

### **4.1 Cultural Diversity versus Exclusivity**

A discussion of the particularities of the Latino youth experience in Somerville necessitates an exploration of how these needs are met, or have the potential to be met, by youth-directed programming and organizations. Given that Somerville as a City needs to invest more time and resources in engaging youth and creating more programming opportunities and that Latino teens have been identified as a population in need, how should this space be constructed? Should programs be targeted specifically at Latino youth? Should youth programs be culturally or ethnically specific or ethnically/culturally diverse? This issue of cultural diversity versus exclusivity elicited divided responses across narrators, with many expressing certainty on a particular stance, while others were more ambivalent towards the issue. Currently, there are two high-profile programs for Latino youth specifically, which are not run by the City's Youth Department:

The *Jovenes Latinos* (Young Latinos) program is the Community Action Agency of Somerville's peer leadership training program that is issue-based, focusing on topics such as gang violence prevention, pregnancy prevention, drug prevention, homework help and with emphasis on "making smoking history in Somerville." The group does outreach and advocacy to other youth around tobacco prevention, the initiative for which they are currently being funded. While the program is issue-based depending on the agenda of donors, a consistent component of the program is addressing the bicultural identity of the constituents and providing a space and mentorship for them to negotiate

their in-between status as Latino in the context of the U.S. The program is in the process of becoming dissolved due to lack of continued funding, partially attributable to the staff turnover of grant writers. Part of the rationale for this program is that teens hold a great capacity for education and awareness directed at their peers (Manrique, Aru, personal interview, 2004).

*Pintamos Nuestro Mundo* (We Paint Our World) is the youth arts and leadership development program offered by the Cambridge-based organization, Centro Presente. According to its brochure, Centro Presente “empowers Latin American immigrant communities in Massachusetts through the promotion of civic and democratic participation, leadership development, education and legal immigration services.” By this same merit, Program Coordinator Cynthia Tschampl described *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo* as a microcosm of the larger organization (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004). Young Latinos aged 11 to 14 in East Somerville produce public and personal artworks to foster the following goals:

- Teach techniques and vocabulary relating to art
- Help participants grow in confidence and skills, which aid in achieving social and academic success
- Encourage civic and community participation
- Develop leadership
- Involve parents in all activities whenever possible
- Have fun in a safe environment for being bilingual and bicultural<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Program objectives stated in program description sheet distributed to parents

The program was created about 7 years ago as an informal means of engaging the children of clients while they received services at Centro Presente. Currently, 25 participants meet after school, broken down into gender-segregated groups once a week, and a co-ed group and field trip that brings both groups together twice a week. Participants are recruited mainly through word of mouth, but numbers are kept to approximately the current size in order to remain manageable. A distinct aspect of this program is that it contains both service provision as well as a youth-organizing component, both objectives achieved by engaging in production of private and public art. As a politically muted population, youth are employed to engage in art that has political implications. Cynthia Tschampl encourages cultural expression through personal and collective art, as well as civic and community engagement through painting switchboxes, public murals, and art with political messages.

These programs are unique in that their constituents are solely Latino teens, although Cynthia Tschampl indicated that her program has expanded to “Latino in the fuller sense” to include Portuguese-speaking Brazilian youth (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004). Besides the program directors themselves, there were several other interviewees that were adamantly in support of culturally specific programming.

Former Youth Director for the City of Somerville, Marty Martinez, continually reiterated that there are not sufficient services that are culturally directed at Latino youth. He mentioned some of the programs in which Latino youth are highly represented, (such as the Welcome Project and the CASPAR Youth Services drug-prevention peer program, and youth groups at Churches), however, he highlighted that the reality of Somerville’s diversity creates an immense need for culturally/ethnically specific programs because

different populations have different needs. “I think that one of the problems is that services and resources in Somerville are just geared towards ALL youth and they are not focused on certain populations, which I think is troublesome.” Marty argued that the City Youth Services should be doing more specific programming targeted at Latinos. Currently, there are only two high-profile programs for Latino youth specifically, which are not run by the City’s Youth Department, but by other non-profit agencies. The City needs to do an assessment of the needs of each population that comprises the Somerville community because services being delivered have not kept up with demographic changes. Generalized programs are beneficial, but they neither have sufficient outreach nor scale (accommodating everyone in need) for the Latino community and the “one size fits all” technique employed by the City is not optimal for all youth. Marty argues that Somerville needs to celebrate its diversity, but not pretend that differences don’t exist, because different populations have very different realities and experiences (Martinez, Marty, personal interview, 2004).

Cynthia Tschampl explained the rationale for *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo* as providing a space for cultural preservation for bicultural youth. She alluded to one of the goals of *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo* as an attempt to provide a place for negotiating how diverse nationalities are categorized as Latino within the context of the U.S. Art is treated as a form of ethnic identity expression as well as trauma therapy. It is also apparent that this program operates on the principle that different populations require their own space, as indicated by gender-segregated groups. However, the narrator explained the logic in having both gender-specific groups as well as a co-ed space

(Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004). This suggests that an optimal program might have a space for cultural specificity as well as for diversity.

By this same merit, *Jovenes Latinos* director Aru Manrique claims that culturally specific programs are preferred because of the element of cultural preservation. This provides a space for youth to negotiate a bicultural or multicultural identity as well as to navigate how to functionally assimilate in a new context if kids are recent immigrants. The program conducts workshops on how to communicate with parents as a means of alleviating the generational gap between parents who have authoritarian child-rearing strategies and kids who are exposed to mainstream culture at school. “No matter what the funding is...we try to have that component of who you are as a Latino...why it’s important for you to go to school, why it’s important for you not to get in trouble, why it’s important as a Latino to try to be more in your city and be more politically...civically involved.” He also highlighted the importance of channeling the rebellious nature of teens to a productive cause, “teaching them how to pick their fights,” and showing them when it is appropriate to take a stance. Aru asserted that generalized programs are beneficial as well because they teach children about differences and how to work with diversity. He clarified, however, that ethnic/national/cultural diversity occurs within the Latino community itself.

Distinct from other narrators, Andy Haydu, Program Coordinator for the newly implemented Teen Empowerment program at the Somerville site, was far more emphatic about the parallel needs of “immigrants and poor communities and communities of color.” “There’s all these things that are shared...One of them is the fact that they are currently living in a capitalist market-driven, sort of vicious, not-very-welcoming society

that wants to alienate members of the working class across cultural lines.” Andy cautioned against increasing divisiveness via ethnicity because recognizing commonalities such as lack of healthcare, adequate jobs and income, dilapidated and limited housing across the working class and poor, regardless of ethnicity, provides a greater springboard for advocacy. In Andy’s mind, the way this ideological issue might trickle-down into youth programming is that culturally *representative* programming is more effective than culturally *specific* programming because there is “so much richness into the work that you achieve when you have proper representation of all cultures at the table...I think you run into a lot of dangers if you just say...well, let’s just work on this portion of our community and that’s it...with me, it’s all about let’s work on East Somerville as a community...” (Haydu, Andy. personal interview, 2004).

These varied perspectives on the issue of cultural specificity in effective programming for Latino teens were informed by the experience, background and expertise of each narrator. While there appeared to be opposing views, none of the narrators disputed the need for space for teens to negotiate cultural/ethnic identity. There was a consensus that many issues were shared across populations in need. An issue of contention was whether these should serve as basis for unity or whether the nuanced experiences of differing communities should be highlighted. It appears that the optimal program would offer both spaces. According to Nelson Salazar, who reconciles the advantages of both approaches, there should be a two-step process in youth programming: first, youth should be able to interact and identify within their own ethnic group and second, they should be exposed to diversity. “By principle, it’s always good to know your own people first and then after that you can integrate all the groups” (Salazar,

Nelson, personal interview with Lindsey Nicholson and Adrienne Vannieuwenhuizen, 2004).

From these responses it also becomes possible to map this issue as a continuum rather than as polarized choices of culturally specific versus integrated. In terms of generalized programs, cultural representation seems to be of paramount importance and appears to be something Somerville does well. By conducting a phone survey of the demographic breakdown of a number of the programs for teens listed in the Somerville After-School Resource Guide 2004-2005<sup>6</sup>, I learned that most programs for teens tend to recruit a constituency that is representative of the diversity of Somerville.

These ideological debates about the nature of culturally sensitive programming do not currently seem to be substantiated by program evaluations in the context of Somerville. Based on my own intuition, as well as in the program descriptions provided by several narrators, program effectiveness does not appear to hinge on the selection of a particular approach to meeting the needs of different ethnic communities. Highly successful programs are seen in both the culturally-specific as well as integrated realms. Program effectiveness is contingent upon multiple factors but the fact that culture and ethnicity should be taken into account in some capacity is integral to the issue of meeting the specific needs of Latino teens in Somerville.

#### **4.2 Trickle-Up Effect: Youth Programming Debates in Local Politics**

These ideological debates about programming also figure into the political realm of local government in Somerville. The firing of former Youth Director Silvio Almanzar,

---

<sup>6</sup> The Somerville After-School Resource Guide 2004-2005 is published by the After-School Programming Committee and is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole

a Latino, received much media attention and, from the perspective of most of my narrators, represented a loss to the City's youth services and to the Latino community. Under his leadership and that of Marty Martinez, there was a program specifically targeted at Latino male teens as a preemptive response to a festering gang problem (Martinez, Marty, personal interview, 2004). This program dissolved with changes in leadership. Currently, the Youth Department is under the leadership of two former NFL football players, John Hannah and Roland James, who also both serve as football coaches at Somerville High School and in Sharon High School respectively (Provost, Denise personal interview, 2004). Both these appointments were made by Mayor Joe Curtatone and have been subject to much criticism. For instance, John Hannah's creation of a football camp was disapproved because football is less culturally meaningful than soccer to many of the Latino youth being recruited for extra-school activity in the summer. On the other hand, Silvio Almanzar was criticized in his vision of culturally-specific mentoring program for Latino teens for being too narrow in his demographic focus (Gross, Susan, personal interview, 2004). While I am unaware of the relative effectiveness of these two programs, they demonstrate how this debate manifests itself politically. Tied in to the issue of cultural specificity in programming is also the notion of cultural relevance, and how certain activities might be more culturally meaningful to some groups and not others.

#### **4.3 Depth versus Breadth: Issue of Scale**

The issue of scale, or the capacity to reach all youth that need to be reached, is a prominent issue regarding effective youth programming for teens in Somerville. In all of

the programs investigated through interviews with program coordinators, programs usually had around 20 participants or less at any given time. In general, it seems like scale is compromised for the effectiveness of the program. In the view of Cynthia Tschampl, director of *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo*, programs that are comprehensive and adequately individualized cannot cater to more than 20-30 participants. She recounted that some of her program's finest work happened at a tutorial level in the early history of the program. She has used this as a rationale to implement a one-on-one mentoring component in the program that has since expanded (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004).

Yet, as Aru Manrique, coordinator of *Jovenes Latinos*, asserts, Somerville's 2,500 teens, contained in a space of 4.2 square miles, seem like a manageable population to be able to serve adequately (Manrique, Aru, personal interview, 2004). By this logic, more programs are needed simply because the existing programs do not have the capacity to accommodate all of Somerville's teens. Marty Martinez provided a slightly different view, indicating that while the City government could not be expected to account for everyone, he did expect that the City would concentrate on the particularly marginalized and currently demonized Latino teen population in the context of current gang hysteria in Somerville. His stance was that in the event that scale cannot be reached, the focus should be on the most underserved populations, and that is the most effective way to alleviate heightened gang activity. In reference to current strategies by the City in terms of youth programming (such as the summer football camp and provision of 80 summer jobs for teens), Marty voiced that the City thinks it should help a larger amount of teens a

little bit, but Marty think the City needs to “help a lot of people a lot” (Martinez, Marty, personal interview, 2004). In other words, the City values breadth over depth.

Some of the barriers identified towards reaching scale include space and budget, particularly because funders are more concerned with breadth versus depth (Tschantl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004). According to Alderman-at-Large Denise Provost, under previous Mayor Dorothy Kelly Gay, during a budget crisis, the Youth Department was essentially eliminated, reduced to one full-time position that was folded into the Recreation Committee (Provost, Denise, personal interview, 2004). Nelson Salazar, however, feels that budget issues are overemphasized. He claimed it is a fallacy that the City needs a lot of money to have effective activities and programming opportunities for youth. He made an analogy to the educational system, saying that funds allocated to youth programming don't necessarily trickle down to the operational level, but stay at an administrative level and thus don't benefit program providers and recipients in any case (Salazar, Nelson, personal interview, 2004).

## **5. Cultural Sensitivity/Outreach to the Latino Community**

My analysis of program effectiveness generates questions about the Latino community as a political actor to effect changes in youth programming as well as the degree of outreach from the City and by youth programs to the Latino community. According to Alderman-at-Large Denise Provost, communications within the City are “abysmal” (Provost, Denise, personal interview, 2004). In general, there is little to no Latino representation in local government. The Mayor is currently making efforts towards hiring a Multicultural Advisor. For a more comprehensive investigation of the relation between the executive branch of local government, City Hall, and the Latino community, please refer to Yanelly Molina’s report.

### **5.1 Latino Representation**

The lack of outreach from an administrative level further highlights the importance of proper representation in City Council. Marty Martinez emphasized the importance of having people that self-identify as Latino in positions of power. (The only Latino Director in City of Somerville is Vincent Zanabria, who works in the Health Department). Alluding to himself as an example, Marty considers himself a feminist, but said that women’s rights are not necessarily always on his radar screen or on the forefront of his consciousness because he has not personally experienced this kind of marginalization. Similarly, advocates, providers and elected officials probably care about the Latino community and they might be well-intentioned, but they are either hard-pressed to determine specific cultural needs or don’t know how to go about addressing

those needs. Until there is a system in place that acknowledges that we need institutionalized ethnically specific programs, who is in staff matters because individuals know the needs of communities that define who they are (Martinez, Marty, personal interview, 2004).

## **5.2 Cultural Sensitivity in Programming**

From an operational perspective, cultural sensitivity and effective outreach to the Latino population vary from program to program and according to individual recruitment initiatives. With regard to how comprehensively cultural diversity is addressed in after-school programs, Susan Gross, former Director of Somerville Community Schools Program, expressed that while there is a concerted effort to cater to diverse populations, cultural sensitivity is not embedded in curriculum of most programs. The degree of attention paid to cultural issues varies according to program/organization. For instance, the Parent Information Center provides multi-lingual publications and workshops to outreach to parents and families in Somerville. However, they face multiple logistical barriers, such as getting information translated and disseminated within a time frame, demonstrating accessibility, inability to institutionalize word-of-mouth recruitment, contentious employment/income status of families in need, and cultural differences in the value of after-school programming, childcare needs, etc (Gross, Susan, personal interview, 2004).

Director of the Parent Information Center and Somerville Family Network, Regina Bertholdo, demonstrated the commitment to the cultural diversity of her organizations' constituency that is institutionalized within both programs. The

Somerville Family Network is an example of a centralized resource that incoming families perceive as accessible and welcoming, because they are reached out to in their own language. This is especially important when speaking English is a barrier for newly arriving immigrants. While many incoming families are immigrant families, there are a variety of reasons families move to Somerville, such as leaving a shelter, escaping a situation in their country of origin, or simply moving from out of state. The demographic of incoming families has predominantly been Latinos, Brazilians, Haitian Creole representing the three major groups (as indicated by all Somerville Public School publications translated in Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole) but recent influx has included West Indians, Armenians, Chinese, and a wide spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds (Bertholdo, Regina, personal interview, 2004).

Part of the objective of the Somerville Family Network is to convey the idea that child development occurs through play, a Western middle-class ideal embodied in playgroups. Playgroups are lead by language-specific facilitators that have expertise in child development. In addition, Somerville Family Network has partnerships with SCALE (Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences) and other resources to create a comprehensive family literacy program that initiates families into Somerville and helps them to navigate a place within their new community. At the Parent Information Center, the entire office staff is bilingual, so parents can feel comfortable in filling out paperwork and buys time for the office staff to get to know their clients personally. Regina was emphatic about the necessity of having staff that are representative of the cultural backgrounds of the clientele, but that are additionally knowledgeable about community resources. In short, token representation is not sufficient for effective service

delivery; staff need to be bilingual/bicultural as well as competent and knowledgeable. For instance, it may not be sufficient to hand parents the newly-printed after-school resource guide even if it is in their native language. In some cases, more guidance and explanations might be necessary. In order to make this information more accessible, staff members are comprehensively trained in available community resources. Representing a prototype for effective culturally sensitive outreach, Regina situated the Parent Information Center within the City as a well-known resource that has become well integrated in the City. With a ten-year cumulative history, the Parent Information Center is very connected to the community, and their profile remains high through word-of-mouth, participation in fairs, and networks with other youth workers in Somerville.

Regina further noted the bi-products of having diverse personnel representative of the community. While all inquiries about registration are automatically referred to the Parent Information Center, Regina explained how many cases at City Hall get referred to the Parent Information Center because City Hall is not equipped to handle non-English speakers. Thus, by default, the Parent Information Center provides unofficial services such as advising people about marriage licenses and tax bills because of communication barriers with City Hall operators. She seemed resigned to the fact that the City does not have these services in place of its own accord.

Recruitment methods are another way that youth services in Somerville operate unofficially. All of the narrators that are program providers stated word-of-mouth as their main form of recruitment. At *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo*, recruitment occurs predominantly by word-of-mouth and referrals from current members. While there is a formal cap for participation time in the program, participants usually grow out of the

program. Currently, there are a higher proportion of second-generation Latinos as compared to immigrant children, whereas previously the reverse was true. The only prerequisites for involvement are Latino background and age between 11 to 14 years. Because little screening occurs beyond this, varying degrees of risk factors are seen among participants. Cynthia is also adamant about home visits to generate face-face contact with parents. In terms of culturally relevant programming, she revealed that a number of parents can't read or write in English or are pressed for time even if they can read the materials, thus the program goals need to be reinforced through the kids, through phone calls to parents and through home visits (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004).

Andy Haydu's recruitment techniques have occurred through the different organizations that serve different communities, such as the Welcome Project in the case of Latino youth. He mentioned that he visits Somerville High School and casually converses with kids about Teen Empowerment to increase visibility and alert them to the program. Again, this demonstrates the informal nature of outreach to different communities within youth services in Somerville.

## **6. The Individual Actor in Meeting Needs and Creating Opportunities for Latino**

### **Youth**

As demonstrated above, much of the effective outreach to the Latino community is currently not institutionalized, which channels much of the responsibility to community-based organizations and community leaders. All of the narrators interviewed functioned as community leaders in some capacity, formal or informal. My sense of this is because one of the salient findings across interviews is that effective and culturally sensitive outreach to the Latino community was largely attributable to individual cultural competence. The individual that is both knowledgeable and biculturally competent, as pointed out by Regina Bertholdo, by way of interpersonal networks, seems to be an essential actor in the way that youth services operate in the City of Somerville.

Alderman-at-Large, Denise Provost, explained how the Board of Alderman could do little to implement visions of change because most of the power and decision-making lay within the realm of the executive, the mayor's office within this City. As a result, she capitalizes on the space where she does have agency in increasing her own accessibility and visibility in order to compensate for the lack of institutionalized outreach to the Latino community. For example, her friendship with a member of the Community Action Agency of Somerville Advocacy Director provides her with a gateway to the Latino community and the Advocacy Director with an "in" to the legislative branch of local government (Provost, Denise, personal interview, 2004).

As demonstrated in Alderman Provost's case, as well as in that of Cynthia Tschampl's and Andy Haydu's, a similar ethnic background is not imperative to

administer effective outreach. Program providers and legislators can be biculturally competent without a relation to their personal identity, the profile that Marty Martinez pinpointed as optimal for Latino representation and meeting the needs of Latino teens.

Cynthia Tschampl did not perceive her recent introduction to Somerville as an inhibiting factor in her work with youth. She cited Aru Manrique's case as advantageous because he has an immense capacity to connect with his constituency, since he is a long-term Somerville resident. In her case, however, Cynthia is specifically dealing with an immigrant Latino population and represents the primary Latino immigrant organization in the area. The incredible organizational history that has seen several individuals from "situations of fleeing unspeakable terror to become fully-engaged voting citizens" lends itself to the credibility of the program in Somerville. In terms of her administrative role in Somerville, Cynthia feels she has had to (and is still in the process of) playing catch-up. While she interacts with the mayor, she has not met many of the Alderman. Even so, she continually feels more and more involved with the Somerville community. She has been involved with the Somerville Youth Worker's Network from the start and was among the first people trained to volunteer with the Somerville Trauma Response Network. She is also involved in the Somerville Arts Council, through which the narrator was recently awarded a Cultural Heritage Artist Fellowship. A familiar trend as seen in previous interviews, Cynthia's growing involvement in Somerville has lead to provision of unofficial services, such as specific case interventions at East Somerville Community School (Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004).

Aru Manrique stated that his particular background and relation to Somerville informed his work and that it was far more effective to have a staff member that could

relate to the experiences of the participants. Having grown up in Somerville and having attended the same schools, Aru is highly attuned to the needs of Latino teens and the dynamics of adolescent relations in Somerville and the realities of being a minority youth. He understands the nuances of their experiences, which further enhance his approachability and ability to influence them positively. This implicitly reasserts my initial hypothesis that effective outreach and culturally sensitive service rests on individual competence, rather than a systematic, embedded commitment from an administrative level. (Manrique, Aru, personal interview, 2004).

One of the means by which this network of interpersonal relations operates is the Somerville Youth Worker's Network<sup>7</sup>, alluded to in many interviews and identified as a potential asset in Teen Empowerment's assessment of the adolescent delivery system in Somerville. While I was unable to research in-depth how this Network is an actor and/or connector in the landscape of youth programming in Somerville, this holds potential for follow-up research. Interviews have indicated that familiarity and "nativity" to Somerville are attractive assets, but not necessary for working with youth in Somerville. As asserted by Regina Bertholdo, competence of youth program-providers is crucial, yet, as apparent in the work of many narrators, non-Latino ethnicity is not necessarily an issue in connecting with a young Latino constituency. It is evident that multicultural/bicultural competence is not contingent upon the identity of staff, but other factors such as educational background, training and ability.

---

<sup>7</sup> The Somerville Youth Worker's Network's mission is to create, develop, and promote quality of life for youth in Somerville through coalitions with schools, families, youth serving agencies and people in the community

## **7. The Role of the Latino Community in Meeting the Needs of Latino Youth**

### **7.1 Barriers to Community Organizing and Advocacy**

Much of the weight rests on individuals and is shifted away from administrative officials to alleviate gaps in the youth delivery system as a consequence of the informal ways that Somerville's youth delivery system operates. Marty Martinez feels that this phenomenon is an obstruction to the organization of the Latino community as a political body. While he maintains that the City needs to make an ideological commitment to provide a place for everyone, he also revealed what he perceives to be the other side of the equation: lack of political voice and organization within the Latino community. Upon the premise that the "squeaky wheel gets the oil," he expressed his disappointment that there are not enough people advocating for the Latino community. In his mind, youth are particularly vulnerable populations because youth under 18 years cannot vote, and in the common case that their parents don't have citizenship, there is little scope for political voice for Latino youth. This is compounded by the harsh economic realities faced by many immigrant families: advocacy and community organizing become muted in the context of immediate economic needs. (Martinez, Marty, personal interview, 2004).

Fellow Latino and Somerville "native," Aru Manrique, concedes that action needs to be taken from the community side as well. As a member of the recently founded, but somewhat inactive, Latino Coalition that is trying to launch itself to become fully functional as an independent coalition, there are steps being taken towards community organizing. The intent of the Latino Coalition is to bridge the gap between the City and the Latino population. Aru is convinced that if a Latino, or any minority, were to run for

office, they would generate a huge, untapped voting bloc and this would speak loudly to the City about the Latino community's needs. One of the barriers to this participation is that people's residence in Somerville is transient thus experiences less of a civic obligation to contribute to the community. He further claims that Latinos are intimidated by the political system and many barriers would need to be overcome for a Latino to feel comfortable enough to be a decision-maker in the City (Manrique, Aru, personal interview, 2004).

## **7.2 Community-Based Initiatives**

Despite the Latino community lacking a highly visible political role, I found evidence of proactive community initiatives in the arena of youth services. Beginning this research with a preliminary hypothesis that there are underdocumented efforts occurring at a grassroots level within and beyond community-based organizations to meet the needs of Latino youth, this proved difficult to research. However, I did stumble upon two examples of such initiatives that demonstrate the subtle forms of activism and service-provision occurring at a community level that aren't officially listed under the City or school system resource guide.

My classmate, Spencer Hickok, who was interviewing Pastor José Giron, of the Salvadoran Church, Misión Christiana de Restauración, first came across such an initiative. The Pastor mentioned the existence of a Church youth program that preaches gospel to identified gang members (Giron, José, personal interview with Spencer Hickok, 2004). An equivalent program at the Vida Real Church on Broadway was unveiled from

a Somerville Journal article titled, “Local Church reaching out to community.”<sup>8</sup> The article states that, “[Victor] Chicas and Vida Real Pastor Luis Morales have already begun working with a few members of the Salvadoran street gang MS-13 in an effort to help them create a new lifestyle...Local churches are trying to help where they can...but keeping kids out of gangs will take a combined effort between the religious organizations and the city.” Morales was quoted in the article as stating that “The City, I don’t think they are ready for the types of issues they are facing...They are not doing anything about preventing what is happening, they are just reacting. I think that this issue is a social issue, and they should develop some kind of program to address that issue.”

In a brief phone interview, Pastor Morales voiced many of the same concerns. He explained that the Church has a team of two young people that have left gangs who are the point-people that recruit identified gang members and bring them to the Church to compel them towards an alternative lifestyle. He claims that members are usually ready to give up gang membership when their lives are in danger or there is a grave crisis that forces them to question their choice of lifestyle. With a background in psychology, he stressed the trauma recovery and counseling elements of such a program. Success of the program is measured when constituents decide not to revert back to gang membership. In the event that they do revert, the program leaders persist in recruitment. He explained that there is a weekend retreat that revolves around soul searching, challenging oneself and facilitating honest self-exploration, an event that usually cements the exit from a gang-oriented lifestyle. The program began about one year ago in early 2004 in response to increasing gang membership and increased media attention to gang violence in Somerville.

---

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.townonline.com/somerville/news/local\\_regional/sj\\_covsjsidegangms06032004.htm](http://www.townonline.com/somerville/news/local_regional/sj_covsjsidegangms06032004.htm)

Pastor Morales cited part of the appeal of gang membership as seeking the supportive community that is void in many of these individual's lives. In the above-stated article, he is quoted as saying

The reason kids are joining gangs in Somerville is a lack of love at home. Many Salvadoran parents, as well as other immigrants, are working two jobs and long hours and are unable to spend much time at home...when parents finally have the money...their authority has been [dismantled] by the time apart from their children.

This program is an effort to expose these individuals to a community that is supportive and won't endanger their lives by use of violence. Institutionalized religion and an appeal to internal faith is the tool by which this exposure happens. He reiterated his feeling that City is not adequately proactive in terms of prevention and promotion for youth, and thus any other initiatives had the potential to be effective (Morales, Luís, phone interview, 2004). These programs at the Vida Real Church and the Misión Christiana de Restauración present example of Latino community leaders filling the gaps they perceive in Somerville's services to Latino youth. Such culturally-specific programs provide a space for troubled Latino teens to find community as a springboard for negotiating their own place in Somerville. Like other youth programs, they oppose the view of gang members as inherently destructive forces and validate bicultural "ethnic options" by creating a community space. This type of program additionally speaks to the pivotal role of individual initiative in the effectiveness of the youth service delivery system in Somerville.

The above examples beg the question of whose responsibility it is to meet the needs of Somerville's youth. Which actors among the City Administration, school system, community-based programs, or parents, are responsible for engaging all Latino

youth in Somerville? According to Denise Provost, the engagement of youth after-school has traditionally been under the jurisdiction of the school system (Provost, Denise, personal interview, 2004). The City is making a concerted effort along with community and religious leaders to shoulder part of the responsibility for ensuring the healthy development of teens. But what about young people themselves? To what extent are they given the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them?

## **8. Voice of Somerville's Latino Youth: Focus Group with Teens**

### **8.1 Focus Group Agenda: Interview as Intervention**

As the research process unfolded, I obtained perspectives of Latino and non-Latino administrators, program-providers, parents, and residents, but towards the tail end of the data collection, it became glaringly obvious that there was a missing element to a comprehensive discussion of the issues presented thus far. The absence of youth perspective in investigating needs, opportunities, outreach and accessibility neglected the voice of the experts in this area: Latino teens themselves. Ethical considerations did not permit in-depth individual interviews with youth less than 18 years of age except under specific conditions. Thus two classmates (investigating the history and current landscape of human rights in Somerville) and I conducted a focus group to discuss our topics of research. Andy Haydu of Teen Empowerment informed me that the assessment carried out by Teen Empowerment also involved youth focus groups from different programs, including one from the Latino-specific program, *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo* (Haydu, Andy, personal interview, 2004 and Tschampl, Cynthia, personal interview, 2004). However, without access to the raw data, it would not be feasible to extract the opinions of solely Latino youth to add a cultural dimension to this assessment.

Furthermore, the discourse in anthropology around oral history and public anthropology considers the notion of interview as a form of intervention (Yow, 1994). Marty Martinez highlighted the fact that youth are a marginalized population because of their muted political voice (Martinez, Marty, personal interview, 2004). The youth focus group was mutually beneficial in unveiling youth perspectives to the researchers as well

as providing a space for discussion, permitting the voices of some Latino teens to be heard. Many of the participants expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of being interviewed and voicing their opinions because they claimed adults seldom pay attention to their views. In several cases, it appeared that this notion was empowering in itself; it had not occurred to most of the participants that their perspective held credibility or that they hold authority on what their own needs are. While the nature of this discussion group was severely limited and might not necessarily be representative of the Somerville Latino youth community, the activity was extremely revealing. It is worthy to note, however, that this group of participants is probably selectively well-connected to resources and activities as they were recruited through the Welcome Project, one of the centralized service providers for Latinos in the area.

Creating our own model for a discussion group, we recruited six teens via the Welcome Project, four young women and two young men ranging in age from 13 to 17 years, primarily second-generation immigrants of Salvadoran descent, but with some other nationalities represented, that are all current residents of Somerville. The participants were alerted to the purpose of the project and our rationale for acquiring a youth perspective. Our session began with a values continuum activity, in which a physical continuum was created on the room wall ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with “neutral/I don’t know” at the midpoint. Participants were read issue-based statements such as “I feel safe in Somerville” and “I feel there are enough options for me for after-school activity” and encouraged to locate themselves along this continuum. This activity served as an icebreaker as well as a springboard to generate discussion by prompting the participants to think about the pertinent issues and take a

stance. (Please refer to Appendix D for specific statements and an approximate map of individual location on the continuum for each statement).

## **8.2 Youth Perspectives**

In relation to feelings of safety in Somerville and the gang-loitering ordinance, youth had a general feeling of safety, which was based on past experience, where you hang out, as well as the perception that “if you’re not doing anything bad, nothing bad is going to happen to you, even if things might be happening in your city.” They perceived their parents to be more concerned with safety, which sometimes manifested in over-protectiveness. Though they seemed to detect a gender differential here attributable to Latino culture, they said they understood their parents’ concerns. As a result of media, they said that their parents’ greatest fears were of gang activity. Most participants expressed that being Hispanic, they were susceptible to being labeled as members of Salvadoran gang MS-13, although they asserted that this suspicion by stereotyping and racial profiling of their ethnic group is not particular to Somerville. They felt that Somerville spent too much money on police, and not enough on keeping kids occupied. When asked where they adopted these ideas, they were unable to pinpoint a source, but attributed it to general consensus in their environments. They said the current environment in Somerville affects personal behavior because they avoid wearing solid colors when interacting with groups of friends. They were highly conscious of the association of group colors, particularly sky blue, with gang membership. One participant cited an incident in her school where she was asked to change her outfit when wearing a blue t-shirt and matching bandanna. In her recounting, she said a peer with a

similar outfit who was not Latina was not asked to change. She did not believe herself to be pinpointed as a gang member, but rather as someone with the potential to be mistaken for one. The youth participants stated that gang membership and activity was not restricted to guys only and that increasingly girls were becoming involved with gangs.

When discussing the motivations for joining a gang, the participants listed factors of appeal as “to be cool,” “to fit in,” “if you are an immigrant,” “if you don’t feel safe on your own, you feel safe hanging out with tough guys,” “if your parents are too strict,” and “to be rebellious.” Upon the premise that these were reasonable motivations, the participants explained that they were raised not to join gangs, saw the reasons as “dumb,” and felt that they “knew better” because “if you’re not in a gang, it’s easier for you to do things, you don’t have to be watching your back 24/7.” When asked why this was apparent to them and not necessarily to all other teens, they said some kids were “just rebellious” or “had too much on their mind and problems at home” so they “just turn to the streets.” They asserted that appeal of gang membership depended upon the persuasiveness of friends/other gang members as well as a parental presence in one’s life. The participants further stated that the issue had become a “big deal” through the media and they felt it made their community “look bad.”

Shifting gears towards youth programs, a quick survey of types of activities that these teens participated in, including employment, revealed an art club, sports at school, such as football, track, soccer, and basketball, a girls’ discussion group, church activities, on-call projects at the Welcome Project, Sunday School, and childcare. Many of the activities were made available through school. When asked if Somerville had enough youth programs, the participants indicated that that it depended on the person and their

desire to be involved and to take initiative. They suggested that while there might not be enough programs, the ones that existed needed to be sought out. This potentially informs the recruitment methods of currently existing programs. They also advocated for more diverse programs because “different people have different tastes and there might not be something out there for everyone.” Furthermore, the participants alluded to palatability of programs. They expressed desire for a space for teens to be able “hang out” that is free. They claimed that the Boys and Girls Club and YMCA are for younger kids, and that other recreational opportunities that existed were perceived as “too cheesy.” Their suggestion was a recreational safe space for teens with music, couches, TV, food, etc.

In issues concerning gender and cultural specificity of programming, the teens were more ambivalent. Sports were viewed as necessarily gender-specific while they recognized that gender specificity in some programs, such as discussion groups, might make participants more comfortable. When asked about culturally-specific programs, they expressed hesitation, believing this would highlight differences between groups and exacerbate the divisiveness they said is present in the school setting, and is likely to perpetuate stereotypes. However, in terms of the rationale of cultural preservation in culturally-specific programs, they were very supportive of the need to have activities that ensured one “didn’t forget about their culture.” Some said that these programs were exceptions, but in general programs should not be divided by ethnicity. Others felt the choice should be for participants themselves, thus both types of programs should be available.

With regard to program accessibility, they said they usually hear about opportunities from friends, which is in accord with word-of-mouth as a method of heavy

recruitment from a provider's perspective. Some youth indicated that their parents were sources of information through their workplace, but most indicated that while their parents wanted them to be involved, their parents were not very well informed of program availabilities for their children.

This project itself is relevant to available programming for Latino youth. The Urban Borderlands partnership between Tufts students and Somerville high-school students, while small scale, is an example of an effective, culturally relevant and specific leadership program with a mentorship component that engages youth in their own community. When asked about this partnership, the youth were extremely enthusiastic about the idea, claiming "this is the kind of programs Latinos should participate in." While this initiative stemmed from a course at Tufts University and is credited to Nelson Salazar and Professor Deborah Pacini-Hernandez, it potentially serves as a prototype for a culturally relevant program that provides a negotiation space and opportunity for civic engagement for Latino teens in Somerville.

## **9. Conclusion**

The lives, work, and perspectives of my narrators, including the Latino teens interviewed, illuminate the politically-charged dialogue taking place in Somerville concerning the nature of youth and youth programming in Somerville. Collectively, these voices represent the general view of the youth services sector of Somerville. Implicit in this dialogue is an asset-based conception of Latino youth. Language such as “youth engagement,” “opportunities to negotiate identity,” “space for cultural expression,” “civic and community participation” that were used consistently across narrators, recognizes Latino teens, “not as problems to be solved, but as resources to be developed” (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). This vision of the youth-programming sector of Somerville is directly opposed to the rationale behind the gang-loitering ordinance, which assumes a deficit model: teens need to be contained to prevent delinquent behavior and literally be kept “off the streets.” Youth program-providers, in contrast, seek not only to meet immigrant youth needs by providing services, but to capitalize on positive features of youth development. The notion of getting youth “off the streets” means creating opportunities for youth leadership and participation. In the words of Cynthia Tshampl referring to Latino teens, “they are an absolute treasure chest of potential [so] how do we help them unlock themselves?”

In this research, I adopt the view of Latino youth as “culturally creative but as actors in an arena that they do not control” (Waters, 1999). Youth programs provide a space for Latino teens to express their “cultural creativity.” By exploring the role of youth programs and community-based initiatives in informing the experience of coming of age as a Latino in Somerville, I encourage a shift away from a deficiency-based model

of Latino youth. I have attempted to situate anthropological debates about youth in the context of Somerville, where the heightened attention to gang activity amplifies the dialogue around the nature of youth and youth programming.

Documenting youth programming perspectives is not only vital in the context of negative media attention towards Latino teens, but as a microcosm of Latino incorporation. Latino teens claimed the controversy around gang activity and the ordinance has become a “big deal” in Somerville and makes their community “look bad.” Just as negative views towards Latino youth reflect upon their community at-large, I hope the positive conception of youth presented in this paper reflect positively on the Latino community as a constructive actor in the social landscape of Somerville.

## **10. Acknowledgements:**

The nature of qualitative research, the richness of human experiences and nuances of varied perspectives necessitates an extensive list of thank-yous! The cliff-notes version is as follows:

**Deborah Pacini-Hernandez**, our professor and mentor. Thank you for challenging conventional academia, for empowering students as researchers, for reading our transcriptions and feeding us pupusas and, most of all, for validating all our work as meaningful.

**Nelson Salazar**, for having 18 million full time jobs and still accommodating our needs and interests.

**William Velasquez**, my co-pilot a.k.a. high-school partner, for consistently answering my calls and e-mails, for his revealing perspectives and for a very pleasant afternoon by the river. You have an immense capacity to effect change in your community, even though you misspelled my name! :) It was awesome hanging out with you—let's watch cartoons and eat cereal together some time.

My classmates, **Lindsey, Adrienne, Dalia, Sara, Sebastien, Yanelly, Spencer, Leah** and **Julia** for caring about this project and for keeping each other in the know. Is it just a coincidence or is there a prerequisite to be amazing to enroll in this class?

All the other **high-school partners** from the Welcome Project for their incredible maturity and commitment to this project. This project in particular speaks to the positive contributions and assets of Latino youth in Somerville.

**Christian Capellan**, our technology guru. Here's to sleepless nights during finals; as budding anthropologists and therefore technologically incompetent. we couldn't have done it without you!

**Michelle Fuentes** from the Welcome Project for trying to alleviate the logistical hassles that are integral to this kind of work.

**My narrators**, for their time, their effort, their expertise, their concern. their incredible commitment to Somerville's youth, for being spirited enough to articulate themselves for the purposes of documentation, for trusting this project and, most of all, for being vital actors in the way youth services works in this City.

## **11. Bibliography**

City of Somerville official website: <http://ci.somerville.ma.us/>

Durham, Deborah. "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa: Introduction to Parts 1 and 2" in *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 73(3), July 2000, pp.113-120.

Lerner, Richard M. *Liberty: Thriving and civic engagement among America's youth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004.

Levitt, Peggy. *Transnational Villagers*. University of California Press. 2001.

Parker, Brock. "Local church reaching out to community." The Somerville Journal at [www.townonline.com](http://www.townonline.com), June 3, 2004.

Roth, J. L., Brooks-Gunn, J. "What is a youth development program? Identification of defining principles" in F. Jacobs, D. Wertlieb, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.) *Enhancing the life chances of youth and families: Public service systems and public policy perspectives*. Handbook of applied developmental science: Promoting positive child, adolescent, and family development through research, policies, and programs. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Vol. 3, 2003, pp. 197-224.

Somerville After-School Resource Guide 2004-2005, Programs and resources for children, youth and families.

Taneja, Avantika. Interview with Susan Gross. October 8, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika and William Velasquez. Interview with Alberto Ortiz. October 19, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika. Interview with Marty Martinez. October 27, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika. Interview with Aru Manrique. November 2, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika. Interview with Regina Bertholdo. November 3, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika. Interview with Andy Haydy. November 9, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika. Interview with Cynthia Tshampl. November 30, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika and Dalia Palchik. Interview with Denise Provost. December 10, 2004.

Taneja, Avantika. Phone Interview with Luís Morales. December 13, 2004.

The Center for Teen Empowerment, "Youth Services in the City of Somerville, Massachusetts: Assessment and Recommendations," June 23, 2004.

Waters, Mary. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. Russell Sage, Harvard Press, 1999.

*Youth Services in the City of Somerville, Massachusetts: Assessment and Recommendations*.

<http://www.provostcitywide.org/somervilleyouthservassessmt.html>

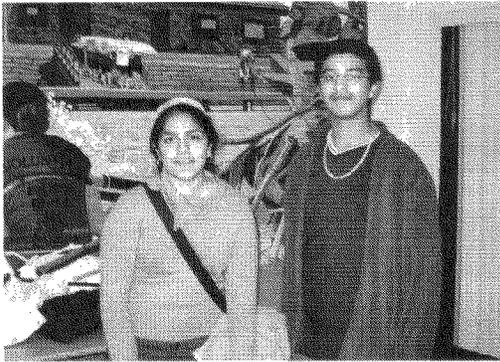
Submitted by the Center for Teen Empowerment. June 23, 2004.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*. California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994.

## 12. Appendices

### **Appendix A: Researchers**

Meet the Researchers from Tufts University and the Welcome Project, Somerville, MA:



Avanti and her co-pilot, Will

Hi, my name is Avantika Taneja; the vital stats about me are that I am a senior at Tufts University, majoring in anthropology and child development, so this project has been an opportune way to integrate both my majors. I am Indian by nationality, but I was born and brought up in Indonesia which I refer to as ‘home.’ Topically, this project intersects with my personal, academic and extracurricular interests regarding positive youth development, ethnic identity, and cultural sensitivity in youth-serving programs, program evaluation and Tufts university-community relations. I find it difficult to articulate how much I learned conducting a semester-long research project, because my learning occurred on so many levels, including methodology skills, information about the history and current landscape of Somerville, aspects of youth development, as well as the richness of qualitative research. Primarily, I gained exposure to the work and perspectives of the experts on this topic: program providers, elected officials, parents and, of course, youth themselves. I consistently left each interview session with the salient thought, “I just want to *be* that person” which speaks to the narrators’ incredible dedication to the welfare of Somerville’s youth.

“Hi, my name is William Ernesto Velasquez. I was born here in Massachusetts, but all my family comes from El Salvador. El Salvador is a small country in Central America where it is warm and beautiful most of the time. But like they say, “It never rains but it pours.” I like to listen to music and hang out with my friends. I enjoy playing games and doing puzzles. Figuring things out is one of my favorite things because I like challenges that make me think “outside the box” so to speak. I got involved in this project to learn more about my culture and find out new and interesting things. I’m working with Avanti on after school activities for kids. We are researching what the programs are and what they are doing for teens. On most of the interviews, the answer is mostly the same. We need to focus less on making laws to keep teens off the streets and make more programs to keep them out of trouble. We need to make more programs that will interest them and make them want to join, that way most teens will forget about doing bad things and some of the

problems in somerville will go away. We can't get rid of it for good, crime will always exist. It's human nature to be destructive and to fight against each other, but we can help bring it down to being a less serious thing in our world. That's pretty much all I have to say for now, so remember, you can make a difference if you try. Sorry if there are some spelling errors, spelling is like my one true weakness" (Velasquez, William, 2004).

## Appendix B: Biographies of Narrators

**Susan Gross** is a former employee of the School Department in Somerville, serving as the Administrator for Somerville Community Schools from June 2002 until a few months ago. She is currently still residing in Somerville, but in the process of transition to move with her husband to Pennsylvania. Susan's educational background is in history and education: her vocational trajectory shifted from public school teaching at the elementary level to her involvement with after-school programming. Susan was hired by the Keeping Kids on Track initiative of the non-profit Mass 2020 as a coordinator to improve and expand after-school programs in Somerville and Lynn, which marked her initial involvement in the birth of the after-school movement in Somerville. Subsequently she worked in the area for cultural exchange programs for high-school students to countries in Europe. With the drop in participation in such programs post-September 11<sup>th</sup>, however, Susan applied for the position of Administrator for Somerville Community Schools and was accepted, beginning her term in September 2002.

**Alberto Ortiz** was born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, on August 4, 1968. He came to Boston with his family at age 4 and he lived in Massachusetts (predominantly in Boston) since. He has lived in Somerville for six years as the owner and head instructor of the Red Tiger Dojo Karate School on Broadway. He grew up mainly in housing projects in the South End and Roxbury, the youngest of a family of five siblings, apart from one younger step-brother. Forced to fend for himself from the age of 13, he was married and had a daughter by age 18. He now has four children, the oldest aged 18, twins aged 17, and the youngest 11 years old. Like him, all his children are black-belt instructors. Alberto has studied martial arts for over 20 years and has championships in form and fighting on both national and international levels. He is the founder of the school where my high-school partner, William Velasquez, receives karate instruction twice to three times weekly.

**Marty Martinez** is currently the Project Director of the Boston Aids Consortium in Boston. He is a resident of Somerville since he graduated from Tufts in 2000 with a degree in Urban and Environmental Policy. Marty served as the City's Youth Director in 2000. He is the first Latino to run for City Council in Somerville in Ward 7 in 2003, when he lost by a narrow margin of 93 votes. Marty self-identifies as a Chicano, born in Texas with Mexican ancestry. Raised by a single mother of five children, Marty primarily grew up in Nebraska within a sizeable Mexican immigrant community. Two major socializing influences that were particularly meaningful to him were the church and his family that contributed to his activist tendencies. In a context of limited economic opportunity, as the youngest sibling, Marty was afforded the opportunity to go to college unlike the rest of his family.

**Aru Manrique** is currently the Latino Youth Coordinator of *Jovenes Latinos*, transitioning to Housing Advocate at the Community Action Agency of Somerville in Union Square, Somerville. His family came to the U.S. from Venezuela in 1985 via Orlando and settled in Somerville in 1989 when Aru was 12-years old. He has lived in Somerville since, attending the East Somerville Community School, then Somerville

High and attending college nearby at Emerson College in Boston. He currently lives with his girlfriend in West Somerville and anticipates remaining in Somerville to raise his own family. His educational background is in audio/radio; he essentially stumbled upon his involvement in the youth-serving industry, but hopes to pursue a master's degree in social work, youth development, multiculturalism or something related.

**Regina Bertholdo** currently holds two full-time positions as the Director of Somerville Family Network and the Leader at the Parent Information Center for the Somerville Public Schools. She worked at the Somerville Family Network for two years, followed by leadership at the Parent Information Center for two years and is in her third year temporarily filling both positions due to budget crises in the past few years. The narrator, a native of Brazil, has been in Somerville as a resident for 11 years and as an employee of Public Schools for nine years. She is the mother of one daughter who attends 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the Healey School.

**Andy Haydu** is the Program Coordinator for Teen Empowerment at the Somerville site. Teen Empowerment is a Boston-based organization that was commissioned by the mayor's office in Somerville to conduct an assessment and make recommendations for the adolescent delivery system in Somerville. He has previously coordinated the Teen Empowerment program at English High School, Jamaica Plain and done some administrative and public relations work for the organization. His preferred line of work, however, is on-the-ground, working directly with youth. While a native of Boston suburbs, Andy spent some of his crucial developmental years from age 18 to 25 years in the U.K. studying Anthropology :). Being new to Somerville since August 2004, he is currently in the process of navigating himself around Somerville and its youth programming landscape.

**Cynthia Tshampl** was born and raised in Iowa. She studied Spanish in college and has some education and clinical work background. After graduation, she spent a few years in various countries, including South Africa, Chile, Haiti and Argentina doing solidarity work and advocacy for the detained disappeared among other issues. Subsequently, she got involved in field office for the U.S. government; her experiences in Washington revealed much about the inner workings of the government at different levels of decision-making and certain undemocratic practices and informed her of the tremendous, far-reaching impact of U.S. foreign policy. In summary, Cynthia's post-graduate years consistently exposed her to issues of injustice and experiences and testimonials that did not fit into her worldview of race and economic problems in the U.S. only occurring in isolated pockets. This exposure coupled with her Roman Catholic upbringing in which a commitment to service was embedded, lead her to this position which involves Spanish, education, and advocacy, components that are all part of her background and interests. She moved to Boston 3 years ago and has worked with Centro Presente just under two years. Though the organization is based in Cambridge, the majority of her work is directed towards Somerville youth.

**Denise Provost** is currently one of the Alderman-at-Large for the City of Somerville and the President of the Board of Alderman as well as a resident of Somerville. She came to

Somerville in 1981, occupying a position as an attorney for the City until 1989. Her first venture into public office was in 1993, when she ran as Ward 5 Alderman but lost by a narrow margin, an outcome possibly attributable to election irregularities. She ran again in 1995 and again lost by a narrow margin. Believing her career in local politics to be over, in 1999, she was recommended to run again for both Ward 5 Alderman and Alderman-at-Large and won in Citywide. Alderman Provost was sworn in at the beginning of 2000. Simultaneously, she holds a law practice and is the mother of two daughters, aged 15 and 7 years. Alderman Provost distinctively is the only Alderman that voted against the recent gang loitering ordinance. Her website can be accessed at <http://www.provost-citywide.org/>

**Luis “Tony” Morales** was born in Chalatenango, El Salvador and grew up in Matapán. He came to the U.S. in 1980, 2 weeks prior to the election. He arrived in Somerville soon after, and has been in Somerville for almost 24 years. He came to the U.S. with some friends when the Civil War was obstructing his studies, leaving with friends to migrate to Boston. He met his wife in El Salvador; they have been married for thirteen years with a twelve year-old son and a four year-old daughter. When he arrived in here, Luis finished his high school diploma. He opened his first store in 1983 with a friend in Cambridge, a restaurant called “El Rancho” and he sold it almost two months after he opened it. This is when he started opening stores and selling them. He has three master’s degrees in theology, psychology, and in family therapy. He does not use them as degrees, but he does apply what he has learned in his work at the church. He is now hoping to pursue a degree in Leadership or in Organizational Psychology. Among his business endeavors, only 14 months ago in late 2003, Luis founded and is Pastor of the Vida Real Church on Broadway in Somerville.

## Appendix C: Program Descriptions

**Teen Empowerment** is a Boston-based organization with the overarching mission of empowering youth as agents of social and institutional change. Earlier in 2004, Teen Empowerment was recruited as a consultant by the mayor's office in Somerville to conduct a study assessing the adolescent delivery system in Somerville. One of the recommendations of this assessment was to hire Teen Empowerment to implement a youth organizing program at the Somerville Community Youth Program using the organization's interactive model of youth development and empowerment. The Teen Empowerment program provides a model of both a culturally and developmentally sensitive program that isn't focused on a particular population, but on the East Somerville community in general. Primarily, Teen Empowerment's programs do not focus on providing services to youth, but rather engaging them in addressing systemic causes and creating social change. <http://www.teenempowerment.org>

*Pintamos Nuestro Mundo* (We Paint Our World) is the youth arts and leadership development program offered by the Cambridge-based organization, Centro Presente. According to its brochure, Centro Presente "empowers Latin American immigrant communities in Massachusetts through the promotion of civic and democratic participation, leadership development, education and legal immigration services." By this same merit, the narrator described *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo* as a microcosm of the larger organization. Young Latinos aged 11 to 14 in East Somerville produce public and personal artworks to foster the following goals:

- Teach techniques and vocabulary relating to art
- Help participants grow in confidence and skills, which aid in achieving social and academic success
- Encourage civic and community participation
- Develop leadership
- Involve parents in all activities whenever possible
- Have fun in a safe environment for being bilingual and bicultural

The program was created 6-7 years ago as an informal means of engaging the children of clientele while they received services at Centro Presente. Currently 25 participants meet after-school in a boys group and girls group once a week and co-ed group and field trip that brings together twice a week. Participants are largely recruited through word of mouth, but numbers are kept to approximately the current size in order to remain manageable. A distinct aspect of this program is that it contains both youth-service provision as well as a youth-organizing component, both objectives achieved by engaging in production of private and public art. As a politically muted population, youth are employed to engage in art has political implications. Centro Presente website: <http://www.cpresente.org/>

The Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS), a private nonprofit agency that incorporated in 1981, is the legally-designated antipoverty agency for Somerville. It is part of state, regional, and national networks of community action agencies. The mission

of CAAS is to reduce poverty among local families and individuals while working to counteract, and whenever possible eliminate, the societal conditions that cause poverty.” (from website <http://www.volunteersolutions.org/boston/org/213424.html>) The *Jovenes Latinos* program is CAAS’s peer leadership training program that is issue-based, focusing on topics such as gang violence prevention, pregnancy prevention, drug prevention, homework help and with emphasis on “making smoking history in Somerville.” The group does outreach and advocacy to other youth around tobacco prevention, the initiative for which they are currently being funded. While the program is issue-based depending on the agenda of donors, a consistent component of the program is addressing the bicultural identity of the constituents and providing a space and mentorship for them to negotiate their in-between status as Latino in the context of the U.S. The program is in the process of becoming dissolved due to lack of continued funding, partially attributable to the staff turnover of grant writers. Part of the rationale for this program is that teens hold a great capacity to make information/awareness to make issues pertinent to their age group more palatable to their age group.

**The Somerville Family Network (SFN)** is an early childhood program, providing universal care for families with children aged 0 to 4 years, offering specialized playgroups for children and parents and workshops/support groups for parents. In a pamphlet, the program is qualified as “a place where parents can get information on other services and resources available in Somerville” and “a place where your language is spoken” and “a place where diversity is shared.”  
<http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/education/dept/dept.php?sectionid=57>

**The Parent Information Center (PIC)** for the Somerville Public Schools is a centralized registration center for all new students entering public schools from pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade directed at incoming families.  
<http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/education/dept/dept.php?sectionid=56>

**Red Tiger Dojo** is a privately owned karate school for all age groups located in Somerville, Massachusetts. The description from its website states that: “Shotokan Karate is a traditional martial art. This means that improvements in character and mental discipline are as important as physical skill, if not more so. Shotokan Karate is meant to be accessible to all, including, women, children, and those without great athletic ability. Red Tiger Dojo offers a caring, safe environment where adults and children can learn the art of karate. Its practice leads to:

- Muscular and Aerobic fitness
- Body alignment, balance and movement
- Increased perceptual awareness
- Stress management
- Concentration, confidence and discipline”

<http://www.redtigerdojo.com>

**Appendix D: Youth Focus Group-Map of Values Continuum Activity**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/I Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel safe in Somerville.					
I think the anti-loitering ordinance is necessary.					
I think there is a gang problem in Somerville.					
I feel that there are enough options for activities for me after school.					
I feel take advantage of the after-school opportunities that are offered to me.					
I think Somerville has enough youth-programs for teens.					
I think that there should be programs specifically for Latino teens.					
I think programs should be gender-specific.					
I feel that Somerville has done a good job welcoming its Latino population.					
I feel that Somerville wants to welcome its Latino population but doesn't know how to.					
I feel that the young Latino population is well-integrated into the Somerville community.					
I feel that Latino adults are well-integrated among Somerville's adult population.					
I feel that my parents' rights are more respected here than in their countries of origin.					
I self-identify as Latino.					
I think that I have the power to make a difference in Somerville.					

Appendix E; Upcoming Youth Forum

Jobs • Arts • Education • Public Safety • Drug Prevention • Communication  
• Youth Leadership

The Somerville Youth Workers' Network presents

# Filling the Gaps

A forum about the needs  
of Somerville's Youth

Wednesday, January 19

Snow date: Thursday January 20

6-9 PM

Food available 6-6:30

Somerville High School

81 Highland Ave

All are invited • Teens strongly encouraged to attend •  
Children welcome

Help set the direction for Somerville's youth  
services

Small groups • Youth speakers • Speech by the  
Mayor

In cooperation with Mayor Joe Curtatone, the Youth Services  
Subcommittee of the Board of Aldermen, and Teen Empowerment

For more info or to pre-register, call Andy at 617-625-6600 x 2254

## **Appendix F: Summary Points of Assessments and Recommendations Conducted by The Center for Teen Empowerment for the City of Somerville, June 2004:**

### **Needs Assessment:**

- youth service system that has suffered from a series of severe budget cutbacks on state and local levels
- lack of connection b/w needs and adolescents and limited teen services available at this time
- program vary in quality; few structured to intentionally address the issue of drugs, gangs, suicide, and racial tension that characterize the patterns of behavior of far too many youth
- teens feel sense of hopelessness about the future
- many youth need and want jobs and leadership opportunities
- youth interest in engagement in theater, art, music-based activities, programs that are currently available on an extremely limited basis
- issues of transportation and safety hinder involvement
- no clear way for community-based programs to coordinate their efforts with the intervention and prevention programming taking place within schools

### **Opportunities:**

- infrastructure to build effective youth prevention/intervention strategy
- strong foundation: YMCA, CASPAR, Fire Station community center, Boys and Girls Club, Community Schools, Mystic Learning Center, Youth Worker's Network
- commitment from mayor's office

### **Recommendations:**

- -base all program for adolescents on a rigorous analysis of the goals they are designed to reach
- more teen programs intentionally designed to address the issues of drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, gang violence, and racial tensions and isolation
- expand services for adolescents, priority for programs that involve paid employment, job training, leadership opps
- intentional strategies and protocols for school—community-based org links
- expand in school and after-school opportunities for art, music, theater-based activities
- opportunity for youth voice
- expand transportation resources
- develop a Youth Leadership Network as a forum for youth to provide input into policies and practices re: youth

