Walla Walla Poverty Assessment: How Transportation, Healthcare, Employment, and Domestic Abuse Affect Latinos and Others in Poverty

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Introduction:

Throughout history, issues of poverty and inequality have embedded themselves within the consciousness in our country. From Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign in the late 1960's, to the Welfare Reform legislative overhaul in 1996, the poor population of our country has been frequently highlighted and recognized in various forms of media and in the actions of our lawmakers. However, in many ways, poverty remains dramatically misunderstood, underestimated, and limited to fictionalized and surface-level accounts of "what it means to be poor" through movies and literature in our popular culture.

Particularly, issues of poverty and race are difficult to address sensitively and completely, leaving many gaps in analysis, and in turn, gaps in progression towards economic equality. As easy as it may be for many to ignore the connections between race and poverty, it is vital to our development and growth as a nation that we address the scope, quality, and attributes of poverty—for *all* populations.

In order to most thoroughly address issues of poverty and race on a national scale, it is imperative that we begin with a significantly more minute and local analysis. This report assesses the nature and extent of poverty in Walla Walla, Washington, a task that is important both for its own sake and as a case study that can help to address larger issues. Keeping in mind how interwoven poverty and race continue to be in this country and region, this report asks the question, **what are the characteristics and causes of poverty in Walla Walla, particularly for the Latino population, and how can poverty in the Valley best be alleviated?** Due to the fact that poverty is in itself multifaceted, this research focuses on the ways in which **transportation, unemployment, healthcare, and domestic abuse affect the poor population**. In order to evaluate poverty thoroughly, I ask the question, **what is currently being done to address poverty in Walla Walla, and additionally, what policies and practices can be implemented to help reduce the rate of poverty in Walla Walla?** A comprehensive report of poverty has never been done in this area, and yet, many local organizations, including my community partner, Commitment to Community, address issues of poverty in their everyday work. Commitment to Community recognizes that in order to most effectively create change in any community, full knowledge of the extent and nature of that problem is vital. Particularly for issues pertaining to poverty and race, it is essential that full understanding be present in any action taken: otherwise, the potential for the exclusion of certain populations, intentional or not, increases.

The findings of this report indicate that there are in fact numerous and multifarious issues and problems related to the poor population of Walla Walla and their experiences with transportation, employment, domestic abuse, and healthcare. While many service providers are actively attempting to reduce some of the issues that the poor population cited in my report, generally, despite the numerical evidence that the Latino population is in need of services related to the factors stated above, **most service providers acknowledge that they are a highly underserved population.** My report examines why this might be the case, according to both members of the poor Latino population as well as the service providers themselves. The data shows that the lack of

service use may be due to a number of barriers that the Latino community faces, including educational obtainment, language usage, immigration issues, problems with domestic abuse, barriers to a living-wage job, and reliable transportation. Additionally, the findings also speak a great deal about general difficulties that non-Latino whites face with regards to poverty: specifically, issues of healthcare and employment proved especially important. Furthermore, mental health and dental health issues emerged as important for non-Latino whites, as well as significant decreases in low-wage jobs available for the poor population. This report also found **inaccurate and harmful perceptions in the community**, both in relation to the perceptions that Latinos had about the white population and vice versa, as well as the perceptions that many service providers held in regards to the motives behind an individual's or group's lack of participation in the services they provide. These perceptions are fueled by a lack of understanding and lack of access to resources explaining and providing insight for the vast and varied experiences within poverty.

This report recommends that we bring together various representatives and stakeholders in the community to organize a more **all-inclusive campaign to reduce poverty** in Walla Walla. Additionally, it is recommended that the numerous service providers in town **create regulations that will hold organizations and individuals accountable to serve all populations effectively** and completely in Walla Walla, including a plan for how to conduct effective outreach to populations that are not being served. This report also recommendations community forums that will discuss misperceptions regarding race and the poor population of Walla Walla. In terms of transportation, this report recommends that services not be cut and instead expand public transportation routes. With regards to healthcare it is vital that the quality and capacity of service increases, that more of the population is able to assess insurance, and that the poor population feels comfortable and valued accessing healthcare. It is important to the community and economy in Walla Walla that there are more low-wage jobs available and more opportunities for upward mobility within those jobs. Finally, problems of domestic abuse reveal that all women, regardless of immigration status, should feel safe seeking help for abusive situations, and be provided skills and services that will help them become more self-sufficient and independent.

Literature Review: Defining Poverty

There is, undoubtedly, an enormously expansive and valuable sum of data available regarding the various components of poverty. This type of research is attempting to offer insight, however fragmented, into the definition of poverty. This Literature Review offers a sampling, a mere fraction of the total, of what poverty means and looks like in relation to transportation, healthcare, employment, domestic abuse, rural poverty, and the racial dimensions of poverty. Undoubtedly there are other components and pieces within a greater definition of poverty that this report does not have the capacity to address. It is clear that Walla Walla has problems with housing concerns, as well as food insecurity. Currently, across our country about half of children will be on food stamps at some point during their upbringing. In Walla Walla specifically, food stamp usage has gone up a staggering 37% since 2007 (Bloch, Matthew et al. 2007). It is important to acknowledge the fact that this report is by no means a complete assessment

of poverty in Walla Walla: it is fragmental in nature. However, the information that it does contribute is vital to progression in and of itself.

Transportation and the Capacity for Good Jobs and Social Inclusion: The Limitations of Transit and the Poor Population

Poverty can often result in an experience of sharp constriction of one's ability to move through one's everyday living environment, in physical and spatial terms. This constriction has a great deal to do with the kinds of transportation to which a person has access. More specifically, transportation has a great deal of power with regards to a poor person's capacity for inclusion. Susan Kenyon et al. suggest a strong correlation between lack of mobility and social exclusion (Kenyon et al. 2002, 207). These authors explain however, that there are several key differences between social exclusion and poverty. They consider poverty to be simply one dimension of social exclusion, stating, "where poverty centers upon the outcomes of unequal access to *material resources,* social exclusion centers upon the processes of unequal access to *participation in society (*Kenyon et al. 2002, 208). By focusing more on issues of social exclusion, Kenyon et al. refocus the transportation discussion on the potential repercussions that income-related disparities may have on a poor individual's role in their community, and ultimately their experience with poverty (Kenyon et al. 2002, 208). Within the context of their primary research, Kenyon et al. define social exclusion as a combination of various factors that result in an individual's denial of access to participate in the social and political life of the community. The results of social exclusion can be a diminished sense of both material and non-material measurements for quality of life, as well as "tempered life chances, choices, and reduced citizenship." (Kenyon et al. 2002, 209) With social exclusion in mind, Kenyon et al. suggest that it may in fact be beneficial to redefine our conceptions of poverty by accounting more for inclusiveness and recognition of the fact that social exclusion is a very real dimension of poverty itself.

Kenyon et al. introduce another re-definition of a common term in the transportation debate, claiming that *mobility* is distinctly different from mere transit related concerns. They define mobility-related exclusion as "the process by which people are prevented from participating in the economic, political, and social life of the community because of reduced accessibility to opportunities, services and social networks, due in whole or in part to insufficient mobility in society and environment built around the assumption of high mobility." (Kenyon et al. 2002, 211) Kenyon et al. state that mobility-related cases of exclusion can occur at both the neighborhood and individual level. They argue that neighborhoods in both urban and rural areas that have high levels of exclusion tend to have lower levels of "motorized mobility." (Kenyon et al. 2002, 211) The author's claim that because of these low mobility levels, and due to the unreliability of public transit that often exits in these types of areas, social exclusion is likely to be reinforced (Kenyon et al. 2002, 211).

Kenyon et al. also note that transportation difficulties can be a key barrier to obtaining employment (Kenyon et al. 2002, 212). They show evidence suggesting that choice of employment, as well as the potential for getting a job at all can be restricted and heavily affected by mobility difficulties (Kenyon et al. 2002, 212). In addition to these

employment-related concerns, they note the potentially negative social repercussions of transit inaccessibility. Transportation can be viewed as a "social service," and therefore, a lack of it can lead to a decrease in formal and informal social networks and social interactions in general. A decrease in these things can lead to more isolation not only from material things and services, but from friends, family, and social activities (Kenyon 2002, 212).

Catherine Stamps et al. also discuss the critical nature of transportation with regards to social and economic functionality and in American society: they acknowledge that the fact of the matter is, minorities disproportionately lack access to transportation (Stamps et al. 2007, 273). They examine Latinos in Georgia, and state that within the community, as well as in many others across our country, Latinos are significantly less likely to drive alone to and from work because they do not live in households where a car is readily available for personal use (Stamps et al. 2007, 273). Like Kenyon et al., they too discuss the various social problems that a lack of transportation may cause for Latinos: specifically employment opportunities and the capacity for new Latino residents to adjust to their environment (Stamps et al. 2007, 273).

While many other studies have discussed the connection between employment and transportation for the poor population (Giuliano 2003; Raphael and Rice 2002; Kain 1992), Stamps et al. discuss the more unique and narrow topic of how a lack of reliable transit can create a political, social, and psychological adjustment barrier for immigrants (Stamps et al. 2007, 275). Through their interviews (with key informants in six different counties) and focus groups (with Latino residents in each of the six counties) (Stamps et al. 2007, 282) they found that in many respects, regardless of the ways in which distance and transit were not issues for the Latino population, they found many limitations within the preexisting innovations regarding transit (Stamps et al. 2007, 283). Many Latino participants in the focus groups noted that without cars, many are relegated to only a few specific industries, and that often car-pool arrangements resulted in inability to access places and services outside of work, such as community colleges. (Stamps et al. 2007, 283) Stamps et al. describe a scenario in which one member of the Latino community turned carpooling into an economic endeavor, in which one person owned a car or van, and charged people for rides (Stamps et al. 2007, 284). These authors also argue that a lack of transportation not only limits job opportunities for Latino immigrants, but also requires that they live in communities where it is easier to get to and from work. While this may appear positive, Stamps et al. claim that due to this restriction, many Latinos said they remained in poorer neighborhoods despite the option to move to better housing (Stamps et al. 2007, 284). Furthermore, one component within the definition of poverty is most certainly the implications of mobility, or a lack thereof, with regards to a poor persons capacity to have social inclusion as well as job opportunities.

Domestic Abuse and Latinas: Barriers to Seeking Help, Cultural Concerns, and Women's Income:

If poverty is best understood not only as a condition of lacking certain things but also as an experience of limited mobility as Kenyon and Stamps et al. state, it also should be understood as a markedly gendered experience. Differential wages are a major issue for

women, and because of these differences, along with many other contributing factors, single mothers in particular are at extreme risk for poverty. In 1996, 57% of female-headed households were considered low-income non-working families, and 37% were considered low-income working families (Blank 1997, 39). In 2008, we see that female-headed households are undoubtedly still struggling: 4.6% of married-couple families are below the poverty level, where the percent of female-headed households below the poverty line is a staggering 28.2% (Census Bureau 2006-2008).

Particularly the increase of single mother families over time has proved troubling (Blank 1997, 39). This increase has been fueled by both growing divorce rates and an increase in the number of women who have never been married (Blank 1997). These two factors lead to some interesting and important questions related to the nature and quality of female-headed households, as well as the motivation behind their existence. There has been growing research showing that across our country, many women choose to leave their husbands because they have experienced substantial physical, mental, or emotional abuse in their marriages (Blank 1997, 40).

According to Blank, in 1997, in a random sample of single mothers who received welfare in Washington state, a shocking **60%** reported past experiences with sexual or physical abuse (Blank 1997, 40). This dramatic sum certainly seems to correlate to the decision that many women are making to leave their husbands or boyfriends. Of course, to some degree, it is not surprising that as our society progresses more women are choosing to live on their own. Traditional values and beliefs that women should get married and have children have certainly evolved and developed differently over time. While this shift alone is not disconcerting, research has shown, that seeing as single mothers are much more likely to be poor than any other family group, an increase in single mothers increases the poverty rate overall (Blank 1997, 41).

In addition to this fact, an increase in the number of single-headed households has also increased the difficulty in alleviating poverty rates through employment (Blank 1997, 41). This is because of several reasons. First, these types of households have only one adult available for work, which naturally will constrict the earning capacity of the family. Secondly, in addition to being the sole provider for the family economically, single parents typically bear the majority of parenting responsibilities. These responsibilities are undoubtedly a factor when it comes to capacity for employment, in terms of how many hours you can commit, energy you can give—generally, parenting responsibilities, particularly for single parents, have the potential to constrain work effort (Blank 1997, 42).

With these facts about women and poverty in mind, it is important to consider the extent to which domestic abuse is contributing to poverty and female-headed households. In particular, how the Latino population fares with regards to these issues is something to consider, due to the lack of research existing on this population. Joanne Klevens' text compares the Latino population to other ethnic groups in terms of their experience with domestic abuse, or as she call it "Intimate Partner Violence" (IPV), referring to abusive experiences that can occur both inside and outside of the "domestic" or home-based realm. Because there has been very little research done previously on the Latino

population specifically and how it pertains to IPV, Klevens' text samples from the more minimal existence of data regarding that population in the context of greater IPV discussions (Klevens 2007). Klevens' goal is to discern if and how IPV is different for the Latino population. Through her analysis of preexisting data, Klevens' main discoveries include: Latinos experience similar forms of IPV and similar consequences as non-Latinos, the role of alcohol appear to be less strong in IPV cases for Latinos, and cultural factors may be extremely relevant and unique only to the Latino population. For example issues of immigration and acculturation, in addition to the importance of male dominance in Latino culture, as well as power relations in a general sense play a major role in how Latinos experience cases of IPV (Klevens 2007).

In most of the research that Klevens examines, the findings suggest that the rate and nature of IPV is not dramatically different for the Latino population comparison to the general population (Klevens 2007, 113). However, Klevens does suggest to some extent that the factors associated with IPV in Latino communities are different than that of the non-Latino population. For instance, Latina victims of IPV tend to be younger, less educated, and more disadvantaged financially than white victims of IPV. However, these traits could be more a reflection of the Latino population as a whole (Klevens 2007,114). Issues of male dominance and machismo do emerge as being correlated to instances of IPV, although the research and conclusions are quite mixed in this regard. Some researchers claim that "male dominance is not that typical among Latinos who tend to be more egalitarian in domestic decision making (Baca-Zinn, 1982; Sugihara & Warner, 2002) and that beliefs toward gender roles have not been associated with IPV among Latinos (Klevens 2007 114). Other sources show Latinas who have experienced IPV are approximately twice as likely to be living in a male-dominated relationship, when they are compared to abused non-Latino White women (Klevens 2007, 116).

In addition to Klevens', Stephanie Riger et al. offer insight into the gendered nature of poverty (Riger et al. 2004, 318). Initially, Riger et al. explain the difficulties in attempting to represent and account for various cultural differences that may be relevant in studies about domestic abuse and gender relations within poverty. For example, they claim that most studies are rarely designed particularly for diverse populations. Because of this, these studies may allow for an unintended misrepresentation of an individual's comprehension (Riger et al. 2004, 319). Taking this into account, Riger discusses more thoroughly the ways in culture, race, and gender intersect within domestic abuse. Riger states, "sexism and racism are not mutually exclusive; rather, the intersectionality of their multiple identities complicates minority women's experiences of violence." (Riger et al. 2004, 320)

The authors proceed to explain in greater detail the ways in which ones culture, as related to race and ethnicity, may play a role in how a woman experiences and expresses instances of domestic abuse. Riger claims that due to the acute awareness that many women of color have with regards to their racial identity (and the stereotypes that are associated with it) they may be less willing to disclose any experiences they may have with domestic abuse. Furthermore, Riger cites the danger and inaccuracy that can often result from people allowing these cultural stereotypes to distort perceptions of domestic abuse (Riger et al. 2004, 322).

In addition to the effects that race has on domestic abuse, Riger claims that low socioeconomic status may in fact complicate the link between culture and domestic abuse. This is due in part to the fact that racism and other repressive systems are inextricably connected to class discrimination and because of this, "research has been unable to separate the effects of cultural background and socioeconomic status." (Riger et al. 2004, 321) Many researchers have found a strong correlation between poverty and the level of abuse that women experience (Riger et al. 2004, 321). Additionally, the cultural implications of immigration are particularly important to consider, especially with regard to the Latino population in our country. Many studies have shown that immigrant women, given the financial instability that is practically inevitable within the resettlement period, are more likely to take work as unskilled labor in various occupations (Riger et al. 2004, 322). Due to the fact that immigrant women may have an easier time gaining employment, they often become the primary breadwinner of the family. In turn, men may use violence to reestablish their dominant role, or in an attempt relinquish a sense of shame (Riger et al. 2004, 323). When immigrating to the United States, many Latinos may be leaving behind their most valuable familial connection or sense of community. So while many would view leaving an abusive spouse as the most rational and reasonable thing to do in any given scenario, it may seem illogical to a woman whose spouse is her sole source of connection to her country of origin (Riger et al. 2004, 324). Being a new immigrant in a foreign country also has the potential for disorientation and isolation, causing these women to feel more dependant on their spouse for guidance, ultimately making it that much more difficult to leave them. This sense of alienation is one that men may take advantage of in their attempts to have more control over their spouses (Riger et al. 2004, 324).

These two researchers demonstrate the explicit and overlapping connections of gender, domestic abuse, and poverty. For Latinas especially, we see that issues of immigration proved difficult with regards to economic and emotional progression. Additionally, we found that single mothers often experience overwhelming hardship economically, and are much more likely to be impoverished, demonstrating the importance of examining the correlations between these variables.

Employment Issues: Poverty in Relation to Wages, Education, and Advancement Opportunities:

In addition to both a gendered definition of poverty as well as a mobility-centered argument, for many discussions of poverty, issues of employment lie at the crux of analysis. Employment concerns are particularly relevant in our modern world due to the fact that **unemployment rates are just over 10% for the United States, the highest it has been since April of 1983** (Census Bureau 2009). However, many scholars say that unemployment is not the only, and perhaps not even the predominant concern that the poor population has with regards to employment. Income levels, which are of course entirely connected to occupation, are a determining factor in whether or not an individual will be in poverty. Popular opinion is of the belief that people who are in poverty tend to be unemployed: this notion is far more multi-dimensional and incorrect than most assume (Quigley 2003). Not only are more people in poverty despite being employed, now more

than ever before, the challenge has become the apparent lack of good, living-wage jobs. Essentially—for many Americans, getting a job does not mean getting out of poverty (Kazis et al. 2001,1).

Increasingly over time, it has become true that a steady job does not necessarily equate to financial success, or to escape from poverty. This is because even with a minimum wage job, formerly thought of as useful for skill building and entry-level positions, it takes about double that amount for a family of four people to meet their basic needs (Quigley 2003). This is clear when looking at the federal Food Stamp Program. According to Quigley, in 2003 (the year Quigley's book was published) a family of four remains eligible for assistance its income exceeds $23,530 a year. That equates to more than $11 an hour for a single wage-earner, which is in fact, much higher than any state's minimum wage. In addition to this, many researchers claim that the federal poverty threshold is too low and not reflective of the true poor population, or the kind of wages that will cover all of a family's basic needs (Quigley 2003 6).

This imbalance is in part due to the changing face of minimum wage workers. Initially, minimum wage work was for entry-level positions in the work force trying to build their skill level, and then, with their new abilities, ultimately move up to higher paying jobs. However, this image no longer holds true (Quigley 2003, 23). While temporary work is still an element of minimum wage, more than ever, low-wage work is a permanent, more stagnant state of existence. Quigley is explicit in his claim that a minimum wage job is by no means a living wage job (Quigley 2003, 87). Additionally, he highlights many of the problematic factors related to low-wage work, asserting that it sustains poverty and maintains the cycle for millions of workers and their families, giving them just enough to maintain a sense of struggle without providing motivation to advance. Essentially, he claims, "Nonworking people in poverty have, as a result of welfare reform, traded in one form of poverty for another." (Quigley, 2003, 88) While Quigley acknowledges the ways in which gainful employment might improve the self-esteem of the poor population, it ultimately does not allow for them to make ends meet (Quigley 2003, 88).

In Anthony Carnevale et al. text, the authors offer great insight into what extent the low-income population is working, claiming that the majority of people living in low-income families live in families that work (Carnevale et al. 2001). Carnevale et al. discuss in greater detail the extent to which educational attainment is connected to employment. With regards to upward mobility and the capacity for getting a better job, many signs point to education (Carnevale et al. 2001, 50). They found, on average, that highly educated workers were more likely to be in higher paying positions and tended to earn more in the same job category than less-educated workers (Carnevale et al. 2001, 50). Carnevale et al. showed that 75% of males and 77% of females with four-year college or graduate level degrees held the economy's top jobs during their prime earning years (Carnevale et al. 2001, 52).

In addition to the correlation between education and good jobs, there was a strong connection between race and education levels as well. They claim that, "many of the differences between the earnings and jobs holding of Blacks, Hispanics, and whites can

be attributed to education and age." (Carnevale et al. 2001, 52) Carnevale et al. show the dramatic differences in earning level as designated by race. In their data, they found that Hispanics had the highest percentage of all workers, including both prime-age men and prime-age women, who received less than $15,000 annually. They found that for all workers, Hispanics had 44.8% receiving less than $15,000, as compared to 38.4% and 29.5% of Blacks and whites respectively (Carnevale et al. 2001, 52). Carnevale et al. note that in many respects, the key to mobility in the workplace for all ethnic groups is in fact education, stating again that workers with even minimal postsecondary education fare far better than those without that experience, due to the fact that it offers them more opportunities to train for advancement. Additionally, workers without that postsecondary school experience are significantly less likely to receive jobs with training opportunities, creating a trap of sorts for many of those workers (Carnevale et al. 2001, 64). They collect their data primarily through the use of available data provided by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan.

Sonia Peréz et al. devote an entire chapter to Latino low-wage workers and the various factors that contribute to their experiences with employment. Their previous conclusions pertaining to education play a pivotal role in discussions of the Latino population, due to the fact that Latinos, more than any other group, have the lowest education levels of all Americans (Peréz et al. 2001, 241). In addition to educational concerns, Peréz et al. bring up structural and institutional issues, as well and legal and policy based blockades for Latino workers (Peréz et al, 2001, 241). In terms of structural and institutional level problem, Peréz et al. state that most Latino immigrants come into the United States in order to work, and the numbers reflect that mentality. According to Peréz et al., Central and South American Men, and well as Mexican men have the highest labor force participation rates of any group of American workers (Peréz et al. 2001, 243). In terms of legal and political barriers to employment for Latinos, the two most prominent difficulties are issues of documentation and discrimination in the workplace. Peréz et al claim that being undocumented leaves Latinos more vulnerable to being taken advantage of or exploited in the workplace, and that the types of jobs Latinos most commonly obtain are significantly less likely to offer health insurance, pension plans, and other benefits (Peréz et al. 2001, 243).

It is clear that employment issues for the poor population extend beyond the mere existence of a job. Issues of wages, upward mobility opportunities, educational advancement, and immigration each serve to highlight the significance of employment within the definition of poverty and therefore justify and necessitate the need for further analysis.

Healthcare, Health Insurance and the Immigrant Population:

Poverty is certainly classified as more than simply a matter or income and what you own—it also includes the types and qualities of service you have access to. In this regard, quality of healthcare and availability of health insurance should inform our conception of poverty. The need for healthcare reform in a modern sense certainly emerged as vital because of these types of issues: simply put, not enough people are

being served, and those who are often don't get the quality of care they need. Comprehensive healthcare reform is most certainly underway. This will undoubtedly affect the poor population of this country. Generally speaking, the poorer an individual, the worse their health is (A. Mills et al. 2008, 6). It is also widely acknowledged that poverty and health maintain a reciprocal relationship with one another—we see that poverty not only leads to poor health, but that poor health is in fact a major factor in households and individuals becoming poor and staying poor (A Mills et al. 2008, 7). Today, most people recognize the need for healthcare reform, especially when considering the fact that previous attempts to target the health needs of the population without insurance (particularly government run services) have not proved adequate, regardless of good intent the programs may in fact be providing (A. Mills et al. 2008, 8).

In 2008, 15.4% percent of the general population and **30%** of Hispanics, the largest percentage by far of any ethnic group, remained without insurance. Additionally, 15.2% of the uninsured population lived in non-metropolitan areas, and not surprisingly, 24.2% of the uninsured, the largest share, made a household income of $25,000 or less (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Research has shown that the variables of ethnicity, location, and poverty level have a number of effects on how an individual experiences healthcare.

Jonathan Engel's text *Poor People's Medicine* gives a historical overview of the challenges in providing healthcare to the poor population. For the purposes of this research, his section on rural care proves particularly illuminating. He claims that rural health conditions were historically worse and more difficult to address than those within urban poverty (Engels 2006, 74). Engels presents and discusses two theories pertaining to rural health: the first involves the idea that poor rural communities tend to be ignorant to modern hygienic habits, and that "rural residents maintained strong beliefs about health and medicine which would need to be aggressively displaced by new attitudes if their health status was to be improved." (Engels 2006, 75) In addition, rural residents may experience what many have titled "medical alienation." This is referring to the rural isolation that may cause a fear or skepticism of authority figures, and in turn prevent low-income people in rural communities from seeking the medical help available to them (Engels 2006, 76). Specifically, in one study, it was shown that poor blacks experienced higher levels of alienation and were more likely to avoid medical situations that made them uncomfortable and challenged their sense of security (Engels 2006, 76).

This notion of alienation leads to the consideration of how race/ethnicity, culture, social networks, and poverty intersect with healthcare: specifically, how a poor person's social networks and culture affects their quality and utilization of health services. The research is extremely mixed in their findings related to these issues. For instance, James Kirby claims in his research related to social networks that in fact poor individuals are less affected by community-level poverty because of the benefits they can receive from the experience and knowledge base of the communities they participate in (Kirby 2008, 329). Kirby makes an even more dramatic claim and states "the negative relationship between the prevalence of poverty in communities and access to health care is much stronger for middle- and high-income individuals than for those in lower-income groups." (Kirby 2008, 328) Kirby suggests that poor people benefit from living among others in similar economic circumstances because they face similar obstacles, especially in terms

of how they obtain medical care. He claims that for people of lower economic status, collective knowledge and experience within their communities may compensate for the other negative factors of poverty. Kirby uses a collection of data from Medical Expenditure Surveys, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Health Resource and Services Administration in order to provide context for his statements.

Margarita Alegria et al. discuss other factors that may have an influence on a poor person's experience with health, particularly for Latino's. They discuss concerns such as language, claiming that English language ability increases information and access to health care, and fluent bilingualism has been linked to improved familial relations and social adjustment (Alegria et al. 2007, 480). In their primary research, they found these language abilities were highly correlated with physical health as well (Alegria et al. 2007, 491).

Issues of immigration are also relevant to Leighton Ku et al. research, and within that discussion, they acknowledge immigrants' general lack of access to insurance. This lack of insurance is undoubtedly linked to A. Mills et al. research on health and poverty. Minority groups have a higher risk of being impoverished and therefore, have a higher risk of poor health, making a lack of insurance particularly dangerous. Ku et al. state that Latinos represent the highest percentage of any racial/ethnic group in the United States without health insurance (Ku et al. 2001, 247). In their research, they ask to the question, to what extent are differences in insurance status and usual care related to being an immigrant, as opposed to other social and economic differences (Ku et al. 2001, 248)? The authors state that their findings represent data pertaining solely to race/ethnicity and immigrant status. Ku et al. frame their findings in a way that show the increased or decreased average probability of heath coverage based on immigrant status, controlling for the other factors that play a role in determining whether or not a family is insured (Ku et al. 2001, 250). For example, they show that the likelihood that a child with parents who are not citizens will not have health insurance is approximately 7.9%. In context, this sum means that if a child whose parents were citizens had a 30% chance of being without insurance, then a child with similar demographic features who had noncitizen parents had a 7.9% increase in their risk for living without insurance (Ku et al. 2001, 251). For adult noncitizens, they found a 2.5% reduction in Medicaid coverage, an 8.9% percent decrease in job-based insurance coverage, and an 8.5% reduction in the probability of insurance as compared to native citizens.

This research demonstrates the fact that for the poor population, healthcare can often play a major role in their quality of life, particularly one's immigration status can indicate their experience with insurance, and therefore, with poverty. Additionally, a poor person's networks and culture have the potential to affect their quality of care, showing that it is in fact unwise to overlook the connection between health care and the poor population.

Spatial Dimensions of Poverty in Rural Areas:

The kind of community surrounding an individual affects a vast number of qualities in their life. It has the potential to open or close employment opportunities, to

continue or cease interpersonal exclusion, and to allow for or marginalize diversity within a given community. Given the power that space and community has within our daily lives, it is vital to consider it a component of poverty. Because this report focuses on rural Walla Walla, it is important to consider the differences and unique challenges of rural poverty as compared to inner city or urban poverty.

Historically, rural poverty remains a highly under-researched and under-acknowledged topic, as most people today associate poverty with urban areas: the so-called "ghettos' of big cities. In reality, only about 12 percent of the poor population live in these urban areas or neighborhoods. (Census Small 2006-2008) While over the years the amount of poverty in rural areas has lessened significantly (in 1970 47.6 percent of the poor population lived in rural areas) (Blank 1997), it remains prevalent, and, as the public's perception of the face of poverty evolves, rural poverty becomes less and less visible to most Americans. Not only has rural poverty's visibility decreased, but in addition the policies and regulations that affect rural areas are most often decided in metropolitan or urban areas, often resulting in practices that don't reflect the true needs of a community (Castle 1998, 621).

In light of Castle's concerns regarding how rural communities should be organized, it is important to turn specifically to the issue of rural poverty and the text *Rural Poverty in America,* edited by Cynthia Duncan. Duncan begins with an intriguing description of how rural communities are often perceived, and then contrasts that with the dramatically different perception of the *rural poor* (Duncan 1992, xx). She claims that most people living outside of a rural area often envision a place where a more idyllic existence is the status quo. Duncan reports that most middle-class American's picture "simple face-to-face relationships," and an economy thriving on hard work (Duncan 1992, x). However, the rural poor are seen as entire outsiders in this utopian vision—they are perceived as "people left behind." (Duncan 1992, x) Duncan explains that neither of these images is entirely accurate, claiming that while rural poverty as a whole is a dire issue, these images negatively simplify what it means to live in a rural community. (Duncan 1992 xx)

Duncan discusses many challenges pertaining to rural poverty, including its relative invisibility amongst most Americans (Duncan 1992, 63), the education that most of the rural poor lack (Duncan 1992, 11), and the problem of low-earnings and work opportunities within rural communities (Duncan 1992, 21). Particularly, one discussion of migrant workers proves enlightening. Duncan cites Doris Slesinger and Max Pfeffer who claim that the migrant farm worker population is amongst the most underprivileged groups in our society, and that despite their key role in the agricultural economy of our country, their conditions have improved little over time (Duncan 1992, 135). They state, "Perhaps what is most disturbing about migrant-farm-worker poverty is its persistence over time. Farm labor has never commanded more than a subsistence wage, and migrant farm work, where individuals and families follow the planting and harvesting of crops, has usually been compensated at the lowest of wages available for hired farm workers." (Duncan 1992, 135) They continue to discuss the issues that migrant workers face in a rural community, claiming that not only are low wages a concern, but that social

marginalization is a major problem, one that is reinforced by the active recruitment of ethnic and racial minorities into farm work (Duncan 1992, 145).

When considering issues of the migrant farm labor community and specifically farm labor in rural areas, matters regarding the immigrant population as a whole, and the Latino community, emerge as relevant things to examine considering the high representation of Latinos in this workforce. This population is important to consider with regards to poverty, considering the previously stated low wages and minimal benefits that farm labor provides or its employees, resulting in high poverty rates for that population. When considering two small rural areas similar to Walla Walla, Nelson and Hiemstra discuss the role that place and location have in cultivating a sense of belonging within a community for Latinos. They claim that for immigrants, one's socio-spatial experience within daily occurrences determines the type and quality of interactions between immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as one's capacity for building a sense of ownership connected to location. This sense of ownership is related to income, social service use, personal and professional relationships, etc. Essentially, a sense of belonging is strongly correlated to behavior in any given place. This is especially relevant for the immigrant community, or any community often labeled as "other," due to the exclusion that is often imbedded in location, making it that much more difficult for the poor Latino population to remove themselves and their families from poverty. (Nelson and Hiemstra 2008)

Naturally, rural communities contain a very different kind of place, and therefore, a different kind of belonging, than those in metropolitan areas. The cultural factors associated with place are extremely important because rural communities tend to me more culturally homogenous than urban communities, therefore allowing for those who have experienced culturally different environments to achieve the label of "other" more rapidly and more fully than they would in a diversified environment (Hiemstra and Websdale 2008). They claim that this label is dangerous because it allows for a further manifestation of separation and exclusion from both vital resources and social networks. This exclusion can perpetuate the cycle of poverty for these populations assigned this label of "other."

A discussion of rural poverty serves to complicate the notion of poverty in an important and helpful way. Particularly, Duncan's discussion of social marginalization with regards to space demonstrates that poverty is more than a collection of economic measurements: it is in fact, a compilation of various indicators, including community and spatial layout.

Racial Dimensions of Poverty

Throughout various discussions of transportation, healthcare, domestic abuse, employment, and rural poverty, issues of race are indisputably embedded. Therefore, in any discussion of poverty, race is, at least to some extent, a factor requiring significant consideration. Because of this fact, it would be inaccurate and entirely incomplete to leave out an analysis of the ways in which race and poverty intersect.

While it is true that members of racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States are more likely to be poor than whites, the fact remains that the poor population is a very *diverse* group of people (Blank 1997, 21). Making generalizations about the "face" of poverty only serves to propagate stereotypes and create a sense of "otherness" within the poor population, making it that much more difficult for minority populations to progress. Not only this, but these assumptions also create potentially detrimental misunderstandings and miscalculations about how to address and alleviate poverty (Blank 1997, 13).

Despite the fact that the sheer mass of the white population in poverty is in fact higher than that of both African Americans and Latinos, historically, **poverty has afflicted a much higher percentage of minorities than whites** (Quigley 2003, 24). Some important and helpful measurements for how poverty affects minority groups include factors such as income and wealth. In 2001, the median net worth of people in the United States, as stratified by race, showed that white people had a net worth of approximately $120,900, whereas people of color displayed the dramatically lower sum of $17,100. In 2008, the differential distribution of wealth is still very much defined, to some degree, by race. Approximately 24.7 percent of African Americans and 23.2 percent of Hispanics were in poverty (a 1.6% increase for Hispanics from 2007) compared with only 8.6 percent of non-Hispanic whites (Census Bureau 2007-2008). The factors contributing to why minority groups have higher rates of poverty are as expansive as they are complex. Discrimination plays a large role, in terms of housing and employment: this creates overwhelming challenges for minorities with regards to exclusion from vital resources (Blank 1997).

Lui et al. also attempt to better understand and address the roots behind the disproportionate allotment of wealth among people of color. They too claim that through our nation's history, people of color have had severe disadvantages towards upwards mobility—this is because they have been limited by the law, prejudice, and an inability to participate in the kinds of government run wealth building programs that so many white Americans benefit from (Lui et al. 2006, 17)(**M**). Additionally, the issue of segregation was one that Lui et al. cited as being formative for minority experiences in poverty. They claim, "Even low-income white people tend to have connections and advantages not available to their counterparts of color."(Lui et al. 2006, 16) Their primary methods for defending these claims vary from chapter to chapter, but typically the authors use primary data from various sources (Census Bureau Analysis of the Survey of Consumer Finances) as well personal anecdotes to provide context for their claims. This text offers a valuable focus on what it means to be a Latino in poverty, within the greater spectrum of what it means to belong to any major ethnic or racial group in poverty. For example, theses authors compare various wealth indicators across multiple ethnic groups. Typically, within these various categories (such as mean asset ownership, median net worth, family income distribution, etc.), Latinos emerge as relatively similar to that of the African American population—which is to say, generally these two groups do not fare well. For instance, in 2003, Latinos had the lowest home ownership rates of any ethnic group, coming in at around 46.7% (Lui et al. 2006, 7).

Meizhu Lui et al. discuss in the opening chapters of their text one component and cause of the racial wealth divide that they claim to be extremely underestimated: the role of the government. They contend that, "how we try to close the racial wealth gap depends on how we understand where assets come from." (Lui et al. 2006, 18) It is inaccurate to postulate that people, particularly well off Caucasians, obtain their wealth merely through individual skill and hard work—this statement implies that the way to move low-income minority groups out of poverty is to encourage them to try harder (Lui et al. 2006, 18). When considering poverty, it is imperative that we recognize how heavily people of wealth have relied upon government help to both build and maintain their assets (Lui et al. 2006, 19). Particularly, Lui et al. acknowledge the vital benefits of citizenship, stating that citizen rights have fluctuated a great deal over time, "with all people of color and all women excluded at some times and places." (Lui et al. 2006, 19) Citizenship opens many doors for people, both economically and socially.

Not only has the government helped certain populations achieve wealth, is has certainly hindered the wealth accumulation of minority groups. Lui et al. claim that due to events such as the displacement of Native Americans, the enslavement and subsequent segregation of African Americans, the colonial conquests of Spanish-speaking countries, and the treatment of Asian Americans as permanent foreigners, these populations have been "racialized" and turned into "a legal entity subordinate to white people." (Lui et al. 2006, 19) These authors do not claim that the government is the sole cause of this wealth divide amongst races. They acknowledge that culture, ideology, and the economic structure play a large role as well Lui et al. 2006, 20). However, they do call our attention to the importance of public policies in generating and ameliorating the conditions related to poverty.

When considering what poverty "means," it quickly become clear that there is no one definitive answer—poverty is, inevitably, extremely difficult to compartmentalize. The scholarly literature offers an array of valuable and enlightening data, solidifying the notion that poverty is in fact extremely complex and contextual. With regards to transportation, it is clear that mobility related issues are an important link when considering poverty—it has the potential to increase social exclusion for the poor population and for minority groups, it very much affects an individual's capacity to obtain gainful employment, and for Latino immigrants in particular, one scholar speculated that it can affect "migrant adjustment" in a major way. It became clear that a gendered definition of poverty is vital to analysis as well. Single-mothers and their families are at high risk for being impoverished, and many scholars noted the strong correlation between poverty and abuse. Within domestic abuse specifically, immigration issues and culture were important aspects to analyze: it became clear that victims of domestic abuse may have a harder time escaping from an abusive situation if their spouse is the only connection they have to this country. Employment issues are an essential component of poverty, and the scholarly literature very much supports this notion. Employment is clearly more than simply having a job: it is a matter of wages and advancement opportunities as well. Education levels and race were also important factors to consider within employment, and the ways in which either one might limit the ability to maintain a living-wage job. Healthcare is another important component in the definition of poverty: we learned that the poorer an individual is, generally, the worse

their health is, and the greater their need is for care. Undocumented immigrants particularly cannot receive health insurance, and immigration issues in general have the potential to increase exclusion and therefore, increase health issues. Finally, the spatial and racial dimensions of poverty are extremely important to consider. Rural poverty has a unique set of challenges, including the social exclusion and marginalization that often result. Interwoven throughout each of the other sections, the issue of race, and the inequalities that minority groups face within poverty was extremely present.

When examining the research discussed in these various characteristics of poverty, the connections that can be made between the various findings and variables are seemingly endless, and yet their mere existence necessitates that they are made. For instance, it is clear that rural poverty, issues of unequal resources for minority groups, educational attainment, and low-wages are interwoven and reciprocal. Acknowledging the multi-dimensional web that is poverty and its characteristics is vital for a complete and thorough understanding of how to alleviate it. This composite definition of poverty is the most effective way to assess and account for these various connections.

Methods:

In order to best determine how the poor population, and Latinos in particular, are affected by the variables of transportation, unemployment, healthcare, and domestic abuse in Walla Walla, it was vital to my research that I gather data pertaining specifically to those separate, and yet undoubtedly overlapping issues. Specifically, this means that within both types of data collection, GIS mapping/quantitative analysis and interviews, I allocated distinct room and consideration of each variable.

My data serves to offer two discrete realms of information: GIS mapping and my quantitative analysis sections offer the numerical, demographic, and spatial sense of what poverty *looks* like literally in Walla Walla: particularly, it gives insight into access to resources that various populations may or may not have, based on geographic location, and indirectly, race. My second piece of data, interviews, compliments this first set in a number of ways. First, it allows for connections to be made between what the socio-spatial data is expressing and what people's perceptions within the community are expressing. It is important and valuable to note the correlation, or lack thereof, within these two data sets. Secondly, interviews allow for articulations and anecdotes that are less explicit and powerful in numbers or maps: particularly how people perceive the poor Latino population and how the poor Latino population views its own place in Walla Walla's community. Because Walla Walla is a small rural area of only about 35,000 (with a Latino population of 18.5%) these perceptions and anecdotes become that much more relevant and worthy of examination (Census Bureau 2009).

In my primary research I interviewed 13 individuals total, each coinciding with at least one of my major variables. In addition to these four variables, I narrowed my interviewees into three different types or categories of individuals: a.) Representatives of governmental or social service organizations, b.) Individuals who have escaped from poverty, and c.) Individuals who remain in poverty. It was important that I get the full

spectrum represented in these categories for a number of reasons. To begin with, the service providers and government run organizations present a sense of what individuals who hold, or have to the potential to hold, a great deal of power in the system, perceive as the key issues related to poverty and the Latino population. It is important to recognize the power differentiation between the service providers and the individuals in poverty. These organizations have access to and get to dictate, at least on some level, how these resources are allocated and to what populations. I proceeded with my interviews in a top-down fashion—beginning with the people most in power, then moving down to those most affected by the policies and practices put in place by the upper echelon of the structure.

With regards to the governmental organizations and social service providers, I utilized an extremely targeted approach in obtaining these interviews. In order to build a foundation for comparisons to individuals more directly connected to poverty, I started my first wave of hour-long interviews with these governmental and social service providers. I devised a set of questions for each type of interviewee directly from my scholarly research: each question essentially evoked the same theme from the participant, however, depending on whether or not I was talking with a provider or a resident of Walla Walla in poverty, the outcomes and specifics of these themes varied a great deal. Since prior research has indicated that inadequate public transportation often prevents people in poverty from accessing job opportunities, I first interviewed a representative of Valley Transit to discern how well this public company connects its customers with employment sources. Additionally, my scholarly sources revealed that gender and domestic abuse are also indicators and facets of poverty—this led me to interview a representative from both the Walla Walla Police Department as well as the two representatives from the YWCA who worked primarily with the Latina population to determine how issues of domestic abuse affected the poor population of Walla Walla. I also interviewed a former Community Action Agency employee who did a lot of work with job training skills, as well as a physician from the Lincoln Health Center who does a great deal of health services for kids from impoverished backgrounds. These two interviews helped bring into focus other issues that the scholarly research discussed such as low wages and immigration status, as well as a high rate of health issues for the poor population.

For my interviews with residents both out of poverty and still within it, I questioned them about how, on a personal level, they felt their lives had been affected by any and all of my four variables. I asked them questions that asked them to self-assess in various ways. In terms of transportation I specifically asked about how each participant felt their transportation or lack thereof contributed to their experience with poverty (specifically with regard to their ability to access job centers and other opportunities). For questions regarding domestic abuse, I asked if they had experienced, either first-hand or through a friend or loved one, instances of domestic abuse. Within this, I asked what connection, if any, they saw within poverty and domestic abuse, including issues such as immigration and the role of power (economic, physical, etc,). Within employment issues, I asked an array of questions related primarily to wages, advancement opportunities, and the general availability of jobs, as related to the previous discussions in my Literature Review. And finally, for healthcare related concerns, I asked particularly about barriers to

healthcare, the quality of care they felt they received, as well cultural components involved in the utilization of healthcare. With regards to each of my focuses, I asked specifically about the Latino population, and how these experiences may or may not look different for that population.

When I began my first wave of interviews with government run organizations and social service providers, I received a contact from my community partner, Teri Barila from Commitment to Community. She provided me with the name of Maureen Anderson, a woman who is playing a large role in the creation of Walla Walla's ten-year plan to end homelessness. While issues of housing and homelessness are not a primary focus of mine, I was told that Ms. Anderson represented an extremely present and valuable voice in the community for the homeless population. After this interview, I called a number of various organizations that pertained to my four variables within the community, ultimately scheduling interviews the organizations listed above.

In the midst of conducting interviews with the above service providers, I participated in a conference that Commitment to Community (C2C) sponsored they titled "The Opportunity Conference." C2C convened the event so that residents of their target neighborhoods could hear a leading public speaker on how to escape poverty, and so that local individuals who had found a route out of poverty could share their insights and experiences with others in town that were still struggling with poverty. This conference gave me an opportunity to interview local individuals who had experienced poverty, and to analyze the racial dynamics of the event.

While conducting and searching for interview participants, I was actively seeking numerical data on both the state of poverty for the country, as well as for Walla Walla specifically. Specifically I sought data that pertained to my four variables specifically, as well as data that helped to inform the Latino experience in Walla Walla in an explicit way. For transportation, I looked for data that would give me a sense of both the frequency with which people used public transportation in order to determine the population's relative reliance of it. Unfortunately, I was unable to find public transit use and determined by race/ethnicity. In terms of healthcare, I sought qualitative date that would highlight how much the population is uninsured in Walla Walla, including a racial breakdown of insurance rates (which I found for on a national scale). Employment and unemployment qualitative data proved the easiest to locate for Walla Walla specifically. I researched income levels, unemployment rates for Latinos and whites, as well as education levels. Finally, when researching women in poverty and domestic abuse, I was searching for information that would help me determine the prevalence of domestic abuse cases in Walla Walla, as well as the economic differences and frequency of female-headed households versus male-headed households. Additionally, I sought out a great deal of qualitative data related to poverty in general, for both Latinos and whites.

I decided to use GIS to spatially determine and articulate information such as poverty levels, transit use, unemployment rates, etc. Spatially representing these variables is the most effective use of the technology due to their potentially overlapping nature: they each inform the success or failure of the others, and due to this, comparisons become extremely relevant and necessary for examination. GIS serves to bring a vital spatial

dimension to various demographics—unlike a table or graph (which is useful in its own way), a GIS map is able to demonstrate the layout of various indicators across Walla Walla. Each map helps to inform data found in other maps: for example, the poverty levels displayed in one map help to provide context for the spatial layout of an entirely different measurement, such as the amount of female-headed households in Walla Walla. GIS technology helped to determine that there is in fact a correlation between high poverty rates and the areas with the greatest percentage of female-headed households. It helps to show where certain percentages or demographics may be concentrated or spread out for various populations and neighborhoods in Walla Walla.

Census data proved to be the most useful, but the PEW Hispanic research center proved invaluable as well. I also received a number of useful sources from my community partner, as well as from people in my various interviews, including rates of reported instances of domestic abuse in Walla Walla, and well as a report on the effectiveness of Valley Transit. Walla Walla Trends is a site put together through the Port of Walla Walla and the State of Washington Department of Community Trade and Economic Development. This source ultimately guided my research in a significant way.

Overview of Poverty in Walla Walla:

Unlike other areas across our country, both metropolitan and rural, **no report or analysis has been done on poverty in Walla Walla that truly reveals the extent and nature of the poor population.** While this data in itself is important for any community, complementing and compiling this along with qualitative information is the most thorough and effective way to truly understand poverty in this region.

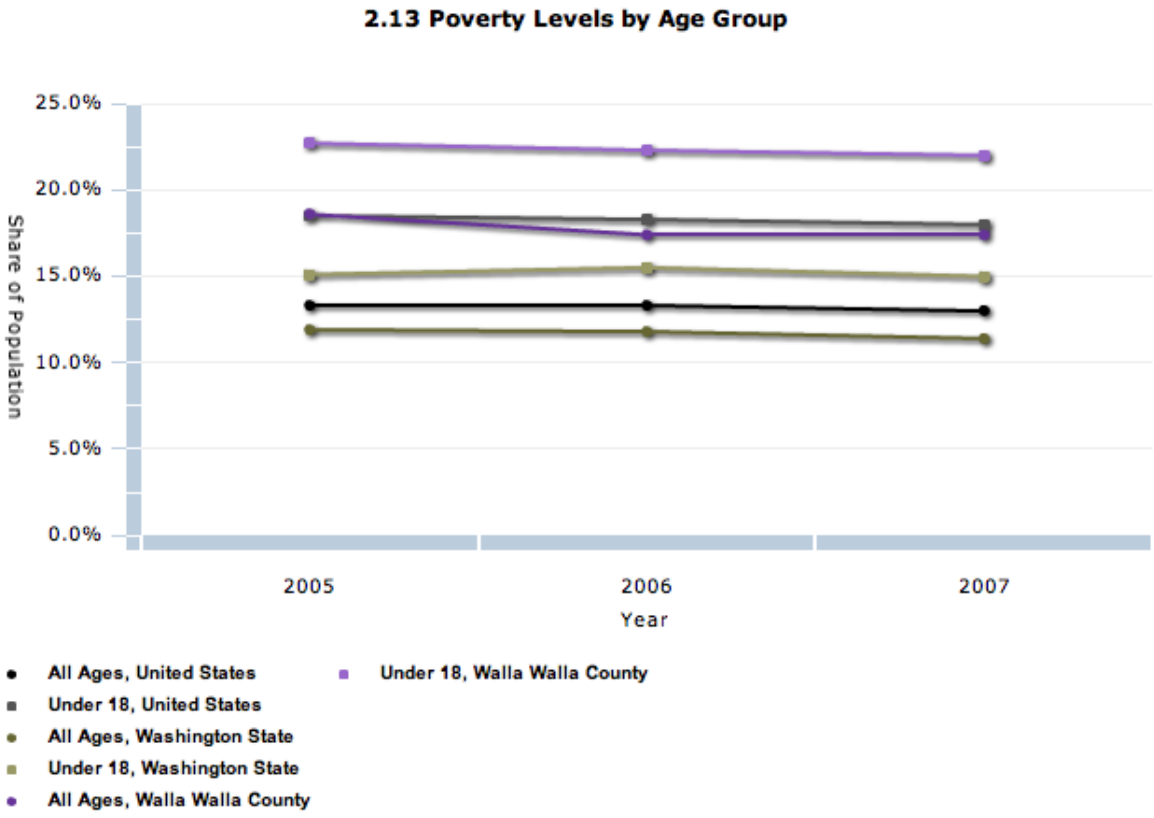
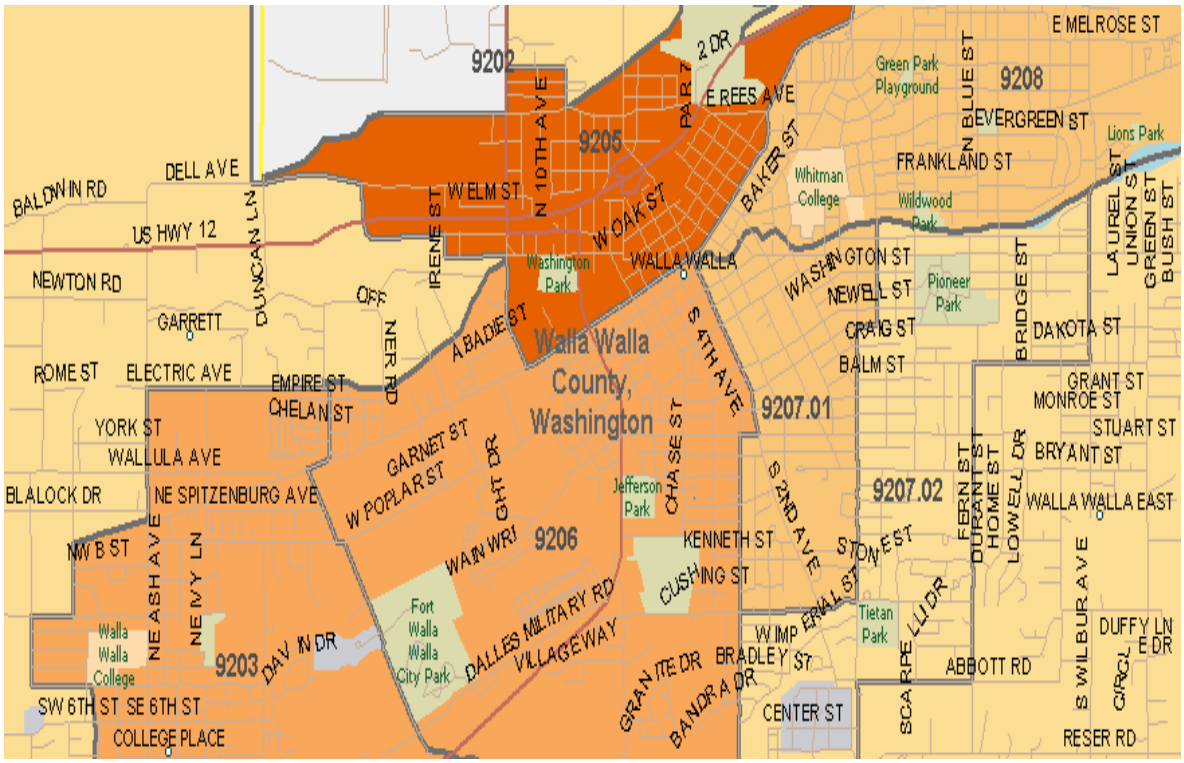


Figure 2.13 compares poverty rates for various age groups within Washington State, the United States, and Walla Walla County. This graph displays some troubling numbers for Walla Walla—from 2005 through 2007, Walla Walla County has had higher rates of poverty for all ages, as well as residents under the age of 18, as compared to the rates of Washington and the United States as a whole. In 2007, **22% of the population under the age of 18, and 17.4% of the general population, were considered to be in poverty in Walla Walla County.**

Additionally, the map below displays the geographic breakdown of poverty percentages in various neighborhoods in Walla Walla. (2006 3Census Tract Estimate)

PERCENT LIVING IN POVERTY:



2006 Census Tract Estimates

% Living in Poverty

- Missing Data
- n/a (<100 base cases)
- < 1%
- 1% to 5%
- 5% to 10%
- 10% to 15%
- 15% to 30%
- 30% to 40%
- 40% to 60%
- 60% to 75%
- 75% to 90%
- 90% to 95%
- 95% to 100%

- State Capital
- City Pop. 30K to 50K
- City Pop. 50K to 100K
- City Pop. 100K to 250K
- City Pop. 250K to 500K
- City Pop. Over 500K
- State
- County
- Census Tract - thick outline
- Census Tract - thin outline
- Airport/Airfield
- Park/Forest
- Military
- Prison

This map shows that the neighborhood just south of the State Penitentiary has the highest concentration of people who are impoverished, displaying a range of **40-60%** of the neighborhood living in poverty.

Regardless of the fact that the data clearly demonstrates the existence, and in certain areas, the prevalence, of poverty in Walla Walla, according to nearly every service provider interviewed, **poverty in Walla Walla is dramatically misunderstood and underestimated amongst residents in the area.** Dick Fondahn, the manager of Valley Transit claimed that the majority of people in Walla Walla "are happily unaware" of just how many people in the community are struggling to get by.

Maureen Anderson, a woman working on Walla Walla's ten-year plan to end homelessness, claimed that due to Walla Walla's rural nature, most residents tend to interact much less with homeless people or people in poverty than most would in a bigger city. Because of this decrease in visibility, residents of Walla Walla tend to assume the problem is significantly less than

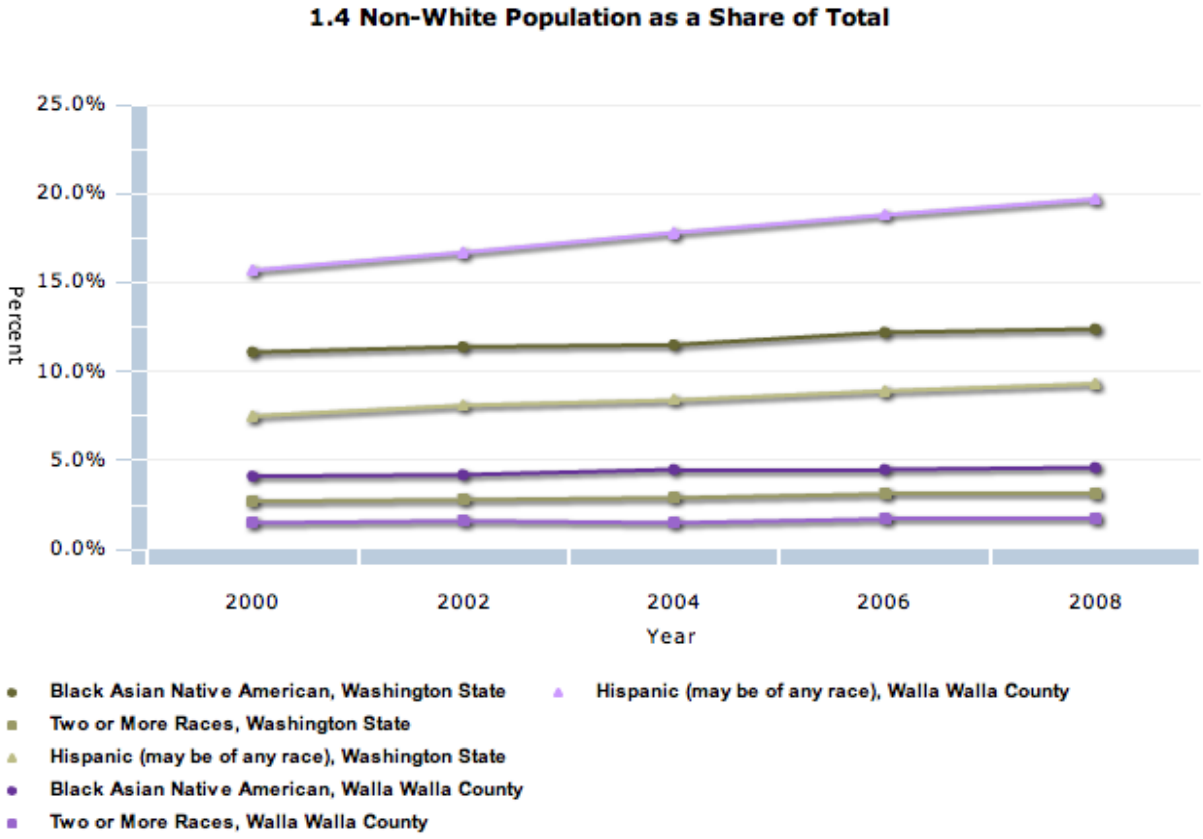
the numbers reveal it to be. Fondahn echoed similar concerns, claiming that the social service community allows for a sort of blockade of awareness amongst people not in the poor population. He says:

> *There are a lot of people here who make very little money, and most of the town has no idea. Part of it is because we have a good network of social services…I think that helps take the edge off…because, why don't we see more poverty here? I think the existence of programs like that, and a fairly large faith-based community allows people to get by to the point where it almost hides it.*

This notion has dangerous implications, especially when considering efforts to alleviate poverty. If most people are not fully aware of the nature and extent of poverty in Walla Walla, decreasing that rate becomes more and more difficult.

According to the majority of interviews held, as well as the numerical data I have collected, it appears that in many ways**, Latinos experience poverty very differently that whites**. While many were quick to draw upon the ways in which all people struggling with poverty are similar and desire the same things, in a number of ways, there is an added set of fears, constraints and worries related to being Latino in Walla Walla that have the potential to influence their success.

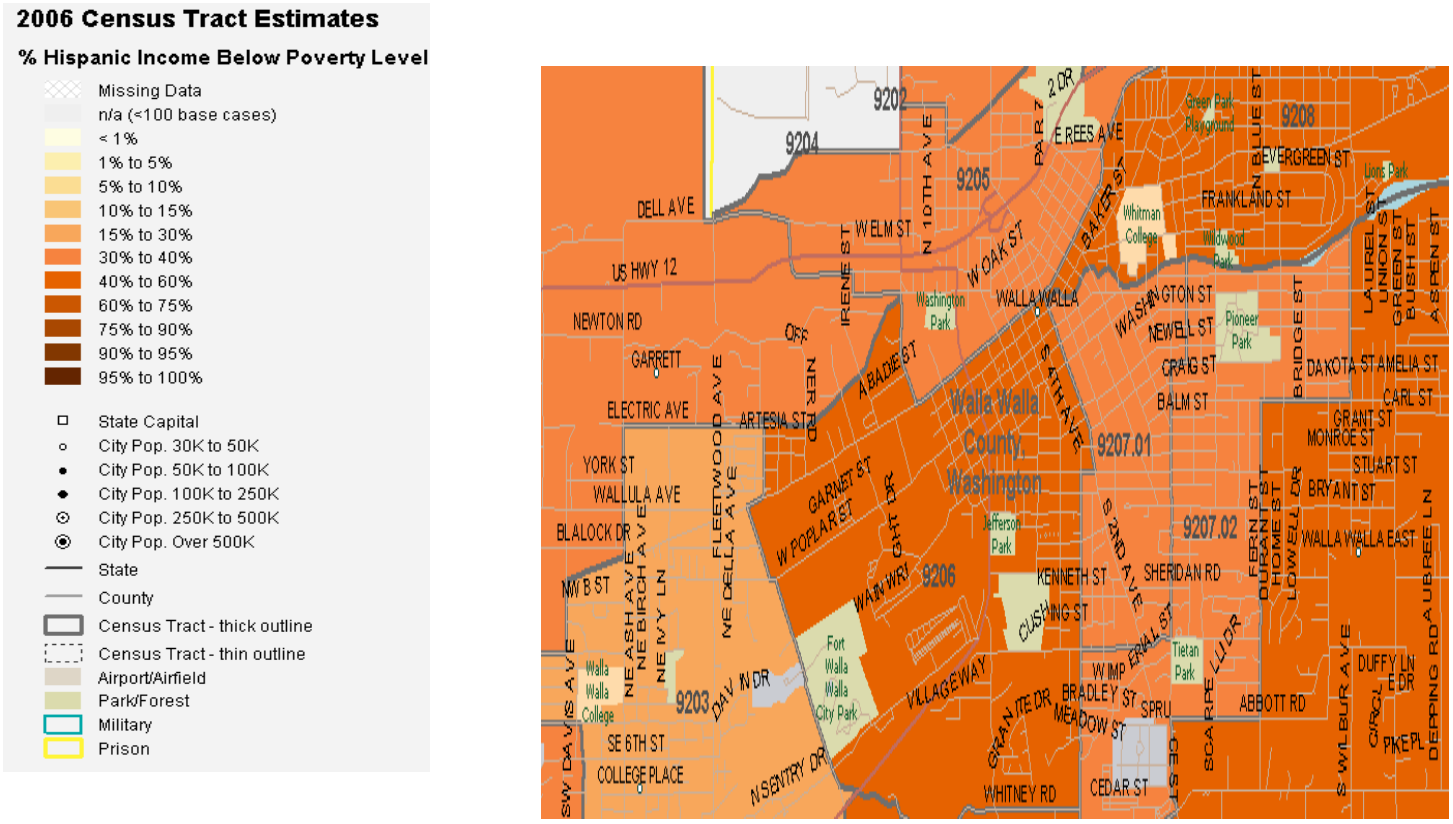
Figure 1.4 below shows that the Hispanic population in Walla Walla has not only increased significantly over time (reaching almost 20% in 2008), but it also displays the fact that compared to other ethnic minority groups in both Walla Walla and Washington State, they represent the largest population.



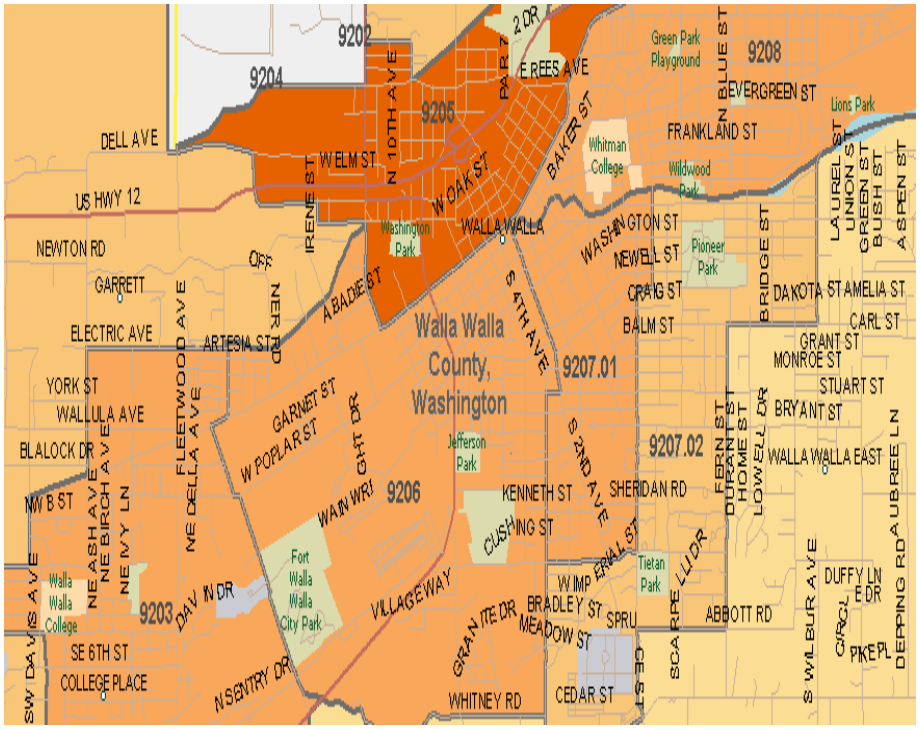
While this chart clearly shows the prevalence of the Latino community in Walla Walla, it is important to numerically consider and examine the extent to which the Latino population is a part of the **poor population** of Walla Walla.

The maps below compare the percentage of Latinos to the percent of whites in Walla Walla that have an income below the poverty level. When examining these differences, it is fairly apparent that in general, Latinos experience higher levels of poverty than whites throughout most of Walla Walla County. Additionally, the overall spatial distribution of the poverty rates for each race show that Latinos in poverty are present more predominately *throughout* Walla Walla, whereas the population of whites in poverty is more concentrated in certain areas. The only major area on the map in which the white population experienced a higher percentage of people with an income below the poverty level was the area south of the penitentiary, in the Edith-Carrie neighborhood.

% Hispanic Income Below Poverty Level:



%White Income Below Poverty Level:

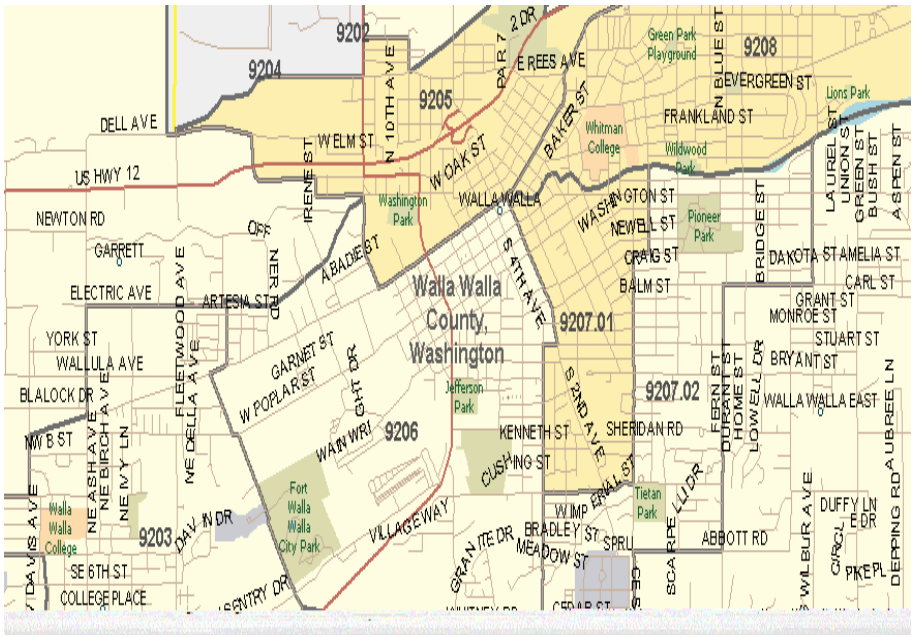


It is clear that poverty afflicts a large number of people in Walla Walla, including both whites and Latinos. The fact that many are not aware of the extent of the problem displays a fairly strong miscorrelation between perception and reality in terms of poverty in Walla Walla. The sub-sections below discuss the *real* implications and challenges of transportation, healthcare, employment, and domestic abuse in this community, as well as what is currently being done in each of these areas and what challenges and opportunities remain with poverty reduction.

TRANSPORTATION IN WALLA WALLA: USEFUL AND UNDERUSED

The table below displays the percent of people in Walla Walla County who used various forms of transportation to get to their place of employment. As the table indicates, a very small percentage of residents in Walla Walla appear transit dependant—a mere .8% of people use public transportation to get to work.

COMMUTING TO WORK	**PERCENT**
Workers 16 years and over	**15,377**
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	73.4%
Car, truck, or van – carpooled	12.8%
Public transportation (including taxicab)	0.8%
Walked	6.9%
Other means	2.6%
Worked at home	3.6%
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000)	



Additionally, the map above indicates the geographic differences in public transportation use among residents of Walla Walla. As demonstrated, there is only a slight difference in usage: the only increase that takes place is the neighborhood south of the penitentiary in which the range of people using public transportation increased to 1-5%.

This quantitative information certainly appears to correlate to the data obtained in interviews. **Overall, the people in poverty whom I interviewed did not appear to assign the factor of transportation any profound meaning, be it negative or positive.** Although its relevance was not overwhelming present or overt, transportation did emerge as helpful in more subtle ways in terms of serving to reduce issues with employment. Two of the women I spoke to who have now emerged from poverty mentioned that, mostly out of luck, they had received reliable transportation that allowed for them to get to and from work. However, many of them also mentioned that a positive thing about living in such a small community was the ability to get anywhere you needed to be at a given time, due to the proximity of most important entities.

Despite the above quantitative data, the manager of Valley Transit cited many ways in which public transportation is vital to the poor population of Walla Walla. He claimed that due to the affordability of fares, as well as a multitude of various extra services that Valley Transit offers in addition to their traditional bus routes, the poor population has successful access to the places they need to go. One of the most valuable services that Fondahn mentioned was a program called Job Access. This is a service that provides transportation for people going to a specific work site that can be outside of the

As white people we don't have a problem going to white doctors in a white system where people help us and assist us and are able to joke. But it's a very different thing, to have small town Caucasian people, receptionists, physicians, nurses: and not have anyone to joke about the championship of the Mexican soccer team. That's kind of cultural comfort. Adults sometimes have been made to feel they are not valuable or they are an intrusion or that you're wasting my time. This is stupid, you're stupid, you're dirty. No one would want to walk into a situation like that to seek healthcare. It isn't always what's said, sometimes it's what's unsaid, sideways glances, it's whispers.

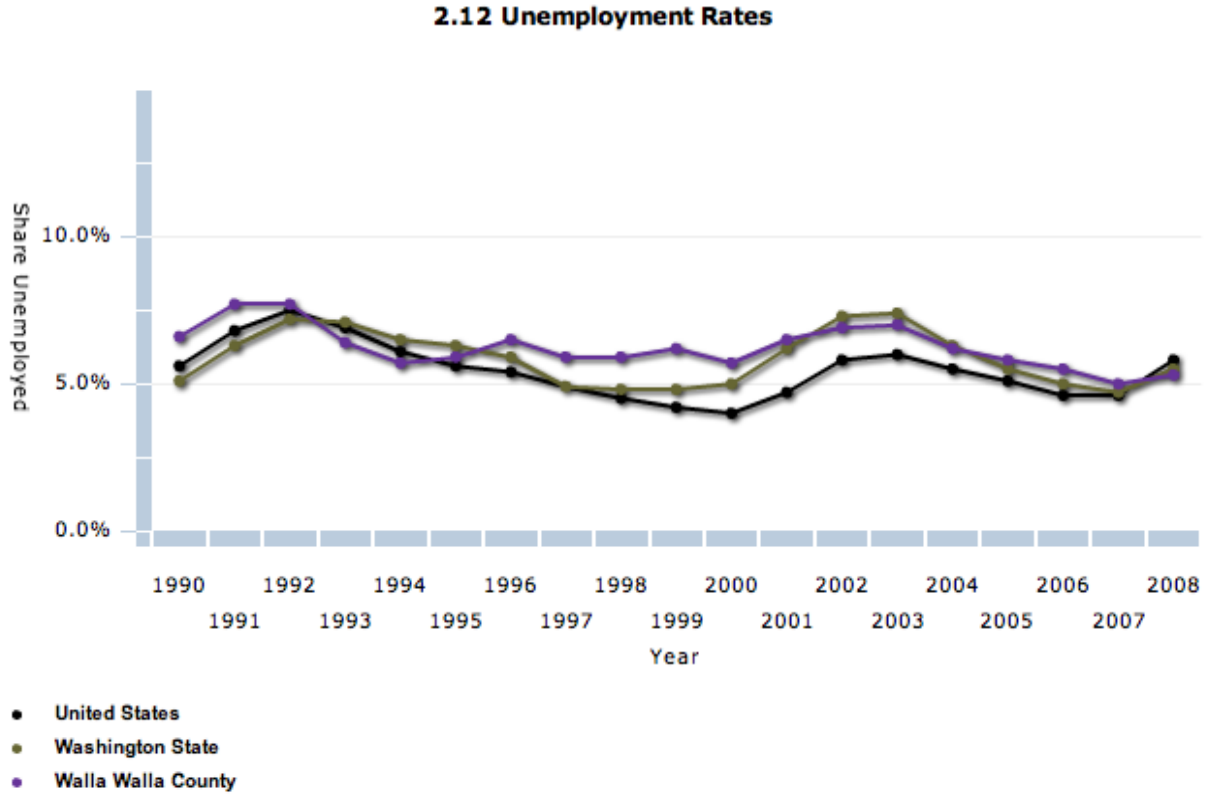
Discomfort has been described as a factor for various members of the poor population of Walla Walla, but the cultural piece appeared to pertain solely to the Latino population. Many participants spoke about how this discomfort can lead to a utilization of health services only in cases of emergencies as last resorts. This can create an entirely new set of problems, including increased and more serious health issues for the individual and their families, and more money spent reactively instead of proactively within the facilities themselves, resulting in a significantly less cost effective system. This certainly relates and feeds into A. Mills et al. claims about the reciprocal relationship between poverty and poor healh.

Finally, a major issue for the poor population is the general decrease in capacity, both in terms of finances and immigration status, to obtain health insurance. Naturally, issues of documentation connect to health insurance across our country, and Walla Walla is no different in this respect. A fear of being reported is a factor in an immigrant's decision to seek any kind of health care, even if it is sorely needed.

Furthermore, many of the participants within the study mentioned issues related to priorities, claiming that if an individual is struggling to pay for food or rent, health insurance is not going to be something that they invest a great deal of time or money in, especially when and if it can be avoided. Many of these individuals are struggling to simply get their **basic needs** met and in within this context, healthcare and health insurance may appear to be a luxury item.

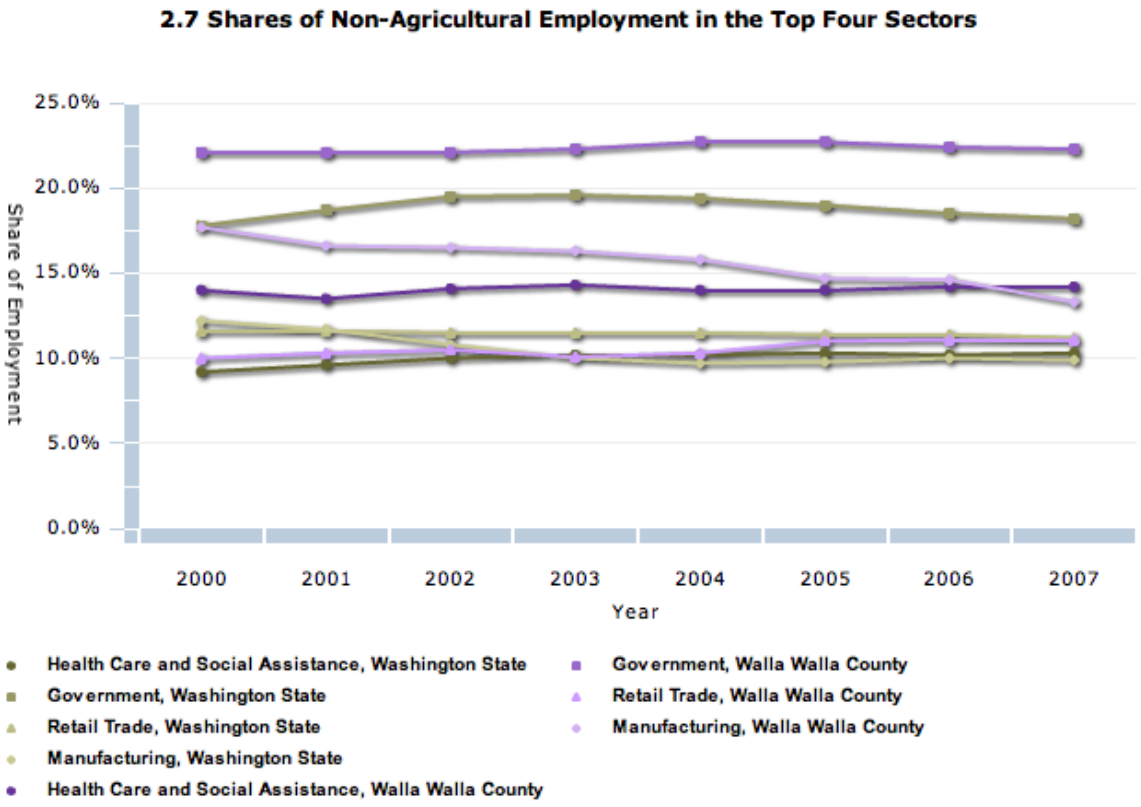
In general, my data on the intersections of poverty and healthcare revealed a number of things. It was clear for the participants in my study that they felt uncomfortable entering a health facility in numerous situations: they claimed that a lack of insurance or cultural barriers prevented them from feeling at ease. For the white poor population in my study, issues of mental health emerged as important, while dental care was lacking for both non-Latino whites as well as Latino participants in my research. Additionally, while in the quantitative data it was clear that the Hispanic population is greatly lacking health insurance across our country, several participants in my study explained that health insurance is less important for Latinos than for whites. However, due to issues of immigration and cultural exclusion, Latinos often are prohibited from receiving insurance, or discouraged from using health facilities.

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES AND POVERTY:



(Eastern Washington University, Institute of Public Policy and Economic Analysis. 2002)

Figure 2.12 above displays the unemployment levels for Walla Walla County, Washington State, and the United States, showing that in 2008 each rate was around the same, with Walla Walla's rate being 5.3%, Washington State being 5.5% and the United States with the highest rate of 5.8% unemployed. However, as I stated previously the unemployment rate has risen *dramatically* for our country this past year, raising our nation's unemployment rate to just over *10%*. This fact probably means that the unemployment rates in all of the areas graphed above have increased.



(Eastern Washington University, Insitute of Public Policy and Economic Analysis)

Figure 2.7 above shows the percentages of people employed in Walla Walla by the top four sectors of employment in the area, excluding agriculture. As demonstrated, the highest concentration of workers was in the Government sector with 22.3%, and the lowest was in Retail Trade with 11.1% of representation.

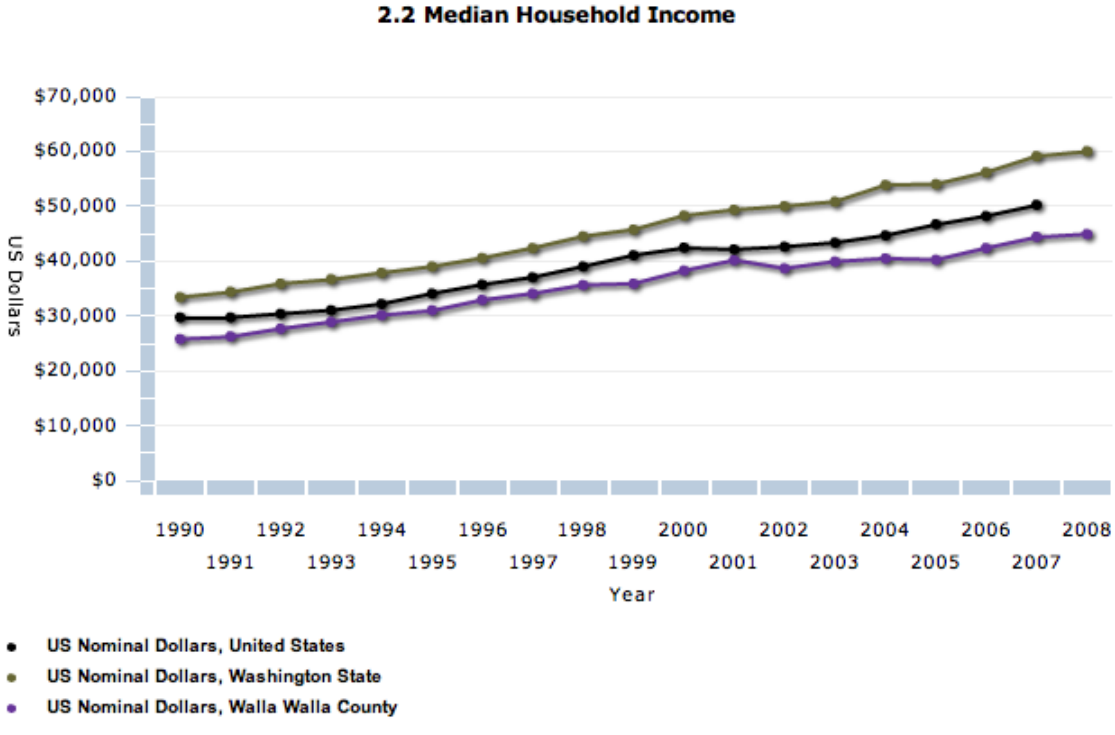


Figure 2.2 above displays the median household income for Walla Walla County, Washington State, and the United States. While the median income has increased steadily over the years for all three of these categories, **Walla Walla has consistently had a lower median household income than both Washington State and the nation as a whole, and in 2008 the median income for Walla Walla was $44,911, as compared to Washington's amount of $60,009.**

Nearly every particpant spoke about issues of wages and employment in relation to poverty in Walla Walla. Their issues and concerns regarding employment spoke to a range of problems, the primary ones being **the loss of living wage jobs in Walla Walla, the stagnation and inability for upward mobility that is often experienced in low-wage work, and the social networks/abilities required in the workplace for both whites and Latinos.**

One social service provider involved in the study spoke a great deal about Walla Walla's recent loss of living-wage jobs, and that the jobs that Walla Walla has been losing have not been replaced or "backfilled" with those same types of employment opportunities. The result is significant and unfair competion over the low wage jobs remaining. Rachel Rolston, a long-time local social service provider who works with many low-income people in Walla Walla regarding issues of employment, explained in more depth the difficulties low-income people face in competing for jobs.

> *They have so many more things that are going to make them less appealing to employers, I mean dental care, the barriers of socially appropriate language, the barrier of transportation…they might be saying, you know I can't work the evening shift, because I don't have anybody to watch the kids and I need traditional day care and I can't get that to do the 2-10. I can't get home at 10 at night because the buses don't run. They have so many more things that make it harder for them to successfully engage in and maintain employment.*

Also, Rolston spoke about the notion that in some respects, it is irrelevant who you are in the job market**; if there are not jobs available in the first place (which she claims is the case right now in Walla Walla) everyone is going to a have a hard time obtaining employment.** She mentioned that she has seen people with master's and bachelor degrees coming to her, worried about making their house payment. Knowing this, Rolston also stated that she didn't think issues of employment had a disproportionate effect on Latinos in Walla Walla, claiming that they represented only about 10% of her client list. This statement shows a disconnection to the previously displayed quantitative data regarding Latinos and unemployment rates in Walla Walla.

It was apparent in my research that opportunities for upward mobility within the low-wage job market were difficult to receive, especially without increased levels of education. One woman described her inability to move up in pay or position, stating:

> *You had to be a certain level to get somewhere. And I was always at rock bottom. 28 years of my life and all I have done is clean. And so, I have never had a job to where I could work my way up, yeah I have gotten 10 cent raise, 23 cent, I was so*

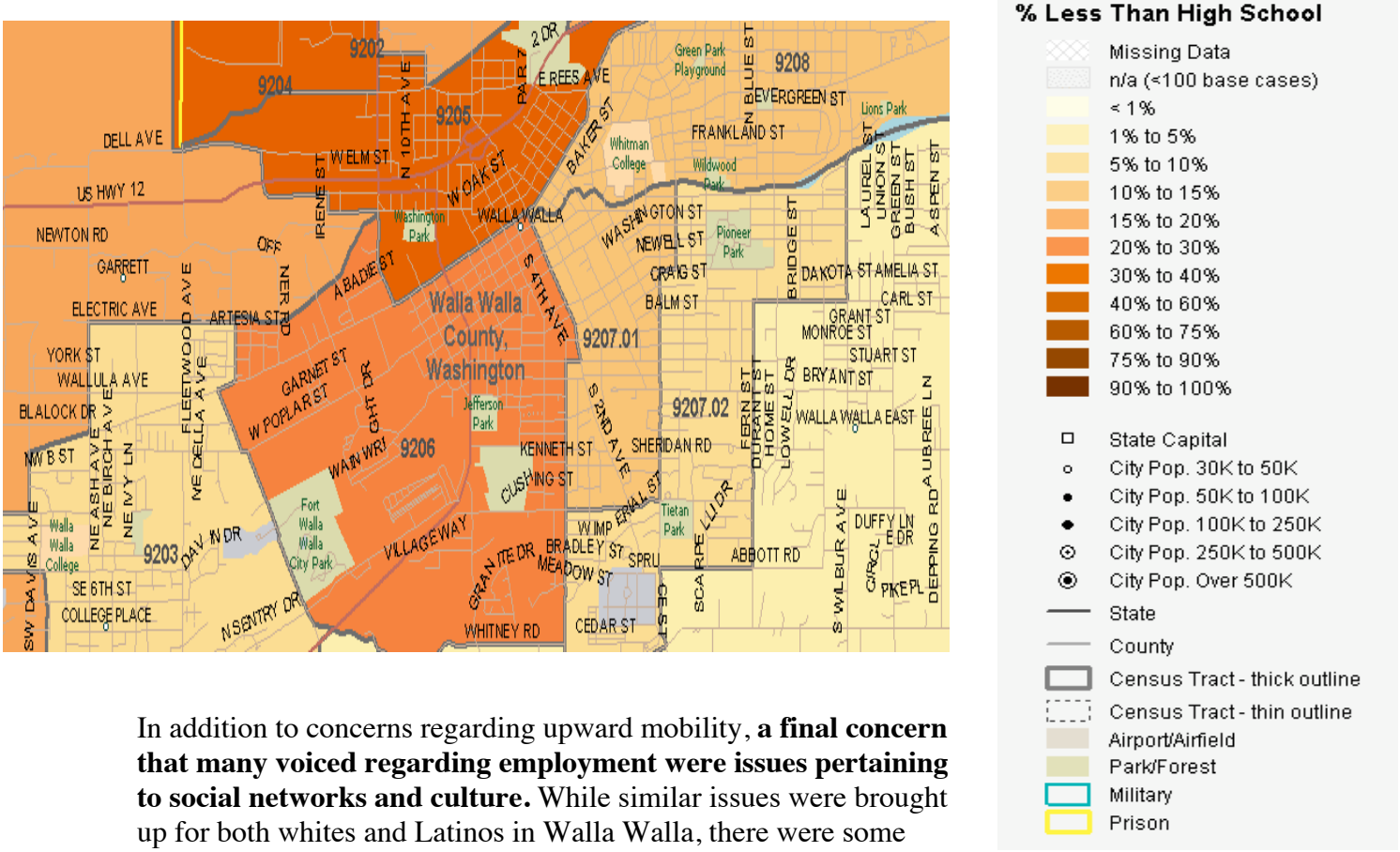
excited 2 or 3 years ago when I got my 23 cent raise…but that's still…I'm cleaning.

Other participants spoke about a lack of upward mobility opportunities, **especially if the individual is lacking education.** Rolston argued that Walla Walla is, in general, lacking opportunities for advancement in the workplace.

We've got huge gaps in that career ladder. We have some career paths that have real clear rungs on the ladder taking them upward, but we are missing huge chunks in that middle sector. You either have to be skilled, college educated, get some of the upper tier jobs, or you re just going to the flounder at the low level. There is not a lot in between to let someone staircase up, without investing serious time in education. That is a problem in this area that we are lacking.

The figure below shows a higher concentration of people with less education in areas that we know from previous data sets, are areas with a high percentage of people in poverty, such as the Edith-Carrie neighborhood.

% Less Than High School

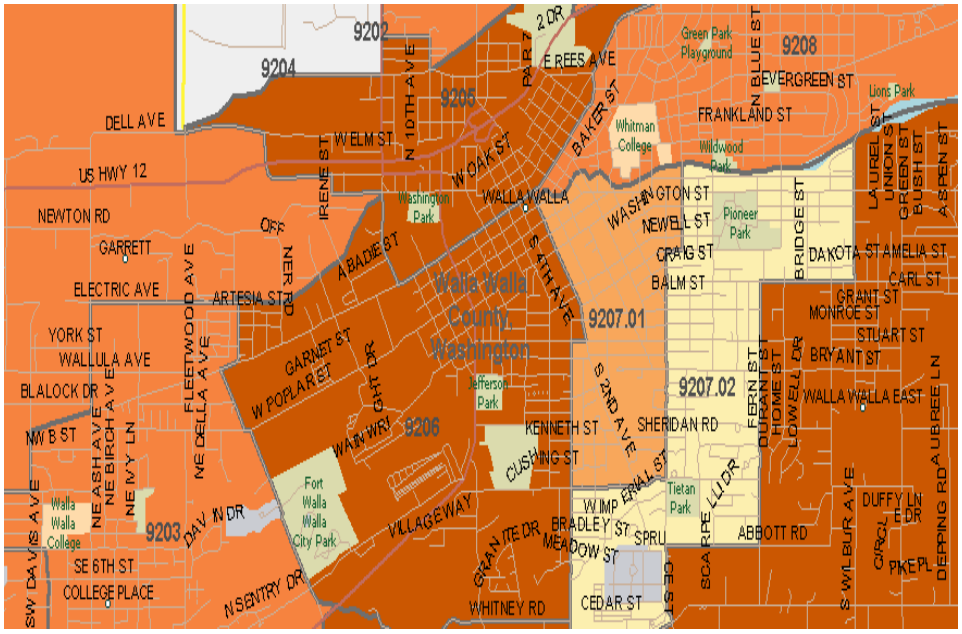


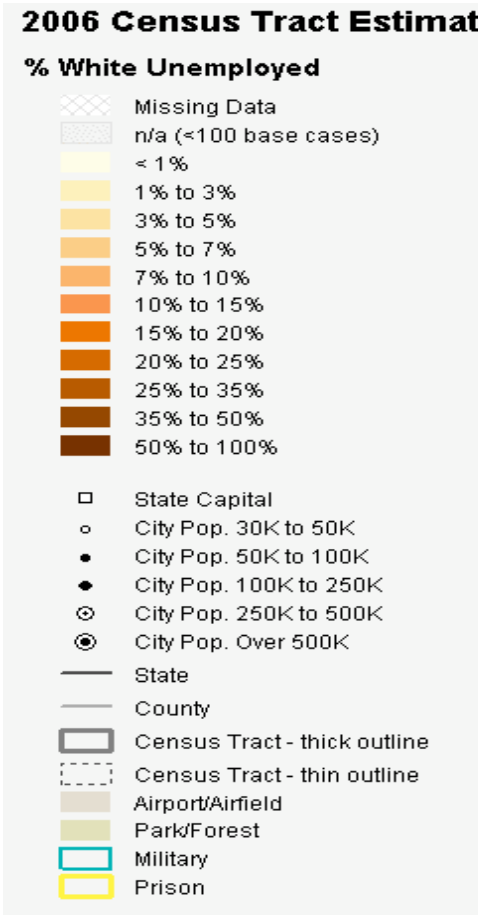
In addition to concerns regarding upward mobility, **a final concern that many voiced regarding employment were issues pertaining to social networks and culture.** While similar issues were brought up for both whites and Latinos in Walla Walla, there were some

important differences. Many of the white particpants in the study expressed the need to "know the right people" or "start at the right level" in order to move up in employment. They spoke to the importance of forming your "team" or creating strong social networks with those around you. Many of them expressed a desire for improved social skills, and they echoed sentiments expressed at the Opportunity Conference related to the need to "speak middle-class language" in order to escape from poverty.

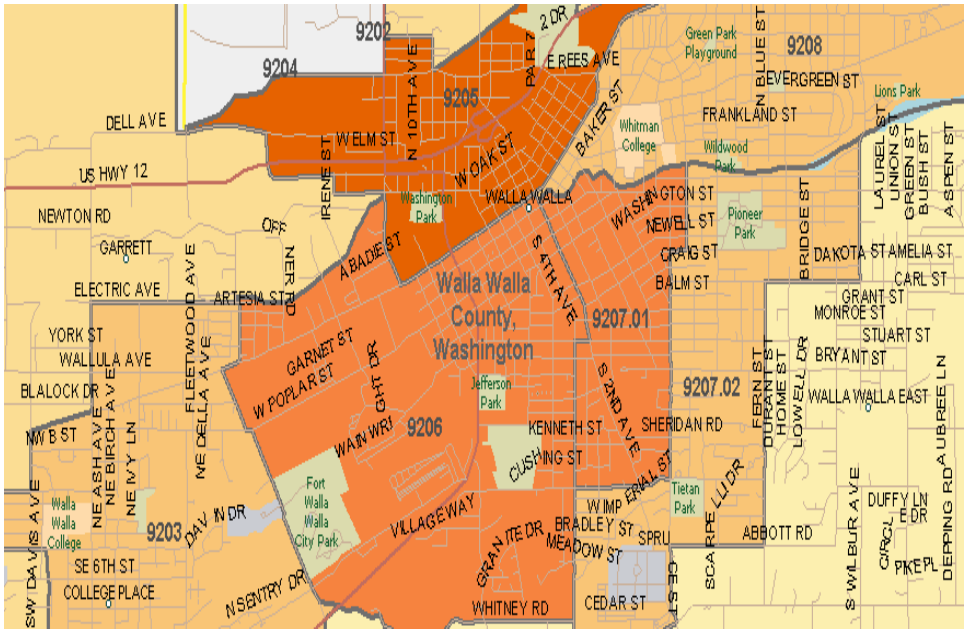
The maps below compare the unemployment rates for Latinos and whites in Walla Walla. As demonstrated, generally the percentage of unemployed Latinos is greater than the percentage of unemployed whites in Walla Walla. It is also important to note that the unemployment rates are distributed differently between the races as well: it is clear that the Latino unemployment rates are more spread out and expansive, whereas for the white population, the unemployment rates are more concentrated in certain areas.

Latinos Unemployed in Walla Walla





% Whites Unemployed Walla Walla



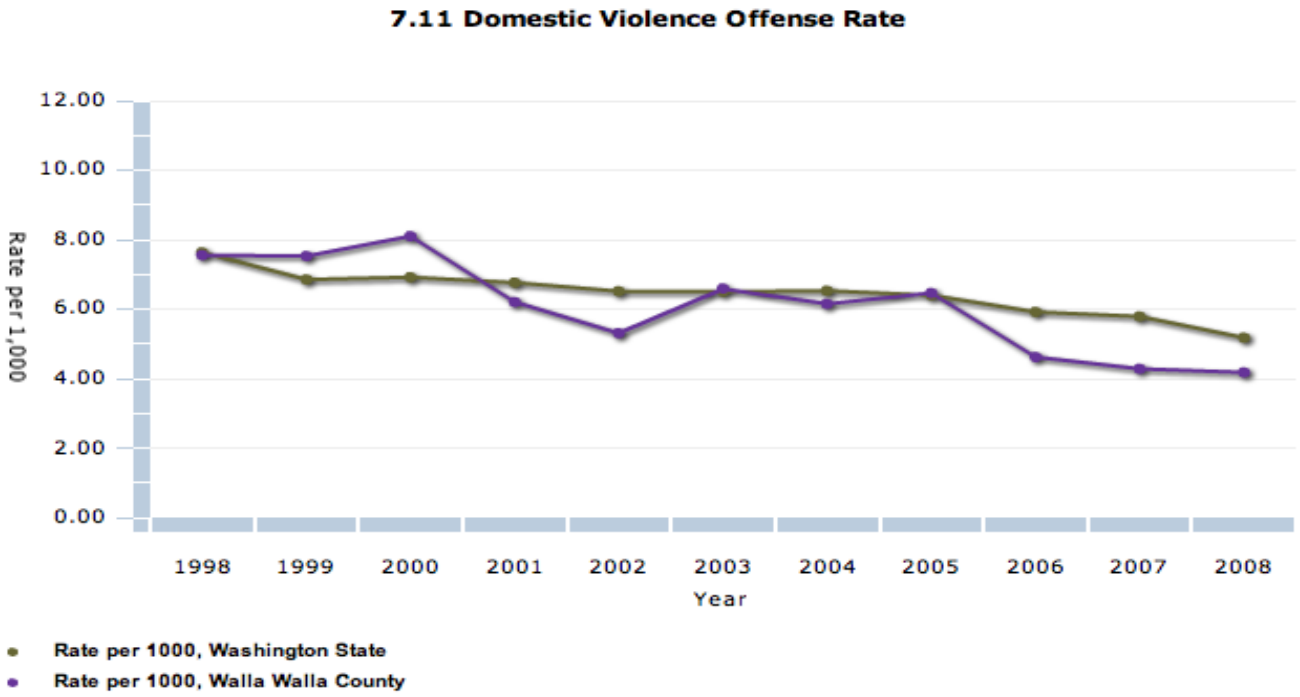
For Latinos, Gonzales expressed that the idea of "being behind" as a poor person is often more difficult and more all encompassing for undocumented immigrants. He said in reference to what it was like to immigrate to the US and be in poverty:

> *So we were what you'd call poor. At the time I felt, there's roads, there's trees, there's sidewalks, and there lights, wow, I'm rich! But that's what I am saying, when you don't know that other things exist, they don't matter to you. Until I started seeing other people, the way they dressed, the way they spoke, what they did and did not do, that's when I realized, we're behind. We are way behind. You can spend 10 years in the states, but if you don't have your citizenship, you're still way behind. You might not be poor, and you might be making it, but you're still way behind.*

Gonzales' notion of "being behind" applies to both culture and employment. **He claimed that even if you have a steady job and a decent income, as an undocumented immigrant, escaping from poverty becomes significantly more difficult.**

It is apparent that particularly in our current state of affairs, employment issues affect a much larger portion of the population than in recent history—this includes, in a major way, the poor population. For Walla Walla specifically, it is clear that a lack of low-wage jobs is extremely problematic in these difficult times due to the fact the poor population (who usually dominate the low-wage market) are now forced to compete with individuals who are likely to be more qualified. Additionally, due to the lack of available jobs, many participants claimed they are stuck in jobs that do not allow for upward mobility or an increase in pay, causing them to be unable to meet their basic needs, and in many ways unable to escape the cycle of poverty. Typically, the poor population can only remove themselves if they are able to take time off for education, which most are unable to do. For Latinos specifically, issues of immigration emerged as key to whether or not an individual will be able to progress in their job.

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND POVERTY:

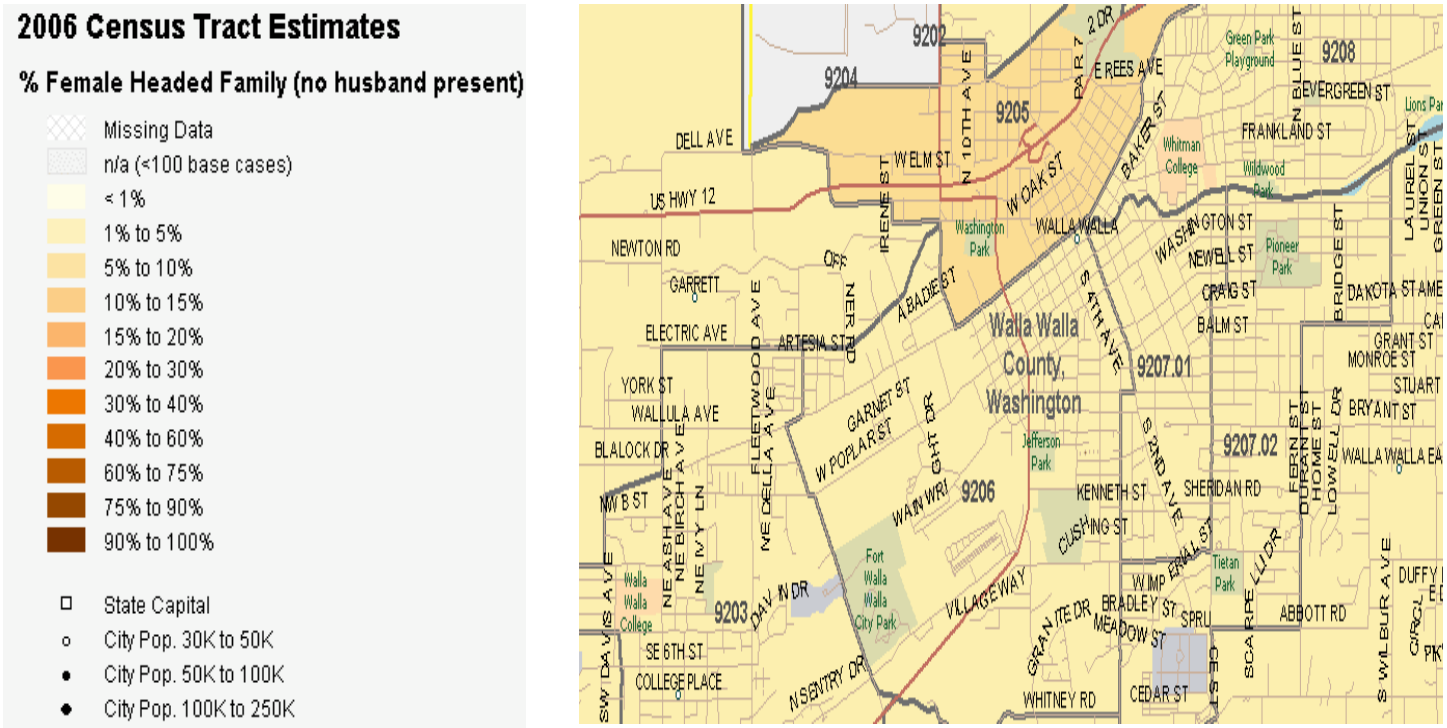


(Eastern Washington University, Institute of Public Policy and Economic Analysis. 2002)

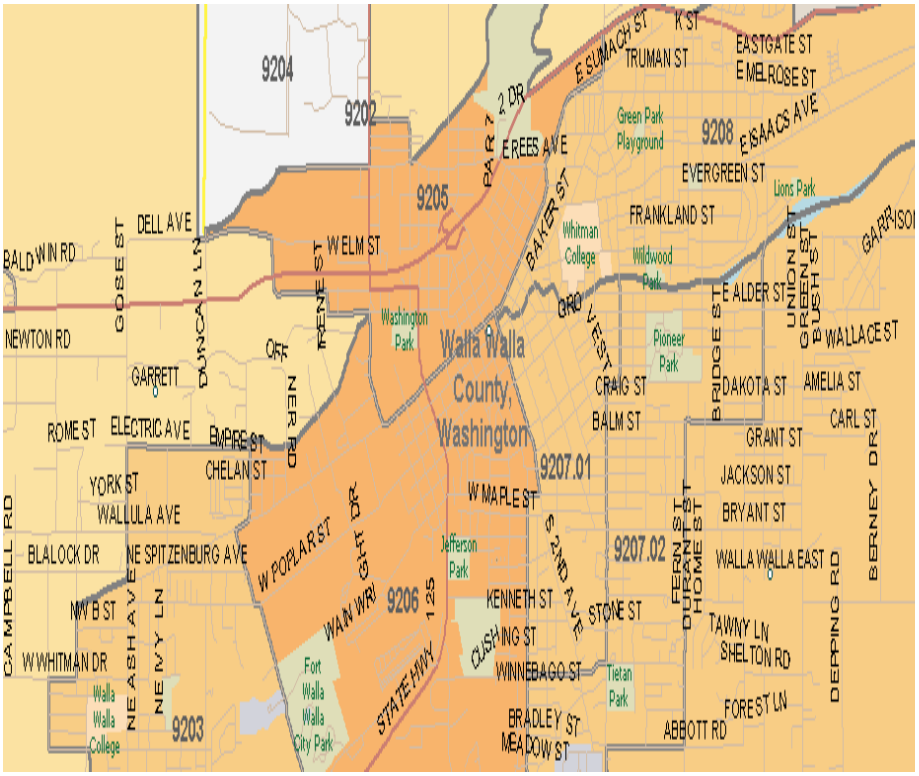
Figure 7.11 shows the domestic violence offense rate for Walla Walla as compared to Washington State, displaying that in 2008 the rates for Walla Walla were less than Washington, showing that Walla Walla's rate for domestic abuse per 1,000 people is 4.19, where Washington's rate is 5.19.

The maps below display a higher concentration of female-headed households not only throughout Walla Walla as a whole, but also specifically in the areas represented throughout this report as being higher in poverty than others.

%Male Headed Family



%Female Headed Family



Issues related to domestic abuse in Walla Walla came up or were referenced within every interview I conducted with women in poverty. The extent and seriousness of the cases varied. Some described scenarios in which they had been abused by boyfriends, husbands, father, uncles, etc: but every woman expressed some sort of abuse-related trauma that affected their lives in poverty. The major themes that emerged out my research as contributing to domestic abuse were **the limitations of being a single mother, the barriers and motivations behind seeking help, the complexities of culture, and the worries of the undocumented immigrant population**.

In terms of how the responsibilities of parenting intersect with poverty, **many women and service providers explained that women tend to make children their top priority.** Due to this, a major fear for many women when deciding whether or not to leave an abusive husband is this notion that without the additional economic contribution of the husband, they would not be able to care for their children alone. This is not only a fear that women pay a great deal of attention to, but in some cases it can be a worry that abusive husbands exploit in their attempts to make their spouses stay. One woman described a conversation that she had with her husband while three months pregnant with her fifth child:

> *(crying) Cause he tell me that… I was going to be alone by myself with my kids, and I not gonna be like able to work and take care of them and everything. I can do that. And I do the taking care of them, working and everything.*

Her husband told her this, even though this woman claims that during their marriage her husband contributed little economically to their household. He claimed that he was "the man of the house" and he could do whatever he wanted. This included financial control—Anita claimed to never know where her money was going, but she insinuated that he might be spending it on other women. Due of this lack of control, women in abusive relationships can be entirely unaware and unable to affect change in the financial stability or instability of their household. This is particularly problematic if a family is impoverished—in many abusive situations described, the abusive spouse did not spend money wisely or effectively, causing many members of the family to go without basic needs.

With regards to the Latino population, my interviews with service providers (both the YWCA as well as the WWPD) revealed that **culture in relation to domestic abuse is complex.** One service provider I spoke to cited a conversation she had with another service provider who speculated that rape "might be part of the culture" for Latinos. Andrea acknowledged the danger is these types of generalizations about the supposed effects of culture, and the potential for propagating false and negative stereotypes. The most important thing both service providers stressed was the concept that **domestic abuse is a choice that, while perhaps exacerbated by financial hardship and poverty, is not determined by economic or other factors such as substance abuse.** Rather, they claim it is a choice pertaining to power and control.

The major issue that the service providers discussed was the horrific set of fears and abuse tactics that undocumented women face in abusive situations. The representatives from the YWCA claimed that is was the number one difference between

cases of abuse for whites and Latinos, and that threats pertaining to immigration issues were the most common for Latina women.

> *Mainly they are terrified that they can be deported and the children can stay here. That is a big issue, they don't want to be deported and lose their children. They also use their immigration status to intimidate them, threat them. Like, if I kill you nobody will know. You are nobody here. Nobody is going to look for you. You don't have family here. You don't have a social security number…The most common threats that a spouse gives is, I am going to cut you up into little bits and pieces and throw you out and scatter you. Nobody is going who you are, nobody is going to know you are missing, nobody knows you exist.*

Repeatedly, service providers stressed this notion that men take advantage of their undocumented spouses in violent ways. **Additionally the service providers discussed issues concerning how the women cope after they leave their abusive husbands.** Because of the overwhelming control and manipulation that the men use, many women don't know how to take control over the affairs of their lives. Even when still within the confines an abusive marriage, issues of power and immigration can be transmitted to the children. One service provider spoke to the potential consequences and effects this may have on the women:

> *When they leave them even, to recognize that they have the power to control the money, to control the children, control their lives. It's hard for them, it takes a while to be in control of what they are doing. They are so used to other people telling them what to do, even the kids get into that. We had one father, the mother was scolding the child, and the father told the son who was nine, "You do not have to listen to her. She is illegal, you are a US citizen, she has no power, she has no control over you. She doesn't have the right to tell you. You pick up the phone and call the police and tell them that she hit you so that they can put her in jail and that's where she needs to be."*

The providers told many other horrific tales related to abuse and immigration, proving it to be an effective tactic that men use to prevent women from seeking help escaping their marriages. They described other situations where men used their physical strength as a threat regarding sex as well—in one abusive situation the man threatened to rape his wife in front of their children if she refused to have sex with him. In addition to this, service providers described men using techniques of **isolation** to control the women and keep them from seeking help. This involved limiting the communication with family members, and convincing their spouses that their families were putting wrong and inaccurate thoughts in their heads.

The service providers explained that issues of sex, immigration, finances, the custody of children: all of these various factors that abusive men typically try to utilize in their threats are signs of power. Due to women's general inequalities regarding strength and economic and employment related opportunities, issues of power become that much more important to recognize.

Overall, my research reveals that issues of domestic abuse are painful and extraordinarily prevalent for the impoverished women that I spoke to. The fact that every woman I spoke to who was in poverty acknowledged or referenced some instance of abuse in their lives speaks to the often overwhelming intersection points between domestic abuse and poverty. Within domestic abuse itself, issues of economic control, manipulation, and particularly, exploitation of immigration status proved to be the most common tactics for abuse. Additionally, service providers claimed that because these women were used to a lack of control over the choices they make in their lives (regarding money, living arrangements, etc.), they didn't know how to start being more assertive if they ever left their abusive spouses—this fact may certainly contribute to the continuing cycle of poverty that often occurs for these women.

Current Practices and Perceptions in Walla Walla:

In light of the data I have presented thus far, it is important to consider the ways in which current service providers are addressing the issues that have emerged, as well as the ways in which these organizations can improve. Additionally, this section reveals some dynamics within the community of the poor population itself and the ways in which race in particular affects the interactions their interactions.

When asked about the Latino population, **many services providers claimed that Latinos are significantly less present than the white population with regards to services offered to the poor population of Walla Walla.** During my first interview with Maureen Anderson, she explained that when she went to survey a sample of the homeless population in Walla Walla, while there were some Latinos present, she did not see high numbers of that population represented at shelters. Additionally, the representative from valley transit claimed that, "the typical response from the Latino community is nothing, unless they see something that really bothers them." Even the women at the YWCA who worked exclusively with the Latino and immigrant population with regards to cases of domestic abuse, acknowledged that their shelter was mostly full of Caucasian women and children. Rolston, a woman who has been working with the low-income population of Walla Walla for a number of years claimed that from her first-hand experiences dealing with issues of employment, "I am not seeing that it has a disproportionate affect (for Latinos) in Walla Walla."

From my interviews with people currently in poverty, it was clear that while some they acknowledged the fact that Latinos were certainly present in the poor population of Walla Walla, **many claimed that in numerous community-based activities, the Latino population was not predominately present or visible.** One woman in particular, noted that after 24 years of living in the same neighborhood, she had not known any of her neighbors until recently. When asked why that was, Sally stated:

> *They just don't associate with anyone. 99 and ½ percent are Hispanic. When there becomes work in the park, you very seldom ever see them. If we're over there, meaning white, they don't want to help. You know, it's supposed to be a*

community neighborhood, for the park. I'd really wish they'd come out and help, we're not gonna bite them, you know.

She continued these types of statements regarding the lack of participation by the Latino community, describing certain community-based events in which only the white community played a pivotal role. This included activities such as the community garden, a food drive, an Easter egg hunt, etc. When asked about why Latinos might not be participating in local social services (such as homeless shelters, employment services, public transit, etc.), even though they clearly have need, many participants cited cultural and linguistic reasons. One participant said:

I think, in regard to that population…their culture will take care of themselves. Not that they shouldn't be accessing these services that are available, but they are more apt to take another family in, to double up, if you're homeless or having a bad time. They'll do that, and help one another out, where I don't think that is true for the white population here. I am wondering if, that's why we don't see these people coming to shelters.

In addition to comments like this, **many participants cited a lack of English skills as a potential reason for the supposed lack of participation for the poor Latino population of Walla Walla.** Gonzales, one participant who emigrated from Mexico to the United States when he was ten, framed this issue of "culture" in a different way from the other interviewees. **He claimed that as an undocumented immigrant in particular, you are surrounded by a climate of fear that seems to permeate every facet of life, including the utilization of social services.**

Imagine if you went to Turkey and you needed a job, and you had to work to survive to get your basic needs, but you couldn't because you didn't have a number. You'd feel like you're not worth being there. It plays a big role in the way you act, the way you talk, the way you expose yourself. Who is going to show up downtown or the YMCA? You pretty much keep to yourself. Almost anywhere you go, people think you have to fill out information, name, address, phone number, and sometimes social security number. What do you think happens when they read that It's the unknown, people not knowing where that information is going to go. So why expose yourself? Laying low, that means not sharing your information…that's the reason.

When asked why second or third generation Latinos, people born in the United States, still might not be utilizing the services available to them, Tomás explained that many of these people hear stories from their families about what they should and should not participate in, and as a result they feel the same sort of fears associated with these services. As he claimed, "They probably feel like immigrants themselves." In addition to these more culturally based concerns, he, along with others, frequently referred to issues of literacy in relation to embarrassment, claiming that people are significantly less likely to seek help and the use of social services if they feel that they would embarrass themselves with their inability to express their concerns effectively. Many participants noted that Latinos tend to "keep to themselves" about their issues regarding poverty.

These kinds of inter-community conflicts and perceptions are a major part of what Commitment to Community to trying to develop in a healthy and accurate way within poor neighborhoods in Walla Walla. Many participants acknowledged the progression that has been made within their communities due to the efforts of C2C. However, the fact that the discordance between the qualitative data and people's perceptions (both service providers and community members) is so prevalent indicates the necessity is addressing such concerns.

Summary:

Each section of my research serves to offer a piece of a composite definition of what poverty looks like in Walla Walla, for both the Latino population as well as the poor population in general. Through each focal point, numerous issues have emerged as important to consider, in terms of how the Walla Walla community should move forward within poverty reduction, how should individuals interact with one another, as well as what the Walla Walla community is doing right currently.

In terms of transportation, a wide variety of opinions were present in the research. While in the general the poor population did not think that transportation was a major benefit or hindrance to their daily lives, a few participants (who had recently found themselves in better economic times) cited that they had personal vehicles that helped them get to work. Most participants agreed that Latinos in Walla Walla appear to use public transportation less than the white population: the fact that there is limited bus service to and from the farm workers homes may contribute to this perception. Additionally, there is no current bus route to the DHS, which several participants mentioned as being extremely problematic.

In addition to mobility, many participants claimed that they had fairly substantial issues with the quality and availability of care for the poor population of Walla Walla. One major finding was the overt discomfort that many participants experienced in seeking medical attention: they claimed that this discomfort could be attributed to a lack of insurance and/or cultural barriers. Additionally, both Latino and white participants acknowledged issues of mental health and dental care. While the qualitative data shows that nationally Latinos greatly lack insurance, several participants claimed that health insurance was less important for Latinos than whites. Cultural exclusion in terms of health care was also a major issue for Latinos in my study.

Employment issues were extremely problematic throughout my research, and due to the recent unemployment rates, it is highly likely that the unemployment rates in Walla Walla from 2006-2007 have increased for all populations. In addition to problems of unemployment, a lack of available low-wage jobs is a huge concern due to the unfair levels of competition that the poor population is forced to engage in. Many participants acknowledged the lack of upward-mobility opportunities as well, claiming that the only way to get an increase in pay to invest in education. However, for undocumented immigrants as well as the poor population in general, this is particularly difficult.

Finally, instances of domestic abuse proved extremely important for the participants in my study: literally every woman I spoke to who was in poverty had

experienced instances of abuse or traumatic experiences. This fact alone is extremely important when considering the severity and prevalence of domestic abuse cases for the poor population of Walla Walla. Within these documented instances of domestic abuse, two major concerns emerged: immigration status as a dangerous method for exploitation and abuse, as well as an inability on the part of the women to take control of their own lives (in terms of finances, careers, etc.) if and when they leaves their abusive spouses.

In terms of what is being done currently, it is clear that is many ways there are holes in progression. The dramatic dissonance between perception and reality is represented through the fact that while the data clearly shows the need that the Latino population has in Walla Walla for services such as healthcare, homeless shelters, career service centers, etc., representatives from these providers claim that they do not see the Latino population utilizing these services, and some even claimed that their need may be less than that of the white population. Additionally, while organizations like Commitment to Community are to helping neighborhoods work together, there is undoubtedly room for improvement, particularly when it comes to perceptions regarding race.

Recommendations:

General Recommendations:

•Create a **comprehensive campaign for poverty reduction** in Walla Walla, beginning with a needs assessment of variables not included in this report that have a major influence on the poor population: such as food insecurity, education issues, disability issues, issues for the elderly, etc. Emphasize and account for inclusive community based-solutions within the campaign.

•Create an **accountability framework** for all social service providers in Walla Walla, requiring that they serve all populations inclusively and effectively—include a regulation regarding outreach to underserved populations that is culturally competent. Include a system for the poor population to provide constructive feedback to their service providers.

• Increase the amount of **community forums and discussions held regarding poverty and issues of race in Walla Walla** in order to break down misperceptions and stereotypes about who is poor and why. Specifically, forums for service providers to speak openly with each other about their struggles and successes with regards to serving diverse populations.

Transportation:

•Rally members of the community behind the **Campaign for Valley Transit**, a campaign that is fighting against cutting Valley Transit services by proposing a sales tax increase of three cents that would go towards saving Walla Walla's public transportation system.

•Include bus routes to the **DHS** as well as more services to **farm labor homes**.

•Improve Valley Transit advertising efforts to **increase ridership**.

Healthcare:

• Create **regulations that require the various institutions that the poor population interacts with to be on the same page with regards to issues of mental health** for the poor population.

• **Increase funding and capacity** within the kinds of health services that a poor individual interacts with, specifically the SOS clinic.

• Take measures to ensure that **individuals feel welcome entering any health facility**. Potentially include in training staff a segment on the kinds of behavior that make people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds feel comfortable accessing care.

•The new healthcare plan should account for the **large population of undocumented immigrants who are unable to obtain health insurance** and are in turn forced to utilize more expensive emergency care.

Employment:

• Develop an **economic growth strategy** that will include community stakeholders and new businesses in order to increase the amount of low-wage jobs available to the poor-population of Walla Walla.

• Current low-wage job providers should invest in creating **clear tracks for upward mobility** and give their employees the **capacity to seek higher education while employed**.

Domestic Abuse:

• Develop measures on a statewide scale that **ensure and make public the protection of undocumented victims of domestic abuse.** Specifically, service providers such as the YWCA and the WWPD should advertise the fact that regardless of immigration status, all women can come to those providers to seek help without the danger of being deported.

• Providers should emphasize **practical, empowering skills for women** just emerging from abusive relationships, in order to give them the capacity to move out of poverty.

• Create **community support groups for women to talk about instances of domestic abuse**, in order to alleviate the fears that many women have with seeking help.

Conclusions:

The complexities of poverty in both Walla Walla and the nation as a whole do not allow for simple solutions and quick fixes. Today, more than any other time in our country's recent history, this is a true statement. These issues have been, and in many respects will continue to be, a component of our country and our communities. However,

this fact does not equate to an inability to affect change. In fact, the limitations of time and urgency require that we address these issues specifically, concretely, and effectively.

As many scholars noted, poverty affects a diverse population, and Walla Walla is no different in this respect. However, my research indicates that in many ways, various populations experience the same problems very differently based on individual experiences, including, but not limited to, race and ethnic affiliation. We heard from Gonzales about the kinds of fears surrounding immigration that permeate into behaviors regarding social service use, we heard comments about cultural differences between Latinos and whites in relation to healthcare and transportation use, and, perhaps most traumatically, there were numerous accounts regarding Latina women and the exploitation of immigration status within their intimate relationships. These documented differences should not be used as an excuse for social inequality. Rather, these facts require the creation of sustainable, inclusive, and community-based solutions is vital. Currently, many inequalities exist for the poor population as a whole. However, in order to include and improve the conditions of the *entire* poor population of Walla Walla, it is important to take note of the ways various populations may be experiencing differences.

Due to poverty's inherent multi-dimensional nature, it is an impossibility to solve all its problems at once. However, addressing a few factors in specific steps has the potential to dramatically improve the quality of life for poor individuals and families in Walla Walla. By increasing or maintaining public transportation use we could help an individual get to work. An increase of people who are insured could reduce expenses overall and potentially prevent serious health problems for the poor population. If one employer could increase the opportunities they offer to move up and increase pay, they could prevent a family from relying on food stamps. By providing skill training for victims of domestic abuse we could help remove a female-headed household from poverty. By offering open and honest discussions on what it means to be white and impoverished or Latino and impoverished or black and impoverished, we could provide a foundation for a more cohesive community. This foundation necessitates an inclusiveness that is at once realistic and hopeful, specific and flexible. Without this, there can be no hope of progression.

Appendices:

Appendix A:

Anderson, Kelly at BMAC (Blue Mountain Action Council). October 7, 2009

Fondahn, Dick at Valley Transit Offices. October 21, 2009

Bowler, Sally at Reid Campus Center. October 26, 2009

Rolston, Rachel at Reid Campus Center. October 29, 2009

Gonzales, Tomás at Reid Campus Center. October 30, 2009

Newman, Leslie at Reid Campus Center. November 4, 2009

Reiner, Lucy at Reid Campus Center. November 5, 2009

Collins, Martha at Reid Campus Center. November 5, 2009 (Done in conjunction with Lucy Reiner)

Adams, Susannah at Lincoln Health Center. November 12, 2009

Collier, Christina at Lincoln Health Center. November 12, 2009

Vasquez, Andrea at YWCA. November 12, 2009

Ramirez, Theresa at YWCA. November 12, 2009

Reyes, Daniela at residence. November 13, 2009.

Appendix B-Question List: (paraphrased from interview transcriptions:

Interview with Kelly Anderson:

1. What is the most prominent cause of poverty in Walla Walla?
2. What is your organization or what are you doing to try and fix this problem of poverty?
3. What is limiting your progress?
4. How is rural poverty different than inner-city poverty?
5. How do you define poverty? Is this different for the Latino population?
6. How do you think the variables of unemployment, healthcare, domestic abuse, and transportation affect the poor population of Walla Walla?
7. How can I make my research matter more to the community?

Interview with Dick Fondahn:

1. How do you think the transportation system affects the poor population in Walla Walla?
2. How about for the Latino population?
3. How does public transportation serve a connection to jobs for poor people?
4. How effective overall are the programs for the latino population in connection to job services?
5. How do you think the transit system affects the ability of poor people to get good jobs or achieve upward mobility?
6. How do you think transit system connects people to bilingual services, food bank, shelters and other services?
7. Would any population be hit harder if transit services were cut?
8. What does poverty look like to you?

Unemployment Questions: Rachel Rolston:

1. How do you think problems of employment affect the poor population of Walla Walla?
2. How about for Latinos?
3. How do poor people in Walla Walla go about finding jobs?
4. Are there cultural factors that may affect how people from different backgrounds get jobs?
5. Do you think there are enough good jobs available in Walla Walla that allow for people to make a living wage?
6. Is this different for the Latino population?
7. Do you think that there are opportunities for the poor population of Walla Walla to gain upward mobility and get a job above minimum wage?
8. Can you think of many examples where a person went beyond a minimum wage job towards a job with more benefits?
9. Is this situation different for the Latino population?
10. Do you think there are adequate resources for job training programs in Walla Walla?
11. What about for the Latino population?
12. Are there enough bilingual services available for the Latino population?
13. What do you think stands in way of people getting jobs in Walla Walla?

Interview Questions for Sally Bowler Tomas Gonzales, Martha Collins, Lucy Reiner and Daniela Reyes: (with minimal variation depending upon ethnicity and whether or not they are in poverty)

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself, how you got involved with Commitment to Community, etc.?
2. Domestic Abuse is a huge problem within the poor community. While you were in poverty, have you seen, either first-hand and from others you know, instances of domestic abuse?
3. Did you or those you know experience feelings of not having power as part of this?
4. Did you or they have trouble seeking help for dealing with the issues of domestic abuse that you/they were facing?
5. Was language a barrier? If yes, how so?
6. Can you tell me a bit about your experiences with obtaining employment? What were the difficulties you faced?
7. If employed, did you have trouble making a good enough wage to have enough food? Pay rent? Child services?
8. Did you feel you had the skills or training necessary to get a good job?
9. Can you tell me how Valley Transit played a role in getting a job, did it allow for you to get to and from work?
10. Did it allow for you to get to food banks or shelters?
11. What were the problems, if any that you had with it?
12. Can you tell me about how valley transit connects you to work opportunities?
13. How do you think you would have been affected if these services did not exist?
14. What has your experience been with healthcare?

15. Do you feel that your environment or family or loved ones have affected the way you view health care?
16. Do you think there is a difference in healthcare between poor people and people of higher income? Do you think wealthier people receive better health care than lower class people? Can you give an example?
17. How, if at all, is your healthcare different now that you are not in poverty?
18. Did you use/have knowledge of the resources in Walla Walla? How did you become aware of them?
19. Did you feel well served at these places?
20. What can organizations do to help more?

Interview Questions for Leslie Newman, Andrea Vasquez and Theresa Ramirez:

1. How do you think the issue of domestic violence affects the poor population of Walla Walla?
2. In particular, how do you think the Latino population is affected by domestic violence?
3. What kinds of power come into play when domestic violence happens, from what you have seen?
4. How about for Latinos? Does immigration play a role? If yes, how so?
5. Is there a connection you see between domestic violence and low-income households? Why would it happen more in low-income homes?
6. What about for Latinos?
7. What do you think the role of culture is in domestic abuse cases?
8. Do you think alcohol or substance abuse plays a role in in cases of domestic abuse?
9. How about for the Latino population?
10. What do you think is the connection between job quality or employment in general and domestic violence?
11. What about for Latinos?
12. How do victims of domestic abuse typically seek help in Walla Walla, or do they typically seek help? Explain.

Questions for Susannah Adams and Christina Collier:

1. What role do you think healthcare plays in a poor person's experience in Walla Walla?
2. What about for the Latino population?
3. How do you think the combination of an individual and their community helps to form their experiences with healthcare?
4. How well informed do you think the poor population is about healthcare?
5. How do you think people become informed about what's available to them?
6. Why wouldn't people be utilizing healthcare?

7. Do you think, is transportation an issue with regards to healthcare?
8. What do you think of the new healthcare plan?

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