

# Wisconsin 5-County Latino Needs Assessment Project

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**“But I think that many people do not want to become informed, because they are afraid.”**

~~Latino participant from Walworth county

**“I have obligations, but I don’t have rights.”**

~~Latino participant from Dane county

**“I think that there should be more help for us . . . because we help the economy of this country . . . the U.S. has become strong thanks to the Hispanic race.”**

~~Latino participant from Jefferson county

**“It comes down to the very basic level of lack of education on the part of the people not willing to accept the change in diversity.”**

~~Latino participant from Rock county

**“I would like to see that stereotype broken, that we are simply good laborers . . . good for lifting . . . good for pushing. Well, we are not pack mules. We are people who are capable, who have just as much mental ability as Europeans; Asians. I would like to do my part to show this, as a Hispanic.”**

~~Latino participant from Dodge county

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# Introduction

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## BACKGROUND

Representing 12.5 percent of the total population, more than 35 million people in the United States identified themselves as Latino or Hispanic in the 2000 U.S. Census.<sup>1</sup> In Wisconsin, the number of people identifying themselves as Latinos is approximately 205,000. In the past ten years, the number of Latinos living in Wisconsin has increased by 107 percent. Latino population growth has been even more dramatic in the south central counties of Dane (150%), Dodge (140%), and Jefferson (161%). Rock (239%) and Walworth (204%) counties more than doubled their Latino population between 1990 and 2000. Latinos now represent 3.4 percent, 2.5 percent, 4.1 percent, 3.9 percent, and 6.5 percent respectively of each county's total population. Together, these five counties have a Latino population of nearly 32,000 or 15.5 percent of Wisconsin's Latino population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Rock, and Walworth counties vary significantly in terms of development (e.g., predominantly rural or urban); employers (e.g., largely industrial, agricultural, governmental, or university); and how existing services are organized (e.g., centralized or decentralized). In addition, services provided through each county's University of Wisconsin–Cooperative Extension Office (UWEX) and other community agencies vary. Given the dramatic growth of the Latino population in recent years, questions were raised about existing services and programs. Were they adequately addressing the needs of these communities? Did services or programs need to be altered or expanded? Were new services or programs needed to meet the needs of the growing Latino population and their communities? Exactly what service or program changes would be most effective was unclear. To determine what services and programs were working, what

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<sup>1</sup> The United States of America will be referred to as United States; The United States of Mexico will be referred to as Mexico.

services and programs needed changing, and what services and programs were missing, a needs assessment of communities with growing Latino populations in five south central Wisconsin counties—Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Rock, and Walworth—was determined to be essential.

## **STUDY ORGANIZERS**

Early in 2000, several UWEX educators, Richard Pedersen, UWEX Southern District Director, and Dr. Richard Lee, Dean of Continuing and Graduate Education at University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, began a cross-divisional collaboration to design a needs assessment study. The UWEX mission includes extending University resources to facilitate Wisconsin individuals' and families' utilization and application of information generated by University faculty. The five UWEX educators who worked to implement this project are: Kathy Hetzel, Family Living Educator (Dodge County); Shelby Maier, Family Living Educator (Walworth County); Bridget Mouchon, Interim Family Living Educator (Jefferson County); Lesly Scott, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program, Dane County Coordinator, (Dane County); and Randy Thompson, Dairy and Livestock Agent/Department Head (Rock County).

In November 2002, Dr. Paula B. Poorman, Associate Professor of Psychology at University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, joined the group as research consultant. Her task was to design the research methodology, oversee data collection and analysis, train others in the methods used to collect and analyze data for the project, and prepare the project summary.

## **CONCEPTUALIZATION**

*Previous Studies.* To design this study, similar studies implemented in other Wisconsin counties were reviewed (e.g., Fellner, 2003; Malek, 2001, 2002). The previous studies were generally well-designed, involved focus group interviews, and resulted in the identification of a number of needs of area Latinos. Building on these studies, a number of methodological changes in this study were expected to

result in more valid, reliable, and generalizable findings about Latino needs in the south central Wisconsin area.

***Design Considerations.*** In assessing the needs of any group, it is critical that the design of a study result in findings that accurately and credibly assess the needs intended (internal validity), can be expected to be reasonably consistent over time, place, or person (reliability), and will generalize to the needs of others not involved in the study (generalizability/transferability or external validity). Qualitative research designs (e.g., those that use focus groups as data collection methods) may approach validity, reliability, and transferability of results somewhat differently than quantitative studies, but it is no less critical to attend to internal and external validity and reliability in evaluating the quality of a research project (Creswell, 1998; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Patton, 2002; Poorman, 2002). Triangulation is one example of a commonly used qualitative research design strategy through which one method or sample can be used to corroborate the data of another method or sample (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Patton, 2002). A number of methods of enhancing credibility, consistency, and transferability of the results in this study included design considerations in four key areas: (1) augmenting the concept of community-building, (2) enhancing the sampling procedures, and (3) enhancing interviews, and (4) enhancing data analyses.

### **1. Augmenting the concept of community-building**

Previous studies have assumed that only Latinos themselves could provide useful information about Latino needs within a community. We assumed that community-building is implemented by *all* who live in a community. Latinos certainly have relevant perspectives about Latino needs for services and programs. Community leaders and professionals who provide services and programs to Latinos also have valuable perspectives to contribute to understanding Latino needs in their communities. Further, gathering perspectives about Latino needs and services in each area from area Latinos, community leaders, and helping professionals within each community enhanced the validity of the data by

triangulating the sample. In other words, including key stakeholders from within the communities was consistent with beliefs about how communities evolve and improve and also served to corroborate the information gathered.

## **2. Enhancing the size and diversity of Latino-community samples**

Previous researchers interviewed Latino participants from one specific area and typically interviewed a small number of individuals within the community. This study recruited participants from several different counties whose demographics vary substantially to generalize the findings to a broader population within Wisconsin. This study also recruited multi-generational participants, both recent and long-term immigrants, and native Wisconsin Latinos. In addition, each participant was asked to identify others whose perspectives should be heard about Latino needs. Both purposefully sampling a diverse group to answer interview questions and asking participants to identify others with relevant perspectives (called *snowball* or *networked* sampling) enhance internal and external validity (Patton, 2002).

UWEX educators and the research consultant developed the criteria for recruiting participants for the Latino participant groups and for the community service provider groups. Criteria for inclusion in the Latino participant groups were as follows:

1. recent immigrants
2. multi-generational citizens
3. native citizens
4. SES range
5. agricultural employees
6. homemakers
7. employees from manufacturing
8. paraprofessional employees
9. service industry employees
10. undocumented workers
11. varying countries of origin

Criteria for inclusion in the community service provider groups were as follows:

1. mixed groups of Latino and Anglo professionals
2. clergy
3. social service employees
4. healthcare employees
5. law enforcement/criminal justice employees
6. school employees
7. food pantry employees
8. ESL teachers
9. HeadStart teachers
10. agricultural agents or farmers
11. employers of Latino workers
12. bank employees
13. DMV employees
14. Housing Services employees
15. elected officials

Triangulated sampling strategies drew from initially diverse participant perspectives and experiences of community resources and included others who had relevant perspectives to corroborate findings. Snowball sampling was also used to triangulate perceptions of those who might hold relevant perspectives.

### **3. Enhancing interviews**

In this study, the interview format, questions, and level of moderator involvement were designed to maximize dialogue among participants and exploration and inclusion of participant perspectives in the development of the needs assessment (Morgan, 1997). We triangulated interview questions by including a focus on what is working as well as questions about what could be improved. Asking about what is working well and what needs improvement offers a more realistic and balanced perspective of communities as providing well for some needs, while needing to improve others.

The design of previous studies, while understandable, may have compromised the validity of the results by utilizing facilitators from area Catholic churches, compensating participants through their employers, and interviewing participants at their work sites. If interview facilitators are too closely identified

with the Church, interview participants may be reluctant to disclose difficulties associated with the Church or ways in which they believe churches could be more helpful to them. In the same way, participants who are compensated for their time by their employers may be reluctant to speak about barriers the employers themselves are associated with. To ensure that participants could freely express all of their perspectives, this study utilized facilitators who were not identified by religious affiliation or church, and all participants were compensated by UWEX, not employers. Finally, previous studies interviewed participants at their work sites to facilitate accessibility. To ensure that the interview venue itself did not cue or inhibit any perspectives, this study used various public venues for the interviews (e.g., library, UWEX buildings) and provided transportation to the interview venues as needed.

#### **4. Enhancing data analyses**

Previous studies relied on individual participant responses gathered during one interview and analyses conducted by the facilitators alone. In addition to possible biases introduced by facilitators affiliated with area churches, this approach may limit the reliability of the findings by limiting analytic interpretation to those participating in the interview. To enhance reliability of perceptions, the interviews in this study were analyzed using a consensus-building interviewing model in which participants themselves arrive at a group consensus about the most important or salient needs after brainstorming all possible perspectives (e.g., Poorman, 2002). Making participants co-analysts by using their consolidation responses to establish the initial category coding and including UWEX educators as co-analysts added analyst triangulation. Input from UWEX educators assumed to have expert knowledge of each community further added validity by triangulating interpretation of the data (Flick, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Consultation with those whose first language is Spanish added to validity of the interpretations. All co-analysts worked in a consensus decision-making model

to arrive at meanings, which paralleled the focus group consolidation process, further ensuring interpretive validity. Constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998) with the verbatim transcripts enhanced confirmability of resulting needs (Creswell, 1998).

Previous studies were based on a one-shot interview with a convenience sample of area Latinos. In this study, the project developers considered it important to know that the findings could be repeated if conducted at different times or with different participants. In other words, they wanted resulting program initiatives to be based on ongoing community needs. In addition to asking participants in five different counties for their perspectives, this study asked participants to answer questions about their own experiences and set up “as if” interview questions to triangulate reliability (Patton, 2002). Questions such as “When you and your family first moved here, what would have made your life easier?” and “What do you think would make the lives of Latinos and their families who are new to this area better?” were developed.

Several other triangulation strategies increased result consistency. To establish reliability in the categorical interpretations, transcripts were reviewed and analyses checked for accuracy by three different people familiar with qualitative analysis, but who had not been involved in the interviews. Participant responses within each category code were quantified across code and group to (a) verify each group’s relative impact on the overall assessment, (b) ensure group parity in contribution to the findings, and (c) acknowledge possible intergroup differences and similarities.

Finally, as is common in qualitative studies, detail about the participants, the process, and the analysis invites readers to determine transferability of the results to other people or communities (Creswell, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Patton, 2002; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

# Method

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This study utilized a qualitative research design. Data were collected through focus group interviews. A focus group interview is an interview in which a group of participants with the most relevant perspective to the research questions are asked to respond to several questions and in the process, dialogue is encouraged to facilitate development of participant perspectives (Morgan, 1988). Focus groups were selected as the most appropriate means of collecting data for several reasons. We hoped that the method might serve to enhance community-building as one benefit to the participants in this process. Focus group interviews offer (a) an emphasis on dialogue and synthesis for generating knowledge and understanding and (b) participants' interactions with one another and the moderator as a means of developing and exploring their perspectives. Focus groups are recommended for exploring new topics (Morgan, 1997). Finally, using a method of gathering information that did not rely on literacy skills facilitated the inclusion of participants whose educational backgrounds ranged from an elementary education (common in Mexico) to possible doctorates.

Each focus group was comprised of participants recruited through criterion-based, maximum diversity, and snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 2002). Three focus groups were conducted in each of the five targeted counties: one group of community service providers with any ethnic background (five groups total) and two groups of area Latinos (ten groups total). Altogether, fifteen focus groups were convened for this study. The 156 participants in the study constituted key community stakeholders from each county.

***Facilitators.*** Trained facilitators/moderators—one male and one female—conducted each interview. Bilingual facilitators whose first language is Spanish conducted the focus groups for Latino participant groups. Bilingual facilitators conducted the focus group interviews for community service provider groups. Each

facilitator had some background in interviewing prior to their involvement in the project, and each received eight hours of additional training from the research consultant in research ethics, research interviewing, and crisis intervention.

Facilitators used a low-moderator involvement approach recommended for exploratory studies (Morgan, 1988). This process involves moderators posing questions and paraphrasing each participant's responses without interpreting responses and emphasizing drawing in participants who may speak less frequently. Facilitators also kept track of the time allotted for each question and for the consolidation process.

***Interviews.*** All focus group interviews were conducted within a 12-week period (March–May 2003). Each interview was conducted on a different day to prevent data drift. Consistent with their mission, UWEX offices included nutritious snacks and childcare for all participants. When requested or required, participants were provided with transportation to and from the interviews. As participants arrived, each was greeted by facilitators and UWEX educators, children were guided to onsite childcare, and food was offered. Childcare, meals, and transportation not only allowed lower-income participants to be included in the interviews, but also began valuable networking for later services and programs provided by the same UWEX offices.

Each interview began with a standardized statement presented by the facilitators and informed consent process (see Appendix B). Participants were then asked how long they had been in the county and what had brought them there. Following these ice-breaker questions, the study questions were asked. Participants were encouraged to discuss their perceptions with other participants and the facilitator.

Following the interviews, participants completed a demographic questionnaire and a form that asked them to identify other potential participants (see Appendix B). Participants were compensated with a \$20 gift certificate from a

local grocery or discount store and informed that they may donate the honorarium if they wished.

***Documents.*** With input from the UWEX educators, the research consultant composed, edited, and scripted initial participant invitations (e.g., phone and in-person contacts), letters confirming participation, the initial description of the study that participants received, informed consent forms, introductory statements to each group, and the interview questions. All participant information regarding the project (e.g., invitations by phone or in-person, confirmation letters, informed consent forms) and the questions for each interview were developed in English, translated into Spanish, and then back-translated prior to their use to ensure validity of both English and Spanish versions of the documents and scripts.

***Additional Participant Safeguards.*** We expected that participants might benefit from an increased awareness of area services and programs and a reduced sense of isolation in regard to the challenges they have faced and that they might also benefit from any program or service enhancements that resulted from the study. However, since the focus groups would likely include participants without legal documentation of citizenship or residency, reassuring participants of their anonymity was critical to recording valid information. Additional safeguards were put in place to ensure anonymity of participants. Participants were advised of these safeguards in advance (Appendix C). It was also possible that in addressing challenges they had faced, some participants would be reminded of traumatic or harmful experiences and that such memories might be uncomfortable. Participants were advised in their first language of the voluntary nature of their participation, that they could choose not to answer any question, that they could leave at any time, and that they could request to have the recorder turned off. Further, facilitators were trained to identify participant discomfort and to make immediate and effective interventions and follow-up referrals for professional help as necessary. For each county, appropriate supportive services were identified and

presented to participants on the informed consent form. Participants themselves determined whether the risk of possible discomfort was acceptable.

***Interview Questions for Latino Participant Groups.***

- What brought you to [insert community name]?
- What's working well here for you/your family?
- What barriers have you encountered since coming to [insert community name]?
- What would make your life and your family's life better?
- What training or educational programs would you like to have that you haven't found?
- What else should we know about your experiences here?

***Interview Questions for Community Service Provider Groups.***

- What is your organization currently doing to meet the needs of Latinos in your community? In your organization?
- What's working well for Latinos in your community? In your organization?
- What barriers/challenges do you think Latino families encounter in your community? In your organization?
- What sorts of challenges have you/your organization faced in meeting the needs of Latinos in your community? In your organization?
- What needs of Latinos aren't being met in your community? In your organization?
- What else should we know about your experiences?

***Data Preparation.*** Spanish and English interview data was transcribed verbatim by one of the facilitators whose first language is Spanish. Transcription was relatively contemporaneous to allow for follow-up interviews as needed and adjustments to the interview protocol. Transcripts were formatted by a professional

editor and writer who also edited Spanish transcripts for language flow consistent with the speaker's first language. In preparing the transcripts, no identifying information was associated with individual responses. Verbatim transcripts identified each participant only with a "V" for voice. Moderators/facilitators were identified in the transcripts with an "M." Consent forms and tapes were kept in a secure location selected for this purpose. Transcription was completed June 2003. Review and editing of the transcripts was completed in January 2004. (See Appendix E for a sample transcript.)

*Analyses.* Each 90-minute interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Two independent research assistants reviewed each of the transcripts for accuracy. The resulting data were analyzed qualitatively, using a thematic content analysis and the constant comparison method recommended to ensure that results adequately captured participant perspectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Analyses began with participants themselves determining the most salient needs and final analyses were conducted by the facilitators, UWEX educators, and the research consultant (seven people total). Analyses were reviewed independently to ensure reliability in categorical interpretations.

After each verbatim transcript had been proofread and formatted, UWEX educators were trained to complete the initial fracturing of the data (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Tesch, 1991). Each educator examined the transcripts line-by-line for data (e.g., utterances, actions, events) and then broke participant responses into individual units of data related to each question. Educators then prepared the fractured data for initial categorization by recording each data unit onto a card identified by county, key participant characteristics, and date of the interview.

Initial categorization, sometimes called open-coding (Glaser, 1978), was completed manually. The facilitators, UWEX educators, and the research consultant gathered in a large room with multiple rows of conference tables. Each educator began sorting her or his data units into coherent themes expressed by participants.

Other educators were encouraged to assimilate their data into thematically driven categories and to modify or change categories to accommodate new input. During the process, each data unit was examined for meaning and its intended meaning was clarified by the facilitators, who had first-hand knowledge of participants' intent. This analysis of each category to determine its implications moved into the next analytic posture to prepare for axial coding. In axial coding, assessments were made about the degree to which each response fit provisional assignment to a category (Glaser, 1978; Spradley, 1979, 1980; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Tesch, 1991). Educators sought consensus about meaning before sorting data units into categories. In this way, the encoding process for inclusion of additional data units grew directly out of the perceptions of the participants, and the data interpretations of the educators, facilitators, and the research consultant. Because this part of the process is often relatively intuitive, the research consultant regularly asked educators and facilitators what criteria were being used for inclusion in a particular category before additional data were assimilated.

Relationships between the variable categories (i.e., axial coding) also evolved out of the emerging categories as facilitators and educators discussed how information categories were related to one another (Tesch, 1991). Finally, as educators, facilitators, and consultant systematically related each core category to all other categories and validated the relationships with the encoded data, categories were further refined and developed that reflected theoretical saturation (Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and conceptual maps began to emerge about the category domains, the properties of each domain, and dynamic relationships between the domains for each question. Educators, facilitators, and research consultant began mapping visual models that emerged from the data. (See Appendix H for conceptual models.)

Quantitative analyses were conducted to determine whether and in what ways the counties differed in terms of age, number of professionals, ethnic composition, and quantity of responses in general and the response consistency

across groups and categories. This study also utilized previously researched methods for ensuring consistent input across groups. Some researchers advocate methods of categorizing each response as general, variant, or typical (e.g., Hayes, McCracken, McClanahan, Harp, Carozzoni & Hill, 1998) or invariant, variant answers, rare answers (e.g. Rhodes, Hill, Thompson & Elliott, 1994). In this study, group percent of total responses were calculated (Poorman, 2002). These features ensured the validity of the models as reflecting common results.

Responses of groups from each county were analyzed separately following essentially the same process, though individual county responses were sorted with only the UWEX educator and research consultant present. Each individual county response grouping was compared to the categorical groupings as a whole.

Finally, community service provider group responses were analyzed separately and compared to Latino group responses to determine similarities and differences in perspectives held by community service providers and the targeted consumers of the services.

# The Participants

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Demographic data are reported first to demonstrate frequency distributions of specific demographic characteristics and potential differences between group demographic characteristics. One hundred fifty-six people from five counties participated in the focus group interviews. Participants answered several background questions about themselves.

***Ethnicity.*** One hundred fifty-four participants answered the question about their ethnicity.

- 124 participants identified as Latino
- 27 participants identified as Anglo-European
- 3 identified with other ethnic groups

One hundred Latino participants took part in the ten focus group interviews that included Latinos only. Twenty-seven Latinos and 21 Anglos took part in the five focus group interviews that included community service providers.

***Age.*** One hundred-forty participants completed the demographic question about age.

- Participants ranged in age from 18–67
- Mean age of participants was 37.4 years
- Median age was 35.5 years
- Distribution of ages was multimodal

There were no significant age differences between participants in the Latino groups as a whole and participants in the community service provider groups as a whole. There were no significant differences in age between the community service provider groups and the Latino group participants in Walworth, Dane, or Dodge counties. Age differed significantly between the Latino participant groups and the community service provider groups in Rock and Jefferson counties. Rock county community service providers were significantly younger (an average of 9.75 years)

than Latino group participants ( $t = 2.46, p < .05$ ) and Jefferson county community service providers were significantly younger (an average of 14 years) than Latino group participants ( $t = 6.76; p < .01$ ).

***Disability.*** Seventy-eight participants completed questions about disability status. Four of these participants (2.6%) identified themselves as disabled.

***Length of Time in the United States.*** Latino group participants had been in the United States and their counties for different lengths of time. The most recent immigrant to the United States had arrived within a week of the interview. A number of participants had been born and raised in the United States. Many had initially immigrated to southwestern states like Texas or California. Some reported moving to Wisconsin from Chicago.

***Reasons for Immigrating to the United States.*** Most of the participants gave work-related reasons for immigrating to the United States or moving to their current county of residence. They or someone in their family had been seeking work, more work, better work opportunities, more economic stability and progress, and/or better opportunities for advancement. Occupations included a range from unskilled labor to professions requiring higher education, certificates, or licenses in their countries of origin and the United States. The second most frequent reason given for immigrating to the United States was to join family members already living here or to get settled prior to making arrangements for family members to join them. Other rationales included immigrating for educational opportunities for themselves or their children, general quality of life (e.g., increased trust, decreased corruption, tranquility), and basic needs (e.g., personal safety, less discrimination, cheap rents, hunger, and family illness).

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“We are here looking for jobs; we are here looking for better opportunities for living.”  
~~Latino participant from Dane county

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# Overall Results of 5-County Interviews

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Results are reported for all five counties together and for community service provider groups and Latino participant groups separately. Finally community service provider responses are compared to responses of Latino group participants.

## **WHAT'S WORKING WELL?**

Results indicated that as a whole group, participants recognized and appreciated a number of services and programs. The most consistent and frequent responses were related to, as several participants put it, “American’s helping Latinos economically.”

*Latino Participant Groups.* Latino participant groups reported that government assistance programs (e.g., medical assistance, WIC, Food Pantry, food stamps, Public Health, vaccination programs, HeadStart, Evenstart, Community Action) and private non-profit organizations (e.g., YMCA, St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army) were working well. They also specifically identified job programs (e.g., employment agencies, Job Service, newspaper ads, Dislocated Workers Program) as well as the fact of finding better jobs in the United States as positive. Participants appreciated a number of education-related services or programs, such as English tutors, free-schooling, co-workers attending Spanish language classes, and schools offering direct contact and support for their children’s needs. One participant appreciated getting a car for personal transportation, a comment that stood in sharp contrast to other concerns about the absence of public transportation. A couple of responses indicated participants appreciated the police “ doing their job.”

*Community Service Provider Groups.* The community service provider groups represented or identified a number of different programs and services for Latinos that fell into the following categories:

- bilingual language services (to Latinos; to service providers)
- comprehensive social or human services
- law enforcement/legal services
- human services
- religious services
- financial services
- health services
- collaborative services (focused on networking; coordinating other services)
- education (preschool; youth; adult/continuing education; higher education)

Their response categories were not unlike those of the Latino participant groups, although the number of services and programs identified and the specificity of their responses were significantly different. One example of this was community service provider responses indicating 54 distinct government or private, non-profit services or programs, whereas Latino participant groups identified a total of 16. Community service provider responses demonstrated that they either represented or recognized healthcare (e.g., free health service through The Church, the Ronald McDonald bus for children, Health Net for dental, Spanish-speaking doctors, free clinics, an asthma program, community care programs, resources for cheaper healthcare and Child Clinic), food services (e.g., WIC and its accessibility), education (e.g., K-12 programs like ELL, staff development, cultural differences programs, good parent–teacher relationships, bilingual teachers, 4K program, scholarship for classes), and access to post-secondary education without a social security number (e.g., post-secondary ESL classes, English tutors, teaching English, offering students ID numbers, after-school programs) as educational programs or

services working well to meet the needs of Latinos. Community service providers also represented agencies that meet spiritual needs and cited increasing Latino populations in their churches as something they perceived to be positive. Community service providers perceived some communication/translation to be working well and offered examples like DMV signage in Spanish, some police documents translated into Spanish, and easier access to driver's licenses, professional translators, Spanish-speaking staff, and efforts to increase communication between teachers and families. Community service providers, like the Latino group participants, offered that some aspects of employment services were working well (e.g., training programs, help with employment applications). Working to create more available/affordable housing, group meetings on rental assistance, referrals to other agencies for rent assistance, and financial assistance for housing were also identified as working well. Finally, community service providers in the five-county area identified activities that revolved around coalition-building (e.g., working with other agencies and Spanish Center, programs at some community centers and churches, an available city manager and council people, agencies making referrals to other agencies), networking among Latinos through organizations (e.g., Espirito Esperanza, La Sup, a quarterly Spanish newsletter), respect between professionals and Latino clients, developing relationships with trust, and incorporating values in programs that seemed to reflect building relationship-building as positive.

Community service providers also identified comprehensive services (e.g., childcare, academic support programming, financial services, ESL classes, help with taxpayer identification, home visitation programs, UWEX offices in one county), a Spanish department of police, Spanish documents, financial services (e.g., being able to open a bank account without documentation or with a W-7 form, using taxpayer identification numbers, being able to file income tax reports) as positive. In two counties, community service providers reported they did not require social

security numbers for school registration, had a law enforcement officer involved in a Latino Coalition, and had programs that taught legal rights.

*Summary.* Latino group participants appreciated the extent to which Americans go to help them economically and cited a number of government assistance and private, non-profit organizations that they knew of that supported this perception. There was agreement between the responses of the two groups about awareness of some of the specific programs and services offered and the value of those programs. Community service providers, who represented specific and comprehensive services and programs in the area, also identified services and programs that had not been identified by Latino participant groups and appeared to perceive some coalitions and relationship-building efforts not recognized by Latinos.

## **WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS THAT LATINOS FACE?**

Responses from both Latino and community service provider groups emphasized substantial barriers in daily living faced by Latinos in south central Wisconsin (see Appendix G, Table 1). This question drew the largest number of and richest responses in every county and from every group.

*Latino Participant Groups.* Language and literacy barriers, documentation barriers, and discrimination/cultural ignorance as barriers constituted the largest number of responses and the most uniform agreement about barriers faced. These three barriers were perceived to have direct and indirect effects on each other and on most or all of the other barriers identified. They are therefore grouped together. Barriers included discrimination, language and literacy, documentation, worker and worker's rights, healthcare, housing, children's welfare, churches, no Latino center, education, accessing information, and law enforcement.

### **●Discrimination**

Latino group participant responses indicated greatest frequency and consistency in reporting discrimination/ethnocentricity, language and literacy

barriers, and barriers that resulted from not having legal documentation of citizenship/immigrant status. All three issues were so interconnected that separating their impact would be nearly impossible. In other words, discrimination was not only reported as a general theme, but showed up relative to language and documentation and was consistently reported in other specific categories of barriers (e.g., work and worker's rights, healthcare, housing, children's welfare, churches).

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“. . . an American thinks that because one does not speak English, [one] cannot do the job; one is not disabled, one can work like anybody else . . .but they want you to speak as if you were born an American . . .”

~~Latino participant from Jefferson county

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Latino group participants noted not only discrimination, but also bilateral cultural ignorance as a barrier they faced. They noted being taken advantage of because they lacked certain rights, discrimination by professionals, employers, whole communities, and unequal treatment in public places. They wanted to see fewer stereotypes, equal rights on the job, equal treatment in public places, and more resources for people who do not speak English. They noted a lack of understanding of law enforcement procedures, difficulties in understanding different cultures, and labor laws as barriers.

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“I think . . . another barrier is that sometimes these programs for Hispanics are designed by Anglos who focus more on getting the language communication in place and don't devote enough time to the other issues of culture that need to be part of making someone feel comfortable in that setting.”

~~Community service provider from Walworth county

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### ●Language and literacy

Language and literacy constituted significant barriers in terms of lack of interpreters, lack of training in English, lack of convenient classes in English, lack of support from the community, books being written in English, lack of initiative to learn English, lack of Spanish documents, and the need to learn English in order to get a job.

## ●Documentation

Not having documentation of citizenship or residency status was perceived to constitute a number significant barriers such as discrimination and distrust from various agencies, job availability, opportunities for higher education, a general lack of resources, unfair medical practices, difficult or impossible banking, housing, support, and driver's licenses. Participants perceived a need for information about how to get documents and accurately perceived the process of documentation to be lengthy and the immigration laws strict. Several Latino participants commented on the availability of illegal documents as a means of access to services.

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"You get paid less than an American for being illegal or for the fact that we don't speak English."

~~Latino participant from Dane county

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"I think that people just don't know what's going on, and what are some of the challenges we have. Do they know that most of these individuals have a challenge in getting a social security number? Do they know that most of them have two or three families living in the same home?"

~~Community service provider from Dane county

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". . . people have to live . . . these obstacles that are there, they're going to continue . . . in other countries there are the laws and . . . there are two ways of living. One is you follow the laws and the other one is the real reality . . . and to an extent that's much closer. [There is difference a] difference between the law and how you live. . . it's the way things are."

~~Latino participant from Walworth county

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## ●Work and worker's rights

Employment, although recognized as better in the United States, was not without barriers for Latinos. Some of the most consistently and frequently reported barriers were the work-related barriers that included lack of available work, employers not accepting international training or credentials, and a lack of time to train for career development. In addition, many noted that employers failed to honor worker's rights and discriminated against or exploited Latino

## On work and worker's rights:

"Some four years ago, it was really easy to have two to three jobs in this area because there weren't a lot of people. But now there is a Hispanic increment, and so resources need to grow, and for the people, it is very difficult to find employment."

~~Community service provider from Walworth county

"I have a profession, some knowledge, well, I have no other choice but to accept a job washing dishes . . . working 12 hours and earning for 8 hours."

~~Latino participant from Dane county

"I also think a lot of employers take advantage of the situation where they pay the people who don't speak English a lot less than they would pay them, because they know that they probably don't have documents."

~~Community service provider from Dodge county

"I was working, but I had to leave it because I had babysitting for two, so I was paying more in babysitting than what I was making at the job."

~~Latino participant from Jefferson county

"The jobs we have are very exhausting. We work without having a good salary, without benefits, for cartoon salaries."

~~Latino participant from Rock county

"So they have a job, and they're not legal. They are afraid to complain about things because there are only two or three companies where they can really go and find work when they are not documented."

~~Community service provider from Dodge county

employees. There was little information about worker's rights. Most who reported these difficulties also reported that they knew they were "being treated unfairly because [they] were undocumented." Although most responses indicated there was plenty of work, there was little job security. Myriad basic needs and services were beyond many Latinos' financial means.

### ●Healthcare

Healthcare is an issue of enormous proportions throughout the United States and particularly among those who are disenfranchised or disempowered, or groups of people whose job status does not afford them insurance. Latino participants in this study were no exception when they reported barriers that included not having "health services in Spanish," "help with the cost of medical care," "cheaper healthcare," "equal treatment by doctors and nurses," "insurance to help pay medical bills," ". . . mental health, . . . psychological, and . . . counseling . . . services," "better [health]care for [their] children," and "better access to health clinics and dental services." On a related note, participants reported that they needed "cheaper insurance" and "more available medical assistance."

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". . . they see their bill and they don't go back ever again, unless in an emergency. They take their children . . . only . . . when it's an emergency; otherwise they don't go because . . . the bills are real high."

~Community service provider from Walworth county

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### ●Housing

Participants also reported housing barriers in terms of the need for "help with rent," "available housing for undocumented laborers," "racial discrimination in housing," "limits to the number of residents in the house," "the need for a better quality of housing," and "more affordable housing."

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"They ask you for the deposit amount and one month in advance, which many of the people don't have to give give—\$1,200 for example—to enter the apartment. Very difficult. Another thing is that they limit the number of people that live there. And here we have large families . . . when you arrive, a relative has to give you a place to live and you get him in trouble."

~Latino participant from Walworth county

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### ●Children’s welfare

Participants noted that Latino children face multiple barriers. These barriers included being misdiagnosed as having mental disorders for not speaking English well, being rejected by teachers, language barriers in schools, being influenced by the culture of their peers, the absence of programs for Latino youth, having no legal status for continuing education, and having recreational activities that are not affordable. The participants also perceived child labor laws as a barrier.

### ●Churches

Churches posed barriers in terms of outright discrimination, but also cultural differences in religions, language barriers, stereotyping by religious leaders, and a lack of funding to attend church and a lack of support by churches.

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“. . . now that Centro Guadalupe is more elegant, more ample . . . now the services are more restricted; before . . . the service was more humane, people would listen to you . . . now the first thing they ask you . . . is if we are Catholic . . . these services are Catholic services . . . I declare myself Catholic, even a monkey, whatever you want.”

~~Latino participant from Dane county

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### ●No Latino center

Participants reported as a barrier the absence of a centralized agency to provide support, break cultural barriers, and offer funds for activities or inexpensive services. From their reports, it was clear that “center” did not necessarily mean a building, but rather a point person or people who had accurate, recent, and consistent information about local and statewide services, practices, and policies.

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“. . . I think I would need an organization that I would feel protects me, orients me, helps me to reach my objective, because right now, if I want to reach it, I am alone. I can’t achieve it.”

~~Latino participant from Dodge county

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### ●Education

Participants faced numerous educational barriers that included not having “childcare for workers who are students or parents,” “more access to basic English

classes," "making education available at home for homemakers," "smaller class sizes," "more supportive educators," "cheaper education," "more validation of international credentials," and a perception or realistic appraisal that ". . . in the U.S., only select people can be educated." Perhaps one of the more difficult realizations was the fact that no matter how intelligent or accomplished their children may be, Latinos without documentation would always face access discrimination in higher education.

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"We have many adolescents, very intelligent, that they are capable to pursue a career, and they have the aspiration, but they can't."

~~Community service provider from  
Walworth county

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". . . they graduated with honors, right, but only up to where they reached, because [with] their legal status they cannot. They will register for college and they will immediately ask them for their legal status and they don't have it, so they reject them . . . even though they may be very intelligent people, they cannot go on studying."

~~Community service provider from Jefferson county

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### ● Accessing information

Participants noted barriers in accessing accurate information. They cited the lack of advertised information services, use of radio shows, need for legal information, and the census as indicating inaccurate information as barriers.

### ● Law enforcement

Participants perceived discrimination by law enforcement agencies in terms of tickets and a general lack of trust by law enforcement officials.

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"I have heard from my children's classmates in high school who have serious problems, and some are still in jail for lack of lawyers."

~~Community service provider from  
Walworth county

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### ●Other needs

Less commonly mentioned, but no less necessary were needs reported by participants for public transportation and funds for food.

*Community Service Provider Groups.* Community service providers recognized that Latinos in the five counties faced a number of barriers and also emphasized documentation, discrimination/cultural ignorance, and language and literacy. Participants across all five counties also recognized the need for work and worker's rights as significant barriers and, although it was less frequently noted, they perceived barriers internal to Latinos themselves. Education and healthcare were frequently reported as barriers to Latinos, although two community service provider groups each failed to report one of these issues as a significant barrier. Churches, housing, transportation, childcare/children's programs were reported less frequently as barriers and food, law enforcement, and Latino centers were each only reported by two of the counties.

*Summary.* In this five-county catchment, Latino and community service provider groups frequently and consistently reported documentation, discrimination, and language/literacy as major barriers Latinos face. Further, the three pervade nearly all of the other barriers Latinos mentioned and a number of the programs and services the community service providers mentioned. Barriers related to work and work-related rights were also of primary concern to both the Latino and the community service provider groups. Each of these barriers also prevented access to education, viable health/mental healthcare, housing, and language and literacy services. Latinos debated the relative importance of the role that internal and external barriers played, while community service providers across all five counties perceived internal barriers to constitute a significant barrier. Both community service provider and Latino participant groups recognized churches as playing a role in creating barriers to Latinos. Both community service provider and Latino participant groups perceived that Latino children faced a

number of barriers and recognized that it was difficult for Latinos to find reliable, coordinated information about services, programs, and policies. While not mentioned as frequently, both community service provider and Latino participant groups reported the need for Latino centers and food security. Both groups also reported that law enforcement was not administered fairly. Many participants concurred that Latinos had not been treated with respect, trust, or equity in law enforcement.

### **WHAT INTERNAL/ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS DO LATINOS FACE?**

In addition to recognizing that Latinos face a number of external and internal barriers, we wanted to know the extent to which community service providers were aware of organizational/institutional barriers Latino clients might face within their own organizations. Each group of community service providers was asked what barriers Latinos faced within the organization or agency they represented. In response to the question, the community service providers often continued reporting additional external barriers Latinos faced. They listed relatively few barriers endemic to their own organizations. Barriers they did identify included absent, fragmented, and underfunded services, problems in collaborating, differences between the rate of growth in the population versus the rate of growth in resources, difficulties in financial assistance, systemic language barriers, safety of Latino clients, discrimination, linguistic competency issues, and spiritual needs barriers.

### **WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR LIFE, YOUR FAMILY'S LIFE, AND THE LIVES OF LATINOS BETTER?**

This question was intended to address those programs, services, and policies that community service provider and Latino group participants identified as necessary to improve the quality of their lives. In some respects, this question added a slightly different perspective about what is keeping them from realizing their aspirations.

***Latino Participant Groups.*** Latino group participants identified a number of improvements that would make their lives or the lives of their families better (see Appendix G, Table 2). In order of frequency, consistency, or both frequency and consistency, responses fell into categories related to improvements in healthcare and health insurance, education, language and literacy services, documentation, work, Latino centers, childcare, transportation, cultural programs, children’s programs, and housing. Most suggestions for improvement followed directly from the reports of barriers Latinos faced.

Participants placed frequent and consistent emphases on improvements needed in healthcare (e.g., a center for family planning, translators at doctor’s offices, a clinic accessible to Latinos, help for pregnant women, access to affordable dental care, [alcohol] rehabilitation services for low-income clients, payment options for medical services, improved care and attention in the medical area, improved health sector, advertising locations of medical services, more available insurance, and fair medical care); language and literacy (e.g., more frequent use of translators,

more use of Spanish, more Hispanics in careers, more advertising of programs, more opportunities for learning English, more bilingual opportunities) and educational opportunities and access (e.g., improved English classes, Hispanic scholarships, magazine, support for those

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“When they started more openly as a center, as a place for people to come together, they had a greater potential for success because their program initiative came from the people. It came from what the people coming in the door wanted to have happen. Maybe the emphasis was on jobs and day care, and not so much on literacy, but the point is they had a center. They had a place to go, and they had a place to say what it is they wanted.”

~~Community service provider from Walworth county

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working on farms, making school, but specifically, career development available to all, and making education bilingual for all residents of the counties). Access to citizenship or residency documentation and other related needs was also emphasized (e.g., help in getting driver’s licenses, education about labor laws, organization help with documentation, improvements in IRS policies and practices).

Work issues were also frequently and consistently identified by participants as an area of concern (inspections to avoid discrimination at work, more stable work, more and better job availability, knowing worker's rights, and more flexible work schedules). Latino centers and childcare were frequently and consistently reported as improvements that would make life better. Transportation, children's programs and cultural sensitivity/awareness training were also mentioned as issues that, when addressed, would improve Latinos' lives. Finally, better and more affordable housing was mentioned in response to this question.

*Community Service Provider Groups.* Community service provider responses could be categorized like those of the Latino group participants. These included responses that fell into categories related to healthcare and insurance; improvements in education access and language and literacy (e.g., seeing getting education as a way to get the whole family educated, making education more flexible, improvements in ways to pay for their own courses, suggestions for adult family education, needing research to establish the best way to educate children with a different language, bilingual teachers, education about resources and living, and the need for appropriate available education); cultural training improvements (e.g., more resources to help Latinos adjust to United States culture, recognition that Latino families stay together, the need for bicultural staff, teaching cultural rights, family literacy, collaboration of community service providers, need for an elder as leader); documentation (e.g., educating people about rights, funds to aid in getting documents, legal visas, two cultures working together, more Latinos in the system to offer assistance and education about American culture); children's programs; transportation; and housing. Community organizing was mentioned twice in the community service provider groups and Latino centers and work-related improvements were each mentioned once.

There were significant differences in the frequency and consistency with which the community service providers and Latinos discussed work and work-related improvements and the need for centers or organized community responses.

The community service providers were significantly less likely than the Latino group participants to discuss these types of improvements.

**Summary.** Both Latino and community service provider groups reported similar major areas for improvements that included affordable and improved access to healthcare, language and literacy education, and documentation policies and practices. Community service providers made more frequent responses about the need for cultural awareness training. Latino group participants more frequently reported needed improvements in work, centralized services, and childcare. Both Latino and community service provider groups emphasized transportation, children's programs, and affordable and accessible housing less often than other improvements. The most marked differences between the two groups were their emphases on work and work-related improvements and the need for centralized or coordinated community service providers with Latino participant groups placing more emphasis on each than the community service provider groups.

### **WHAT TRAINING, EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, OR PROGRAMS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?**

As an indicator of programs that communities could offer, a check for consistency in responses about needed improvements, and to deepen understanding of Latinos awareness of education as a means to improve lives, participants were asked to identify educational services and programs that they would like to see. Responses indicated that Latinos wanted to see training related to educational opportunities, language and literacy training, work/job training, and community centers.

**Latino Participant Groups.** By far, the most frequent and consistent responses from each of the groups were about the higher education system. Participants wanted to see reductions in college/university tuition, making higher education more available to Latinos, making credits more easily transferable to universities, offering more subjects relevant to Latinos at universities, easier access

to higher education for migrant workers, scholarships to universities, school programs to finish careers, coping classes, health education, free personal development classes, help in goal setting, flexible scheduling at work to facilitate education, CDs and videos to study, community support for education, and specifically more hands-on community-support for education.

Participants also wanted to see increased language training, including bilingual preparation for careers, learning with cartoons, after-school programs to help youth with English homework, Hispanic channels, free English classes, Hispanic magazines, and more promotion of programs. Participants wanted training courses to be provided and more convenient work schedules to accommodate classes. They wanted to know about more job opportunities and a wider variety of careers. They also wanted more alternatives for people without social security number documentation. Some also commented on wanting programs or services to address specific health concerns (e.g., a group for diabetes and hypertension), training for bilingual medical translators, training to change other's attitudes, and training about Latino cultural heritage, the environment, and American culture.

***Community Service Provider Groups.*** Among community service provider groups, the most frequent responses were also about education, although the types of education they spoke of differed from responses given by the Latino participant groups. Community service providers wanted to see specific educational programs to address rights, education about Hispanic culture directed toward both the general community and law enforcement officers, American culture, and training programs for women. They also wanted to see Spanish classes, Adult ESL classes, a library program, and more Spanish language media geared toward language education. The community service

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“They also got me one day for speeding and, when I gave him my license, he asked me if I was sure my license was valid . . . as if saying maybe it was fake. And I told him, “Yes, it is good.’ He asked me, ‘Are you sure?’”

~~Latino participant from Walworth county

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providers also identified more programs for children and youth, such as exchange programs to teach language skills, a larger Spanish Girl Scout troop, early Spanish language education, and more after school programs. Some commented that they would like to see programs that addressed the topics of worker’s rights and income tax preparation, more bilingual healthcare workers, and more opportunities to share culture.

*Summary.* Both the Latino and the community service provider groups identified educational programs and services they would like to see. Latino participant group responses indicated considerable emphasis on programs that would educate them about opportunities in higher education, whereas the community service providers emphasized training about a variety of specific skills.

## CONSOLIDATION RESPONSES

After the study questions were explored and answered, each group was asked to identify what they perceived to be the most important ideas they had generated during the interviews. There was considerable overlap between responses of the Latino participant groups and the community service provider groups and some noteworthy disparities (see Appendix G, Table 3). Participant responses from all groups across all counties indicated recognition of the need for affordable, available, and appropriate health and mental healthcare, language and literacy skills, and changes related to documentation policies and practices. The Latino participant groups consistently and frequently placed healthcare at the top of their most important issues. Of great importance and second only to healthcare as the most consistently reported across the Latino participant groups were concerns about documentation and language/literacy skills. The community service provider groups, however, consistently and frequently listed language and

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“I am seeking healthcare services for my baby because I am insured and not my husband, and our baby will not be insured when it is born and that is very expensive, even with Blue Cross that we have managed to get, to maintain the household budget.”  
~~Latino participant from Dodge county

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literacy skills at the top of their most important issues, with healthcare and documentation mentioned as almost as important. Worker's rights, Latino centers, youth programs and services, the availability of work, and transportation were listed by most Latino participant groups as among the most important issues raised. Discrimination was also perceived by the Latino participant groups to be one of the most important issues raised in the interviews and, in two counties, it was perceived to be the most important of all of the issues raised. Community service provider groups in most counties identified cultural sensitivity as among the most important issues raised. Finally, in two counties, childcare was identified as one of the most important issues raised. Community service provider groups did not prioritize childcare training and identified only language and literacy services for youth among their most important priorities.

***Summary.***

By far, the most striking difference in the response priorities given by the groups was the importance placed by the Latino participant groups on discrimination and the complete absence of this in the lists of priorities developed by the community service provider groups. Recognizing the need for cultural sensitivity was considered among the most important for the community service providers and certainly indicates an appreciation of the need to reduce ethnocentrism. Experiencing discrimination first-hand would, no doubt, make the lived

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“. . . we gave [an award] out in May so we did the presentation for the family in Spanish and English because in some cases we know the parents don't know English and if they do, it's not very well. Yes, some of them know English, but . . . I was criticized for having done it in Spanish and English. This is in a university setting by people who are administrators; people who are professors. I was criticized: why did I have to waste people's time by doing it in Spanish?"

~~Community service provider

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experience more salient for the Latino group participants. However, it is also important to note that not being aware of or acknowledging discrimination as among the priorities for Latinos could certainly compromise the effectiveness of

services and programs intended to help Latinos. In fact, each of the conceptual models that emerged from the data suggest that to be most useful, services and programs for Latinos must be embedded in a thorough understanding about the impact of discrimination, racism, and ethnocentrism, documentation policies and practices, and the impact that language and literacy education barriers have for Latinos.

## **CONCEPTUAL MODELS**

When all analyses were complete, analysts conceptualized the relationship between the themes the interview questions had generated. Several models and common themes emerged (see Appendix H for models). One model identified the disparities between the expectations Latino residents immigrated with and the realities they found in the United States. At the top of the model one sees the expectations reported by the Latino group participants. They came to the United States expecting to find what many Americans already consider a myth—that anyone who works hard enough will be able to access at least basic needs. The fact that there are plenty of jobs, however, doesn't translate into a living wage and the jobs themselves may actually have become a barrier to meeting even basic living expenses or needs like housing, transportation, medical, mental health, and dental care. In addition, educational barriers, language barriers, barriers in documentation/legitimacy, and social, institutional, cultural, internal, and horizontal oppression and discrimination erect walls that continue to prevent access to these basic needs.

Another model that depicts the findings as a whole shows a Maslowian type hierarchy of needs encircled by bilateral cultural ignorance. This model demonstrates the concepts reported in this study that mental health, self-esteem, self-sufficiency, and even education are goals that must be supported by access to basic services like health, transportation, and housing, and that all of these rest on a foundation of either adequate work or access to entitlement programs. It is the absence of discrimination or being/feeling welcomed that supports movement

toward either work or entitlement programs. This is the case for any people who are not welcomed or who are discriminated against whether the discrimination is due to ethnicity, race, age, sex, ability, or orientation. In the case of Latinos in the United States, language and literacy skills not only provide unique salience for responses about the unwelcome or discriminatory nature of their experience, but also constitute another foundation for either avoiding or facing discrimination or for being unwelcome.

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“I went to a restaurant, my sister and I. We went in. We were there some 20 minutes waiting for them to seat us. They still did not wait on us. They attended some Americans who would arrive, and we would think maybe they had reservations. In time, we went and sat at a table. They never served us. We were there 1 hour and 25 minutes. We got up. I went and talked to the supervisor and we left.”

~~Latino participant from Dodge county

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Finally, documentation constitutes another foundation unique to Latino immigration as well as a unique foundation from which virtually all upward movement proceeds. Whether one will access language and literacy skills, be welcomed or discriminated against, work or access entitlement programs to access medical needs, food, housing, transportation, and move on to feel more self-sufficient, get more education, and effect mental health, ultimately depends, for Latinos, on documenting their legitimacy as residents in their communities, educating for literacy and language proficiency, and ameliorating the effects of discrimination. While some debate took place about the relative importance of documentation, this is perhaps less important than the fact that it pervades the perceptions of the Latinos who participated in this study. Language and literacy, documentation, and discrimination create the circumstances under which poverty or inadequate incomes thrive, which limits access to basic needs, much less personal or professional advancement.

In the model depicting community service provider responses to Latino needs, professional services and program responses are conceptualized as pieces of the puzzle of addressing basic Latino needs with some appreciation of the language

and documentation barriers. Without the crucial understanding of the role that discrimination plays, the services and programs—like the puzzle pieces—remain fragmented. In a sense then, this model suggests that it is an understanding of the role of discrimination that will bring much needed cohesion to the picture of addressing Latino needs.

In summary, the models conceptualizing the results of this study indicate that difficulties in documentation, language and literacy skills training, discrimination, racism, ethnocentricity, and welcoming attitudes or cultural appreciation, may impact access to work or entitlement programs that facilitate communities meeting basic or advanced needs of Latino residents. Being able to access only or predominantly minimum wage or low paying jobs forms a solid wall barring access to both higher education and basic needs. Better pay and documentation may facilitate better access to language and literacy. Documentation, but also less ethnic discrimination, certainly facilitates access to education, better healthcare, housing, transportation, and food. Professionals recognizing the impact of documentation policies and practices, language and literacy education, and racial/ethnic discrimination will likely create more effective programs and services to address the needs and experiences of, and barriers faced in Wisconsin communities with growing Latino populations.

“Curiously, the Americans like Mexican food; the Americans like our country. I mean . . . like Cancun . . . like Playa del Carmen, Puerto Vallarta. The only things that the Americans don’t like are the Mexicans.”

~~Latino participant from Dodge county

# Discussion

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All participants in this study identified programs, policies, and services in each county that were serving Latinos well. Latino group participants and community service providers differed in their awareness of the programs, services, and policies available. The community service providers reported many more services and programs available and with greater specificity than the Latino group participants.

All participants in this study identified significant barriers facing Latinos. The barriers that Latinos face are substantial and some are quite difficult to address at a local or programmatic level. For example, documentation was perceived as a major barrier by most of the participants, regardless of their own immigrant, citizen, or residency status, length of time in the United States, or ethnicity. Difficulties in the policies and practices related to documentation for Latinos will not be resolved at a county level. This does not mean that individual communities cannot effect improvements to address or ameliorate such barriers. Discrimination is certainly an ongoing issue facing many ethnic and other minority or disenfranchised people in the United States and will certainly not be resolved by UWEX or within these five counties. Nonetheless, some efforts to reduce racism and ethnocentrism, and to increase cultural appreciation are still in order.

Most Latinos in this study reported they immigrated to this country because of the prospects of full-time, well-paid work. For them, and many others who struggle with low incomes, economic development in Wisconsin must include more than simply drawing industries or businesses to Wisconsin. Industries and businesses must pay workers a living wage that affords access to basic needs. Economic development, then, must translate into creating not only more, but better jobs for a number of groups who can see the American dream, but have little prospect of accessing the dream. Reflected in various needs and barriers like

affordable and available healthcare, education, housing, and transportation was the desire for better jobs and working conditions. Many publicly subsidized services and programs address these concerns, but still there are barriers to Wisconsin Latinos.

Latino and community service provider groups frequently and consistently reported documentation, discrimination, and language/literacy as the major barriers Latinos face in this five county catchment. The three barriers pervade nearly all other barriers mentioned by the Latino groups and many of the programs and services mentioned by the community service provider groups as well. Work and work-related rights were also of primary concern. Each of these barriers prevented access to viable healthcare and mental healthcare, housing, education, and language and literacy services. In addition, they faced significant internal barriers, their children faced barriers, and it was difficult to find reliable information about services, programs, and policies. While not mentioned as frequently, law enforcement was not administered fairly and many concurred that they were afraid of or had not been treated with respect, trust, or equity by law enforcement officers.

Both Latino and community service provider groups reported that the major areas for broad improvements were in educational access and opportunities, documentation policies and practices, language and literacy education, centralized services, and to specific daily living exigencies like healthcare, transportation, cultural programs, and affordable/accessible housing. It appeared that work and length of time in this country might have determined whether documentation or language and literacy was considered more important. The need for language and literacy education and continuing services and need for information about services was also clear.

There were notable differences between the Latino participant groups and the community service provider groups about the availability and quality of services, the impact of the most significant barriers Latinos face, the organizational/institutional barriers Latinos face, and to some extent the educational

and training programs needed. However, the most striking difference was in the appreciation of the extent to which discrimination and American ethnocentricity influenced Latinos lived experience of services, programs, and policies in each county. While both groups recognized each of these in some of their conversations, Latino group participants perceived discrimination as among the most important issues raised; community service providers did not include it. On the other hand, community service providers saw cultural sensitivity as among the most important issues, and Latino group participants did not include this. It is possible that the community service providers groups were using cultural sensitivity to euphemistically include discrimination or that Latino participant groups were characterizing some acts as discrimination that were motivated by cultural ignorance alone. It is also possible that those faced with discrimination would find it more salient in their lives. This requires further investigation and attention to ensure that services and programs are bound together with an understanding of what it is to live with racism and discrimination.

The paucity of relevant responses in the community service provider groups made it difficult to assess the extent to which community service providers are aware of barriers Latino clients face in their own organizations and agencies. It is possible that community service providers simply did not wish to “air dirty laundry” about internal barriers to those outside their own organizations. It is also possible that they are unaware of the barriers they themselves may impose. “It is most difficult for fish to know the water” (Banning, 1992). It is often difficult for someone who is part of a particular process to sufficiently distance him or herself to comment on what that process is like. If they are unaware, this would certainly make improvements or addressing internal barriers difficult or impossible. Regardless, it appears from these interviews that community service providers could benefit from increasing their awareness of or willingness to report internal deficiencies or barriers in the interest of providing more effective services and programs for Latinos in their communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

Future studies could further enhance validity of the findings by including additional data collection methods (e.g., utilizing random community surveys with questions developed from these interviews, random or purposeful individual interviews using the same types of questions, specifically targeting undocumented persons, conducting focus groups with co-workers). Additional analyses of this data would also contribute to an even deeper understanding of Latino experiences in these five counties and others throughout Wisconsin. For example, a closer look at the Latino’s passionate debates about internal versus external barriers would be useful in designing programs and services that help

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*“These are my words.”*  
~~ending phrase often used by  
Latino participants from all five  
counties to close their comments  
during the interviews

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Latinos look at the nature of the barriers they face. Additionally, a closer examination of the impact of gender in the group interviews would be useful in determining whether separate services or surveys for men and women could identify additional issues. Interviews with Latino children or youth and service providers to Latino children and youth would shed additional light on the needs Latino children face and triangulate the reports of their parents.

Future needs assessment studies could also use these findings as a platform to construct surveys. Snowball or networked sampling strategies could identify many or even most Latinos across the state of Wisconsin to whom written or verbal surveys could be administered. Expanding the number of people responding to such questions could facilitate more in-depth quantitative analyses of the frequency of certain types of responses and issues, the rank order of different needs, services, or programs, or the precise relationship between the variables and demographics identified here. For example, it would be helpful to demonstrate whether those who have been in the country longer perceive different barriers than those who’ve been here a shorter time and would subsequently benefit from different educational services or programs; whether there are different needs or services that could be

identified at different points in time for Latino immigrants; and whether those who have held successful jobs in unskilled or skilled trades feel more or less affected than those in professional positions by documentation difficulties or their children's difficulties in gaining admission to higher education institutions. These are a few of many examples of ways in which additional analyses could contribute to understanding Latino experiences, needs, and difficulties in Wisconsin.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

Regardless of improvements that could refine understanding about Latino experiences and perceptions of needs in Wisconsin, this study resulted in rich findings that can serve as a valid, reliable, and transferable measure of needs within each county involved in the study and in south central Wisconsin in general. The areas of agreement and disparity between the counties, the Latino participant groups, and the community service providers who serve Latinos in each county gave rise to a number of recommendations for UWEX to address.

These results, for example, could be used to guide construction of a matrix that identifies "best practices and policies" in each county regarding Latinos and documentation; language and literacy education; training to reduce the incidence of discrimination, racism, and ethnocentrism or increase cultural sensitivity or appreciation; healthcare services and programs; and work and worker's rights programs. The matrix could then be distributed to both Latinos and community service providers in the area. A "point person" within each UWEX office could compile accurate information, ensure that the information is kept current, and advertise the "best" policies, practices, services, and programs to other UWEX offices to help encourage consistency. Community advocates or sponsors could be identified who would be willing to assist with concerns like transfer of professional credentials. If there are a number of people needing the same information, workshops utilizing these community Latino resource people would facilitate this, while a network of individual sponsors could help newcomers learn how to negotiate this issue. These are two of many examples of intervention or prevention

strategies that could evolve from these results to better serve communities that include many Latinos.

UWEX educators can use these findings to enhance their own awareness of the breadth of Latino needs and barriers facing Latinos in south central Wisconsin as a whole. UWEX could initiate new programming for Latinos and other community residents, document needs for maintaining services and programs for area residents including Latinos, expand services and programs based on documented needs, and enhance cohesion or coordination in some currently fragmented or decentralized services. The results can also form the basis of state and federal grant applications to fund programming and may be published or presented in various local, regional, and national venues.

By sharing the information learned from this study about Latino needs or by using this study as a template for conducting their own needs assessments, other Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Services may benefit. The sponsors, researchers, UWEX educators, and participants in this study anticipate that this study and other studies like it will lead to improvements in the lives of Latinos and their families, and in the communities that adapt and grow to better accommodate the needs of all community residents.

We also hope that from all of this, there will be something of benefit to the community we are in . . . . We want to thank the people who care about us, the Latinos, and who try to hear us from where we are unseen.

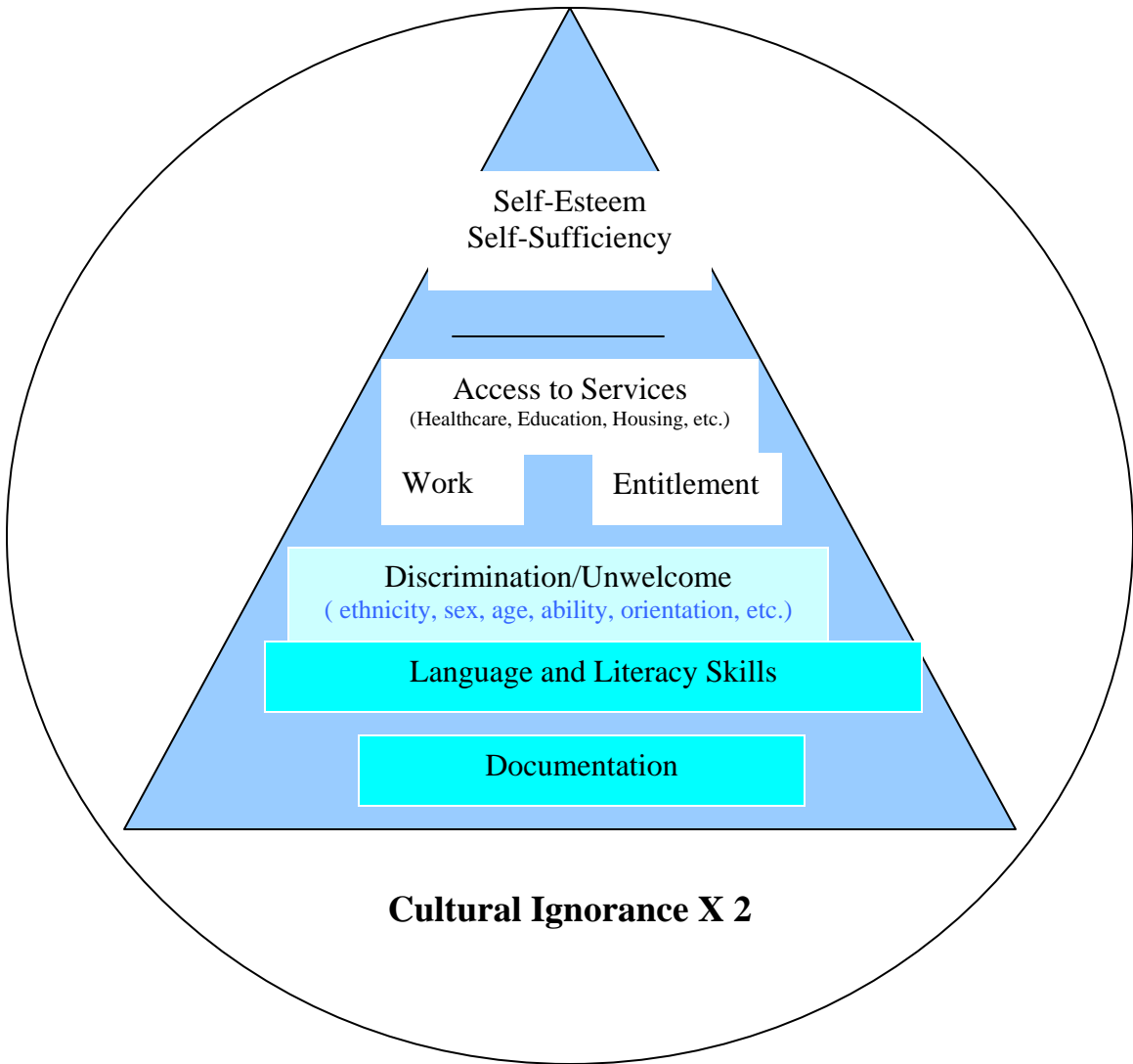
~~Latino participants from Dodge county

These are our words.

Table 1. What Barriers Do Latinos Face?<sup>1</sup>

LATINOS	COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS
Language & Literacy Barriers	Documentation Barriers
Documentation Barriers	Discrimination/Racism/Ethnocentrism Cultural Ignorance/ Oppression
Discrimination/Racism/Ethnocentrism Cultural Ignorance/ Oppression	Language & Literacy Barriers
Work & Worker's Rights Barriers	Work & Worker's Rights Barriers
Healthcare & Insurance Barriers	Educational Barriers
Housing Barriers	Healthcare & Insurance Barriers
Internal Barriers	Internal Barriers
Barriers Facing Children	Church-Related Barriers
Lack of Latino Community Center	Transportation Barriers
Information Barriers	Barriers Facing Children
Law Enforcement Barriers	Housing Barriers
	Information Barriers
	Insufficient Food
	Law Enforcement Barriers
	Lack of Latino Community Center

**Hierarchy of Needs**  
**Latino Specific**



Latinos

Housing  
Documentation  
Language  
Discrimination  
Care

Economic Development

Poverty  
Low-income

Limited  
Access

Education  
Health

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