

Bridging the Gap: The Case of a Latino Nonprofit Organization in Kansas

By

Madison G. Huber

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Donald D. Stull, Chair

Committee Members

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Peter H. Herlihy

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Brent E. Metz

Date Defended: April 13, 2011

The Thesis Committee for Madison G. Huber  
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Donald D. Stull, Chair

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## **ABSTRACT**

Madison G. Huber

Department of Anthropology

University of Kansas

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This thesis looks at Latino Resource Center, a Latino nonprofit organization in Sunflower, Kansas, and discusses whether this organization is benefiting the Latino population and the Sunflower community. Interviews with directors, board members, and clients show that although the center is helping its targeted clientele, the majority of Latinos are not receiving help. I suggest ways for the organization to better serve its client base by broadening its funding, recruiting experienced board members, involving individuals representative of the target population, and joining together with other Latino-serving individuals and agencies.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In 1965, the United States Congress enacted the Immigration and Nationality Act, which “lifted the barriers that had virtually halted immigration for forty years” (O’Neill 2002:82). New immigrants flowed out of Latin America and the Caribbean and from as far away as South and East Asia and the Middle East (Reimers 1983:9). Coming from so-called third world countries, many immigrants were fleeing unstable social and economic situations (ibid.:20).

Despite lifting some barriers, the United States still maintained a ceiling on immigration, and countries from both the eastern and western hemispheres were sooner or later subject to preference systems that selected against unskilled laborers and individuals without family ties in the U.S. (Reimers 1981:4-5). These limitations coupled with strong push factors in the sending countries coincided with a rise in illegal immigration. The majority of undocumented immigrants entered with few skills and little education and had difficulty speaking the language (ibid.:12).

The needs of the newcomers, both documented and undocumented, were not ignored by nonprofit organizations: “The resulting influx led to new social service activity from established organizations as well as new agencies in the principally Asian and Latin American immigrant communities” (O’Neill 2002:82). Immigrant nonprofit organizations (see Hung 2007; de Graauw 2008) took on the challenge of helping to meet the needs of the new immigrants.

The term “immigrant nonprofit organization” (INPO) is used by a handful of authors to describe various groups that serve immigrant populations (Hung 2007; de Graauw 2008).<sup>1</sup> Who and what constitutes such an organization varies from scholar to scholar. Some limit the term to organizations formed just by immigrants, while others also recognize immigrant-serving

organizations established by long-time residents of a community. The nonprofit label also carries different meanings for different scholars. This ranges from having a formal IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status to simply providing goods and services to immigrant groups without seeking profit.

Chi-Kan Richard Hung (2007:710) states that “in spite of emerging importance of immigrant nonprofits, research on these organizations had not begun in earnest until very recently.” Even the IRS has little to no available data on immigrant nonprofit organizations, especially those serving Latinos, the largest immigrant group in the U.S. (Campoamor and Diaz 1999:7).

For his statistical profile of Latino nonprofit organizations, Michael Cortes (1999a) used the IRS’s Exempt Organization Business Master File. This source affected Cortes’s ability to accurately account for Latino nonprofits in several ways. First, churches are not required to receive an IRS ruling, and even though some were represented in the master file, Cortes chose to exclude churches from his study. Churches often play important roles in new immigrants’ lives by providing a place of refuge and services (Selee 2006: 23). By excluding churches, Cortes cannot provide the whole picture of Latino nonprofit organizations. Also, at the time of this study, organizations making less than \$25,000 a year were not required to report income or assets to the IRS (Cortes 1999a:27). Small Latino nonprofit organizations that were just getting started may not be included in Cortes’s numbers. Cortes even admits that the master file contains little information on the program activities of nonprofits (ibid.:30).

According to the master file, the primary activities of these organizations were “veterans’ activities, awarding scholarships and educational activities, and promotion of business and commerce” (ibid.:31). This finding caused Cortes (ibid.:40) to ask, “Why do Latino nonprofits

look the other way instead of doing more to address the serious problems confronting Latinos in the United States?” These organizations were lacking the services that Cortes felt would truly address the needs of the population. But Cortes (ibid.:39) recognized that research on Latino nonprofit organizations needed to go beyond the IRS files to answer the question: “Is the nonprofit sector a ‘leading force’ for improving the role and prospects of the Latino population in United States society?”

While in high school, I volunteered with a Latino nonprofit organization. While volunteering, I saw bilingual classrooms for the young children of Latino immigrants as well as a large clothing drive where members of the community were invited to pick out donated clothing for their families. After seeing the services this organization offered, my overall perception of such organizations was very positive. Five years later, a graduate course I was taking required students to participate in service learning, and I chose to work at a Latino nonprofit organization. Through my service learning and a research project a semester later, I learned that this organization offered various services ranging from free income tax assistance to information about free local English classes.

While discussing my research with my peers, I heard something I did not expect: criticism of the organization. Some claimed that the organization was not reaching enough individuals in the Latino community, while others asserted that by limiting its clientele to Latino immigrants, it was ignoring other disadvantaged immigrant groups. Overall, the organization was simply not doing enough.

I expected criticism of these organizations to be fueled by anti-immigrant sentiment. Yet, the criticism was now coming from individuals who had worked with Latino immigrant populations and immigrant nonprofit organizations. This criticism raises important questions

concerning Latino nonprofit organizations. Are they meeting immigrants' needs effectively? Do immigrants want the services they provide? Overall, are they, as Cortes asked, a "leading force" for improving Latino immigrant prospects in the U.S.?

As anthropologist Melanie Chansky (2005:10, emphasis in original) points out

To have truly *effective* services, providers must not only make these services understandable and accessible to the target groups, but must assure that they meet the needs that the immigrants and refugees themselves feel are important to their everyday lives.

If veteran's activities and promotion of business, as Cortes's data show, are actually the primary activities of Latino nonprofit organizations, perhaps these organizations are not providing or are not able to provide effective services to Latino immigrants.

Seeing that there is some information out there to support the criticism of my peers, it seems necessary to also ask if Latino nonprofit organizations are benefitting the larger community in which they reside. The 2010 Arizona bill (SB 1070), which has been called "the broadest and strictest immigration measure in generations," reveals there are many Americans who feel that immigrants, and thus the organizations that serve them, hurt communities (Archibold 2010). This sentiment is expressed in a letter from an angry resident in Wichita, Kansas, who accuses a local Latino nonprofit organization of "welcoming more immigrants to take jobs" that should go to Wichita's "long time residents" (<http://www.vdare.com/fulford/subsidie.htm>). The director of the Catholic Charities Help Center and Immigration Services of Wichita told me that before she started doing immigration presentations, fellow presenters warned that this topic resulted in several death threats toward them (personal communication, May 19, 2010). If Latino nonprofit organizations stir up such negative emotions, established community members may not see their benefit, if any, to the larger community.

My research attempts to address the varied criticism of Latino nonprofit organizations. I look at immigrant nonprofit organizations serving Latinos and their activities to see if they are benefitting the group they serve, and, looking at the bigger picture, I discuss whether they are benefitting the larger community. I look at case studies of Latino nonprofit organizations, and I also bring in my own research with Latino Resource Center (the name of this organization, anyone associated with it, and its location have been changed), a Latino nonprofit organization located in Sunflower, Kansas.

My research included interviews with the director, the former director, board members, and clients of Latino Resource Center. My sample is based on recommendations by a member of the board of directors and its current director. They recommended board members who they felt had time to speak with me, would be willing to speak with me, and would be able to provide the most information. Three of the four board members I contacted responded and agreed to be interviewed.

I conducted unstructured interviews with the directors and board members to get a thorough history of Latino Resource Center and to allow them to speak freely on what they thought it was doing for the Latino immigrant community. If they did not bring it up in our conversation, I asked about topics such as the origins of the organization, the goals and missions, and the impact on the larger community. The directors, who had the most contact with clients, were able to provide information on day-to-day activities of the organization and the problems of their clients. The former director and the board members had been with the center since it was formed and were able to provide important background information on the organization and the Latino population's situation.

With clients, I used semistructured interviews to determine what services they had used and if they felt current services met their needs. To find potential interviewees, I attended English classes and Spanish yoga classes at a local church and asked for volunteers to speak with me after class about their experiences with the center.

The overall goal of this study is to add to the small body of research on immigrant nonprofit organizations and, more specifically, Latino nonprofit organizations. I also want to provide data that will allow individuals to determine if INPOs are good for their community, whether it be a small immigrant community or a larger established community. This information can also be used by Latino nonprofit organizations to improve their services as well as their image in the larger community in which they work.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is also seen in the literature as “immigrant organization” (Cordero-Guzmán 2005), “ethnic nonprofit organization” (Chung 2005), “identity-based nonprofit organization” (Ospina, Diaz, and O’Sullivan 2002), “immigrant-serving community-based organization” (de Leon et al. 2009), and “immigrant association” (Moya 2005).

## Chapter 2

### A Not-so-new Phenomenon

*"The fraternal society was far more than another device to address deep-seated cultural, psychological, and gender needs. It allowed Americans to provide social welfare services that could be had in no other way."* David T. Beito (2000:3)

Latino nonprofit organizations fit into a larger national phenomenon that has been happening for hundreds of years: immigrant aid organizations. In the United States, “nearly all ethnic and national groups erected formidable networks of individual and collective self-help for protection” (Beito 2000:17-18). Such organizations and associations date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century:

Scottish immigrants to Boston formed the first ethnic mutual aid society in 1657, initiating a trend that continues today for virtually every ethnic, racial, and nationality group.... (Roger Lohmann, quoted in Boris and Steuerle 1999:42)

This society, the Scots Charity Box of Boston, helped its fellow countrymen survive in a new country (Risch 1936:16). More Scottish societies formed by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and German, English, Irish, and French immigrants followed closely behind (ibid.). These organizations provided material goods for struggling immigrants but also pushed for better traveling conditions to America, provided medical and burial services, and gave money to destitute individuals wanting to return home. In addition to services, organizations also provided a form of sociability outside of the family (Moya 2005: 835).

The “era of new immigration” began at the turn of the century, bringing immigrants from nontraditional sending countries in southern and eastern Europe (Beito 2000:17). Mutual aid organizations for Italian, Polish, Slavic, and Greek immigrants soon formed. These organizations provided many of the same services as early mutual aid societies, but also took on new services such as selling life insurance (Hein 1997:281) and advocating for equal opportunity (Minkoff

2002: 379). Other groups not associated with the new immigration era were also forming organizations. Japanese and Chinese immigrant organizations were pervasive as were those established by Mexicans (Beito 2000:20).

As older immigrant groups became economically stable, their needs for mutual aid organizations decreased, causing these organizations to disappear (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005; Beito 2000). But immigrant aid organizations continue today, providing services for newer immigrants to America, like Latinos.

### **Formation**

According to sociologist Raymond Breton (1964: 204), three factors contribute to the formation of ethnic organizations: cultural differences with the native community; the level of resources among the ethnic group; and the pattern of migration. Differences in language and religion create different needs for an immigrant group, and if there are not institutions in the host country to satisfy these needs, new organizations are created to address them. When immigrant groups have few resources, such as social services or occupational skills, they form mutual aid groups or become the “clientele” that “support welfare and mutual benefit organizations” (ibid.). Migration patterns affect how large this clientele can become.

Marlou Schrover and Floris Vermeulen (2005:826) point out that immigration scholars take more factors into consideration today, and they recategorize Breton’s concept into three sets: the migration process, the opportunity structure in the host society, and the characteristics of the immigrant community. Their migration process is similar to Breton’s pattern of migration. Opportunity structure refers to both political and institutional opportunities in the host country. They describe these opportunities as “the extent to which powerful groups, including

governments, are vulnerable or receptive to new claims made by groups that hold a marginal position in the political system” (ibid.: 828). An example of this would be in the 1960s when the United States government provided funds to immigrant nonprofit organizations to fight poverty, thus creating an opportunity for these organizations to survive and grow. Schrover and Vermeulen (ibid.:830) outline a list of characteristics that affect an immigrant community’s ability to organize: residential proximity, regional background, age, sex ratio, religion, occupational structure, education and political orientation, population turnover, and labor market participation. For example, small, heterogeneous groups are less likely to succeed while older, larger groups are more likely to be involved in organizational activity (ibid.:830).

Jose Moya (2005) believes that neither cultural differences nor the civic habits of the host country play as big a role as Breton and Schrover and Vermeulen think they do. For Moya, the migration process is the primary stimulus for immigrant associational activity. He explains, “This process tends to intensify and sharpen collective identities based on national, ethnic or quasi-ethnic constructs” (ibid.:839). He goes on to refute Breton’s (1964:204) claim that “the more different the people of a certain ethnicity are from the members of the native community, the easier it will be for them to develop their own institutions” by pulling in examples from around the world. Moya points out the Portuguese in Brazil who have just as many organizations as the Japanese living in the same country (ibid.).

Based on interviews and discussions with immigrant organizations in New York City, Hector R. Cordero-Guzmán (2005:894-895) identifies five factors that contribute to immigrant nonprofit organization formation. His first factor is the size of the immigrant group: groups that are large and continuing to grow are more likely to form immigrant groups. The needs of the immigrant group are another factor. “If a group does not have an unmet demand for services or

the service can readily be obtained from other existing providers the incentives to start organisations are clearly lowered” (ibid.:895). The third factor is the presence of a social-service professional and a human-resource base that can help with various aspects of starting and maintaining an organization. Immigrant organizations’ connections to the local social-service delivery system are also a factor. Their ability to tap into grants and develop useful programs will eventually contribute to their sustainability. The last factor is the resources and capacity of an organization.

More specifically, formation of Latino nonprofit organizations and mass migration have gone “hand in hand” (Camarillo 1991:19). For example, the largest growth in immigrant organizations came in the late 1960s and early 1970s and late 1980s (Cordero-Guzmán 2005:896). These periods followed legislation that increased immigration caps: the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986, which allowed two million undocumented Mexican immigrants and agricultural workers to apply for amnesty (Donato, Durand, and Massey 1992: 140).

Other scholars attribute the formation of Latino nonprofit organizations to the failure of the government. Maria Gonzalez Borrero (1991:113) states, “Hispanic nonprofit organizations, like most nonprofits in this country, grew because government and other institutions were not able to meet the needs of the poor, multiproblem families, the disenfranchised, or the newcomer.” This coincides with the perception of immigrants that social service agencies are often the only way to meet human needs outside the family (Gallegos and O’Neill 1991: 6).

Although Latino nonprofit organizations share common traits with other immigrant nonprofit organizations, they can differ in their foci and approaches (Borrero 1991:114). These

differences can be attributed to Latino immigrants' and Latino nonprofit organizations' unique history.

## Chapter 3

### Latino Nonprofit Organizations

*“This growing diversity of societies is bringing, everywhere, retrenchment of government and increased reliance on the nonprofit sector.”* Burton Weisbrod (1997:543)

#### History

Latino nonprofit organizations in the United States date to 1848 when Mexican lands were ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Mexicans who chose to stay were "maligned socially and culturally by Anglo newcomers to the region" (Camarillo 1991:17). They responded by forming mutual aid associations, or *mutualistas*, to maintain their ethnic identity and to provide economic security and advocacy. For example, La Alianza Hispano-Americana in Tucson, Arizona, provided insurance to its members and worked to combat Anglo political maneuvering (ibid.:17).

Mutualistas continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, serving the growing Mexican immigrant population. Early in the century, growth was fueled by the Mexican Revolution which brought close to one million individuals (almost one-tenth of Mexico's population) to the United States (ibid.:19). This growth continued into World War I and the 1920s due to an economic demand for unskilled migrant labor. Quotas in the early 1920s limiting southern and eastern European immigration left a labor gap for Mexican migrant workers to fill (Vigil 1998: 188). Even with the halt of Mexican labor migration and the deportation of tens of thousands Mexican migrants during the Depression (Harvard Magazine 2007), mutualistas continued to form and work for the well-being of their constituents.

During and after World War II, one to 14 Latino nonprofit organizations were being formed every year (Cortes 1999a:26). Much of this push to organize is attributed to Mexican

American veterans who “expected and demanded more from the U.S. society after risking their lives to defend the United States” (Camarillo 1991:24). The G.I. Forum, for example, was created by Mexican World War II and Korean War veterans to push for equal economic and political opportunities (Vigil 1998:235). During this time, new Latino immigrants were also forming their own nonprofit organizations.

### ***Puerto Ricans***

Middle-class Puerto Ricans had been settling in the United States since the 19th century to escape Spanish colonial policies and political unrest (Rodriguez-Fraticelli, Sanabria, and Tirado 1991:35). During the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States took control and occupied Puerto Rico, and this foreign occupation created poor economic conditions that displaced peasants and fueled emigration (ibid.). Puerto Rican immigrants came to New York City, their traditional destination in America, to meet the demands for unskilled labor. In addition to the mutual aid associations created by early Puerto Ricans, new forms of organizational activity were emerging to meet their growing needs (ibid.:36). La Liga Puertorriqueña e Hispana (The Puerto Rican and Hispanic League), for example, formed to educate the Hispanic population and urge Puerto Rican immigrants to vote (ibid.:37).

The postwar boom coupled with continued social unrest in Puerto Rico brought thousands of Puerto Ricans to New York City (ibid.:38; Gonzalez 2000:89). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, both the American and Puerto Rican governments were actively encouraging emigration from Puerto Rico “as a safety valve to prevent further social unrest on the island” (Gonzalez 2000:89). More than 40,000 Puerto Ricans arrived in the United States in 1946 alone, and their numbers would continue to grow for the next 15 years (ibid.). New nonprofit

organizations like the Hispanic Young Adult Association, Puerto Rican-Hispanic Leadership Forum, Aspira, El Desfile Puertorriqueño, and El Congreso de Pueblo were created to tackle issues of identity, leadership, civil rights, and economic security (Rodriguez-Fraticelli, Sanabria, and Tirado 1991:39-42).

### *1960s-1970s*

During the 1960s, government support encouraged the growth of the nonprofit sector (Salamon 2003:16). The nonprofits serving Latino immigrant populations were no exception. The number of Latino nonprofit organizations being formed every year climbed from four to 71 during the 1960s (Cortes 1999a:26). Overall, formal immigrant nonprofit organizations, or those organizations with a government-issued 501(c)(3) status, were increasing and becoming the primary service providers to immigrant groups. Different scholars attribute this change to various events.

501(c)(3) tax exempt status was enacted in the Internal Revenue Code in 1959 (McCarthy, Britt, and Wolfson 1991:53). Under section 501(c)(3), organizations that promoted social welfare were now considered charitable organizations (Hein 1997:281). This made many INPOs eligible for tax-exempt status. 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status was a major financial boost, especially for those organizations operating on a limited budget (Chung 2005:916). In addition to making an organization tax exempt, it also assures potential donors that their contributions will be tax deductible, making it easier for organizations to raise funds (Cortes 1998:445).

Els de Graauw (2008:323) points to three particular developments since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 to explain why nonprofit organizations have become more prominent service providers to immigrant groups. First, the act renewed large-scale immigration,

providing a demand for services that local governments were not willing to provide. It lifted immigration barriers that had prevented many non-northwest Europeans from entering the United States. Immigrants from developing countries flowed into the country. During this time, there was growth in social activity for immigrant groups, especially in Latin American communities (O'Neill 202:82). This was apparent after the immigration act was passed in 1965, when the number of new Latino nonprofits spiked to 277 in 1966 (Cortes 1999a: 26).

Second, a push by the federal government in the 1960s and 1970s to extinguish poverty and develop communities led to partnerships between nonprofits and the government. This brought grants and other financial support to immigrant nonprofit organizations that were dealing with some of the most impoverished communities in the country. Finally, a push to privatize welfare in the 1970s led the government to contract many services to nonprofit organizations. As a result, the average formation rate of Latino nonprofits per year jumped to 67 in the 1970s (Cortes 1999a:27).

Other authors look more specifically at the civil rights movement to explain the expansion of immigrant nonprofit organizations (Ayón 2006; Cordero-Guzmán 2005; Minkoff 2002). Debra Minkoff (2002:379) explains

The passage of such legislation as the 1964 Civil Rights Act also marked a significant change in the institutional climate for identity-based organizing, essentially legitimizing the rights of a wide range of marginalized groups to make demands for equality or inclusion into the polity.

One such marginalized group was Mexican Americans. Drawing inspiration from the fight for civil rights and their own Chicano movement, Mexican Americans formed hundreds of organizations in the late 1960s (Camarillo 1991:27).

By 1965, Mexico was one of the leading sending nations of immigrants to the United States (Reimers 1983:10). Yet, other Latin Americans would follow throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

### *Dominicans*

In 1965, war broke out in the Dominican Republic. When Dominicans led a campaign to restore to power their democratically elected president, the United States stepped in to crush what it feared would be a “Castro-like revolution” (Gonzalez 2000:118). When the new Dominican dictator began viciously punishing the former president’s supporters, the U.S. was forced to facilitate a mass exodus of the revolutionaries it had once fought against (ibid.). From 1961 to 1986, 400,000 Dominicans entered the U.S. legally, while thousands more immigrated illegally (ibid.:117).

Dominican immigrants, many of whom settled in New York City, formed social clubs and sports associations to build community (ibid.:124). Other organizations, like The Centro Educacional Caribe, helped immigrants learn to speak English and about the American political system (ibid.:125).

### *1980s*

The number of Latino nonprofit organizations continued to grow throughout the 1980s despite the Reagan administration’s budget cuts (Minkoff 2002:379). The growth was particularly apparent following the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986, which granted amnesty to undocumented immigrants who had resided continuously in the United States since

January 1, 1982 (Cordero-Guzmán 2005: 896). The formation rate jumped from 84 a year in the first half of the 1980s to 151 in the last half of the 1980s (Cortes 1999a:27).

The 1980 census showed that Mexican immigrants were now the largest immigrant population in the country (Terrazas 2010). But they were also joined by hundreds of thousands of Latin American immigrants escaping civil wars and unstable economic conditions in their home countries.

### *Cubans*

Although they were escaping unstable social conditions brought on by the revolution of 1959, early emigrants from Cuba had an easier time adjusting economically to their new environment. They were "largely upper and middle class and brought with them enormous technical skills," and as refugees from a communist country, they received massive aid from the federal government (Gonzalez 2000:109). Cuban immigrants in the 1980s were a different story. Escaping a deteriorating Cuban economy, more than 125,000 Cubans departed from Cuba's Mariel Harbor to the United States in a four-month period in 1980 (ibid.:112). Unlike their predecessors, these Cuban emigrants were mostly poor, black, and unskilled (ibid.).

### *Central Americans*

Juan Gonzalez (2000:129) states, "Central Americans were a negligible presence in the United States until the final decades of the twentieth century." The number of immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua increased drastically from 1980 to 1990. For example, the U.S. Census showed an eightfold increase (from 94,000 to 701,000) in Salvadoran-born individuals in just one decade (ibid.). Violent civil wars, combined with the Latin American debt

crisis, forced individuals in these countries to flee to America (ibid.:129-130). Organizations were formed to help Central Americans, many of whom came to the United States undocumented and unskilled. Casa Maryland and the Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN) were among the many groups that provided support for this group (ibid.:141).

A civil war and continued violence was also the catalyst for Colombian emigration. Seventy-two thousand Colombians immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, and this number climbed to 77,000 in the 1970s and 122,000 in the 1980s (ibid.:149). These numbers do not include the thousands of individuals who came illegally.

### *1990s*

The foreign-born population swelled in the 1990s with over 13 million immigrants entering the United States in just one decade (Theodore and Martin 2007: 269). Over 20 percent of the foreign born population had been born in Mexico (Terrazas 2010). The enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 drove millions of Mexicans across the border (Jiménez 2010:49). Unable to compete with cheap, subsidized American corn and other produce flooding the Mexican market, Mexican farmers crossed looking for work. The collapse of the Mexican economy in 1994 also “left many Mexicans with few economic options but to migrate” (ibid.). With this population growth came a surge in the number of Latino nonprofit organizations. In 1999, for example, 300 Latino nonprofit organizations formed, almost double the formation rate 10 years before (Cortes 1999a:27).

## **Latino Nonprofits Today**

In the past, Latino immigrants chose to enter and settle in “gateway states” such as Texas, California, New York, and Florida, but now many are passing through these states and settling in other areas of the country (Lazos and Jeanetta 2002:20). Today, Latinos live in every state, ranging from 5,500 Latinos in Vermont to 11 million in California (Cortes 2004:226).

To serve these dispersed populations, Latino nonprofits are now all over the country. Looking at IRS documents, Cortes (1999a:29-30) found that nearly half of Latino nonprofits were located in California, Texas, and New Mexico, and there were also “significant concentrations” in New York, Florida, Puerto Rico, Illinois, District of Columbia, and Colorado. More specifically, thousands of these organizations are in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago, Phoenix, San Francisco, and various cities in Texas (Gallegos and O’Neill 1991:6). Recent case studies show they are also popping up in less traditional locations like rural Missouri (Jeanetta and Valdivia 2007), Michigan (Andersen 2008), and Massachusetts (Hung 2007).

Latino nonprofit organizations serve various roles and functions within immigrant communities. These roles can range from providing housing assistance to assisting in the immigration process to advocating for immigrant groups’ rights (Theodore and Martin 2007; Cordero-Guzmán 2005).

Hung (2007) categorizes immigrant nonprofits into four functional types: religious organizations, cultural organizations, service organizations, and public interest organizations. Religious organizations are churches and temples that serve immigrants. Cultural organizations work to promote and preserve the ethnic identity of immigrant communities. Service organizations offer social services such as English classes and youth programs. Public-interest organizations advocate for immigrants and make their voices heard. Still, Hung (*ibid.*:708) points

out that these organizations share common goals: “There are two basic concerns immigrant nonprofits are typically organized to address—economic survival in the adopted country and maintaining cultural identity originating from the motherland.”

Although Hung (2007:722) found that Latino nonprofit organizations were more likely to be service organizations, many do not fit exactly into one category. This has led de Graauw (2008:328) to proclaim immigrant nonprofits as “multipurpose hybrid organizations.”

The following organizations are examples of the prevalence and multipurpose nature of Latino nonprofits. These organizations were selected from various sources to represent a range of different organizations.

#### *The National Puerto Rican Coalition*

The National Puerto Rican Coalition, based in Washington, D.C., works on the national level to bring visibility to Puerto Rican issues through research, and it also offers “technical assistance and other support in the areas of economic and leadership development” (Ospina, Diaz, and O’Sullivan 2002:13). The coalition’s overall goal is to improve the socioeconomic status of Puerto Ricans throughout the country. To assess the needs in the Puerto Rican community, it administers an annual survey to its members, and the executive director travels the country to meet with Puerto Rican leaders (ibid.:18). Through government, corporation, and foundation support, the coalition brings in about \$1.6 million dollars annually.

#### *The National Council of La Raza*

Created in 1968 as a Chicano organization, the National Council of La Raza has evolved to serve the entire U.S. Latino population through policy analysis, advocacy, and services

(ibid.:13). Although much of its early activities were political, public and private funding sources required it to focus on housing and economic development (ibid. 21-22). La Raza now has offices and affiliate organizations across the country. To determine what Latinos want or need, La Raza holds annual conferences to communicate with its affiliates, and it also survey affiliates occasionally.

#### *The Institute for Puerto Rican Policy*

The Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, based in New York City, “uses research, advocacy, and networking in political and policy spheres to effect change on issues concerning Puerto Ricans” (ibid.:13). Although its mission stresses the Puerto Rican community, it is open to any individual interested in Latino issues.

To make sure it is maintaining the community’s priorities, the organization conducts surveys and holds topical forums with invited participants. Directors and advisory board members are also asked to give their opinions they hear in their local communities.

#### *Alianza Dominicana, Inc.*

What started as a coalition in the 1980s to address social problems of the Dominican immigrant community is now Alianza Dominicana, Inc., a Latino nonprofit organization with 150 employees and a \$3.8 million operating budget. Today the organization “exists to help solve the problems that Dominican children, youth, and families face daily in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City” (ibid.:16). Although they focus on the needs of Dominican immigrants, they have also worked with Russian, Chinese, African American, and Jewish constituents in the neighborhood (ibid.). It provides services to its constituents and encourages

them to be active in neighborhood affairs. To determine the community's needs, Alianza Dominicana holds annual conferences for community members to attend, organizes focus groups, and uses "informal mechanisms" to obtain information (ibid.:18).

### *AMIGOS*

AMIGOS was created by the city council of St. Charles, Missouri, to support the growing Hispanic population before conflict could arise. Although Hispanics are its primary clientele, AMIGOS works with several different immigrant groups. "AMIGOS operates as a networking resource, helping to identify needs and connect those who can provide services with those who need assistance" (Porterfield, Hoeynck, and Martinez 2004:18-19). It has successfully reduced language barriers in schools and hospitals and has encouraged churches to hold Spanish-language church services. It has also worked to teach basic Spanish to city employees and business owners to improve services and the work environment for Spanish-speakers. Because of AMIGOS, local banks have allowed immigrants to open bank accounts without Social Security numbers.

### *Centro Latino*

Beginning in 1994, a hog processing plant in Milan, Missouri, lured waves of Hispanic immigrants to the area. Although churches provided services to migrants, they were losing resources quickly. In response, Centro Latino opened in 2001 as a multiservice referral program (Bonner et al. 2002:12). It directs immigrants to outside services such as language classes and health services, but also provides its own services, such as translation services and legal assistance. It also hosts multicultural events to "bring people together" and miniconferences over

various health topics (ibid.). Centro Latino also works with a nearby university and local churches to offer youth programs and transitional housing for migrant workers. Overall, “They are trying to link people to each other, the services they need, and to the community. They expect that more people will choose to stay in Milan, and their hope is that the community will be a more welcoming place for those who choose to stay” (ibid.).

### *Fuerza Latina*

Fuerza Latina (FL) in Fort Collins, Colorado, has helped its Latino population by sponsoring workshops on employment rights and visits from the Mexican consulate (Andersen 2008:97). It has also advocated for this population by supporting an ordinance that would “bar city employees from asking an individual’s immigration status without just cause” (ibid.).

### *Hispanic Committee of Virginia*

The Hispanic Committee of Virginia was created by Cuban refugees in the 1980s to help ease the process of acculturation and promote social values. Today this organization “serves mostly Central Americans and promotes microenterprise, economic development, and citizenship” (de Leon et al. 2009:6).

### *CASA*

CASA of Maryland, was founded in 1985 by church congregations of Central Americans and native-born U.S. citizens (ibid.:7). CASA was created to serve the thousands of Central Americans coming into the Washington, D.C., area in the 1980s, but now serves all Latinos. In addition to providing services, it also advocates for immigrant rights.

While all of the organizations mentioned above serve Latinos, they do it in very different ways. Many of these organizations offer services like translation and language classes, but others are more concerned with advocacy or economic development. Some, like the National Puerto Rican Coalition, market their services to one specific group, but others, like AMIGOS, are open to any Latinos in the community. Some organizations think of their community as the town they are located in, while others work on the national level. Perhaps this is due to their locations across the country. Centro Latino is located in a small rural town in Missouri and primarily serves the Latinos in that town, but The National Council of La Raza has expanded across the country and serves the entire U.S. Latino population. These organizations also vary in operating budget and employees. Alianza Dominicana has 150 employees and \$3.8 million, but Latino Resource Center, the organization I worked with, has one employee and around \$74,000 to work with every year. Despite the differences, these organizations have a common goal of helping Latinos improve their standing in society.

The following chapter will discuss my fieldwork with Latino Resource Center in Sunflower, Kansas. Like the organizations discussed above, Latino Resource Center provides a variety of services to a predominantly Latino clientele.

## Chapter 4

### Latino Resource Center

The Latino Resource Center (LRC) is in a quaint house on a residential street in Sunflower, Kansas. The only clue that this is not just another house is a wooden sign with red lettering in the front yard that reads Latino Resource Center.

The stated mission of the center was: “to act as a resource for area Latinos to strengthen our shared community and maximizing our collective potential” (Latino Resource Center 2009). But in 2010, the board of directors and the director of LRC reworked and expanded on the mission and vision:

The Latino Resource Center effectively builds the community’s capacity to meet health, educational and social service needs of Latino families while cultivating cultural understanding and honoring traditions.

We envision our community as a place where Latinos are welcome as valued partners contributing to our success.

**Bridge**

- To connect Latino families to services.
- To connect language, culture and community.

**Embrace**

- To cultivate awareness and sensitivity to the Latino heritage in our community.

**Empower**

- To guide individuals and institutions to transform our community.
- (Latino Resource Center n.d.)

Because the director of LRC was worried about her clients’ privacy, I was not able to conduct fieldwork inside Latino Resource Center, but from accounts given by board members and the director and from the handful of times I visited the center, I am able to describe a typical work day. Dana, the current director and only full-time employee of the center, works with Latino immigrant clients daily at no charge to the client. Clients schedule appointments with Dana and discuss their problems. During the day, Dana may also be called out of the office to

serve as a translator, deal with a domestic dispute, bail someone out of jail, or help with other crises a client may experience. Work days are busy. The center is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., but staff members stay late when needed and come in on weekends for special programs.

LRC was created to serve the growing Latino population in Sunflower, Kansas. In 2000, Sunflower had close to 90,000 residents and around 3,000 persons reported being of Hispanic or Latino origin (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). David, anthropologist and board member of LRC, estimates that this number could currently be as high as 6,000 (personal communication, April 17, 2009).

### **Sunflower Latino Group**

The story of Latino Resource Center begins at the Sunflower Health Department. Prior to 2000, the health department rarely had patients from other countries or who spoke a language other than English. Barbara, retired director of maternal child health services at the health department and a board member of Latino Resource Center, explained:

Around 2000, 2001, almost overnight it seemed we started seeing a lot more Spanish-speaking families. And they came to us because they needed prenatal care. They were mostly young families....We realized we really weren't prepared to deal with that volume in terms of language and access....We didn't have interpreters. We didn't have any bilingual staff. And because our programs were hit the most, along with the nutrition program, we started trying to figure out what to do. (Interview, August 27, 2010)

The health department was not the only agency unprepared to serve the unique needs of the Latino immigrants. Barbara added, "It was a bigger problem than just us, and it seemed like it needed some community organizing."

Barbara wanted to get another person involved, someone who could assess the new immigrants' needs and unite the services that could help Latinos. Around this time she learned

from the Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved that there was funding available for 20 AmeriCorps community health members to serve in health settings across the state. Although the health department was approved to fill the position, it did not find anyone the first year. “It doesn’t pay very well,” Barbara explained. Into the second year, it hired Lauren, who had previously worked as a part-time interpreter at the health department while attending graduate school.

Lauren began by learning about the Latino community:

So that was kind of the first step, just learning about the families, learning about the services that were already available here in Sunflower, learning about what services families were needing, just what their situation was, what they were needing help with. (Interview, September 1, 2010)

She learned about the Latino families by interpreting for health department nurses and their Latino patients, traveling with nurses to the “field” on home visits, and talking with the nurses who passed along requests for services from their Latino patients. Needs ranged from transportation to being able to call a company about a bill. Not knowing English was preventing many Latinos from fulfilling basic needs. These families also needed mental health services to help women get through abusive relationships, individuals with substance abuse, couples with marital problems, and children dealing with a new environment. According to Lauren:

We saw that there was a need to work one-on-one with families to be able to connect them to the services that they needed. But we also needed to work with the community and with the agencies so that they could better provide their services to the families. Really, it was a two-way [street]. The concept that I thought of was a bridge. We were a bridge between families and services, and then likewise, services to community and family. (Interview, September 1, 2010)

To get the community and local agencies involved, Lauren helped create the Sunflower Latino Group (SLG). Barbara and Lauren knew several individuals in the community, and they started by inviting anyone in the community that was interested. Barbara recounted:

We had a really good turnout for the Sunflower Latino Group in those early years: people from the community, people from churches, people who were concerned about families but maybe didn't have any background with this particular population but... saw these families were here and were concerned with how we could serve their needs, social service agencies that didn't know how to deal with the influx.  
(Interview, August 27, 2010)

Both Lauren and Barbara attempted to get participation from Latino immigrants, going as far as to change meeting times, offer childcare, and have interpreters. Still, participation was low.

The SLG met once a month to define Latino needs in the community. They also formed a number of committees to tackle what they would eventually define as the five core areas: cross-cultural sharing and dialogue, language access and education, mental health, advocacy, and access to services (Latino Resource Center 2009). An early focus was helping Latinos start their own businesses, but this group disbanded when the leader of the group moved (personal communication, September 1, 2010). The SLG decided there were more pressing issues to address than business ownership.

The SLG implemented several initiatives to address five core areas (Latino Resource Center 2009). To achieve cross-cultural sharing and dialogue, the SLG set up *intercambios*, *Sábados Culturales*, the Sunflower Immigration Speakers Network (SISN), *Feria Hispana*, and soccer clinics. An *intercambio* was a partnership that matched a Spanish speaker and an English speaker to help one another learn a new language. *Sábados Culturales* gave immigrant and U.S.-born children an opportunity to learn about their culture through Saturday workshops held in the summer. The SISN gave presentations over immigration-related issues throughout the community. *Feria Hispana* was an annual celebration of Latino culture. Soccer clinics were created to give Spanish-speaking children an opportunity to play soccer when it was difficult for their parents to pay for, or understand how to join, the regular soccer league. It prepared children and their parents to eventually join this league.

To help with language access and education, the SLG wrote and distributed a brochure titled “Communicating Effectively with English Language Learners” to health and social service providers. It also created an online interpreter database for these same providers. For Spanish speakers, it offered English as a Second Language classes and tutoring for students in grades K-12. It also set up the Latino Exito Scholarship, awarded annually to a graduating Latino high school senior.

Mental health was addressed by offering counseling services in Spanish, something not available in the community at that time. It created a women’s group for Spanish-speaking women to come together to share information, and it also initiated the first Spanish-language Alcoholics Anonymous group. It held a workshop titled “Concepts for Working with Latinas/os” for service providers.

The SLG offered Know Your Rights forums and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). Know Your Rights forums educated immigrants on their rights and responsibilities when interacting with the police, immigration officials, and landlords. The police department gave presentations at some of these forums. VITA provided free tax-filing services to immigrants.

The SLG eventually focused most of its energy on access to services when it became apparent that not all agencies could have a translator and translated printed materials on hand. The SLG compiled a directory listing Spanish-language community services and distributed it in print and online. It also held monthly Access to Services lunches where service providers could learn about the unmet needs of immigrants. Barbara explained that they realized they needed

a single port of entry where people could go who spoke Spanish and [where] there would always be someone there who spoke Spanish and knew community resources and would help link into existing community resources. (Interview, August 27, 2010)

Latino Resource Center was born out of this realization, but it remained a dream until the SLG could find funding and space.

In the beginning, the SLG asked an established Latino nonprofit organization in Kansas City to open a branch office in Sunflower. Staff from both the SLG and the established Latino nonprofit organization visited one another, but administration changes at the Kansas City organization led to the dissolution of their talks.

With Lauren's funding from AmeriCorps almost up and the need for services growing, the SLG turned to its coordinating board. Stephen, collaborative projects coordinator of Early Achievement (name has been changed), a local nonprofit organization that serves families, helped provide the necessary funds. Early Achievement receives grants from Smart Start Kansas, whose funds come from tobacco settlement money the Kansas legislature has put aside for children's programs <<http://www.kschildrenscabinet.org/smartstart.htm>>. <sup>1</sup> Early Achievement was able to write a grant to receive funding for one full-time case manager to help Spanish-speaking families in the area. Father Joseph, from Good Shepherd Catholic church, provided a house.

### **Latino Resource Center**

With funding and a space, Latino Resource Center opened its doors in the fall of 2006. Lauren was named director: "In the beginning, it was just kind of like, alright our doors are open. You can come to our office or call in. Basically, we just opened the doors and said if you have a question in Sunflower, come. It was not just Sunflower; it was the county" (Interview, September 1, 2010). Although LRC would eventually start making appointments for clients to

come in, Lauren wanted to make sure that immigrants could stop by and get to know the organization first.

With the opening of LRC came the end of the Sunflower Latino Group. Attendance at SLG meetings was dwindling, and Lauren suggested it disband. Some members of the coalition stayed on as part of LRC's board of directors. Lauren attempted to keep up the SLG activities, but it was difficult to keep everything. Barbara explained:

The idea was that out of Latino Resource Center we would still try to do some of these functions. Some of them are still going but a lot of them had to be put aside because staff didn't have time to do them and the volunteer energy wasn't there. (Interview, August 27, 2010)

The focus of Latino Resource Center became case management (Lauren is a social worker) and directing Latino immigrants to services, but it managed to keep some earlier initiatives going. LRC continued to match Spanish-speaking clients with English-speakers. It also kept *Sábados Culturales* and *Feria Hispana*. In 2009, though, LRC was approached to merge *Feria Hispana* into a Culture Festival. Fearing that saying no would bring bad press to the Latino community, LRC agreed (personal communication, April 17, 2009).

The center still held weekly English classes at a local elementary school, but it eventually directed its clients to outside classes held at local high schools and churches. It also continued to award the Latino Exito Scholarship and to offer tax assistance.

In late 2009, Lauren left LRC to start a family, and she was succeeded by Dana. LRC now had to face some tough decisions. Barbara explained:

Lauren kind of ran herself ragged trying to keep a lot of these other things going. Then, she had a baby and decided to stay home and resign her position. And Dana then took over. The two of them sat down with this list of all the things we had going on and said, "What's reasonable for us to keep up with?" and "What do we have to let go or hope somebody else will pick up?" So a lot of things have been let go and then there wasn't a group to pick them up. I don't know if we could restore that energy or not. (Interview, August 27, 2010).

## **Latino Resource Center Today**

“First and foremost, we are funded to provide mental health services in case management for families with young children. That is our primary focus,” Dana explained. Dana is a licensed social worker and is able to provide clinical case management, targeted case management, and therapeutic interventions for individuals or families dealing with issues of domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health. She described her clientele as follows:

I'm working with young, single moms that are survivors of situations involving domestic violence. I work with some families where there's an alcohol problem with one of the parents. I'm working with some teenagers in the community who are undocumented but they have siblings who are documented. They're feeling really depressed and feeling like they don't want to stay in school, that they don't have a life ahead of them. They don't want to go back to Mexico. They really don't know what life there is like.  
(Interview, August 19, 2010)

The center now has over 220 families and 700 people in its database. The majority is from Mexico, but they also come from Chile, Uruguay, Belize, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Those from Mexico are primarily indigenous individuals whose first language is Mixteco or Tlapaneco, and they have varying fluency in Spanish. Many are undocumented, but the families typically have mixed citizenship status.

Although case management takes precedence, LRC continues to offer Sábados Culturales, VITA, and the Latino Exito Scholarship, and it continues to participate in the Culture Festival. It also helps arrange rides to the Mexican consulate where Mexican immigrants can get identification cards<sup>2</sup>. The board of directors actively advocates for the Latino population in Sunflower. When Latino Resource Center does not offer a service their clients need, they try to connect their clients with agencies or individuals that do.

### *Sábados Culturales*

Since many Latino immigrant families cannot afford summer camp or other summer activities for their children, Latino Resource Center offers Sábados Culturales, a free workshop held four Saturdays in June at Good Shepherd Catholic Church. Latino children attend classes taught by a group of native Spanish speakers, and they practice Spanish and create art and music. There is a different theme based on a Spanish-speaking country every Saturday. For example, one theme was “El Salvador: Land of Volcanoes.” The children made volcanoes and spent the day learning about El Salvador. The teachers try to feature different countries every year. 2010 was a very successful year for the program. Sixty students enrolled in the courses, and both the students and their parents participated in a closing ceremony.

### *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance*

Latino Resource Center offers Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) yearly to help clients file taxes or apply for an individual tax payer identification number. Clients sign up through the center to come in on a Saturday that VITA is offered. Early Saturday morning, Latino families sit at cafeteria tables in the basement of Good Shepherd, waiting for their turn to work with a tax preparer. The tax preparers are law students from a local university.

In 2010, there were two sessions lasting from 9:30A.M. to 12:30P.M., and only 18 families received services. This number is much lower than in previous years, but this was all the law school could provide that year. I attended two of three VITA sessions held in 2009. The schedule was completely booked on both days. A room full of people waited for their turn at one of three stations.

### *Advocating*

"When an organization in town is not serving the immigrant population well, we take an advocacy role for the population," explained LRC board member, Stephen. One of the main issues the board deals with is charitable agencies denying goods or services to individuals or children of individuals without a Social Security number. The board has recently targeted two agencies, one that gives out backpacks and school supplies to students and another that provides utility assistance during the winter. At one time, the school supply agency would not give to students whose parents did not have a Social Security number, regardless of whether the students had a number. After pressure from the board, the agency agreed to give to students who had numbers but not to students without them. The agency providing utility assistance will not give assistance to any household if even one member does not have a Social Security number.

The board has written countless letters to both agencies asking them to change their policies and has encouraged local faith communities to do the same. When letters were not producing the desired results, LRC board members met with board members and directors from these agencies in May 2010. Representatives from the United Way (a funding source for both agencies) and a minister also attended the meeting. Although neither agency agreed to make official changes to their policies, United Way agreed to look further into the matter. Toward the end of 2010, board members had formed a small group to identify the next steps in the process.

### *Outside Services and Agencies*

Although Latino Resource Center once held its own English classes, lack of time and resources eventually led to their dissolution. Today, it recommends that clients attend English classes at Assembly Church, which is just a few blocks north of the center. The classes are free,

and the church offers various class levels. All classes meet twice a week and have a similar format. On Tuesdays, students attend a lesson, and on Thursdays, students get the opportunity to practice what they learned with English-speaking partners. In addition to teaching the students English, the church also seeks to build a community around the students. Students interact with their instructors, language partners (church members and student volunteers), and other students who come from all over the world. At the end of the semester-long session, the organizers of the classes host a well-attended party for students and volunteers, and everyone receives a certificate.

Assembly Church also houses a worker justice coalition and Headstart, an organization whose goal is to “develop the whole child” (<http://www.lccap.org/eeHS/php>). LRC can refer its clients to the coalition when they need help fighting for unpaid wages or knowing their rights as workers. It can refer families with children to Headstart, which provides educational and health opportunities for children and social services to families. Assembly also holds services and a weekly yoga class in Spanish.

When clients need medical attention, LRC refers them to a local low-income clinic or the health department. Both have Spanish speakers to assist Latino patients. If clients choose to use the local hospital and have trouble paying the bill, LRC sends them to a local nonprofit organization that works with both the hospital and immigrants to find a feasible payment plan.

### **The Board of Directors**

When the Sunflower Latino Group opened Latino Resource Center, the majority of its coordinating board members became the new board of directors for the center. Many of the current board members have been with the organization since the beginning. Members include an

anthropologist, a retired health department worker, representatives from the school district, a representative from the police department, a dean from a nearby university, a banker, and representatives from the Good Shepherd Catholic Church. The majority of the board is Anglo.

According to Latino Resource Center's bylaws, the board can have up to 11 members. The Board Development Committee nominates new members and the entire board votes on these nominees. As the current board shows, board members represent a variety of professions, especially those that can benefit the center or have experience working with Latinos. Officially, the board's duties include: reviewing LRC's activities and programs; providing guidance and expertise; making sure programs and activities follow the mission, vision, and objectives of the center; determining policy and strategic directions; hiring and evaluating the director; and electing members and officers. Minutes from the board's bimonthly meetings show that members carry out their duties regularly, but they also show that the board takes on other activities. The board is also active identifying fundraising opportunities and advocating for the Latino population.

Barbara, as board development chair, is working to recruit new board members. The board recently drew up bylaws that would limit board members to two terms of two years each. Barbara said that Latino Resource Center needs board members who understand the Latino population and its needs, have connections to resources in the community, have different kinds of expertise, and "are willing to work and not just have their name on the list."

### **New Developments and Future Plans**

Dana is currently the only employee funded by the center. Although LRC has funding for a part-time case manager, this position has been filled intermittently throughout the two-and-half

years I have worked with the center. Recently, LRC has been able to increase its staff through additional funds.

The center has recently received an AmeriCorps member. AmeriCorps is a federal government program that “provides funds to local and national organizations and agencies committed to using national service to address critical community needs in education, public safety, health and the environment” ([http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_individuals/choose/state\\_national.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/choose/state_national.asp)). Organizations use these funds to recruit and train an AmeriCorps volunteer to work at their organization. LRS’s AmeriCorps member will work from August 2010 to August 2011. He will work 32 hours a week and will allow LRC to hold office hours at nontraditional times, such as in the evening and on the weekends. His duties will include recruiting and managing volunteers and working directly with constituents. LRC has also taken on two social work practicum students from two universities to help with case management.

LRC also received a Kansas Health Foundation Grant of \$25,000 that allowed the center to hire a half-time employee to develop a comprehensive Latino community health plan that Stephen describes as a “broad-based health plan for addressing housing, educational, and...public health needs of the Latino community.” More specifically, the woman hired will work with county agencies to address suicide prevention, alcohol treatment, and high school retention rates in the Latino population.

Latino Resource Center is currently considered a ministry of Good Shepherd Catholic Church which means that money that LRC receives is first given to the church who then funnels it down to the center. Its affiliation with the church allows the center to tap into its resources such as bookkeeping, office supplies, legal assistance, and health insurance. As early as the beginning of 2011, LRC could obtain 501(c)(3) status. The board had the application already

filled out this summer, but they eventually decided to shelve the issue until January 2011 for financial reasons. Obtaining 501(c)(3) status would mean that LRC would be responsible for its own bookkeeping and finding affordable insurance to cover Dana. But obtaining 501(c)(3) status would open up funding opportunities. For example, the United Way is one of the few organizations that provide funding for nonprofit organizations' operational costs, but nonprofit organizations must have 501(c)(3) status to be eligible for United Way funds.

Dana would like to see more grants coming in. Specifically she would like a grant to fund clinical supervision. After a certain number of hours under clinical supervision, Dana could become a licensed clinical social worker. As a clinical social worker, she could bill Medicaid and insurance companies for the services she is providing to her clients. She would also then be able to provide clinical supervision for aspiring clinical social workers and charge for her services. Overall, she would be bringing in another source of income to the organization. Dana would also like a grant for a summer photography or art program for children of the families she serves, because these children often are not able to access the same resources as other children in the community.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In 1998, Kansas was one of many states to accept a negotiated settlement from tobacco companies (Kansas Legislative Research Department 2011). In 1999, the Kansas Legislator voted to dedicate Kansas's settlement money to the well-being and health of children.

<sup>2</sup>The identification cards given out at the Mexican consulate are valid government documents. Immigrants can use these cards to obtain individual tax payer identification numbers, and the local school district also accepts this form of identification.

## Chapter 5

### Addressing the Criticism

#### The Immigrant Community

To assess how beneficial Latino Resource Center is to the Latino population, I return to anthropologist Melanie Chansky's (2005:10) claim that

To have truly *effective* services, providers must not only make these services understandable and accessible to the target groups, but must assure that they meet the needs that the immigrants and refugees themselves feel are important to their everyday lives.

#### *Understandable?*

Latino nonprofit organizations, like all immigrant nonprofit organizations, face the challenge of delivering services to a diverse clientele. Organizations that cater to Latinos could potentially work with individuals from several different countries. Even if Spanish is spoken in these countries, emigrants from these countries may know little to no Spanish and instead use an indigenous language. This has recently been the case with some clients of Latino Resource Center (personal communication, August 19, 2010).

To make their services understandable, LRC has always had directors, the people who spend the most face time with the clients, that speak Spanish. Although both directors were not native Spanish speakers, they both spoke Spanish fluently. Neither has been able to speak indigenous languages, but with the surge of indigenous-language speakers coming into Sunflower, the current director has found ways to serve this population. For example, Dana explained that she uses a client who is fluent in both Mixtec and Spanish to communicate with this client's extended family, which only speaks Mixtec.

In addition to being linguistically understandable for clientele, LRC also tries to make its services make sense for the Latino population. Lauren described how they decided to structure the way the center interacted with their clients:

We took into consideration some of the important cultural aspects like that need for interpersonal contact and families not being as comfortable with just talking to someone on the phone and that person saying, “Well, go to this place and you can get help.” You know, to be at a place where people could go and meet you there... they could see you, talk to you face to face. That human connection makes a world of difference, and I think even more so within at least some Latino cultures (Interview, September 1, 2010).

Els de Graauw (2008:329) claims, “Immigrant nonprofits provide services in a culturally and linguistically competent way and offer a nonthreatening environment in which immigrants feel comfortable seeking assistance.” In the case of Latino Resource Center, their efforts demonstrate de Graauw’s claim.

### *Accessible?*

Due to Sunflower’s size, getting to LRC is a fairly short drive for most people living in the city. But individuals without a means of transportation can still access the center’s services by bus or by phone or e-mail. They hold daily office hours that can go from early in the morning to late into the evening. As a once frequent passerby in the LRC neighborhood, I was always surprised to see Dana’s car at the center no matter the time of day.

Aside from distance and office hours, there are accessibility issues in terms of LRC’s outreach. For the most part, people learn of LRC through word-of-mouth, which limits how many Latinos know about the center and its services. This is apparent in the following fieldnote excerpt:

After the Spanish yoga class finished, I approached the participants in order to get their opinions on the services Latino Resource Center offered or should offer. One woman said she no longer used their services but that she saw Latinas needing information on

domestic violence. I told her that Latino Resource Center offers counseling for this type of thing to which she responded, "*No saben* (They don't know)." This leads me to believe that the services aren't widely advertised (Fieldnotes, November 15, 2010).

When Latino community members do not have contacts that can point them to LRC, the organization is potentially inaccessible to them.

LRC's accessibility can be directly tied into its funding. Latino Resource Center's annual budget of \$73,900 pays for the salaries and insurance of one full-time staff member and a possible half-time staff member, and the rest is used to cover mileage, overhead costs, and a few events in the community each year. There is neither enough funds nor staff time to spend on advertising. The type of funding the center receives also limits to whom it can direct services. The funds from Early Achievement are intended to help Latino families with small children. Dana acknowledged that she does not turn people away, but families are still the primary concern. The board has tried to generate more funds through fundraising events, but for the amount of time and effort they put into the events, they rarely get a good return. David, LRC board member, blames their inexperience holding fundraisers. He also explained that there are publicity issues because of the immigration status of some of their clients: "It's hard for us to have a golf tournament for undocumented immigrants" (Interview, January 31, 2011). Kansas is a conservative state, which shows in recent Arizona-like legislation that targets illegal immigrants (<http://www.kansascity.com/2011/02/17/2664323/kansas-unveils-arizona-like-bill.html>). LRC faces the conundrum of wanting to hold public fundraisers while at the same time wanting to stay under the conservative radar and not risk getting its funds taken.

In 2000, the census counted around 3,000 Latinos in Sunflower and estimated this number would climb to 4,000 by 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey). Yet, David estimated this number could be as high as 6,000. Only 700 Latinos are in the

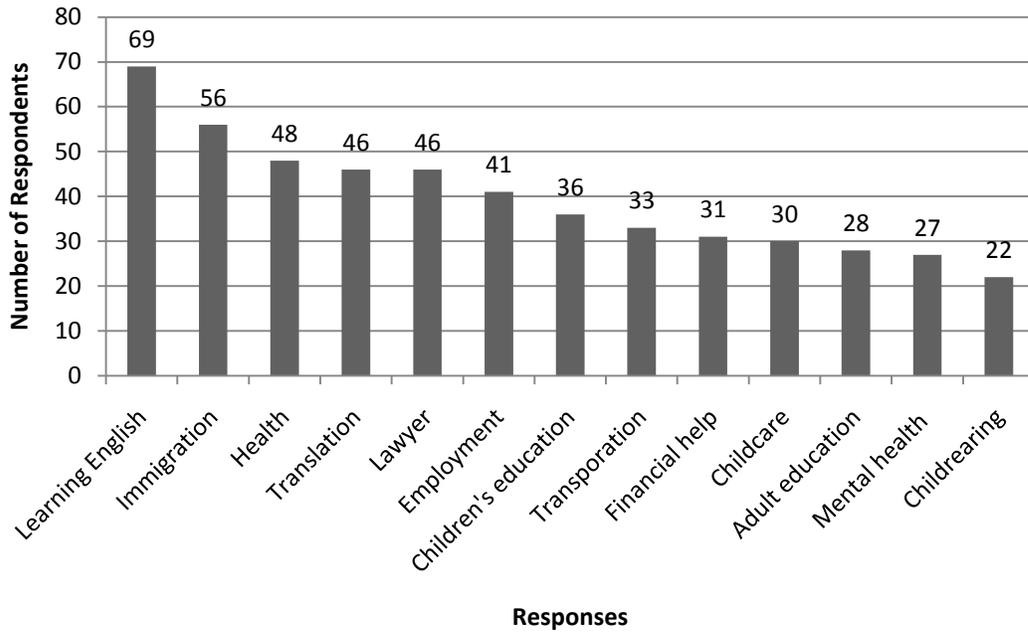
LRC database. If we believe census numbers are accurate, LRC is helping only 17.5 percent of the Sunflower Latino population, and this percentage drops to 12 percent if we accept David's estimate. Either way, LRC is helping only a small fraction of the Latino population.

### ***Meeting the needs?***

LRC conducted a survey to learn about the Latino experience in Sunflower and to identify needs. The survey was conducted in 2007 with the help of 30 students from a nearby university. The students went out into the Sunflower community, looking for Latino respondents in locations such as restaurants, laundry mats, and grocery stores. One of the questions the surveyors asked was, “*¿En cuáles áreas le gustaría recibir más información o ayuda?*” (In what areas would you like to receive more information or help?), and they provided options from which the participants could choose (Metz, Crosthwait, and León 2007). Out of 128 adult Latino respondents, half chose learning English, making it the most chosen option. This was followed in descending order by immigration, health, translation, a lawyer, employment, children's education, transportation, financial help, childcare, adult education, mental health, and childrearing (see Figure 1).

Many of these needs were already being addressed by LRC. In a phone interview, Gabriela told me that her friend had gone to LRC and received help finding a lawyer as well as a job. Josue, who I met at English classes at Assembly Church, also told me that the center helped him find a lawyer after his employer refused to provide him with workman's compensation when he broke his foot on the job. At this same class, I spoke with Maria who had found the class through LRC.

**Figure 1. Latinos' Interest in Services in Sunflower, Kansas**



\*All responses are out of 128 respondents.

When Latino Resource Center cannot directly address a need, it helps clients get in touch with organizations that can. I met Clara at Spanish services held at Assembly Church. She currently helps run the English language classes at the church and works at an organization that helps immigrant patients find ways to pay for their medical bills. In the past, she worked at Head Start, inside Assembly Church. She said that LRC has referred clients to the agencies she has worked for and vice versa. For example, when families call LRC looking for childcare, it refers them to Head Start.

In addition to the survey, Lauren kept a list of unmet needs that she continually encountered that neither Latino Resource Center nor the community had the resources to address appropriately. The top three needs included suicide prevention, alcohol treatment, and high school retention. LRC will be using its Kansas Health Foundation Grant to finally address these needs by asking Latinos in the community how they would like to see these issues resolved.

The survey and Lauren's list are attempts by Latino Resource Center to meet the Latino population's needs. Unfortunately, the survey only included 128 Latinos out of possibly 4,000 to 6,000 Latinos living in Sunflower, and the survey was conducted three years ago. What about the needs of the rest of the Latino population? Have the needs of the Latino population changed? Also, Lauren's list was compiled while working with clients of LRC, who tend to be families. What about the needs of single Latino men and women? Although LRC is doing its best to meet the needs of its clients, the needs of the majority of the population may not be met.

### **The Community**

Because Latino nonprofit organizations help Latino immigrants stay and survive in a community by helping them access resources, community residents may assume that Latinos gain at their loss. Latino Resource Center's major funding, for example, comes from tobacco settlement money that Kansas has set aside for the promotion of children's health and well-being, but LRC uses these funds to help Latino families, some of whom are undocumented. Determining whether a Latino nonprofit organization is beneficial to a community is a very subjective matter, but we can look to see if LRC is mindful of this community while delivering services to a segment of the total population.

The Sunflower Latino Group, the precursor of Latino Resource Center, was actually carried out by established Sunflower community members. This tradition is continued in the LRC current board of directors, which consists of school board members, representatives from the police department, representatives from the health department, bankers, professors, and church leaders. These community members recognize the importance of integrating Latinos and

making them feel welcome in the community. Stephen, a board member of Latino Resource Center, viewed it this way:

If there weren't immigrants coming into the state, you know, we would be even more economically deprived of economic opportunities. The notion that immigrant concerns are only immigrant concerns, that's kind of why I'm on the board. It is all of our concerns. Cities, nations, and states that attract people and invest in people are going to succeed in the global economy in the 21st century. Places that lose population and don't invest in their people, they're going to lose out. (Interview, August 25, 2010).

Helping the Latino community is also helping the larger community.

Barbara explained that bringing together the Latino community with the larger community was always a priority: "From the beginning, one of our goals was to help these families integrate into our community.... We looked at different ways we could bring different cultures together and form friendships and get to know each other as real people before we started making generalizations" (Interview, August 27, 2010). These goals are put into writing in their mission statement and vision for the organization:

#### Celebrate Community

We envision our community as a place where Latinos are welcome as valued partners contributing to our success.

- Bridge
  - To connect Latino families to services.
  - To connect language, culture, and community.
- Embrace
  - To cultivate awareness and sensitivity to the Latino heritage in our community.
- Empower
  - To guide individuals and institutions to transform our community.

LRC has carried out these goals through its activities. For example, when developing services for Latinos, the center chose to not provide separate services for Latinos when they already existed in the community. Stephen explained why

The approach that was decided was that we again weave in existing resources and we do what we can to try to build bridges and not duplicate services so you don't have one set of services over here for the Latino community and another set of services that are exactly the same but are for people that speak English. The idea is that you raise the level

of competence in the community for people to serve anybody regardless of their language (Interview, August 25, 2010).

LRC has also created and participated in events that present the Latino culture to the larger community. It holds these events in an attempt to introduce the Latino population and their unique cultures to the established residents of Sunflower. Events like Feria Hispana and Culture Festival are held in a local park and are open to the public. For Latino Resource Center, bringing together the Latino population with the larger community is beneficial to both groups. By helping its clients access existing services and resources in the community, LRC is able to use its limited funds on focused services, especially those that the larger community does not provide for undocumented individuals. Latino families are able to get the services they need while at the same time learning how to maneuver through an unfamiliar system. The larger community, as Stephen pointed out, is able to raise its level of competence for serving people of different cultural backgrounds and then will be able to gain from the economic and cultural benefits of having immigrants come into the community.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion and Recommendations

Although Latino Resource Center falls short when held up to Melanie Chansky's criteria for effective services, the center does do many things well. It upholds its mission statement and vision and has linked itself into the migrant civil society of Sunflower.

#### Organizational Relativism

When judging LRC by its own standards, it has been effective. Although we could criticize it for only helping a small portion of the Latino population, its mission was changed and now only identifies families as its targeted group: "Latino Resource Center effectively builds the community's capacity to meet health, educational and social service needs of *Latino families*...." (Latino Resource Center n.d., my emphasis). LRC has helped over 220 Latino families and continues to add more clients. The families I have spoken with have appreciated the services they have received, as seen in the following e-mail sent to me by a client:

During the times I have used Latino Resource Center's services, I have had my taxes done, and I have had consultations. Dana helped me a lot. She also helped me find employment. (personal communication, November 16, 2010, my translation)

LRC's vision lists the following goals for the organization: to connect Latino families to services; to connect language, culture, and community; to cultivate awareness and sensitivity to the Latino heritage in our community; and to guide individuals and institutions to transform our community (ibid.). The center already makes sure it does not duplicate services its clients can get at other agencies, and it regularly directs its clients to churches, health clinics, and other nonprofit organizations. By participating in events like the Cultural Festival and holding the annual *Sábados Culturales*, LRC brings Latino languages and cultures to both the Latino

population and the established population while at the same time cultivating awareness. The board members' continual letters and meetings with agencies is their way of guiding these institutions to change how the community treats immigrants.

### **Migrant Civil Society**

While researching Latino nonprofit organizations and working closely with Latino Resource Center, one thing became clear. Singling out a Latino nonprofit organization, whether to commend or criticize, ignores a much wider network of activity. Many of these organizations owe much their success or their limitations to their connections with outside individuals, organizations, and agencies. Xóchitl Bada, Jonathan Fox, and Andrew Selee (2006:2) agree:

It is useful to look at these different forms of participation through the conceptual lens of “migrant civil society.” Civil society doesn't have to be a fuzzy theoretical term. Simply put, migrant civil society refers to migrant-led membership organizations and public institutions. This includes four very tangible arenas of collective action: membership organizations, non-governmental organizations, media, and autonomous public spheres.

Although their definition limits migrant civil society to migrant-led organizations, it can also be defined as “community organizations, social movements, hometown associations, churches and faith-based organizations, social clubs, and other organized groups that *represent the interests of migrants*” (Theodore and Martin 2007:271, emphasis added). When we step away from a single Latino nonprofit organization, we see that it is usually part of a collective actor known as migrant civil society.

Based on available resources and staff time, Latino Resource Center can only offer so much to its clients, but it can call on the migrant civil society of Sunflower, Kansas, to help provide services the Latino community needs. Together, Latino Resource Center, local churches, healthcare clinics, public institutions, worker justice coalitions, individuals in the community,

and various nonprofit organizations work together and call upon one another when they cannot provide what someone needs. Yet, it is also important to note that much of the services and activities that the Sunflower Latino Group and Latino Resource Center offered in its early years had to be dropped when the SLG disbanded. Many of these services were not restarted because there was no longer a group to help plan and run them. Therefore, even though Latino Resource Center has contacts at various organizations and institutions, the lack of a group from these places that meets regularly to discuss the Latino needs and find solutions has affected the quality and quantity of some services.

## **Recommendations**

Latino Resource Center has made great strides in the Sunflower community, but its outreach into the Latino community has been cut short by the dissolution of the Sunflower Latino Group and limited staff and funds. Both the organization and I recognize it could always do more. Many of these recommendations stem from limitations brought up by directors and board members of Latino Resource Center.

To begin, LRC could broaden its client base if it varied its funding base. With the majority of its funding coming from Early Achievement, it is limited to only helping families with small children. Obtaining a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status in the near future will open up more funding opportunities to LRC, but before this can happen, it needs to find ways to replace the benefits that are provided by being a ministry of the Catholic church. I also suggest that when choosing new board members, the board of directors should recruit individuals who not only have experience working with the Latino population but also have experience fundraising. Board members admit that past fundraisers were inadequate due to their own inexperience. Overall,

more funding from a 501(c)(3) status and successful fundraisers would allow the center to hire more staff which could mean more services and more people being served.

In the future, it will also be important for LRC to get more representation on the board and staff from the target population. There is currently one Latino board member, but more representation may help LRC stay up-to-date on the population's needs and interests.

Population surveys should be done on a regular basis. This will allow LRC to stay up-to-date on the needs of the Latino community. It would also be in its best interest to survey the non-Latino population to see what it knows about Latino culture and what the commonly held attitudes are. This information could be used to tailor cultural events that are attended by non-Latinos. Latino Resource Center has a handful of universities in its vicinity, and it could use them as allies (Andersen 2008:98). Like it has done in the past, LRC can recruit university students enrolled in service learning classes or interested in doing research with Latino populations to help design and implement surveys.

I think Latino Resource Center could also improve its services by eventually reviving the Sunflower Latino Group. Even if they just met a few times a year, it would still provide a forum for various Latino-serving organizations and institutions to share their experiences and to solve problems together. It would increase the interconnectedness of the migrant civil society and improve their ability to solve issues within the Latino and larger community. Looking at the larger migrant civil society of Kansas, it may be a valuable experience for Latino Resource Center to interact with other Latino nonprofit organizations outside of Sunflower. Many of these organizations are probably experiencing the same issues in their communities, and they could learn from each other's experiences. Stephen recommended that there be an annual conference of Latino nonprofits in the state of Kansas. While this is something that would take more time and

money than Latino Resource Center can currently provide, it is something that in the future they could either help plan with other organizations or just participate in.

### **A Leading Force?**

I think the answer to Michael Cortes's (1999a:39) question, "Is the nonprofit sector a 'leading force' for improving the role and prospects of the Latino population in United States society?" will come only after anthropologists and other researchers provide more case studies of this of organization, comparing what the organizations want to do and what the immigrants want with what is actually happening.

But for now, I will say that Latino nonprofit organizations will be a leading force if they have strong ties in the network of the migrant civil society and help their clients gain access to a wider variety of resources and services, while at the same time conserving their resources and increasing their knowledge of Latinos' needs through these contacts. These organizations will be a leading force in improving the role and prospects of the Latino population if they are providing services that are understandable, accessible, and wanted by the targeted group.

When I apply these criteria to Latino Resource Center, it has the potential to be a leading force for the Latino population in Sunflower, Kansas. With one full-time employee and only \$74,000 a year, it has managed to serve over 700 Latinos in the community since it opened its doors in 2006. It has definitely led the way for services for Latinos in Sunflower, Kansas, but it also needs to improve in certain areas to truly become the leading force in the community.

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