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**THE LATINO RESEARCH INITIATIVE:
A MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND COLLABORATIVE
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY OUTREACH AND
SCHOLARSHIP MODEL**

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ABSTRACT—This paper has three objectives designed to support the work of practice systems, scholars, and policy makers. First, it provides a conceptual model that supports a multidisciplinary, multicultural, collaborative university-community research, service, and teaching group that is consistent with the philosophy, mission, and objectives of land grant institutions and community systems. Second, it describes how the Latino Research Initiative implemented this collaborative model to support the goals of the university and the community to enhance the lives of Latinos in Lincoln, Nebraska. Finally, this paper discusses how this collaborative model can be used or adapted by university and community professionals with their changing communities. Several factors highlight the importance of university-community collaborative models. The increased Latino population in a sparsely populated region such as the Great Plains requires that research, programming, and teaching be conducted to respond to the changing needs of its communities. Educational (particularly land-grant universities) and community institutions are committed to actively conducting research and programming that serve to enhance the lives of members of their communities. Finally, attitudinal, economical, and organizational barriers and dwindling resources make partnerships necessary so that the needs of diverse populations can be most adequately met.

Introduction

The dynamic ecological system in which communities and universities are embedded has created a context in which the interdependence of subsystems is vital to their existence and the achievement of their goals. Exploring alternatives and expanding the knowledge of how universities and communities can purposefully become interdependent to serve their constituency warrants important consideration. Any analysis should highlight the unique nature of working in emerging communities with an ethnic group that has been traditionally overlooked, in this case, the Latino community. This paper has three objectives designed to be supportive to the work of practice systems (i.e., community professionals, programmers, and direct-service personnel), scholars, and policy-related systems (i.e., funding sources and agencies and policy makers at the county, state, and federal levels). First, it provides a conceptual model that supports a multidisciplinary, multicultural, collaborative university-community outreach and scholarship group that is consistent with the philosophy, mission, and objectives of land-grant institutions and community systems. Second, it describes how the Latino Research Initiative implemented this collabora-

tive model to support the goals of the university and the community to enhance the lives of Latinos in Lincoln, Nebraska. Finally, this paper discusses how this collaborative model can be used or adapted by university and community professionals in their changing communities. Several factors highlight the importance of university-community collaborative models. The increased Latino population in a sparsely populated region such as the Great Plains requires that research and programming be conducted to respond to the changing needs of its increasingly diverse communities. Educational (particularly land-grant universities) and community institutions are committed to actively conducting research and programming that serve to enhance the lives of members of their communities. Finally, attitudinal, economical, and organizational barriers and dwindling resources make partnerships necessary so that the needs of diverse populations can be most adequately met. [The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Central and South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (Day 1996). For the purpose of this article, we are using the term "Latino."]

Collaborative Community-University Model

There is a growing body of literature that discusses the importance and implementation of collaborative models by communities and universities (e.g., see Lerner and Simon 1998 for complete review of land-grant universities and university-collaborative models; Kellogg Commission 1999; Boyer 1990). The goal of these types of models is for universities and communities to engage collaboratively to support or create change that will ultimately enhance the quality of life. Boyer's (1990) work, which encompasses the idea of greater connectedness between universities and their communities, has served as a catalyst for universities to critically reexamine the notion and practice of scholarship. Additionally, his work calls on universities, which he identifies as the "New American University" (Boyer 1994), to redefine scholarship to include the scholarship of discovery (research), integration, application (outreach/service), and teaching. Although multiple challenges have prevented the complete implementation of collaborative community-university models (see Lerner and Simon 1998), faculty are being encouraged and supported in varying degrees by university administrators to work with and serve their communities by engaging in the four functions of scholarship.

The "scholarship of discovery" involves what is generally identified as research and what Boyer calls "disciplined, investigative efforts" (1990:17) that contribute to a body of knowledge. The label, "scholarship of integration," is less familiar and focuses on the importance of making research meaningful by examining it in a multidisciplinary context. Connecting data and facts through the processes of critical analysis and interpretation ultimately gives meaning and authenticity to research. Through this process of integration with research data, the literature and programming for Latino communities become more meaningful and more consistent with the needs of this group. The "scholarship of application" naturally informs and/or flows from discovery and integration; it also allows social problems to inform the discovery and integration process. The "scholarship of teaching" involves engaging in active teaching and learning, where knowledge is transmitted, transformed, and extended. The goal of this process is to enlighten not only the student or learner but the teacher as well. In summary, each of the four functions, discovery, integration, application, and teaching, contribute to and enhance each other as well as maintain this cycle of scholarship.

The community-university outreach and scholarship model developed by Boyer (1994) is embedded within four systems: the community, community agency, university, and professional community (see Fig. 1). It integrates the four scholarly functions identified by Boyer (1990): discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Additionally, it is based on the principles of a multidisciplinary team: collaboration, engagement, responsibility and commitment to the community, applied research, professional development, and serving as a resource to others. The multicultural perspective supports the movement toward the understanding of culture and its role in people's lives (see Ponterotto et al. 1995; Green 1995). Multiculturalism is a defining and unique concept of this community-university outreach and scholarship model (see Locke 1992 for a model of understanding multiculturalism) and it is at the center of the model to illustrate the importance of this concept to the areas of discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Since a consistent definition and meaning of the terms "culture" and "multicultural" do not exist, members of a collaborative group will need to define them so they are consistent within the context of their work and goals. This model incorporates the use of culturally sensitive, relevant, and competent processes in discovery (see Marín and Marín 1991 for complete review), integration (Dillworth-Anderson et al. 1993), application (see Locke 1992), and teaching (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg 1995) among and between Latino subgroups. The Latino community must be considered as it

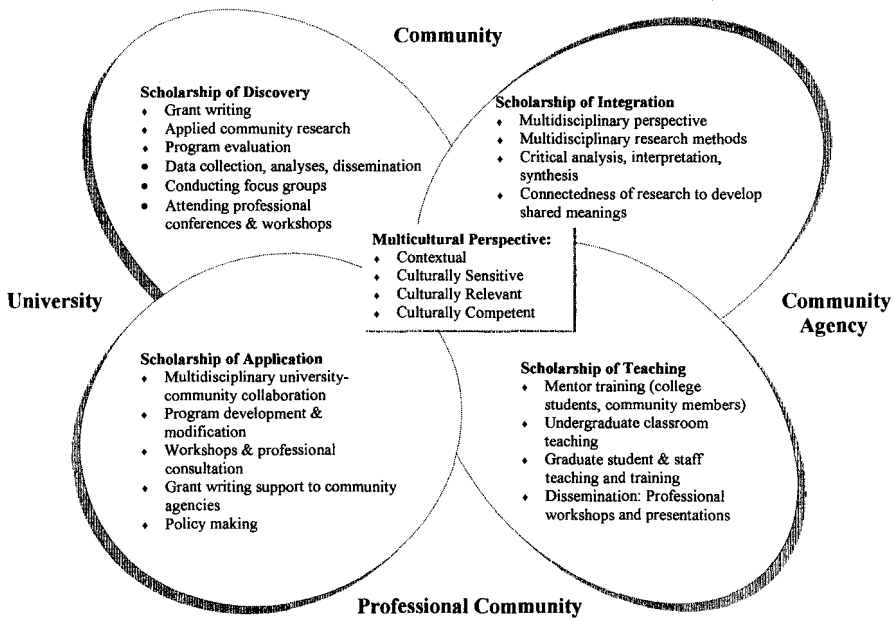


Figure 1. Community-University Collaborative Outreach and Scholarship Model.

exists in its dynamic context. Culture, class, race, gender, oppression, social support systems, strengths, and challenges are some of the dimensions that are important to consider for collaborative groups to most effectively work with Latino populations.

An examination of the activities or tasks listed as examples under the four scholarship functions reveals an overlap across the four areas. The difference lies in the focus or outcome of the activity or task. For example, grant writing can be related to the scholarship of discovery (e.g., a contribution to research literature), the scholarship of application (e.g., faculty or graduate interns engage in grant writing on behalf of or in collaboration with community agencies), or the application of teaching (e.g., culturally based training for community interns, technical training on grant writing for intern and agency staff). Each collaborative team will select what work is conducted under each of the areas depending on the goals of the group, the context, and the critical needs of the Latino community.

In summary, this model is designed for community and university members to engage in one or more of the four areas of scholarship that serve

to improve the quality of life of the Latino community. The collaborative involvement of university and community will have a positive impact on, among, and between these systems and the people they impact.

The Need for Community-University Collaboration in the Great Plains

The Latino Research Initiative (LRI) was created to collectively work on addressing critical areas of need in the Latino community. Based on demographic projections and trends, it is apparent that the Great Plains region will continue to experience a growing influx of people from diverse racial and ethnic populations.

Changing Demographics across the Great Plains

The Great Plains region consists of six states (Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Texas) and portions of three other states (west side of Colorado, most of Montana, and half of New Mexico and Wyoming). From 1990 to 1998 a number of states in the Great Plains region have experienced dramatic changes in their ethnic and racial composition (see Table 1 for complete breakdown of other ethnic groups). For example, relative to other ethnic minority groups, the Latino population has grown considerably in Nebraska, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Kansas (US Bureau of the Census 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d). In 1998 Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado were ranked among the top 10 states with the largest Latino populations (see Table 1) (US Bureau of the Census 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d). The growth of the Latino population in these states has ranged from 20% to 36% since 1990. Five of the states in the Great Plains regions (which ranked in the lower half of 50 states for Latinos) have experienced dramatic growth in their Latino population since 1990. The most dramatic increase has been in Nebraska (96%). Other low-ranking states with growth at or over 50% include South Dakota (65%), Oklahoma (51%), and North Dakota (50%).

The rates of legal and illegal migration (movement within one country, region, or place of abode to settle in another) and immigration (movement into a country in which one is not a native) are contributing to the changing demographics in the Great Plains region. Latinos in this region are migrating from various parts of the United States and immigrating from different Latin countries for different reasons (e.g., employment, education, quality

TABLE 1
CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE GREAT PLAINS

State	Hispanics			African Americans			Asian Americans			Native Americans		
	Rank ¹ in 1998 ²	Population in 1998 ²	%Change since 1990 ³	Rank ¹	Population in 1998 ²	%Change since 1990 ³	Rank ¹	Population in 1998 ²	%Change since 1990 ³	Rank ¹	Population in 1998 ²	%Change since 1990 ³
Kansas	24	139,724	49%	31	154,750	6%	29	46,367	43%	22	23,333	-0.2%
Nebraska	32	72,519	96%	35	67,173	16%	38	21,838	73%	33	14,839	15%
N. Dakota	50	6,999	50%	49	4,001	12%	47	5,344	52%	19	30,109	16%
Oklahoma	26	130,168	51%	27	261,945	11%	30	44,579	30%	2	263,360	2.2%
S. Dakota	49	8,665	65%	47	5,120	55%	50	4,752	50%	11	59,292	17%
Texas	2	5,862,835	35%	3	2,430,061	18%	4	556,355	68%	8	95,682	32%
Montana	46	15,695	28%	50	3,219	32%	48	5,326	24%	14	55,615	16%
New Mexico	8	700,289	20%	40	45,124	42%	36	25,651	69%	4	162,686	18%
Colorado	9	577,516	36%	29	171,904	26%	20	95,850	56%	17	36,740	18%
Wyoming	41	28,870	12%	48	4,082	9%	51	4,023	38%	38	10,608	8.3%

¹ Rank based on the population in that state relative to the 50 states and District of Columbia. Source: US Bureau of the Census 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d.

² Based on estimated population in 1998. Source: US Bureau of the Census 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d.

³ Percentage based on population change from 1990 to estimated population in 1998. Source: US Bureau of the Census 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d.

of life, to be with family). Legal immigrants are defined, based on immigration law, as "persons lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States" (US Department of Justice 1999:3). There are also undocumented immigrants, temporary workers, foreign students, and refugees. Projections for states in the Great Plains indicate that net immigration between 1995 and 2025 will vary considerably. The states that will experience the highest growth of net immigration (US Department of Commerce 1997) in the Great Plains will be Texas (1,008,000), Colorado (123,000), and Kansas (102,000). Oklahoma (92,000) and Nebraska (29,000) are projected to have moderate growth, and North Dakota and Montana (13,000), followed by South Dakota (6,000) and Wyoming (2,000), will have the lowest growth. However, when communities are small, even small increases in the number of immigrant populations can have a strong impact on the residents of communities (see Ogbu 1991). In addition, immigration rates are underreported due to illegal immigration or undocumented people. The movement of the immigrant population into communities must be considered in community planning and development decisions. The diverse immigrant populations will have a common and unique set of needs as well as unique needs that must be identified and addressed. These steps will contribute to a community's ability to adapt to the changes inherent when demographic changes occur.

The growth of the Latino population in Lincoln and Lancaster County in Nebraska is consistent with national and regional trends and has grown at a high rate (47%). In 1990 approximately 3,938 Latinos lived in Lancaster County. By 1997 this number grew to 7,470 (US Bureau of the Census 1998). Although the data illustrate the rapid growth of the Latino population, the number of Latinos may be substantially underestimated (Nebraska Office of Minority Health 1997). Many Latinos are undocumented and many migrate according to seasonal work changes. Therefore, the Latino population in this community may be larger than what is documented. Regardless of their legal status and the actual numbers, the Latino population brings its own unique challenges and resources that contribute to the health and well-being of their families and communities.

The Ecology of Latino Youth and Families

We use Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model to provide a brief examination of the subsystems or ecological niches in which Latinos are embedded. The microsystem consists of the Latino individuals and families;

the mesosystem consists of systems that are working directly with the family, such as schools and employers; the exosystem consists of the community systems that indirectly impact families, such as community agencies and policies; and the macrosystem involves those societal institutions and policies that reciprocally impact the lives of Latinos (see Marín 1994 or Locke 1992 for overview of US Latinos and Mexican Americans). Issues of language, cultural differences, acculturation stressors, and discrimination are compounded when communities across the Great Plains region do not have adequate social structures (e.g., a Latino-based community system or bilingual services in the community) that respond to the needs of Latino populations. Furthermore, lower educational levels, unemployment, underemployment, and higher poverty levels, especially for new or recent arrivals in the Latino community, can result in alienation, prejudice, language barriers, poor self-image, academic underachievement, and family problems (Golding et al. 1991; see McGoldrick et al. 1998). This places Latino individuals, couples, and families at heightened risks of physical, emotional, behavioral, mental, and social problems (see Berry 1994; Garza and Gallegos 1995, for reviews on acculturation and its impact). These problems are exacerbated when communities do not have the structures and processes in place that can effectively respond to the needs of Latino populations. Ultimately, this type of a context compromises the positive development of youth (see Montero-Sieburth and Villarruel 2000 for a review of Latino youth in context, programming, and interventions) and family (see Locke 1992). Many of the institutions in the mesosystem (e.g., educational, social support, and employment) consciously or unconsciously discriminate and exert pressure on Latino individuals and families (microsystem) to conform to the values and expectations of the dominant culture. Variations in individual's acculturation process and living in overstressed environments (e.g., language barriers, financial problems, cultural mismatch with community systems) contribute to family stress and interfamily conflict. Many of these pressures and problems result from a lack of mutual understanding of the structures, processes, and rules that are the foundation of each Latino subgroup's (i.e., immigrant vs. native born; voluntary vs. involuntary) cultural model (see Locke 1992 for a review of the Mexican American experience). Over time, these can result in Latino children, youth, and families experiencing developmental problems, intergenerational conflict, and other problems that adversely impact their quality of life.

Although Latinos experience adversity, they also have a pool of strengths and resources that contributes to their resiliency and provides

support that helps them achieve various levels of success in their lives (see McCubbin et al. 1995 for a review of resiliency in ethnic minority families). For example, Latino families have a culture (including collectivism, ethnic foods, music, and language) and cultural belief systems (e.g., familism, fatalism, machismo, personalismo, folk illness beliefs, respeto, simpatico) that support them in dealing more effectively with life challenges (see Cuellar et al. 1995 for a review of cultural beliefs). These resources are particularly relevant to Latino youths and families living in non-Latino communities that are insensitive to their culture and needs (see McCubbin et al. 1995 for a review of resiliency in ethnic minority families). Understanding the diversity of resiliency factors that are normative to various Latino populations provide a positive framework for those who serve, study, and make decisions that impact this community. Consequently, these resiliency factors also contribute to strengthening the community.

In terms of their impact on the exosystem, Latinos enhance the community in a variety of important ways that contribute to the quality of life of the community. First, they are a source of labor that makes valuable contributions to the economy of the growing number of rural communities in the Great Plains that are facing economic challenges and outmigration (e.g., food processing industry) (see Dalla and Baugher 2001). Secondly, cultural beliefs of Latino families help to strengthen religious, community, and family values. This is because many Latino families promote strong religious beliefs, family ties, and community pride.

The desire to maintain a good quality of life for native and new citizens and the increasing diversity of the citizens of this region necessitates research and programs that adequately respond to the needs of the changing communities across the Great Plains region. In order to maintain the quality of life across the Great Plains, especially as communities face demographic changes in their residents, it is necessary to study, develop, and implement systems and programs that increase the opportunity for communities to stabilize. This objective is challenging for a variety of reasons. First, there is a shortage of baseline data about the issues Latinos face in Great Plains communities. Second, there is a shortage of Latino and non-Latino scholars and community professionals who have interest or experience in conducting in research and programming with Latino populations. Third, community service systems tend to face a continuous struggle of accessing economic and human resources and maintaining an up-to-date base of knowledge of the field since their energies must be focused on providing direct advocacy, service, or programming to the members of its community. Fourth, there is

a lack of sufficient funding for research and programming in minority communities. Finally, the research and programming is either lacking, accomplished in isolation from one another when it is conducted, or not adequately disseminated to others. Consequently, alternative models are needed that will address these issues.

Community professionals and university faculty, by working together to conduct comprehensive and integrated discovery, integration, application, and teaching for the best interests of the Latino and non-Latino community, can effectively respond to the issues relevant to Latino communities. Combining the scholarship and technical expertise of the university faculty and practitioners' knowledge of and experience with the community expands the potential for reciprocal discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Service systems can guide the research of scholars by informing researchers of the current problems, issues, and needs of their clients. They can also assist in supporting the development of trusting relationships between scholars and clients. In turn, scholars can direct research by introducing service systems to timely literature and programming that are consistent with the needs of clients. In addition, a collaborative relationship counteracts the negative images that abound related to universities (e.g., "ivory tower" faculty who are more concerned with obtaining research funds than in serving their communities). The development of collaborative community-university models with these features is a feasible alternative method of responding to the communities' changing needs and context. For example, the changing environment at the local, county, state, and federal levels requires that grants be a primary source of funding for service and research. Since the majority of funding sources place a high value on collaborative work between academic and service professionals, this model supports conducting culturally based discovery, integration, application, and teaching in the community that are designed to improve the quality of life of Latino and non-Latino people.

The Latino Research Initiative's (LRI) Implementation of the Community-University Outreach and Scholarship Model

This proposed community-university collaborative model is designed to address and overcome barriers, join efforts, and highlight individual and group strengths that facilitate successful discovery, integration, application, and teaching in the Latino community. We provide the guidelines and principles of the LRI, followed by a description of the historical develop-

ment of the LRI, its philosophy, mission, and its identity. Examples of LRI scholarship and outreach and a discussion of issues related to dissemination will conclude this section.

Guidelines that have supported the LRI in developing and implementing the collaborative community-university outreach and scholarship model (see Lerner and Simon 1998) are:

- Building relationships: Latino and non-Latino professionals in academia and in community systems who are interested in this work must find a way to associate with each other (e.g., initiate contact with potential collaborators, meet others with common interests by attending community-based functions, and become involved in each other's committees and boards).
- Commitment to developing community-university collaboration: Through ongoing discussion between the members, the group must develop a philosophy, identity, mission, and set of objectives that integrate research and programming.
- Ongoing search of funding: Funding must be secured to initiate and maintain research and programming.
- Dissemination of knowledge: The information must be disseminated to scholars and community professionals in diverse professional fields and disciplines.

Dissemination activities play a vital role in the mission of the LRI and contribute to enhancing the quality of life of Latinos. Dissemination of scholarship across the four areas will inform and educate academic professionals and service providers on multidisciplinary research findings and programming on Latino populations. It will help academic professionals and service providers gain cultural competency in working with Latino populations. First, it will increase their awareness of the importance of conducting culturally based studies and programming. Such knowledge can potentially serve as an important catalyst for researchers, policymakers, community-based organizations, and funding agencies to value, support, and perhaps implement programming and research efforts that are designed to address the critical needs of Latinos in the community. Second, and possibly most important, it will facilitate positive attitudes toward research and programming in Latino communities by providing information on how to work effectively with Latino populations. In addition, providing data that are balanced and presently alternative studies, teaching, or outreach that are

strengths-based can minimize the traditional pathological perspective on the study of Latinos. Such information could encourage researchers, programmers, community members and professionals, and funding agencies to appreciate and value conducting research with Latino populations, when given the chance to observe, learn, or experience the effectiveness of culturally based studies and programming with this community. Third, it will increase and broaden the knowledge base about the issues that Latinos in America face in their communities. It will ensure that the knowledge gained from the LRI's efforts will inform and educate professionals and paraprofessionals in the surrounding community.

The knowledge obtained through the scholarship functions needs to be disseminated across academic disciplines, professional fields, and among nonprofessionals working with the Latino community. This feature is unique as dissemination typically occurs within a restricted audience such as one's own discipline. Through dissemination of information, members of a community-university group provide their audience with multiple perspectives and experiences of the Latino community. The result is the dissemination of a richer body of knowledge that is meaningful because it combines the strengths of faculty and practitioners. Finally, and most importantly, engaging in this type of dissemination can serve to increase the number of people from varying walks of life who are able to learn about an often invisible and misunderstood Latino community that contributes many positive things to the wider community.

In summary, engaging in this process accomplishes the following:

- Data and information on the Latino population will be added to the limited body of knowledge.
- Culturally sensitive and relevant research designs and methodologies will be contributed to the growing number of such presentations.
- Programming that has been developed, implemented, and evaluated to specifically serve the Latino community (e.g., addresses language barriers, cultural identity, and adjustment issues) will be made available to other service providers and researchers who are seeking programming or models of programming for their Latino populations.
- Dissemination activities, which are typically done within one's own professional discipline or community organization, will

be presented across diverse academic and professional disciplines and organizations.

These efforts will contribute to comprehensive research and programming that will address the challenges of increasingly diverse populations and communities in the Great Plains Region.

Historical Development of the LRI

In 1995 two professors from the Departments of Psychology and Latino and Latin American Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) initiated a set of meetings with the director of the Hispanic Community Center (HCC) to discuss potential collaboration. These discussions led to formal consultation with the coordinator of the Mental Health Program at the HCC. The goal was to assist in providing mental health and program evaluation services to Latino children and families.

The Hispanic Community Center is a private, nonprofit organization that obtains funds from many state, community, and foundation sources. Its core mission is to (1) enhance the quality of life of the Latino community; (2) empower Latino peoples to participate in a meaningful way in society; and (3) develop linkages between the Latino community and the community at large. Since 1982 the HCC has provided services to the Latino community, providing a space where Latinos could assemble, discuss, and seek solutions to various problems in the community. One of the first issues addressed was the need for substance abuse treatment programs. In response to that need, a Spanish-speaking Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group began meeting at the center and continues to meet twice a week. Over the years, additional programs have been added, including mental health counseling and referral services, assistance with immigration procedures, transportation to medical and social services, translation services, and educational programs (e.g., tutoring and language classes).

In August 1996, UNL hosted the Third Annual Midwest Consortium for Latino Research (MCLR) Scholars' Roundtable. The MCLR consists of 10 charter-member institutions, which includes the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who have faculty as representatives on their board of directors. One of the UNL representatives is a founding member of this consortium, which began over 10 years ago. The Scholars' Roundtable brought together over 60 Latino faculty and graduate students. The attendees came from colleges and universities in the Midwest region and included several other

UNL faculty and students. A primary issue that was discussed at the roundtable was the need to develop groups that would engage in research with Latino populations. This roundtable set the foundation for faculty members at UNL to join together to consider implementing joint research on Latino issues. Consistent with its goal to create an interdisciplinary group, members from a number of other academic departments were invited to join the LRI. The LRI has representation from the following disciplines: Community and Regional Planning, Ethnic Studies, Family and Consumer Sciences, Latino and Latin American Studies, Psychology, and Sociology. The other important dimension of the LRI is its ability to collaborate in partnership with Lincoln's Hispanic Community Center. Working in conjunction with the Latino and Latin American Studies Program, the group met on a regular basis to discuss issues related to the Latino experience in Nebraska. In addition, a number of speakers were invited to present colloquia on specific research issues. These meetings allowed for discussion on issues and methods to initiate the development of community and research programs designed to address the needs of the Latino community. The working group eventually became more formalized and developed into the Latino Research Initiative (LRI). From the beginning, the director of the Hispanic Community Center of Lincoln was invited to attend LRI meetings. After numerous discussions, the group decided to create a liaison between the HCC and the UNL.

LRI's Philosophy and Mission

The LRI is a dynamic system that promotes working relationships between multiple subsystems in the community. These relationships support and foster the success of research and service programming and focus on addressing the critical needs of the Latino community. The LRI believes in the importance of creating strong working relationships with organizations that have an in-depth understanding and connection with the day-to-day experiences of Latinos in the community. One of our primary goals is to continue *and* strengthen our partnership with community professionals and the Hispanic Community Center, and eventually expand into partnerships with other agencies and organizations that impact the lives of Lincoln's Latino community (e.g., Lincoln Action Program and Lincoln Public Schools). The primary objective of the LRI is to conduct ongoing research and programming that contribute to improving the quality of life of Latinos in this community. Simultaneously, the LRI is a catalyst to the development

and enhancement of working relationships between community organizations and the university. Moreover, the LRI seeks funding from local, state, and federal sources to maintain research and programming efforts. Ultimately, the LRI's efforts are geared to provide programs, research data, and the initial expertise that help guide community-based organizations in making programmatic decisions.

The LRI's philosophy is grounded in the following seven core principles:

- We believe in the strength of collaboration to enhance teaching, research, and service.
- Faculty and administrators must be engaged with the community.
- It is crucial that faculty and administrators assume responsibility and commit to addressing and responding to the needs of underserved populations in their community.
- Applied research is important in supporting programs that better serve the needs of the Latino community.
- We are committed to the development of community service professionals.
- We are committed to disseminating knowledge that helps workers understand and serve minority populations.
- We must serve as a resource to academic and nonacademic professionals, as well as to community members.

The mission of the LRI is to identify and create methods of supporting positive change and growth for the Latino community in Nebraska. Therefore, the LRI is developing and maintaining strong collaborative ties between the university and community. As a result, it has identified issues that are confronting Nebraska's Latino community. Consistent with the mission goal, the LRI conducts ongoing theoretical and applied research. Simultaneously, in this process it seeks financial resources to develop and maintain new and existing programs and research.

The diversity of the LRI membership has contributed to the development of an integrative multidisciplinary framework. Each member represents a theoretical perspective that is consistent with a developmental (Ford and Lerner 1992; Lerner and Spanier 1980), ecological (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1989), systems and family systems (Boss et al. 1995), multicultural (Berry et al. 1997), community (Castells 1983), and sociological (Blea

1995; Hassinger and Pinkerton 1986; Hawley, 1950) approach to the study of the Latino community. In essence, each of these theories contributes to an integrated framework that has the depth and range to more adequately study and serve Latino youths and families. Developmental and family systems theory can be used to study the microsystem, community, multicultural, and sociological theory can be applied to various aspects of the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The interrelatedness and mutual reciprocity of these systems require that each system level be examined. There exists a contextual perspective that provides a more comprehensive understanding of the Latino community and how their quality of life can be enhanced.

Identity of the Latino Research Initiative

The identity of the LRI is best discussed by tracing its evolution. The LRI culminated from the individual members' identity, philosophy, and mission. It consists of an interdisciplinary and multicultural group of faculty members and the HCC director. The LRI is designed to be an inclusive and collaborative group that is built on the common goals of its members. This group has engaged in outreach across departmental and college borders. Finally, the LRI has been actively involved in the professional development of graduate and undergraduate students.

These individual faculty members have been working on issues confronting Nebraska's Latino community since arriving at the university. For example, in 1995 two developmental psychologists conducted a research project designed to examine individual and family factors linked to desirable (e.g., school achievement, prosocial behavior) and undesirable (e.g., substance use, depression) outcomes in Latino adolescents in Lincoln. This project resulted in pilot data for the HCC's youth programs and a number of local presentations, as well as academic publications. One member, who is from the Department of Community and Regional Planning, has been involved in the Minority Risk Factor Behavior Survey, which collects information about health-related behaviors among Nebraska adults. A sociology professor has been involved in two other community projects: (1) the Elliot Neighborhood Wraparound Services Project and (2) the Neighborhood Strengths and Needs Survey. There are two mental health clinicians/supervisors. One clinician directs UNL's Clinical Psychology Training Program and serves on the board of the Child Guidance Center. This center is the major mental health treatment agency for children in Lincoln and Lancaster County. The other clinician is a family scientist and a marriage and family

therapist who teaches and supervises clinical students in the Marriage and Family Therapy program in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department at the university. This member also serves on the HCC Mental Health Advisory Board and works with a youth program involving adolescent Native Americans. In addition, all of the LRI members serve on the boards of local foundations and community organizations. Finally, the executive director of the HCC has served as lecturer and visiting professor at a number of different colleges. The director currently serves on the Nebraska Minority Public Health Association and is a consultant on Latino and Latin American issues in the community.

The multicultural identity of the LRI is one of its strengths. The diversity of its members, among whom five Latino cultures are represented (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Nicaraguan, Brazilian, and Chilean), enhances research and programming. This feature of the LRI has fostered the development of a multicultural approach toward addressing the critical needs of the Latino community.

LRI Outreach and Scholarship

In order to fully implement the LRI's plans for outreach and scholarship that were developed using the university-community model, the LRI submitted a grant proposal to the dean of UNL's College of Arts and Sciences for a new initiative, the "Lincoln Community Access to RESources (CARES) Mental Health Initiative." In partnership with the HCC, the CARES initiative served three purposes. First, it was designed to address and better serve the mental health needs of Latino families and children in the Lincoln and Lancaster County community. To accomplish these objectives, the proposal sought monies to fund a community intern (graduate assistant) at the HCC. The role of the community intern was to work directly with Latino children and families; enhance opportunities to seek funding from local, state, and federal agencies; and create and implement a pilot program of outreach and research. Through direct contact with the Latino community, HCC staff identified issues and areas of need that were incorporated into the planning, development, and implementation of research and outreach activities.

Funding has been secured from multiple university and community sources to engage in two primary activities. The first involves collecting baseline data on issues pertinent to the well-being of the Latino community ("Quality of Life for Latinos" study, in process). The second activity involves implementing and evaluating a youth mentoring program (in process).

The Quality of Life Study

For the past two years the LRI has formulated a research perspective that focuses more specifically on the quality of life for Latinos in Lincoln, Nebraska. As stated earlier, there is a growing population of Latinos in this area who are challenged by limited resources and a lack of access to services due to language and transportation barriers. Through conversations with staff at the HCC (who have direct contact with the Latino community) and among LRI members, in particular the director of the HCC, areas were identified that have been observed or reported to be causing problems for Latino families. Simultaneously, the areas of expertise and interests of faculty were also considered when areas of study were selected. As a first step, the LRI is collecting baseline data on issues that impact the quality of life for Latino families, through face-to-face surveys of adults and paper-and-pencil questionnaires with adolescent youth. These gathers information on a multitude of areas: acculturation and ethnicity, economic and educational factors, family relationships, mental and physical health status, access and barriers to services, potentially risky behaviors, and sense of community. The second step will be to conduct a community-based research study. The objective is to identify critical areas of need that can be addressed in future research and programming to enhance the lives of youths and families. The results and implications of this pilot study will be disseminated at the local, state, and national level.

Latino Achievement Mentoring Program (LAMP)

This community-university-based mentoring program will address the problem of school failure and underachievement among Latino youths. Many Latino children and adolescents experience school-related difficulties that are unrelated to their academic ability, including language difficulties, family stress due to poverty, and cultural barriers such as discrimination and negative stereotyping. These factors contribute directly and indirectly to negative outcomes among Latino youth (see Garcia and McLaughlin 1995; Garcia 1983).

There are a number of community-based youth programs in Lincoln. However, culture-specific programs that involve family members and provide contact with successful Latino role models are lacking. Furthermore, many programs do not fully address other needs, such as, psychosocial support for Latino youths experiencing difficulties at school or help accessing resources in the community. Currently, the number of non-English

speaking-Latino youths and migrant children in the Lincoln public school system exceeds the number of available personnel. More importantly, cultural mismatches between youth and service providers often limit the effectiveness of services. Cultural mismatches occur when service providers are insensitive to impact of culture on youth and youth development or when the Latino youth has a negative perception or history with non-Latino service providers that interfere with effective access or delivery of services. The frequent result of cultural mismatches is a low utilization of or high drop-out rate from services by Latino youth and families.

In an effort to address these issues, the LRI developed the Latino Achievement Mentoring Program that has been implemented at the HCC. This program serves two important goals. The first goal is to promote healthy youth development by providing emotional, academic, psychological, and social support through individual mentoring by ethnoculturally matched college students. The second goal is to strengthen the skills of the college student mentors, who have the potential to become future community leaders. Together, the goals of this mentoring program will help enhance the quality of life of Latino youths in this community (Freedman 1993). Simultaneously, this program facilitates the professional development of UNL students and allows them to remain connected with the community.

An evaluation component of the mentoring program has been developed to measure the program's ability to achieve the stated goals. It employs ongoing qualitative and quantitative methods of assessment. The college mentors, Latino youths, and their families will participate in the programming as well as the evaluation process. Consistent with the first goal, the evaluation is designed to assess the impact of the program on youths' healthy development. The evaluation also assesses the mentors' ability to provide culturally competent services to minority and under-served youth. Consequently, this program will become a model for future collaboration between UNL and community agencies that provide services to minority and underserved populations. Ultimately, this will contribute to addressing the ongoing needs of youths and families in the Lincoln community.

Consistent with the model, dissemination of LRI programming and research includes attending local, state, and national meetings across academic disciplines as well as community-based functions. The results of the initial multidisciplinary study (i.e., Quality of Life Study) will guide future research and programming. It is anticipated that multiple branches of research and program development will be initiated based on the results of this

study. Members of the LRI will conduct followup activities based on their areas of interest and expertise. As a result of the dissemination process, the LRI expects to engage or be engaged by other researchers and community professionals interested in issues related to Latino and other underserved communities. Each researcher or community professional will bring in new ideas and expertise that will influence the direction of the LRI's work. This dialogue may lead to long-term relationships and collaboration among those with common goals. Ultimately, this will facilitate continued research and service with Latinos and other diverse populations in the community.

A future goal of the LRI is to increase its visibility and promote the importance of Latino issues in communities across the Great Plains. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The group can serve as a resource to universities as well as to local, state, and national communities. It can provide support by sharing research and programming information on Latinos. Also, the LRI can provide direct research and programming assistance to interested professionals and service providers. Another possibility is the development of an internet web page that focuses on Latino issues in the Great Plains region. This will make information on Latino issues easily accessible to the community, academicians, and other service professionals. Finally, the LRI can serve as a referral source that links people with similar interests or complementary needs to one another. Together, these efforts increase the likelihood that the critical needs of the growing Latino community in this region will be adequately addressed. There is a lack of resources and limited number of academicians and community professionals who work directly or indirectly with Latino populations or issues in the Great Plains. In response to this problem, the LRI will function as a catalyst to involve others who share similar goals to engage in collaboration in this region.

Replication of the Model

The community-university outreach and scholarship model that was introduced earlier in the paper (see Fig. 1) has been designed based on the literature and the experience of the LRI. This framework and model for conducting research and programming with the Latino community can provide guidance to those interested in doing collaborative work with any population. The four areas of scholarship provide suggestions or general categories that can be adapted or individualized by members of each unique community-university outreach and scholarship group. Collaborative groups

can join together because they share a common interest, or its development could be driven by a significant issue, need, goal, or crisis within the community. At minimum, it requires one person who is willing to introduce the idea of collaboration across groups in the community and/or university and initiate an ongoing dialogue. Development of the group and its goals takes a commitment of time and effort and is most likely to succeed when individual and joint interests can overlap and when there are overriding common goals.

Although most communities in the Great Plains region do not have a college or university in their community, the advent of the internet and distance-based learning makes accessing and developing a relationship with colleges or universities in their state more feasible. The commitment of land-grant universities to communities across the state also supports the potential for community-university collaborations to be developed and implemented to address issues critical to the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities. For example, a critical set of issues is related to the delivery of physical and mental health care to rural communities who are experiencing high levels of stressors due to economic and situational factors. This is complicated when it is a community that has had a recent influx of minorities who are also facing a multitude of stressors and lacking the community services that can respond to their unique needs.

Involvement in this collaborative outreach and scholarship model has highlighted the areas that warrant future attention so that this type of work can be increasingly supported at the institutional level. In order to replicate this model, it would be helpful to consider the following issues that impact its effective implementation:

- Institutions and their policies (community and university) should support and facilitate the collaborative processes (e.g., documentation of the work, budgetary issues, responsibilities, and accountability).
- Structures and processes should be established to maintain communication with the administrative and executive bodies of each system involved to maximize mutual support of diverse needs.

Summary and Conclusions

The Latino Research Initiative consists of a multidisciplinary, multicultural, and collaborative group of faculty members from the Univer-

sity of Nebraska-Lincoln and the director of the Hispanic Community Center. As the LRI developed, it created a research and outreach model that focused on addressing the critical needs of the Latino community by engaging in the four areas of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Consequently, effective individual and family programs that are based on culturally responsive concepts continue to be developed. The model is based on the principles of collaboration, engagement, responsibility and commitment to the community, applied research, professional development, and serving as a resource to others. Each of these contributes to the strengths of the LRI in identifying and addressing Latino issues.

The LRI and its subsequent work (e.g., program development and evaluation, applied and theoretical research, grant writing) is an example of the effectiveness and success of the community-university collaborative outreach model that is discussed in this paper. These successes include securing funds, simultaneously conducting multiple projects that are systematically linked, and engaging in an integrative approach to conduct research and programming within the Latino community. Most importantly, this collaborative model has created a structure where multiple groups (e.g., LRI, HCC, funding agencies, Latino community, university, educational systems) can mutually benefit by working together toward common goals.

This type of model identifies dissemination activities as critical to engaging in effective research and programming with underserved communities. It increases the awareness of the importance of engaged universities and community-based research and programming. In addition, the LRI hopes that this awareness will encourage more positive attitudes towards conducting research and programming with these communities.

However, in order to maintain the integrity of this collaborative model over time, each member of the group must subscribe to the primary goal set forth by the LRI. Although each new member will influence the future direction, the principal goal will be to enhance the quality of life of Latinos. This latter goal serves as a template to promote cohesiveness among the group members.

Implications for the Great Plains Region

Due to the growing minority population in the Great Plains Region, there is a need to identify methods of engaging in research and programming that will respond to the changing ethnic and racial demographics. People from diverse populations who reside in the Great Plains have unique histories (e.g., native ethnic groups, transitory migration, immigration sta-

tus). These result in a range of values, beliefs, and needs that are related to their generation level, language abilities, educational and social status, acculturation level, and cultural identification. The dynamic interactions of these factors complicate the development and delivery of effective services to diverse communities.

This community-university outreach and scholarship model can be used to address the lack of current discovery (research), integration, application (programming), and teaching with minority and underserved populations in the Great Plains region. Furthermore, it can facilitate stronger ties between university faculty (e.g., researchers), professional communities, community agencies, and communities so that a more comprehensive approach can be developed that is more consistent with the diverse and complex needs of Latinos and underserved communities throughout this region. In addition, faculty at universities and members of the community or community agencies can replicate or adapt this model to their community needs and with other non-Latino and underserved populations. Ultimately, this effort can broaden the amount, type, and quality of discovery, integration, application, and teaching that can be conducted that will address the growing needs of changing communities and, ultimately, improve the quality of their lives, regardless of culture.

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