

Equal Access to Services

Investigating Access to Food among the Rockbridge Area's Latino Population

**A HELPING HAND
IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY**



Washington and Lee University

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Visual Depictions of the Distribution of Latinos, Poverty, & Access to Food in the Rockbridge Area

The following are a series of Geographic Information System (GIS) maps. All of the maps are based on quantitative information from the U.S. Census Bureau, particularly the 2010 data, as well as the American Community Survey's one-, three-, and five-year estimates. The only map that is based on quantitative, yet anecdotal data from a local source is the third one entitled Latino Households and SNAP Benefits by Rockbridge-area Census Tract. Because the Rockbridge County Social Services Office's records were so distinct from the American Community Survey's, it seemed appropriate to display how the number of Latino SNAP recipients varies based on the source. Also, the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture makes figure six available on their website.

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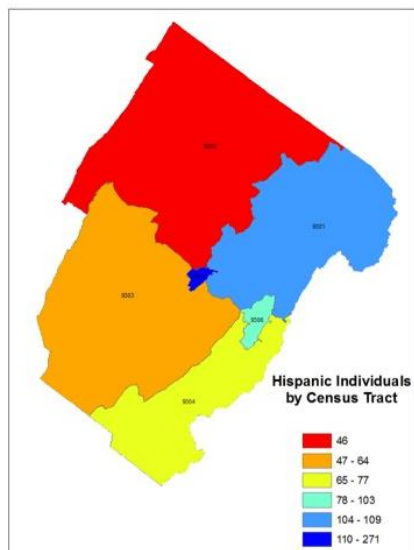
Introduction and Purpose

Almost every day the U.S. media reports something about the country's growing 'Hispanic or Latino' population. Meanwhile, few people stop and consider the characteristics that distinguish a member of this group from other people in society. Even though the U.S. Census uses the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' interchangeably, some scholars suggest that the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' actually represent distinct groups of Spanish-speaking people (Fears 2003; Passell 2009). In the context of the Rockbridge area's Spanish-speaking population, the term 'Latino,' which refers to residents of the United States who speak the same language (Spanish) and share a similar historical vision of "community," is more appropriate and will be used for the duration of this report (Fears 2003).

Now that the population of interest has been clarified, it is necessary to specify this study's purpose. In fact, the impetus for this community-based research was the Rockbridge Area Relief Association's desire to better serve local Latino residents. This paper compares and contrasts qualitative data and quantitative data regarding residents of Rockbridge County, Lexington (city), and Buena Vista (city), Virginia, which constitutes the Rockbridge area. The qualitative data was collected via in-person interviews with Rockbridge-area Latino residents. The U.S. Census Bureau, the American Community Survey, and Feeding America published the quantitative data. The two items of particular interest are Latino individuals and families' access to food, and awareness of community services and public benefit programs that provide nutritional assistance. The following report is designed to inform local food pantries about Rockbridge area Latinos' nutritional needs as well as the barriers this population encounters with regard to community services. It will also offer suggestions to community organizations interested in better serving this particular population.

Latinos in the Rockbridge Area

Of the more than 50 million Latinos living in the United States at the time of the 2010 Census, very few reside in the Rockbridge area (American Community Survey One-Year

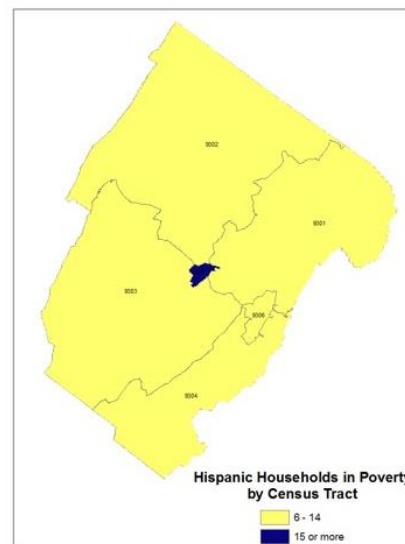


Estimate 2010). Nonetheless, the number of Latinos in this area increased from 2000 to 2010. According to the 2010 US Census, 103 of Buena Vista city's 6,547 residents were Latino, which was up 60.9 percent from 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2010). The percent increase was even more noticeable in Rockbridge County and the City of Lexington. For example, as of 2010 the Census Bureau found that Rockbridge County had 296 Latinos among its 22,011 residents, which represents a 146.7 percent increase from 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2010). The Census Bureau also found that 271 of the City of Lexington's 6,771 residents were Latino, but the American Community Survey for the same year and geographic area estimated that there were 375 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012; American Community Survey One-Year Estimate 2010). Although the U.S. Census Bureau reports a 148.6 percent increase from 2000 to 2010 in the City of

Lexington's Latino population, growth may be more substantial in light of the other estimate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2010). Assuming Latinos continue moving to the Rockbridge area, community service organizations will continue to face challenges, particularly as they attempt to

serve individuals with limited English-language proficiency. This study is a response to the Rockbridge area's increasingly diverse population, and the adjustments that need to be made.

Latinos, in the Rockbridge area and elsewhere, are more likely to experience poverty and food insecurity than other members of the U.S. population (The Hispanic Population 2010). In fact, the 2010 American Community Survey reports that 26.7 percent of Latinos residing in the United States are impoverished (American Community Survey One-Year Estimate 2010). While the national average is staggering, the 2010 Census data shows that 87.7 percent of the City of Lexington's Latino residents experience poverty (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). In light of the small size of the rest of the Rockbridge area's Latino population, the percentage of people in poverty who reside outside of the City of Lexington was not reported (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). The limited information available provides a basic understanding of the challenges local Latinos face; however, the variability between the 2010 Census data and the results of the American Community Survey make it difficult to speak confidently about any of the reported statistics. Additionally, many Latinos, particularly those who are undocumented, choose not to complete the census out of fear that they will be deported (Morocoima 2011). Thus, the few statistics available regarding the local Latino population are far from conclusive. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to believe that the majority of Latino people in the area of study reside in Lexington, and that many are poor or nearly poor.



Public Benefit Programs Combatting Hunger

Generally speaking, individuals and families' whose income is at or slightly above or below the federal poverty line (\$22,350 annual income for a family of four) are eligible for federal and state assistance programs (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program 2012; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2012). Of the numerous public benefit programs, three are specifically designed to combat hunger: these include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

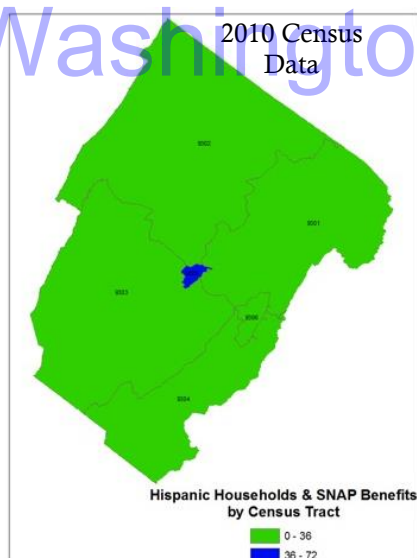
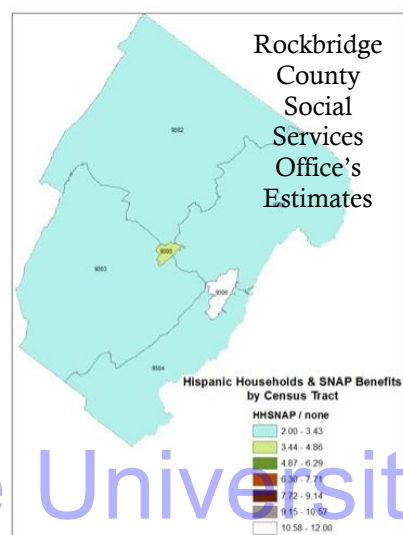
Formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program emphasizes the need to "focus on nutrition and putting healthy food within reach for low income households," (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 2012). SNAP is an entitlement program, which indicates that all eligible applicants will receive benefits (10 Facts You Should Know about SNAP, 2012). Recipients receive monthly benefits on an electronic debit-like card, and are able to purchase most food items (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 2012).

Individuals and families must fulfill certain eligibility requirements in order to participate in SNAP. For example, all citizens and non-citizens must present at least one of identification, proof of residence, and proof of income (5 Easy Steps to SNAP Benefits, 2011). Income eligibility depends on family size as well as earnings as a percentage of the federal poverty line,

i.e. at or below 130 percent (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Eligibility, 2012). The only special requirement for foreign-born adults is proof of immigration or naturalization status and proof of residence for at least five years (5 Easy Steps to SNAP Benefits, 2011).¹ As of October 2003, all children, regardless of entry date, have been eligible to receive benefits (Immigrant Eligibility Requirements, 2012).

In light of the prevalence of poverty amongst Latinos in the United States, it is not surprising that 20.1 percent of this group's households received SNAP in 2010 (American Community Survey, 2010). With this being said, the National Council of La Raza, the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, estimates that almost half of all eligible Latino families do not receive SNAP benefits (Anna, 2011).

Even though the Rockbridge area's Latino population is relatively small, the data available suggests that SNAP is currently serving few local Latinos' nutritional needs (American Community Survey 2010; Downey 2012). First, Meredith Downey, the executive director of Rockbridge County Social Services, estimates that only four Latino families receive SNAP in the City of Lexington (Downey 2012). Similarly, Downey's records show that only eight Rockbridge County Latino families and twelve Buena Vista Latino families currently participate in SNAP (Downey, 2012). Based on this information, twenty-four Latino families in the Rockbridge area are currently receiving federally funded supplemental nutritional assistance. In fact, three of twelve



recently interviewed Latinos in the Rockbridge area reported that their families receive SNAP benefits.

Unfortunately, there is a discrepancy between the Census Bureau's findings and the Social Services Office's records. In fact, 2010 Census data suggests that none of the twenty-seven Latino families that reportedly resided in Rockbridge County and Buena Vista (city) were receiving SNAP benefits (American Community Survey 2010). Also according to the Census Bureau's estimate in 2010, 72 of 86, or 83.7 per cent, of Latino families in the City of Lexington were receiving SNAP benefits (American Community Survey 2010). This statistic is extremely unlikely if only 9.05 percent of all families in the City of Lexington's received SNAP in 2010 (American Community Survey 2010). In light of the data-related limitations, these data are preliminary at best.

Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that many Rockbridge area Latinos experience poverty, and could benefit from additional nutritional support.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is another program designed to eradicate hunger. Unfortunately, there is less statistical information about those who participate in this program and reside in the Rockbridge area than there is about SNAP (Women, Infants, and Children).

Because this program does serve some local Latino residents, however, a basic understanding of the benefits WIC provides and the program's eligibility requirements may be beneficial.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), WIC is funded by federal grants to states (Women, Infants, and Children). Then, states use this money to distribute funds to pregnant women, infants, and children up to age five who are at risk of food insecurity (Women, Infants, and Children). Women and children are eligible to participate if and when their household income is equal to or less than 185 percent of the federal poverty line (The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children 2011). Unlike SNAP, WIC is not an entitlement program (The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, 2011). This means that limited funds are available for this program, and not everyone who qualifies will receive assistance.

The USDA reports that WIC served almost 9.25 million women, children, and infants during the 2010 fiscal year (The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children 2011). Among those fortunate few, many were Latino women, infants, and children, according to a nonpartisan association of major Hispanic national organizations and leaders (Anna 2011). This association estimates that nearly 60 percent of Hispanic families with young children benefit from the WIC program (Anna 2011).

There are no Census data or American Community Survey results concerning WIC participation in the Rockbridge area. However, interviews with twelve local Latinos show that at least two Spanish-speaking families are receiving WIC benefits. Like SNAP, WIC is a program that is helping to supplement local Latinos' nutritional needs.

National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch (and Breakfast) Program is designed to meet school-age children's nutritional needs during the school day (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011). According to the USDA's website, the program served over 31 million children every day during the 2010-2011 school year. Of those, 24 percent were Latino children (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011). In terms of all Latino children in the United States, the USDA found that 76.3 percent participated as of the 2004-2005 school year (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011).

In order to qualify for free meals, the household income of applicants must not exceed 130 percent of the federal poverty line (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011). If an applicant's household income is between 130 and 185 of the federal poverty line, they are eligible for reduced-priced school meals (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011). Other than income eligibility, applicants must reside in the state in which they hope to receive benefits (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011). The USDA does not require proof of citizenship or legal immigration status.

In terms of the twelve Rockbridge-area Latino residents who were interviewed, eight have school-age children (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011). In seven of the eight families, children receive free breakfast and lunch at school. Those who are participating heard about these programs at school registration or when forms were sent home. The family whose child is not participating reported never having received an enrollment form. While SNAP and WIC help meet local Latinos' nutritional needs at home, the NSLP helps nourish these families' children while they are at school.

The Backpack Program

The Campus Kitchen at Washington and Lee (CKPWL) is an environmentally sustainable, hunger relief organization (The Campus Kitchen at Washington and Lee). Each week, the Campus Kitchen recycles more than 1,000 pounds of food that otherwise would have been thrown away (The Campus Kitchen at Washington and Lee). Since it was founded in 2006, this organization has used the food it collects and receives in the form of donations to provide more than 99,000 meals to hungry Rockbridge-area residents (The Campus Kitchen at Washington and Lee).

One of the many ways the Campus Kitchen serves the local community is by providing backpacks to elementary-school children each Friday (The Campus Kitchen at Washington and Lee). Only students who receive free or reduced lunches are eligible to participate (The Campus Kitchen at Washington and Lee). The purpose of the Backpack Program is to help meet children's nutritional needs over the weekend (The Campus Kitchen at Washington and Lee).

According to eight Rockbridge-area Latinos whose children attend school, two reported that one of their children is participating in CKPWL's Backpack Program, and four others expressed interest in enrolling their children.

Latinos' Use of Food Pantries Nationally

Based on the previous section regarding public benefit programs, it appears that at least some of the United States' more than 50 million Latino residents are benefitting from SNAP, WIC, and NSLP. With this being said, many are not currently enrolled, do not qualify, or may still have unmet nutritional needs. Consequently, food pantries across the United States have the potential to enhance this populations' access to nutritious food.

At least three food pantries in distinct parts of the United States are currently serving Latino clients. First, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which is obviously located in a more metropolitan area than the Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA) and the other food pantries in the Rockbridge area, reports that 21 percent of their clients are Latino (Faces of Hunger). Similarly, the Capital Area Food Bank of Texas, which is located in Austin, states that 34 percent of its clients are Latinos (Austin Food Bank 2012). Moreover, the Lighthouse Food Pantry in North Plainfield, New Jersey finds that its clients are mostly Latinos (Morocoima 2011).

While the aforementioned pantries are reportedly serving Latinos, several other sources suggest that barriers still limit this group's access to donated food. For example, a *Chicago Tribune* article from 2006 cites a national study, which found that "Latinos shun food pantries" (Sadovi 2006). According to the study, the main reason Latinos choose not to use food pantries is "fear" (Sadovi 2006). In addition, relief workers, who are familiar with Latino individuals in the Chicago area, report that "many of their intended recipients are undocumented immigrants, who worry that applying to food banks or other seemingly official institutions might result in deportation" (Sadovi 2006). Furthermore, three Auburn University conducted a study entitled, "Regional Differences in Use of Food Stamps and Food Pantries by Low-Income Households in the United States," and briefly mention Latinos in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups. They found that, "Race is not a significant factor in private food assistance use; however, Hispanics are significantly less likely than non-Hispanics in similar circumstances to use food pantries" (Duffy, Bhattarai, & Irimia-Vladu, 2005). Moreover, the same group reported that, "low-income residents in the South are significantly less likely to use private food assistance [than other region groups]" (Duffy, Bhattarai, & Irimia-Vladu, 2005). Based on this

study, it appears that Latino individuals, particularly those residing in the South, are more reluctant to use food pantries than other demographics (Duffy, Bhattarai, & Irimia-Vladu, 2005). Although the previously mentioned conclusions seem reasonable, interviews with Spanish-speaking individuals in the Rockbridge area suggest that fear does not influence their use of local food pantries as much as other barriers, such as access to information, do.

Latinos' Use of Food Pantries Locally

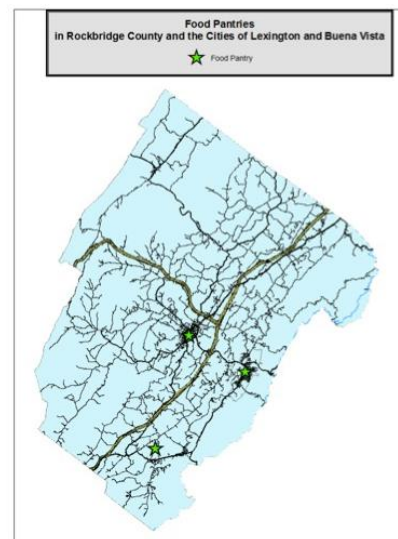
The Rockbridge Area Relief Association's desire to better serve the local Latino community was at least partially motivated by the fact that the organization has not had any Latino clients in at least the past ten years (Rockbridge Area Relief Association, Food Pantry Report: 2007-2011; interview with executive director on January 20, 2012). Like RARA, the two other food pantries in the Rockbridge area – the Glasgow Food Pantry and the Community Food Share Project in Buena Vista – also report a lack of consistent Latino clients (Breedon, 2012; Hickman, 2012).² Thus, the most fundamental goal of this research was to discover why Rockbridge-area Latinos are not using any of the three local food pantries.

Even before attempting to collect information about the factors motivating Latinos' decision not to visit a local food pantry, one staff member and one volunteer at RARA met with me to discuss develop some hypotheses. We thought that fear of being reported to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, restricted access to transportation, limited English proficiency, food security (no need for donated food), dislike for the food available at pantries, the pantries' operating hours, and fear of being discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, or legal status may have been some of the factors influencing Rockbridge-area Latinos' decision not to frequent any of the local food pantries.

In order to begin investigating RARA's inquiry, Myrna Barrera and I conducted in-person interviews with twelve Latino residents of the Rockbridge area. The sample was not designed to be a representative or random. In fact, the interviews were simply designed to gather information about the local Latino community. Local Latinos' feedback also confirmed and disputed statistics from national data sets, local professionals in relevant areas, and anecdotal observations. Ultimately, the interviews inspired suggestions for ways local community organizations could better serve Rockbridge-area Latinos.

The population sampled included twelve adults – people over the age of eighteen – from different parts of the Rockbridge area. All participants – four are female and eight are male - were at their workplaces when they learned of this voluntary study. Myrna Barrera, a native Spanish-speaker and Mexican-American, and I visited eighteen businesses in Rockbridge County and the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista.

Upon arriving at a business establishment, we introduced ourselves as Washington and Lee University students. We also stated that we were conducting a study in collaboration with the Rockbridge Area Relief Association regarding local Spanish-speaking people's access to community services. If we were not already speaking with the manager, we would then ask permission to do so.



Our primary concern involved specifically describing the purpose of the research, so the manager would feel comfortable giving permission to interview one or more of their Latino employees. Some managers told us that the business did not employ Latino people; others said they would accept the informational brochures with our contact numbers; and a relatively small fraction selected between one and three employees to be interviewed.

Business managers selected certain employees to approach and encourage to participate. Thus, it is possible that managers were more inclined to suggest that we interview individuals with spouses and families than single adults. This makes sense in light of the fact that ten of the twelve people interviewed live with their spouses and children and/or babies. One person is a single parent, and lives with a child; the other is single and lives alone. Of the ten families, eight live in the City of Lexington, one in Buena Vista, and three in Rockbridge County. Fortunately the people interviewed live in diverse areas, and the number from each area is basically proportionate to the distribution of Latino people throughout the Rockbridge area.

All of the interviews took place on the businesses' premises beyond the hearing of other individuals. Myrna introduced the study, telling participants that all questions were voluntary and responses confidential and asking all of the interview questions. I took notes on all responses, and occasionally interjected with follow-up questions and clarifications. We did not conduct any interviews in English, but some of the respondents had a basic understanding of it. Each interview took about fifteen minutes, and after all questions had been asked, we always asked if the respondents had any questions. Three interviews involved a single respondent; three took place in pairs; and one was conducted with a group of three. After all questions had been answered, Myrna and I thanked the interviewee(s) (and their managers) for their time, and noted the respondent(s)' phone number(s) to facilitate the random distribution of Kroger gift cards upon the study's completion.

Clearly, the twelve Latinos who were interviewed were not randomly sampled. Likewise, their responses were not necessarily representative of the Rockbridge area's entire Latino community. Nonetheless, the anecdotal, qualitative information Myrna and I gathered is invaluable because it complements the qualitative, often grossly estimated data available for the Rockbridge area's Latino population. Further, a combination of qualitative and quantitative data leads to more informed recommendations to community service organizations.

Results of In-person Interviews

After receiving permission to conduct an interview, Spanish-speaking employees were then asked sixteen multiple-choice questions designed to gather information about Rockbridge-area Latinos' access to food. These questions concerned use and awareness of community services; family size, composition, and meals; and food pantries. The following is an overview of twelve Rockbridge-area Latinos' responses.

Community Services

Eight of the twelve people interviewed reported that they and/or their families use the Free Clinic. Similarly, seven respondents reported using the Maury Express (public transportation system).³ No one reported using any other community service; however, several indicated that they had visited Rockbridge County Social Services' office and/or the Rockbridge County Health Department, and are receiving benefits, such as WIC and SNAP.

Respondents were then asked about how they heard about the community services they or their family members use. Half of the people interviewed said they heard about the services

they use via word of mouth, mostly from family members. Three people said they learned about the Maury Express from a flyer, and a local doctor referred one respondent to the Free Clinic. Half of the interviewees said they learned about the services they use from their children's schools.

Next, interviewees were asked about the best way to advertise new services to the Latino community. Nine respondents suggested posting flyers in Spanish at CVS, Walmart, Food Lion, and Kroger, and three recommended sending information home with Latino school children. Three respondents emphasized the value of writing newspaper articles in Spanish and promoting advertisement via word-of-mouth communication. One person said churches and religious organizations should be involved.

One service that almost all respondents particularly desired but had mostly failed to obtain thus far was free English classes. In the recent past, Washington and Lee University's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) student organization offered English tutoring at the Rockbridge Regional Library and in one-on-one sessions upon request.

Also, in the spring of 2010, ESOL and the Campus Kitchen Project at Washington and Lee (CKPWL) joined forces to offer free dinner and English classes to Rockbridge-area Latinos. Four dinners were held, and attendance was high. Washington and Lee students hope to reinstate these events beginning in the fall of 2012. For this reason, Myrna and Danielle asked study participants if they would be interested in attending community dinners with free English classes and childcare, and if so, what day and time would be best. Ten of twelve people interviewed said they would be interested in attending, and that they would be comfortable in a public place, such as a school or library. Six said that Monday around 6 or 7:00 p.m. would be best, and four (some of the same people said Monday and Tuesday) said Tuesday at around the same time. The two who were uninterested said it was because they are too busy. The positive response indicates that these events will be even more successful in 2012 than in 2010.

Family

Respondents were then asked how many people are in their families in order to get a sense of how family size influences expenditures for food. The average family size amongst the interviewees was 4.4. Also, while many respondents and their families rent an apartment or a house with another person or family, the number they reported only reflects those who eat the food they buy.

In terms of the twelve individuals who were interviewed, nine have school-age children. In eight of these nine families, the children receive free school breakfasts and lunches. Those who are participating heard about the national school lunch program at their children's school registration or when forms were sent home.

The next question related to the types of meals Latinos eat, i.e. individual or family-style. Two respondents said they eat dinner with their families every night. Eight said they eat dinner with their families and lunch at work between six and seven nights a week. One said he eats with his family between two and three days a week because of his work schedule, but that his wife and children all eat together every day. Another respondent said that he never is able to eat with his family, but again, that his wife and children always eat together. Overall it appears that Latinos eat as a family, but men's work schedules often force them to eat alone when they return home late. Based on the interviews, all of the women who stay home, and even those who work, reportedly eat dinner with their children seven days a week.

As for food availability at retail outlets, eleven of the twelve people interviewed buy their food at Walmart and Kroger. The other person does not shop, and eats at work. Three people

shop at Walmart, Kroger, and Food Lion. One person spends \$0-50 per week on groceries, two people (and their families) spend \$51-100, five people (and their families) spend \$101-150, and four of twelve people interviewed spend \$151-200. None of the twelve Latinos interviewed (and their families) spend more than \$200 per week on groceries.

Food Pantries

None of the twelve respondents' families are receiving food donated by a church or other religious organization. Similarly, none of the twelve respondents' families are receiving food from a food pantry.

The most shocking finding of this study was that none of the twelve people interviewed frequented, much less knew there were, food pantries in Buena Vista, Glasgow, and Lexington. Even families who live near RARA were unaware of exactly what or where it was. Of the twelve respondents, three said they were uninterested in receiving food from a pantry because they do not need or want help. The other nine said that the food pantry could help their families, and when they reviewed the list of items commonly available at RARA, everyone said they would be grateful to receive any extra food.

Interviewees were also asked about the number of working adults in their families as well as their average monthly income. Between one and two (1.7) adults work in these twelve Latino families. The average monthly income is \$1,364 per month. This estimate is based on interviewees' responses, such as \$1400 per month, and the median between the two numbers if they pointed to one of the answer choices, such as \$1001-1500. One respondents' income was stricken from this calculation because the amount provided represented only part of the household's monthly income.

Overall the qualitative data confirm some general assumptions about Latinos in the Rockbridge area. In particular, respondents' residences are consistent with 2010 census data; the majority of those with school-age children participate in subsidized meal programs; and at least some qualify for SNAP or WIC. Again, the most revealing finding of the in-person interviews was that none of the twelve participants knew about any of the three food pantries in the area, and nine said that access to more food would be useful to them or their families. This suggests that fear, as is commonly suggested, is not a factor that limits Rockbridge-area Latino's use of food pantries. Instead, food pantries' should increase their outreach efforts, so that Latinos and others who could benefit from nutritional assistance no longer lacks information about available services.

Recommendations

Based on twelve in-person interviews with Rockbridge-area Latinos as well as a thorough analysis of various forms of quantitative data on the same group, there seem to be at least five things local food pantries, particularly RARA because it is located closest to the majority of Latino residents, could do to better serve this specific population.

First, OUTREACH in SPANISH would greatly increase Rockbridge-area Latinos awareness of the food pantries' services, locations, and operating hours. Based on respondents perceptions, the best way to advertise services to Latinos would be by placing flyers at CVS, Kroger, Food Lion, and Walmart; by sending information to be sent home with Latino school children; and by connecting with Latino members of the community, so they could spread the message by word of mouth.

Currently none of the food pantries in the Rockbridge area engage in directed outreach campaigns; instead, they all rely upon word of mouth awareness. This strategy will only benefit the local Latino population if at least one Spanish-speaking person learns of the services available. In order to remedy this problem, Robin Swecker, an Outreach Coordinator at the Blue Ridge Food Bank in Verona, said that the Food Bank would be willing and able to create informational brochures in Spanish regarding RARA and Glasgow's food pantry services, operating hours, and locations. The only thing volunteers from each of these pantries would need to do is to contact her, and set up a time to pick up these materials. Then the flyers could easily be placed in the locations respondents indicated and/or sent home through local schools.

Similarly, the Blue Ridge Food Bank has food pantry application forms in Spanish. This would benefit the local Latino community because Spanish-speaking applicants could read the form in Spanish as the volunteer filled it out in English. Most importantly, translated forms would encourage mutual understanding, and expedite the application process without requiring all volunteers to speak Spanish fluently.

Second, SPANISH-SPEAKING VOLUNTEERS would help make Latino clients feel welcome. There are dozens of Washington and Lee University students who speak Spanish; thus, it would be possible to have at least one Spanish-speaking volunteer on call or at the pantry at any given time in order to facilitate Latinos' application process and visits to the pantry.

Third, EXTENDED HOURS OF OPERATION on Mondays, Tuesdays, and maybe even Saturdays would also increase Latinos' ability to benefit from the three local food pantries. Most of the interviewees are the only working adults in their families, and their spouses stay home and take care of children. Instead of having the weekend off, those interviewed said that they have off Monday or Tuesday. Thus, the best day for them to frequent the food pantry would be on one of these days.

While the Rockbridge Area Relief Association and the Community Food Share Project are already open on these days, it would be beneficial if they could stay open a few more hours. The need for extended hours of operation stems from the fact that the majority of the people interviewed have families and small children, many of who get done with school during RARA's current operating hours. Because only one-quarter of those interviewed have access to their own car, transportation is still a barrier.

Imagine if a parent walked to get their child from school, then turned around and walked to RARA's facility on Spotswood Drive, and still had to pick up food before walking back to their home. This trajectory could potentially take quite a while with a child in tow; hence, opening a little earlier or staying open a bit later would be beneficial to Latino families in the Rockbridge area.

Fourth, MOBILE PANTRIES would also greatly increase Latino and other Rockbridge-area residents' access to nutritious food. As mentioned, people in Rockbridge County lack access to public transportation, and frequently reside farther than ten miles from the nearest grocery store. Thus, it would be extremely beneficial for people in these areas, particularly Latinos who are less likely to own personal vehicles, to be able to obtain fresh food near their residences.

Fifth, COMMUNITY DINNERS AND FREE ENGLISH CLASSES would provide an ideal setting for distributing information about community services, such as food pantries and the Campus Kitchen. Moreover, these events would serve to facilitate communication and relationship building between Latinos and other members of the Rockbridge-area community. Further, free English classes are a much-desired service amongst area Latinos. Per previous mention, a collaborative initiative between Washington and Lee's English for Speakers of Other

Languages and the Campus Kitchen Program was quite successful in the spring of 2010. Thus, reinstating these types of events would have a positive impact on local Latinos and the broader community.

Conclusions and Connections

After comparing and contrasting the quantitative data regarding Latino residents of the Rockbridge area with statistics concerning Latinos at a national level, it is possible to draw some overarching conclusions. First, quantitative data regarding the United States' more than 50 million Latino residents suggests that this group is more likely to experience poverty and food insecurity than others. Despite the fact that millions of Latino adults and children benefit from local, state, and national nutrition programs, such as SNAP, WIC, NSLP and the Campus Kitchen's Backpack Program, many are eligible but not enrolled or are ineligible to receive benefits. With this in mind, food pantries in some areas of the country help supplement Latinos' sometimes unmet nutritional needs. In the Rockbridge area, however, very few Latinos have attempted to obtain services from a local food pantry within the past decade.

In-person interviews with twelve Rockbridge-area Latinos provided invaluable information concerning the barriers that limit this population's use of the three local food pantries. The most surprising and fundamentally important findings of these interviews involved awareness, receptivity, and access to transportation. First, interviews with Rockbridge-area Latinos suggest that fear of being reported to the Immigration and Naturalization Service is not a barrier preventing them from visiting one of the three local food pantries. Instead, the Rockbridge-area Latino community is simply unaware of the food pantries' locations and operating hours. Also, eight of the twelve Latinos interviewed said that having access to additional food and household items would be useful. This suggests that if more Rockbridge-area residents knew about these services, many more would likely decide to apply. Third, in terms of transportation, interviews with local Latinos suggest that many of those who live in Lexington (city) and Buena Vista (city) use the Maury Express public transportation service. Intuitively public transportation seems like a useful service in any area, but it seems that this program has particularly benefitted the local Latino population, which is less likely to own personal vehicles.

In closing, this study was designed to inform local food pantries about Rockbridge-area Latinos' access to nutritious food, and ultimately improve the pantries' ability to serve Spanish-speaking members of the community. The aforementioned recommendations are the by-products of a collaborative effort between local business owners who allowed their Spanish-speaking employees to be interviewed, twelve Rockbridge-area Latinos who volunteered their time to share their opinions and personal experiences, two Washington and Lee students who traveled around the Rockbridge-area to gather information, dedicated community members who shared their insight and made suggestions, and several Washington and Lee professors and staff who support students' efforts to contribute to the local community.

Although this investigation has revealed a great deal more than where Latinos buy their groceries, and the types of foods they would like to see at a food pantry, it is still only one example of research that could and should be done to better understand and serve this small, yet invaluable facet of the Rockbridge-area's community.

Endnotes

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Immigrants, and Immigrants with U.S.-Born Children

As mentioned, this study did not specifically target Rockbridge-area Latinos on the basis of immigration status. As a result, the twelve Latinos sampled may or may not have been legal immigrants. Because SNAP has specific eligibility requirements for immigrants, both documented and undocumented, the following section provides more detail in this regard.

Based on the long list of required documents, it seems nearly impossible for undocumented individuals to qualify for SNAP. It is quite possible, however, that undocumented immigrants' children, whether they were born in the United States or not, would qualify for SNAP (10 Facts You Should Know about SNAP 2012). This assumes that their parents' income is below the stipulated percentage of the federal poverty line.

Many immigrants and others fear that individuals who apply for SNAP, even if it is for their children's benefit, and are unlawfully residing in the United States may be deported as a result of their application (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service's SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues memo, "an immigrant will not be deported, denied entry to the country, or denied permanent status due to receipt of SNAP benefits," (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues 2012). This policy seems to protect the children of undocumented immigrants, in particular, because family members who are eligible can receive benefits even if their guardians or other people in their households lack legal immigration status.

Although it seems contradictory to previously mentioned policy, agencies that process SNAP applications are required to report individuals who lack immigration papers and try to obtain benefits (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues 2012). Thus, immigrants who unlawfully reside in the United States and participate in SNAP cannot be deported because they receive benefits. However, if immigrants without legal immigration status try to apply for SNAP, they are subject to the Immigration and Naturalization Service's policies and procedures.

This contradiction provokes the following questions: What are the consequences associated with requiring the agencies that process SNAP applications to report undocumented individuals? Do these policies discourage undocumented persons from applying for SNAP or other public benefit programs on their eligible children's behalf?

In light of all of the barriers and misconceptions, National Council of La Raza, the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, estimates that almost half of all eligible Latino families do not receive SNAP benefits (Anna 2011). Hopefully this is not the case of eligible Latinos in the Rockbridge area, but Census Bureau data and reports from Rockbridge Social Services suggests that that may indeed be the case.

2. Rockbridge-Area Food Pantries

The Glasgow Food Pantry is located in downtown Glasgow on McCulloch Street. This pantry distributes an average of 365 boxes (small ones for families of less than four people, and large ones for families with four or more members) per month (Hickman 2012). According to the pantry's primary contact, Mr. Wayne Hickman, only a couple Latino families occasionally frequent the pantry.

The Community Share Food Project is the only food pantry in Buena Vista. According to Ms. Breeden, one of the pantry's volunteers, it is designed specifically to help individuals and families in emergency situations until they get back on their feet (Breeden 2012). On average, the pantry distributes food to between 40 and 50 clients per month, and Ms. Breeden reports that, only a few are Latino (Breeden, 2012).

The Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA), located on Spotswood Drive, is the only food pantry in the City of Lexington. It served an average of 530 households per month in 2011, and over the course of the past ten years, only two, if any, clients were Latino (Rockbridge Area Relief Association, Food Pantry Report: 2007-2011; interview with executive director on January 20, 2012).

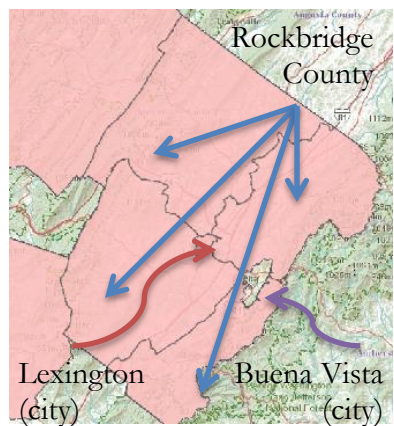
In addition to the food pantries in the area of study, there are three other food pantries in Augusta and Bath County that also serve Rockbridge County residents (Swecker 2012). First, the Windy Cove Presbyterian Church is located in Millboro, (Bath County) Virginia. Also, the Kingsway Help Center in Steeles Tavern, VA and the Craigsville Community Food Pantry in Craigsville, VA are located in Augusta County.

The only one of these three peripheral pantries that reportedly serves Latino clients on a somewhat regular basis is the food pantry in Craigsville (Swecker 2012). This information is from a secondary source at the Blue Ridge Food Bank and could not be confirmed by the pantry's staff or volunteers. As for the other two pantries, the receptionist in Millboro said there are no Spanish-speaking people in the area, which would explain why the church's pantry has never served any Latino clients. Also, a volunteer and board member from the Help Center in Steeles Tavern said that only a few Latino clients have received food in the past, but none of them is a regular client.

Based on the records from six different food pantries within or on the edge of the Rockbridge area, Latinos are not receiving food from pantries. This seems reasonable in light of the fact that none of the twelve people interviewed had even heard of a food pantry in this area, much less considered visiting one. Further, it appears that access to information – outreach, in other words - is the barrier Latinos most commonly encounter with regard to food pantries' services.

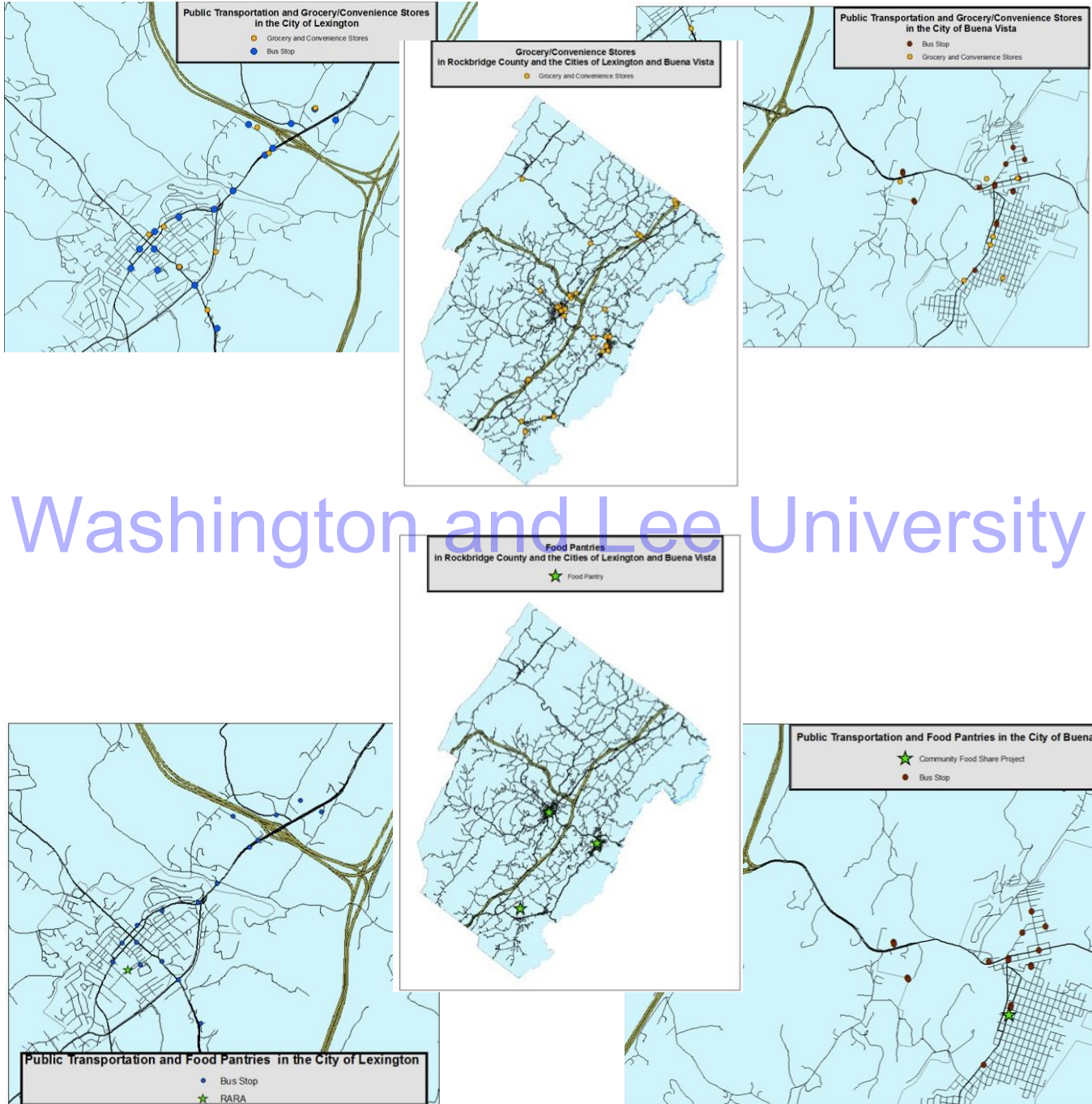
3. Food Deserts and Transportation

Access to food is not only an economic concern; it is also related to transportation and/or the distance between one's residence and a grocery store. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service created a Food Desert Locator, which sheds light on this very question (Breneman & Ver Ploeg). The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HHFI), which is sponsored by three federal agencies including the Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture, defines a food desert as "a low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store," (Breneman & Ver Ploeg).



Somewhat surprisingly, Washington and Lee's campus happens to be located in the middle of five food deserts, which correspond to the City of Lexington's census tract and all of those that constitute Rockbridge County. Lexington's classification as a food desert is perhaps the most debatable. It is most likely related to the Census Bureau's finding that 30.8 percent of the population's income is at or below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Of course, not all Census data can be accepted at first glance, especially because the poverty statistics reflect all residents, which includes thousands of nearly unemployed and financially independent students. In fact, City of Lexington residents have access to Kroger, Walmart Supercenter, and Food Lion by car or on the Maury Express. If one accepts that "food desert" does not accurately reflect the City of Lexington's "on-the-ground" reality, then

neither Lexington nor Buena Vista are food deserts. On the other hand, Rockbridge County residents lack access to public transportation, and commonly live far from a grocery store. Consequently, many people, including Latinos, have limited access to fresh food and food pantries, not to mention other community services (see the figures below for a more visual explanation).



Washington and Lee University

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There were 50,477,594 Hispanic or Latino people in the United States at the time of the 2010 Census, which is the equivalent of 16.3 percent of the country's total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Of the more than 50 million individuals, 26.7 percent are impoverished, which is 11.5 percent higher than the national average (American Community Survey One-Year Estimate, 2010). According to the federal government, the 2011 poverty line was \$22,350 for a family of four (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

Many impoverished individuals and families are eligible for federal and state assistance programs. Of these, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are designed to help qualifying individuals and families obtain nutritious food. There are many eligibility requirements, particularly for recent immigrants; however, despite the barriers, 20.1 per cent of households received SNAP in 2010, and nearly 60 percent of Hispanic families with young children benefit from WIC (American Community Survey, 2010; Anna, 2011).

While national statistics regarding the United States' growing population are fascinating, this paper compare and contrast qualitative data residents of Rockbridge County, Lexington (city), and Buena Vista (city), Virginia, which constitutes the geographic area of study quantitative data published by the U.S. Census Bureau, the American Community Survey, and Feeding America. The two items of particular interest are Hispanic individuals and families' access to food, and awareness of community services and public benefit programs that provide nutritional assistance. Consideration of the quantitative and qualitative data will expose the barriers Hispanic people within the area of study face with regard to available services, and offer suggestions to community organizations interested in better serving this particular population.

In order to realize these objectives, background information in the form national and statewide findings regarding Hispanic and Latino people's access to food, public benefit programs, and community organizations. Then, the statistical data regarding Rockbridge County, Lexington (city), and Buena Vista (city)'s residents in the context of these broader trends. delve into the qualitative information collected via twelve in-person interviews with individuals in the area of study. After comparing both types of information, the weaknesses of the statistical estimates as well as the barriers to collecting data from this specific population. Finally, study's findings community organizations .

People in the United States and more specifically, in Virginia

Hispanic or Latino people are not evenly distributed across the United States. In fact, the 2010 Census Bureau data shows that as a percentage of the total population in four distinct regions of the United States, more Hispanic people live in the West, followed by the South, then the Northeast, and finally in the Midwest (The Hispanic Population: 2010, 2011). Between 2000

and 2010, the Hispanic population reportedly increased by almost four and a half percent in the West and South, while the Northeast and Midwest observed less than a three percent increase (The Hispanic Population: 2010, 2011). Virginia's Hispanic or Latino population is not growing as quickly as other states'; however, reports suggest that this population's distribution varies in accordance employment opportunities, the existence of established communities, and in light of recent events, state-level immigration policies, and thus, is subject to change over time.

Virginia's Hispanic or Latino population, for example, increased 192 percent between 2000 and 2010 (Bureau, U.S. Census 2000, 2010). While Rockbridge County, Lexington (city), and Buena Vista (city)'s respective Hispanic or Latino populations did not increase as drastically, the City of Lexington and Rockbridge County experienced 148.6 and 146.7 percent growth, respectively, and Buena Vista (city) saw a 60.9 percent increase during the same time frame (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2010).

As growth continues, particularly in rural areas without formerly established Hispanic or Latino communities, community service organizations face new challenges, particularly as they attempt to serve individuals for whom English is a second language. This study is a response to this situation and the challenges it creates.

Hunger in the United States, especially amongst Hispanic or Latino Families

For instance, this particular study is an assessment of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic's access to food in light of a local food pantry's lack of clients from this demographic. Even before food pantries distribute food, they use specific measures to determine individuals and/or families' needs. The United States Department of Agriculture USDA is responsible for generating these measures, and in order to describe differences between people's access to food, they developed the concept of "food insecurity," (Food Security in the United States: Definitions of Hunger and Food Security, 2011). This term refers to "a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food," (Food Security in the United States: Definitions of Hunger and Food Security, 2011). In 2010, for example, the USDA found that 14.5 percent of all families in the United States suffered from this condition (Food Security in the United States: Definitions of Hunger and Food Security, 2011). Certain groups experience food insecurity significantly more frequently than others. Sadly, 35.1 percent of households with children that are headed by single women are considered food insecure. And, in the case of the nation's Hispanic population, 26.2 per cent are food insecure (Food Security in the United States: Definitions of Hunger and Food Security, 2011).

Based on these national findings, it seems reasonable to assume that Hispanic or LatinoHispanic people in the state of Virginia and in the area of study Rockbridge County and the Cities of Buena Vista and Lexington, in particular, would also experience some degree of food insecurity. In fact, Feeding America, the United States' leading domestic hunger-relief charity, found that 11.8 percent of Virginia's population suffered from food insecurity in 2009, which is slightly less than the national average (Map the Meal Gap). While this may be the case statewide, I will now use quantitative and qualitative measures to focus more helpfully on the Hispanic or LatinoHispanic within the Rockbridge area. the geographic area of study.

Food Insecurity in Rockbridge County, Lexington (city), and Buena Vista (city)

Feeding America reported that 11.9 percent of Rockbridge County's population (2,540 individuals) was food insecure, and 43 percent was below SNAP threshold, which refers to households' size and net monthly income, in 2009 (Map the Meal Gap). The organization also found that 14 percent of the City of Lexington's population – the equivalent of 253,580 individuals - was food insecure, and 52 percent was below the SNAP threshold (Map the Meal Gap). All poverty statistics for the City of Lexington must be considered with the understanding that they include all residents, including students who are unemployed or nearly unemployed and are financially independent of their parents. In the City of Buena Vista, Feeding America found that 15.9 percent of the population, which corresponded to 1,000 individuals in 2009, was food insecure, and 48 percent was below the SNAP (The Hispanic Population: 2010, 2011) threshold (Map the Meal Gap).

The county's statistics were most consistent with Virginia's data, and the two cities' data more closely resembled the national averages. If that is the case, it seems reasonable to infer that the percentage of Hispanic or Latino people within the geographic area of study in the Rockbridge Area experiencing food insecurity would also resemble the national trends.

Public Benefit Programs: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Food insecure individuals and families likely qualify for SNAP benefits. Formerly known as the Food Stamps Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) emphasizes the need to “focus on nutrition and putting healthy food within reach for low income households,” (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 2012). SNAP is an entitlement program, which indicates that all eligible applicants will receive benefits (10 Facts You Should Know about SNAP, 2012). Recipients receive monthly benefits on an electronic card – like a debit card – which can be used at authorized retailers and some farmers' markets. Benefits may be used to purchase “all foods intended to be eaten at home. Some things, such as alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, foods hot at the point of sale, non-food items, vitamins or medicines and pet foods are not allowed,” (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 2012).

In order to apply for SNAP, all citizens and non-citizens must present at least one of the following forms of identification: birth certificate, voter registration, driver's license, work or school ID card, or a health benefits card. In addition, applicants require proof of residence; proof of earned income in the form of pay stubs, statement from employer regarding as to gross wages, income tax forms, or self-employment bookkeeping records; proof of unearned income, such as letters from agencies issuing Social Security, Veteran's Affairs, child support, unemployment, or other forms of payment (5 Easy Steps to SNAP Benefits, 2011). Income eligibility varies on the basis of the number of family members as well as different income thresholds, which are typically a percentage at or above the federal poverty line, determined on the basis of certain health conditions and disabilities (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Eligibility, 2012).

The only special requirement for those born outside of the United States is proof of immigration or naturalization papers (5 Easy Steps to SNAP Benefits, 2011). Assuming immigrant applicants possess all of the required documentation and earn less than SNAP income-threshold, only those who have lived in the United States for five or more years; are receiving disability-related assistance or benefits, regardless of entry date; and as of October 2003, all children regardless of entry date will actually be eligible to receive benefits

(Immigrant Eligibility Requirements, 2012). There are a few immigrant groups that are exempt from these immigrant-specific requirements, such as refugees, asylees, veterans and active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their spouses and children; however, the Hispanic or LatinoHispanic population within the area of study would most likely be subject to the SNAP requirements for immigrants (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues, 2012).

Based on the long list of required documents, it seems intuitive that it would be nearly impossible for undocumented individuals to qualify; however, it is quite possible that their children, regardless of whether or not they were born in the United States, would be more likely to qualify for SNAP, assuming their parents' income was below the poverty threshold. Mixed family status, especially in the context of public benefit programs such as SNAP, is of utmost concern to undocumented immigrants and those who advocate on their behalf. Many immigrants and others fear that individuals who apply for SNAP, even if it is for their children's benefit, and are unlawfully residing in the United States may be deported as a result of their application (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues, 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service's SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues memo, "Longstanding U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) policy provides that an immigrant will not be deported, denied entry to the country, or denied permanent status due to receipt of SNAP benefits," (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues, 2012). This policy seems to be in undocumented immigrants' and their children's favor because the documented family members who are eligible benefits can receive benefits even if the individual who applies for them is undocumented or lacks lawful immigration status.

The next major query regards whether or not everyone in the household of the individual(s) who are applying for SNAP benefits must present legal verification of status. Per the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, state agencies are only required to verify the legal status of individuals applying for benefits, not those with whom they live. In fact, "State agencies cannot deny benefits to otherwise eligible household members because other members have chosen not to disclose their citizenship, immigration status, or Social Security number," (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues, 2012). All household members who refuse to disclose this information are ineligible for SNAP; "however, the individuals' income and resources are still counted to determine eligibility for the remaining household members," even though they personally are not applying for benefits (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues, 2012).

Although it seems contradictory to the USCIS policy against deportation, etc., Section 11(e)(15) of the Food and Nutrition Act "requires the State agency [responsible for processing SNAP applications] to inform the USCIS immediately whenever personnel responsible for the certification or recertification of households determine that any member of a household is ineligible to receive SNAP benefits because the member is present in the U.S. in violation of the INA," (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues, 2012). Thus, immigrants who unlawfully reside in the United States and receive SNAP benefits cannot be deported, etc. because of these benefits; however, if immigrants without legal immigration status apply for benefits, they are subject to the Immigration and Naturalization Service's policies and procedures.

These policies provoke the following questions: (1) how could individuals without legal immigration status receive SNAP benefits, so as to necessitate the USCIS policy stating that said individuals cannot be deported, etc. on those grounds, and (2) what are the

consequences associated with requiring the agencies that process SNAP applications to report individuals who are discovered to be violating immigration policies while applying for SNAP benefits, perhaps not even for themselves but for their children or other dependents? Finally, and perhaps the least controversial of all of the immigrant-related SNAP policies, “the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 requires states to comply with FNS regulations that require bilingual personnel and printed materials in areas that have a substantial number of members of low-income households that speak a language other than English,” (SNAP Policy on Immigrants and Access Issues, 2012). In light of all of the barriers and misconceptions, National Council of La Raza, the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, estimates that almost half of all eligible Latino families do not receive SNAP benefits (Anna, 2011). Hopefully this is not the case of eligible Hispanic or LatinoHispanic people within the geographic area of study, but Census Bureau data and reports from Rockbridge Social Services suggests that that may indeed be the case.

Public Benefit Programs: Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

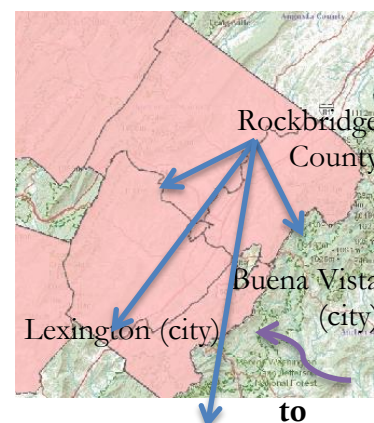
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is another program designed to eradicate hunger among these three target groups; however, there is not as much statistical information about those who participate in this program and reside in the geographic area of study as there is about SNAP (Women, Infants, and Children). Thus, I will briefly describe the benefits this program provides as well as its eligibility requirements.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), WIC provides “Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk,” (Women, Infants, and Children). Unlike SNAP, WIC is not an entitlement program (The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children , 2011). This means that there is only a certain Limited amount of funds are available for this public benefit program, and not everyone who qualifies will necessarily receive assistance. The women who receive benefits are eligible until their child reaches the age of five unless their income exceeds 185 per cent of the poverty line before that time (The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children , 2011).

According to the USDA’s website, WIC served almost 9.25 million women, children, and infants during the 2010 fiscal year (The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children , 2011). Among those fortunate few, many were Hispanic women, infants, and children, according to the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, a nonpartisan association of major Hispanic national organizations and leaders (Anna, 2011). They estimate that nearly 60 percent of Hispanic families with young children benefit from this program (Anna, 2011). Somewhat surprisingly, qualitative data collected via in-person interviews seems to corroborates the organization’s estimate.

Food Deserts & Access to Public Transportation

Access to food is not only an economic concern; it is also related one’s access to transportation and/or the distance between one’s residence and a grocery



store. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service created a Food Desert Locator, which sheds light on this very question (Breneman & Ver Ploeg). The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HHFI), which is sponsored by three federal agencies including the Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture, defines a food desert as "a low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store," (Breneman & Ver Ploeg). Somewhat surprisingly, Washington and Lee's campus happens to be located in the middle of five food deserts, which correspond to the City of Lexington's census tract and all of those that constitute Rockbridge County. Lexington's classification as a food desert perhaps the most debatable, but it is at least partially related to the fact that the Census Bureau found that 30.8 per cent of the city's population's income is at or below the poverty line. Again, not all Census data can be accepted at first glance, especially because the poverty statistics reflect all residents' income, which includes all of the nearly unemployed, independent students. In fact, City of Lexington residents have access to Kroger, Walmart Supercenter, and Food Lion by car or by the Maury River Transit System's bus. If we accept that "food desert" does not accurately reflect the City of Lexington's "on-the-ground" reality, then neither Lexington nor Buena Vista city, which the Maury River Transit System also serves, are food deserts according to the HHFI's slightly adjusted definition. For many people, the term "food desert" conjures up images of a place in which people's access to food is severely limited. This "image" is many Rockbridge County residents' everyday reality, especially those without access to a car. In terms of the four census tracts that correspond to Rockbridge County, all of them are considered food deserts due to the fact that more than 33 per cent of the population of these particular tracts lives farther than 10 miles from a supermarket (Breneman & Ver Ploeg). Because these areas are considered food deserts, it is almost certain that all residents of what, including Hispanic individuals, experience some degree of limited access to [nutritious] food. In order to distinguish "food deserts" from other census tracts, the HHFI needed to develop criteria, and it did. Unfortunately, these criteria are unable to adapt to the on-the-ground reality of a place like the City of Lexington and are subsequently subject to error. Nonetheless, it is critical to recognize the fact that many individuals and households in Rockbridge County as well as the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista do not own cars, and thus, have limited access to certain, more-than-walking-distance destinations. For this reason and others, services such as the Maury River Transit System and Rockbridge Area Transportation Service are invaluable services that offer freedom and greater access to nutritious foods to individuals and families who used to be isolated and restricted to certain geographic areas.

Hispanic or Latino/Hispanic People in the Area of Study: Poverty, Public Benefits, & Access to Food

As noted, mentioned in the introduction, the percentage of Hispanic or Latino/Hispanic individuals and households are more likely to residing in the United States that experience s poverty than other demographic groups in the U.S. is greater than the national average. According to the American Community Survey's one-year estimate for 2010, 14.1 percent of Hispanic or Latino/Hispanic Virginia residents' incomes are at or below the federal poverty line. Of all of the Hispanic or Latino/Hispanic households in the state,

The American Community Survey also found that only 8.5 percent of these households reportedly receive SNAP benefits.

The statistics for Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents of the geographic area of study are remarkably different from the national and statewide averages. In fact, the discrepancies between statistical figures begin with the estimates of the number of individuals who reside there. According to the 2010 US Census, 103 of Buena Vista city's 6,547 residents were Hispanic or LatinoHispanic. Similarly, the Bureau found that Rockbridge County has 296 Hispanic or LatinoHispanics among its 22,011 residents. In the case of Lexington city, the Census Bureau found that 271 of 6,771 residents were Hispanic or LatinoHispanic, but the American Community Survey for the same year estimated that there were 375.

While the official statistics from the 2010 U.S. Census and American Community Survey report 670 Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents in the area of study, Shane Gonsalves, a local Hispanic business owner, suggested that there may be as many as 1,000, and Meredith Downey of Rockbridge County Social Services estimated that there may be close to 800.

Assuming there are approximately 325 Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals residing in the City of Lexington, the 2010 Census data suggests that 285 of them, or 87.7 percent, are below the poverty line. In the five other census tracts that make up the geographic area of interestRockbridge County and the City of Buena Vista, the number of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents was consistently fewer than 15 with the exception of Buena Vista City, which reportedly has 103. In light of the small size of the geographic area of total Hispanic or LatinoHispanic population, the margin of error for many of the quantitative figures reports statistics is often greater than the reported statistic. For instance, the percentage of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic people residing outside of Lexington (city) in poverty was either unknown or unreliable due to the margin of error.

There are a number of challenges associated with obtaining reliable quantitative data regarding a specific and small population in a rural area. For example, the variability between the 2010 Census data and the American Community Survey estimates makes it difficult to speak confidently about any of the reported statistics. Additionally, there are many Hispanic and Latino individuals, particularly those who are undocumented, who choose not to complete the census out of fear that they will be tracked down and deported. As a result of the small sample size and low participation rate in the formal population counts, the available statistics regarding the local Hispanic or LatinoHispanic population are far from conclusive. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to believe that the majority of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic people in the area of study reside in Lexington.

If the Census Bureau's finding that 87.7 percent of the City of Lexington's Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents' income is at or below the federal poverty line, it would seem intuitive that many families should would solicit assistance in the form of from public benefit programs, i.e. SNAP or WIC, and local community services organizations, such as the Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA) or other food pantries.

Danielle, I continue to illustrate how to reduce words and write simpler sentences. Use the illustrations to revise the paper. You should focus principally on revising the prose to make the sentences simply and easily understandable to the many readers.

Unfortunately, the answer to this question remains somewhat of a mystery based on the 2010 Census and Rockbridge County Social Services (RCSS)' contradictory records. While the

2010 Census suggests that 72 of 86, or 83.7 per cent, of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families were benefitting from SNAP, Meredith Downey, the executive director of RCSS, reports that only four families receive SNAP. Overall, the Census Bureau reported that 9.05 percent of families in the City of Lexington's received SNAP in 2010; thus, it seems suspicious that such a high percentage of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families would benefit unless there was a miscalculation. or other counting-related error.

Although there were no data available concerning the percentage of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families in Rockbridge County or the City of Buena Vista, it is still worth considering the number of families that reportedly receive SNAP benefits. According to 2010 Census data, none of the fourteen families that reportedly reside in Rockbridge County participate in SNAP. Likewise, none of the thirteen Hispanic families that reportedly reside in Buena Vista (city) were receiving benefits as of 2010. These numbers are estimates, at best, because other information from the Census Bureau suggests that there are 103 Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents in Buena Vista, which would indicate that the average family size for the thirteen reported families is approximately 7.9 people. Based on in-person interviews with Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents of the area of study, this finding seems unlikely, and provokes questions regarding the accuracy of these findings.

As was the case in the City of Lexington, a discrepancy exists between the Census Bureau's findings and the RCSS's records regarding the number of families receiving SNAP benefits. Meredith Downey reports that there are at least eight Rockbridge County Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families and that reside in Rockbridge County and twelve that reside in the City of Buena Vista Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families currently receiving SNAP benefits (Downey, 2012). If in fact there are fourteen Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families residing in Rockbridge County as the 2010 Census suggests, then 57 percent would be receiving SNAP benefits, according to RCSS records. Even more shocking, 92 percent of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents of the City of Buena Vista appear to be receiving SNAP benefits based on the same records. In light of the data-related limitations, these data are preliminary at best. Nonetheless, if the available data even remotely reflect reality of the Hispanic or LatinoHispanic residents of the area of study, many experience poverty and/or at risk for food insecurity, and could possible benefit from a food pantry's services.

Hispanic or LatinoHispanics' Use of Food Pantries Nationwide

While few Hispanic or LatinoHispanic immigrants to the United States are unemployed or remain in the same place if they struggle to find work, many continue to experience poverty as a result of low wages. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a low-wage worker is anyone "whose hourly wage rates are so low that even if they worked full-time, full-year their annual earnings would fall below the poverty line for a family of four. This wage rate is \$8.63 in 2001, equivalent to \$10.50 in 2008," (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). In fact, an ASPE Research Brief states that Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals represented 17.9 percent of all low-wage workers in the United States in 2001 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Based on the percentage of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals who work low-wage jobs and those whose income may be equal to or less than the federal poverty line for other reasons, it seems logical that many would seek assistance from local food pantries.

In response to hypothesis, three Auburn University professors of agricultural economic and rural sociology conducted a study entitled, "Regional Differences in Use of Food Stamps and

Food Pantries by Low-Income Households in the United States.” They found that, “Race is not a significant factor in private food assistance use; however, Hispanics are significantly less likely than non-Hispanics in similar circumstances to use food pantries,” (Duffy, Bhattarai, & Irimia-Vladu, 2005). Moreover, the same group found that, “low-income residents in the South are significantly less likely to use private food assistance [than other region groups],” (Duffy, Bhattarai, & Irimia-Vladu, 2005). Based on this study, it appears that Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals, particularly those residing in the South, are more reluctant to use food pantries than other demographics (Duffy, Bhattarai, & Irimia-Vladu, 2005). While these seem like reasonable conclusions, qualitative data collected in the geographic area of study contradicts these findings.

Lastly, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which is obviously located in a more metropolitan area than the Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA) and the other food pantries in the geographic area of study, reports that 21 percent of their clients are Hispanic or LatinoHispanic (Faces of Hunger). Also in Chicago, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article in 2006 entitled, “Latinos shun food pantries, study finds.” The article suggests that the main reason Latinos choose not to use food pantries is “fear,” (Sadovi, 2006). And, according to relief workers, who are familiar with Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals in the Chicago area, “many of their intended recipients are undocumented immigrants, who worry that applying to food banks or other seemingly official institutions might result in deportation,” (Sadovi, 2006). Interviews with Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals in the geographic area of study the Rockbridge area led to distinctly different findings., which will soon be discussed in detail.

Qualitative Data Collection Methodology

From a geographic perspective, this study involves the four census tracts that constitute Rockbridge County as well as the two that correspond to the Cities of Buena Vista and Lexington. On a more demographic level, it includes individuals who self-identify as Hispanic or LatinoHispanic on the U.S. Census Bureau and American Community Survey questionnaires.

The statistical data from the 2010 Census as well as the one-, three-, and five-year American Community Survey estimates included in this report is available to the public on the Census Bureau’s American FactFinder website.

The rest of the findings included in this report were collected within the geographic area of study via in-person interviews with individuals presumed to be Hispanic? who fit the demographic description of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic. Respondents were not asked to reveal their immigration status, so the information is just as likely to reflect undocumented as documented individuals. experiences and opinions.

The sample was not designed to be a representative or random. Interviews were The reason for sampling people at all was to gain insight from the local Hispanic community to either confirm or dispute statistics from national data sets, local professionals in relevant areas, and anecdotal observations. We sought , and provide recommendations concerning ways in which local community organizations could improve their services so as to better serve and reach out to the local Spanish-speaking population. individuals and families.

In fact, the population sampled included twelve adults – people over the age of eighteen – from different parts of the area. of study. All participants – four are female and eight are male - were at their workplaces when they learned of this voluntary study. Myrna Barrera, a

native Spanish-speaker and Mexican-American, and I visited eighteen businesses in Rockbridge County and the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista.

Upon our arrival at an establishment, we began by introducing ourselves as Washington and Lee University students conducting a study in collaboration with the Rockbridge Area Relief Association regarding local Spanish-speaking people's access to community services. If I was not already speaking with the manager, I would then ask permission to do so. My primary concern involved specifically describing the purpose of our research, so the manager would feel comfortable allowing Myrna and me to interview one or more of their Hispanic employees. Some managers told us that the business did not employ Hispanic or LatinoHispanic people; others said they would accept the informational brochures with our contact numbers; and a relatively small fraction selected between one and three employees to meet with us.

All of the interviews took place on the businesses' premises beyond the hearing but not in close proximity of other individuals. Myrna was responsible for introducing the study, telling participants that all questions were voluntary and responses confidential, and asking all of the interview questions. I took notes on all responses, and occasionally interjected with follow-up questions and clarifications. We did not conduct any interviews in English, but some of the respondents had a basic understanding of the language. Each interview took about fifteen minutes, and after we were finished with the questions, we always asked if the respondents had any questions for us. We conducted three interviews with a single respondent; three with a pair of individuals; and one with three persons. After all questions had been answered, we thanked them (and their managers) for their time, and noted the respondent(s)' phone number(s) to facilitate the random distribution of ten Kroger gift cards upon the study's completion.

Clearly, the study's population sample was not random, nor was it representative of the entire Hispanic community in the area of study. Nonetheless, the anecdotal, qualitative information Myrna and I were able to gather is invaluable because it complements the qualitative, often grossly estimated data available for the Rockbridge area of study. Further, the most informed recommendations will ultimately be inferred from a product of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Findings from In-person Interviews

Per the previous section, Myrna and I interviewed eight Hispanic or LatinoHispanic males and four Hispanic or LatinoHispanic females who work and reside within the geographic area of study. The following is an overview of the data we collected throughout the course of these twelve in-person interviews.

In terms of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic's use of community service organizations, eight of the twelve people interviewed reported that they and/or their families use the Free Clinic. Similarly, seven respondents reported using the Maury River Transit System. Somewhat surprisingly, no one reported using any other community service; however, several indicated that they had visited Rockbridge County Social Services' office and/or the Rockbridge County Health Department, and are receiving benefits, such as WIC and SNAP.

Respondents were then asked about how they heard about the community services they or their family members use. Half of the people interviewed said they heard about the services they use via word of mouth, mostly from family members. One-quarter said they learned about the Maury River Transit Service from a flyer, and a local doctor referred one respondent to the Free Clinic. Half of the interviewees said they learned about the services they use from their children's schools.

The next question concerned We next asked about the best way to advertise new services to the Hispanic or LatinoHispanic population. within the geographic area of study. Three-quarters suggested posting flyers in Spanish at CVS, Walmart, Food Lion, and Kroger, and one-quarter recommended sending information to school to be sent home with their children. Three respondents emphasized the value of writing newspaper articles in Spanish and promoting advertisement via word-of-mouth communication. Only one person said churches and religious organizations should be involved.

One service that almost all respondents particularly desired but had mostly failed to obtain thus far was free English classes. Historically In the recent past, Washington and Lee University's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) student organization has offered English tutoring on a regular basis at the Rockbridge Regional Library and in the form of one-on-one sessions upon request. This year the organization has been experiencing some challenges with its leadership; thus, its operation has been less consistent, and fewer people are benefiting from group and individual tutoring.

In the spring of 2010, however, ESOL and the Campus Kitchen Project at Washington and Lee (CKPWL) joined forces to offer free dinner and English classes to Hispanic or LatinoHispanic members of Lexington (city), Buena Vista (city), and Rockbridge County's populations. Four dinners were held, and attendance was high. great at first. Last spring the events did not take place, but Washington and Lee students hope to reinstate these types of events beginning in the fall of 2012. For this reason, Myrna and I asked study participants if they would be interested in attending community dinners with free English classes and childcare, and if so, what day and time would be best. Ten of twelve people interviewed said they would be interested in attending, and that they would be comfortable in a public place, such as a school or library. Six said that Monday around 6 or 7:00 p.m. would be best, and four (some of the same people said Monday and Tuesday, but some only) said Tuesday at around the same time. The two who were uninterested said it was because they are too busy. The positive response we received is a great indication that these events will be even more successful in 2012 than they were in 2010.

The following questions pertain to where Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals who live in the geographic area of study buy their groceries, and how much they spend on food per week. As for food availability at retail outlets, Eleven of the twelve people interviewed said that they buy their food at Walmart and Kroger. The other person does not shop, and eats at work. Three said Walmart, Kroger, and Food Lion. In terms of weekly food expenditures, oOne person interviewed spends \$0-50 per week on groceries, two people (and their families) spend \$51-100, five people (and their families) spend \$101-150, and four of twelve people interviewed spend \$151-200. None of the twelve people interviewed spend more than \$200 per week on groceries.

We also asked respondents how many people are live in their families in order to get a sense of how family size influences expenditures for food. much a family of two spends in comparison to a family of five, for example. We found that tthe average family size amongst the interviewees was 4.4. Also, while many respondents and their families rent an

apartment or a house with another person or family, the number they reported only reflects those who eat the food they buy.

Generally speaking, Hispanic or LatinoHispanic women have more children than the national average in the United States, which is 2.06 per woman, which helps explain the previous finding. In terms of the twelve individuals who were interviewed, three-quarters have school-age children. In seven of these eight families, the children receive free-and-reduced school breakfasts and lunches. Those who are participating heard about these programs at school registration or when forms were sent home. At the time of the interviews, only two interviewees had one child each who was participating in CKPWL's Backpack Program, but four other parents expressed interest.

The previous questions were designed to assess the nutritional needs of Hispanic or Latino individuals and families via qualitative feedback from community members as a means of confirming or disproving existing quantitative figures. We then turned to questions related to the types of meals Hispanic or Latino people in the geographic area of study tend to eat, i.e., individual or family-style, and if they are receiving food donated by any organization. First, two respondents said that they eat dinner with their families every night. Eight said they eat dinner with their families and lunch at work between six and seven nights a week. One said he eats with his family between two and three days a week because of his work schedule, but that his wife and children all eat together every day. Another respondent said that he never is able to eat with his family, but again, that his wife and children always eat together. Overall it appears that Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families eat all together, but men's work schedules often force them to eat alone when they return home late. Not surprisingly, women who stay home, and even those who work, reported eating dinner with their children seven days a week.

In terms of private food assistance, e.g. other than beyond benefits from sponsored by the government programs such as SNAP, WIC, or free-and-reduced lunch, none of the twelve respondents' families are receiving food donated by a church or other religious organization. Similarly, none of the twelve respondents' families are receiving food from a food pantry. We also addressed the number of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic families receiving SNAP or WIC benefits. Three of the interviewees' families receive SNAP benefits, and two respondents said their wives and new babies are receiving WIC.

The most shocking finding of this study was that none of the twelve people interviewed frequented, much less knew there were, food pantries in Buena Vista, Glasgow, and Lexington. I was particularly surprised to find out that even families who live near RARA did not know exactly what or where it was. Of the twelve respondents, three said they were uninterested in receiving food from a pantry because they do not need or want help. The other nine said that the food pantry could help their families, and when they reviewed the list of items commonly available at RARA, everyone said they would be grateful to receive all items.

As I mentioned earlier, Myrna and I conducted these interviews at local businesses. We did not select the individuals we would interview, and their managers often approached and encouraged them to participate. Thus, it is possible that managers were more inclined to suggest we interview individuals with spouses and families than single adults. This makes sense in light of the fact that ten of the twelve people interviewed live with their spouses and children and/or babies. Only person is a single parent, and lives with a child; the other is single and lives alone. Of these families, eight live in the City of Lexington, one in Buena Vista, and three in Rockbridge County. Fortunately the people interviewed live in diverse

areas, and the number from each area is basically proportionate to the distribution of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic people throughout the geographic area./ of study.

We also asked about the number of working adults in the interviewees' families as well as their average monthly income. In response to the first question, A little over one and one-half (1.7) adults worked was the average number of working adults in these 12 families. Next, the interviewees' average monthly income is \$1,364 per month. This number is an estimate based on interviewees' responses, such as \$1400 per month, and finding the median between the two numbers if they pointed to one of the answer choices, such as \$1001-1500 would have been entered as \$1250. One respondent's income was stricken from this calculation because the amount provided represented only part of the household's monthly income.

Overall the qualitative data confirms some general assumptions about the Hispanic or LatinoHispanic population in the geographic area of study. In particular, respondents' residences are consistent with 2010 census data; the majority of those with school-age children participate in subsidized meal programs; and at least some qualify for SNAP or WIC. Again, the most revealing finding of the in-person interviews was that none of the twelve participants knew about any of the three food pantries in the area, and nine said that access to more food would be useful to them or their families. This suggests that fear, as is commonly suggested, is not the factor that limits Hispanic or LatinoHispanic's use of food pantries, but rather that outreach efforts must be tailored to this population, so that it no longer lacks information about available services.

Food Pantries in Rockbridge County, Lexington (city), and Buena Vista (city)

Of all types of community organizations, food pantries specialize in making goods and services available to individuals and households with limited access to food. Within the area of study, there is one food pantry in each of the following geographic areas: Rockbridge County, Buena Vista city, and Lexington city.

The only one in Rockbridge County is located on McCulloch Street in downtown Glasgow, and is called the Glasgow Food Pantry. It distributes an average of 365 boxes (small ones for families of less than four people, and large ones for families with four or more members) per month. According to the pantry's primary contact, Mr. Wayne Hickman, only a couple Hispanic families occasionally frequent the pantry. (Brown, 2012)

In Buena Vista city, the Community Share Food Project is the only food pantry location. According to Ms. Breeden, one of the pantry's volunteers, it is designed specifically to help individuals and families in emergency situations, as in until they get back on their feet. On average, the pantry distributes food to between 40 and 50 clients per month, and Ms. Breeden reports that, only a few are Hispanic.

The Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA), located on Spotswood Drive in the City of Lexington, is the only food pantry in the City of Lexington. It served an average of 530 households per month in 2011, and over the course of the past ten years, only two, if many, clients were Hispanic (Rockbridge Area Relief Association, Food Pantry Report: 2007-2011, interview with executive director on January 20, 2012).

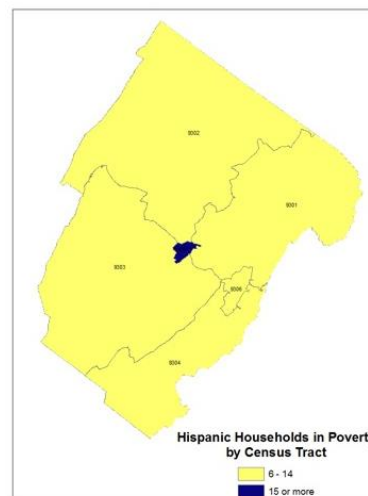
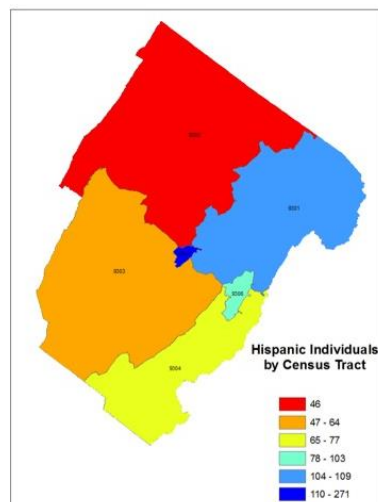
In addition to the food pantries in the area of study, there are three other food pantries in Augusta and Bath County that also serve Rockbridge County residents. These are the Windy Cove Presbyterian Church in Millboro, Virginia, which is located in Bath County,

the Kingsway Help Center in Steeles Tavern, VA and the Craigsville Community Food Pantry in Craigsville, VA, both of which are located in Augusta County. (Russell, 2012) The only one of these three peripheral pantries that allegedly serves Hispanic clients on a somewhat regular basis is the food pantry in Craigville, but this information is from a secondary source at the Blue Ridge Food Bank and could not be confirmed by the pantry itself. As for the other two pantries, the receptionist in Millboro said there are no Hispanic people in the area, which would explain why the church's pantry has never served any Hispanic clients. Also, a volunteer and board member from the Help Center in Steeles Tavern said that only a few Hispanic clients have received food in the past, but none of them is a regular client.

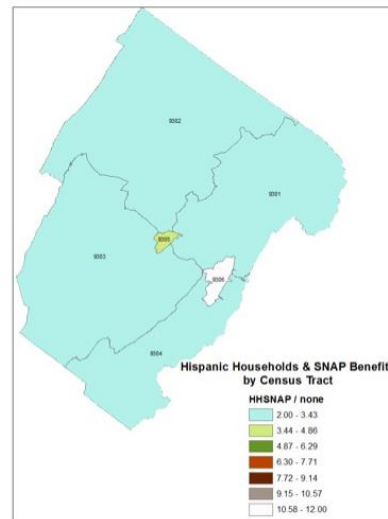
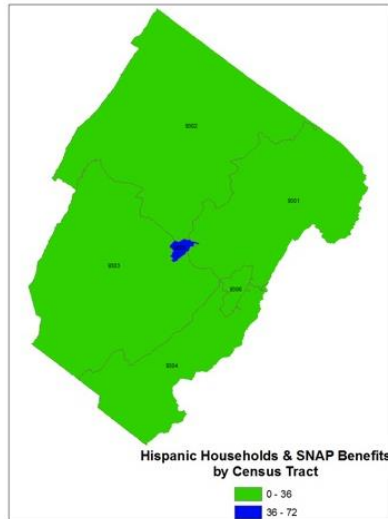
Based on the records from six different food pantries within or on the edge of the geographic area of study, Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals are not receiving food from pantries. This seems reasonable in light of the fact that none of the twelve people interviewed had even heard of a food pantry in this area, much less considered visiting one. Further, it seems that access to information, or outreach in other words, is the barrier Hispanic or LatinoHispanic people most commonly encounter with regard to access food pantries' services.

Visual Depiction of Distribution of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic People, Poverty, & Access to Food

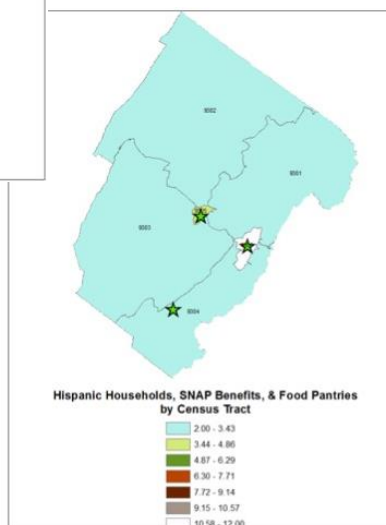
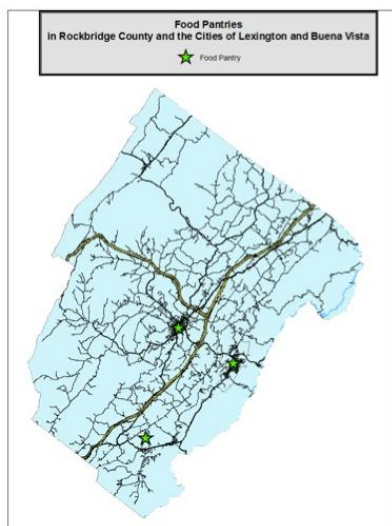
The following are a series of Geographic Information System (GIS) maps that capture some of the concepts previously discussed in this paper. All of the maps are based on quantitative information from the U.S. Census Bureau, particularly the 2010 data, as well as the American Community Survey's one-, three-, and five-year estimates. The only map that is based on quantitative, yet anecdotal data, from a local source is the second one entitled Hispanic or LatinoHispanic People and SNAP Benefits. Because RCSS's records were so distinct from the American Community Survey's, it seemed appropriate to display how the number of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic SNAP recipients varies based on the source. The first map conveys the distribution of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic individuals residing within the six different census tracts that make up the geographic area of study. The second relays the number of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic households in each census tract whose incomes are at or below the federal poverty line.



The third map displays the number of Hispanic or LatinoHispanic households who receive SNAP benefits according to the American Community Survey's 2010 one-year estimate. The fourth is the one conveys the same sort of information, but is based on RCSS's records and staff's perceptions.



The fifth map shows the location of the three food pantries in the geographic area of study. The sixth demonstrates the three food pantries' proximity to the census tracts where the most Hispanic or LatinoHispanic households who receive SNAP benefits reside. Individuals who qualify for SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, or SSI are automatically eligible to receive food from assistance from a pantry.



The seventh and eighth maps capture the Maury River Transit System Bus Routes in the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista. The blue and orange circles, respectively, indicate bus stops, and the green stars refer to the food pantries in each area. Both bus routes do in fact stop in front of each area's respective food pantry.

The ninth, tenth, and eleventh maps shows the distribution of grocery stores and/or other food vendors throughout the geographic region of study in relation to the Maury River Transit System's routes. There are clearly clusters of availability and areas without a single grocer. To be fair, the only full-size supermarkets in the geographic area of study are two Food Lions on the edge of the City of Lexington and in the City of Buena Vista, the Kroger in the City of Lexington, and the Walmart Supercenter, which is located in Rockbridge County near the City of Lexington. Other than that, all of these "groceries" are small, remote locations with limited selection, particularly in the form of nutritional food items. The map provides the explanation for the HHIF's decision to classify Rockbridge County's four census tracts as "food deserts."

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