

# ***Realidad Latina: Latino adolescents, their school, and a university use photovoice to examine and address the influence of immigration***

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**Summary** *Over the past 10 years, growth of the Latino population in the United States has been most rapid in North Carolina. Project Realidad Latina (Latino Reality) was a qualitative exploratory study conducted to gain insight into the immigration experiences of 10 newly-arrived Latino adolescents living in rural North Carolina (NC). The study followed a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach and used the photovoice method. Over a one-year period, adolescents partnered with public health practitioners and researchers in: generating photo-assignments, taking photographs based on these assignments, using the photographs for photo-discussions, and defining themes based on these photo-discussions. A photograph exhibition and community forum raised awareness among local decision-makers and community members of the issues and assets of Latino adolescents and initiated a process toward change.*

*From the participants' words and photographs emerged contextual descriptions of issues that both challenged and facilitated their adaptation and quality of life in their school and community. Likewise, implications from the findings and the nature of the CBPR approach for future Latino adolescent health intervention research are presented.*

**Key words:** *Community-based participatory research; CBPR; photovoice; Latino/Hispanic; adolescents; immigration.*

## **Introduction**

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the US, representing 12.7% of the total population (US Census Bureau, 2000a). North Carolina (NC), on the eastern seaboard of the US, experienced the largest growth in the size of its Latino population in a ten-year period

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(394% increase between 1990 and 2000; US Census Bureau, 2000a). The age distribution of Latinos in NC was bimodal, mainly young children and young adults (US Census Bureau, 2000a). In Centerville<sup>1</sup>, a rural town in central NC with a population of about 7,000 residents, the Latino population grew from 3.8% in 1990 to 39.3% in 2000 (a 1,000% increase; US Census Bureau, 2000b). Just under half of the adolescent population identify as Latino (US Census Bureau, 2000b).

Surveys of adolescents in the US have documented high school drop-out rates as 25% higher for Latinos than White and African American adolescents (NCES, 1999). According to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS, 2001), Latino high school students in NC were more than twice as likely to rate their health status and quality of life as poor, when compared to their White and African American peers. They were also more likely than White adolescents to report feelings of isolation and report being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property by someone during the past 12 months (YRBSS, 2001).

## **Background**

To help explain these troubling findings, this paper describes an exploratory study conducted with Latino high school students to document the influence of immigration on their quality of life. For readers who are not familiar with the community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach and photovoice method, these are described in the following sections.

### *Community-based participatory research: a partnership approach to research*

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) in public health is a partnership approach to research that equitably involves, for example, community members, organizational representatives and researchers in all aspects of the research process (Israel, Shulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). There has been increasing support for and use of this partnership approach to enhance understanding of and address the complex social, structural, and physical environmental factors associated with health status, with a particular focus on improving health outcomes and eliminating health disparities (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003).

There are a growing number of academics in health-related disciplines, funding institutions (both public and private), and journals that have promoted the use of CBPR. For example, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences has several funding initiatives that explicitly require a CBPR approach, and they have taken the lead in organizing an Interagency Committee that involves many of the Institutes within the National Institutes of Health to further advance the use of CBPR. In addition, the recent Institute of Medicine Report, *Who Will Keep the Public Healthy? Educating Public Health Professionals for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Gebbie, Rosenstock, & Hernandez, 2003) identifies CBPR as one of the eight areas in which all public health professionals need to be trained. As stated in the Report, ‘... the committee believes that public health professionals will be better prepared to address the major health problems and challenges facing society if they achieve competency in the following eight content areas’ (p. 62), and the text goes on to list and discuss CBPR as one of ‘these eight areas of critical importance to public health education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (p. 62).

### *Photovoice: A CBPR method to transition from knowledge to action*

CBPR does not specify data collection and analysis methods. *Realidad Latina* used the method known as photovoice. Photovoice is a qualitative method of inquiry that: (1) enables participants to record and reflect on their personal and community strengths and concerns; (2) promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through

group discussions and photographs; and, (3) provides a forum for the presentation of participants' lived experiences through the images, language, and contexts defined by participants themselves (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994). As a CBPR method, photovoice improves quality and validity of research by drawing on local knowledge, developing local theory, and progressing toward action, hallmarks of CBPR.

Photovoice engages participants in the following procedure:

- Attend an informational training session to receive a disposable camera, and determine the topic for their first photo-assignment;
- Record through photography the realities of their experiences for each photo-assignment;
- Share their photographs from each photo-assignment during photo-discussion sessions to examine the issue, and discuss what could be done to effect change; and,
- Organize a forum to present their 'pictures' to local policymakers and service providers identified by participants as potential collaborators and advocates for change.

Photo-discussions typically begin with a review and discussion of themes that emerge from the analysis of previous sessions, followed by a 'show and tell' activity as each participant presents her photographs and explains how they are related to the photo-assignment. The group chooses one or two photographs to discuss in-depth, guided by the five-step inductive questioning technique, SHOWED, often used to bring discussions from a personal level to social analysis and action steps (Wallerstein, 1994). The series of SHOWED questions include: (1) What do you *see* in this photograph?; (2) What is *happening* in the photograph?; (3) How does this relate to *our* lives?; (4) *Why* do these issues exist?; and, (5) How can we become *empowered* by our new social understanding? What can we *do* to address these issues? At the conclusion of each session the group develops a new photo-assignment by asking, 'Given what we have learned so far, what should we explore next?'

After several cycles, the photo-discussion data are analyzed like other qualitative data. Once themes have been identified and interpreted through an iterative process that equally involves the participants, the participants share the themes with local community leaders, service providers, and policy makers. Thus, photographs act as the medium through which issues are discussed to raise awareness and mobilize a core group of allies toward community change.

Photovoice transitions from knowledge, or raised consciousness around issues and assets, to direct community action. Photovoice is a flexible method both in terms of the issues it has been employed to address and the geographic and culturally diverse groups it has been employed with (Wang, 2003). For example, photovoice has been used with Chinese women in the Yunnan Province, China (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang, Burris, and Ping, 1996; Wang, 1998), neighborhood groups (Spears, 1999), people with mental illness in New Haven, CT, USA (Bowers, 1999), homeless men and women in Michigan, USA (Wang, 1998; Wang, Cash, and Powers, 2000), youth peer educators in Cape Town, South Africa (Moss, 1999a, 1999b), urban lay health advisors (Parker, Shulz, Israel, and Hollis, 2001), and public health department leaders and constituents (Wang, 1988). Based on a review of the published literature, *Realidad Latina* represented the first study to use the photovoice method with Latino adolescents in the US.

#### *The Realidad Latina study*

*Realidad Latina* was a qualitative exploratory study of Latino adolescents' immigration experiences in rural NC. The study was a research partnership between a local high school's Latino student-led club and the University of North Carolina, School of Public Health. The

objectives of the study were to engage Latino adolescents in: (1) identifying issues that are affected, both positively and negatively, by their immigration experiences; and (2) examining these issues with local health and human service providers to determine a plan of action. The proactive role taken by Latino adolescents, as co-investigators with university researchers, was intended to create the necessary preconditions for Latino adolescents to develop a more astute understanding of their issues and assets. This understanding was expected to generate momentum among the adolescents to organize and lead a forum with local community leaders and service providers to highlight the findings and determine next steps toward building Latino adolescents' assets and taking a community initiative to address their issues.

## **Methods**

### *Setting and participants*

*Realidad Latina* was conducted from June 2002 through May 2003 in Centerville, a small rural town in North Carolina. Centerville is a town of about 7,000 residents located in Central County<sup>2</sup> in rural central North Carolina. Centerville was historically an agricultural town, but has recently experienced a growth in small manufacturing industry, accompanied by an increase in job opportunities in poultry processing plants and other factory-based work (Burritt *et al.*, 2000).

Central County has two public high schools, with a total enrollment of 891 students. Participants for this study were recruited from one high school with a student body of 539, of which 50% were Caucasian, 27.8% were African-American, and 20.7% were Hispanic/Latino.

### *Recruitment*

The high school student club, from which participants were recruited, consisted of approximately thirty-five Latino members. The club, known as the AIM (Acción, Inspiración, and Motivación) Club, is a predominantly Latino student-run club that provides social and academic support to Latino students. This club was selected by the research team for its involvement in a statewide program for migrant youth and the presence of a program coordinator who could provide entrée into the club.

Ten AIM Club members (referred to as 'participants' from this point forward) decided to participate on a regular basis. Consent was obtained with parent signatures on a form describing the project and requesting their child's participation. Students less than 18 years of age completed an assent form and students over 18 years of age were allowed to self-consent by signing the form. All study-related protocols and materials were approved by the University of North Carolina, School of Public Health, Institutional Review Board of Human Subjects.

### *Data collection*

Four photo-assignments were determined and completed by participants to guide their taking of photographs, and discussion of these photographs. The photo-assignments were: (1) What is it like to be a Latino adolescent living in Centerville, North Carolina?; (2) What are some solutions to the issues brought up in photo-assignment #1?; (3) Social activities and celebrations; (4) What is it like to be a Latino adolescent going to high school in Centerville? During each group discussion, each participant related experiences for three photographs and the group generated issues or assets associated with the photographs. The discussion was facilitated by researchers who used probes framed by SHOWED, which was described earlier.

Each discussion was held at the public library in Centerville, lasted approximately 2 hours and was conducted in Spanish and tape recorded.

#### *Data analysis and interpretation*

These tape recordings were transcribed verbatim in Spanish by native Spanish speakers. The transcripts were returned to the research team for analysis and theme development using NVIVO (QSR International), a commonly used code and retrieval software for non-numeric data. The research team read through the transcripts to become familiar with their content. Coding schemes were developed and sections of the transcripts were labeled according to their codes. These codes were then organized into coding trees to facilitate the emergence of themes. Themes emerged from a data reduction process that collapsed coding trees into statements that fit into the overall context of the project. For example, a theme that emerged out of the code 'a limited future' and the sub-code 'few opportunities for education' was: 'Participants sensed they had a limited future due to few options for higher education.' Codes and themes were then presented to participants to confirm their accuracy and make modifications. This process was iterative with the research team providing technical analytic theme development and the participants revising, developing, and interpreting these themes within the context of their lived experiences.

#### *Photograph exhibition and community forum*

Participants planned an exhibition to display and describe their photographs to their parents, local community leaders, policymakers, service providers, school administrators, teachers, and counselors. Approximately 40 people were in attendance including: high school students, one high school teacher, AIM Club members, local health and social service providers, community leaders, parents and family, and graduate students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Those in attendance were engaged in an action-oriented discussion to identify future use of the exhibition and help develop action steps to address the themes presented.

## **Results**

All participants were born in Latin American countries. All but one of the participants had moved to Central County directly from their home countries. Participants had lived in Central County for an average of 1.8 years. Six participants were male and two female. Participants' average age was 17.5 years. Although English language proficiency was not objectively assessed, five reported a 'good' level of English proficiency and three reported a 'medium' level. Spanish was the preferred language used by participants and facilitators during project sessions.

Ten primary themes emerged. In this section, themes are described briefly; on occasion, participant quotations are presented to provide detail. Several themes emerged from discussions based on photographs that were not directly tied to the content in the photographs.

#### *Sense of limited future*

Participants reported feeling limited in their pursuit of higher education, academic achievement, and opportunities to compete for good jobs.

They felt that a college education was out of reach for them for two reasons: state policies that require undocumented persons to pay out-of-state college tuition rates; and, a general community-wide expectation that Latinos will continue to provide inexpensive labor in the

local factories. One participant shared a photograph he had taken of a plastics factory. The photograph depicted a metal warehouse with no windows that was surrounded by a chain-link fence. The participant described his reason for taking the photograph, ‘[This is] a factory, a plastics factory here in Centerville, [and] everyone knows that the majority of Hispanics work in factories.’ Discussion of this photograph led many in the group to express their desire to rise above factory-based work, while recognizing the challenges even the most academically-successful of them face (Figure 1).

*Feeling of rejection*

The participants reported feeling poorly treated and rejected by school administrators and teachers, their non-Latino classmates, and the community as a result of their limited English skills, their ethnicity, and the amount of time they had lived in the US. A comment from one participant illustrated this theme:

They [administrators] never mark us down [on invitation lists] for big school activities where all the clubs participate; they practically don’t take us into account. But when they [administrators] need help cleaning the school, then they call us because they know that we’ll do it.

The participants expressed feeling rejected within three important domains of their social world: peers, school, and the general community. This rejection across participants’ lives was the cause of intense frustration.

*Limited use of English*

Participants reported that their limited English skills impeded their ability to succeed academically, be accepted by classmates, obtain a good job, and pursue a career. Limited



**Figure 1.** Poultry plant with a large Latino workforce.

English language proficiency surfaced as a significant barrier to adapting to the dominant norms and culture of the US. As one participant illustrated through a photograph of a Latino student in the classroom:

... Hispanics, sometimes when they're in classes where the majority don't speak Spanish or everyone else is American, they isolate themselves. Because of fear ... they sometimes don't talk with their other classmates, and they don't interact. ... They look scared.

This quotation reveals that limited English skills, in addition to academic success, had a substantial impact on participants' social interactions and integration.

#### *The school and institutional racism*

Despite valuing education, participants reported challenges to achieving academic goals. These challenges included: little support from teachers; low expectations from some teachers, counselors, and administrators; and racism. One participant reported how he felt racism affected Latinos(as) academically by saying '... the American teachers ... don't like to see a Hispanic do better than an American, this bothers them.' Participants perceived education as a means to achieve social and economic prosperity. However, participants associated negative experiences with school and reported that they felt the 'system' was set up to keep them from achieving their goals.

#### *Latino students value their Latino identity*

Participants valued their Latino identity which they defined as respect for their customs like religion, celebrations, food, music, clothing, and language. However, the participants perceived that their Latino identity was devalued by non-Latinos. This theme emerged from participants' vivid pictures of their Latino identity. One participant explained that a picture she took of a friend celebrating her *quinceañera*, a traditional celebration to commemorate the 15th birthday of a Latina girl marking the transition from girlhood to young adulthood, illustrated the importance of Latino culture by saying, 'I took this picture ... I took it to show a party [*quinceañera*] that is traditional for most Hispanics. And I took this [picture] because it seems to me like she is very happy here [in the picture]' (Figure 2).

#### *The desire for adult and community support*

Participants felt adult support was an essential factor for successful development at home, at school, and within the community. Participants made two recommendations: a bilingual, full-time teacher at their high school who would be the AIM Club's faculty representative; and, additional support organizations for Latino adolescents in the community. One participant, responding to a photograph of an adult advocate, stressed the importance of adult support and envisioned what life would be like without the advocate. This participant stated, 'I think it would be very difficult to keep going. I think that a lot of students would really leave [school].'

#### *Importance of role models*

Participants reported being motivated by the success of their Latino classmates and role models. Participants referred to success stories as providing hope for their future



**Figure 2.** *Latina youth performing traditional Mexican dance.*

achievements. One participant shared the following referring to a photograph he had taken of a Latino student's award winning artwork:

When I went to school and saw the paintings there were like five paintings, and of those, four were done by Hispanics . . . This meant a lot to me, it was great because this was showing that we [Hispanics] are moving forward and that Hispanics are going to be better.

Participants' reflection on Latino role models and success stories presented evidence that Latinos are beginning to be recognized for their achievements within school. Participants described the achievements with a sense of pride and admiration for those Latino students who managed to defy a discouraging environment and do well for themselves and others.

#### *Appreciation of opportunities to participate in social and service activities*

Participants valued the AIM Club for providing them with numerous opportunities to participate in both social and community-service activities. Participants felt the club provided them classmate support, social and entertainment activities, personal development, preservation of cultural values, and educational activities. Participants stressed that one place they felt comfortable and 'among their own' was within the AIM Club. In this club they could speak Spanish without criticism, share their common and differing experiences, and take on the challenge of addressing issues that affect the Latino community.

The participants also wanted to make a positive change within their Latino community and the greater Centerville community. One participant stated, 'We try and do the best for our community, not just us.' Activities included: volunteerism, community outreach, working to prevent high school drop-out by encouraging classmates to stay in school, promoting higher education and unity, and organizing educational and cultural activities. This theme revealed that participants also focused on issues and assets beyond their families and social networks and the school. In particular, participants were committed to improving their community by volunteering and conducting outreach.

*Within-community tensions*

The final theme that emerged was participants' concern over rising tensions between Latinos. This theme revealed that in addition to being rejected by members of the majority community, at times participants also felt rejected by their fellow Latino classmates. Participants discussed a phenomenon in school wherein Latino students that had lived in the US for a longer period of time, rejected Latino students that had recently arrived from their country of origin. Language skills often played a key role in this phenomenon. One participant noted:

Unfortunately many times the people who disregard you most are your own race. Because they already know two languages they feel superior to you and they joke about you whenever they want. This isn't good and this is why many [Latinos] leave school.

This theme was not as common as those mentioned previously, yet it added a new dimension to the challenges faced by recently arrived Latino adolescents upon entering school. Furthermore, it emphasized the importance of language in determining the degree of acceptance not only by non-Latinos but Latinos as well.

*The photograph exhibition and community forum*

The photograph exhibition and community forum provided an opportunity for participants to raise awareness of their themes among parents of Latino high school students, local community leaders, service providers, school teachers, and school administrators. The participants presented their photographs, themes, and quotations on black display boards. The participants gathered the attendees for a slide presentation that described the project, the rationale, the photo-assignments, and the discovered themes along with their interpretation and examples. Like the photographic exhibition, the presentation was a product of the participants. The research team provided equipment and materials and participants controlled the selection of photographs and quotations, and the forum's agenda.

During the discussion that followed, attendees expressed frustration over the poor turnout of high school teachers and the absence of the principal. To inform the teachers and principal of participant findings, attendees recommended that participants share their exhibition during teacher in-service training hours. The one high school teacher in attendance felt the exhibition should be displayed at an upcoming workshop for high school teachers throughout the county. Another teacher happened to walk in, look at the photographs and themes, and leave, missing the discussion.

Attendees brainstormed other ways to meet the needs of Latino adolescents, suggesting they prioritize certain areas of concern and plans of action, including: communication with Migrant Education within the NC Department of Public Instruction to ensure an AIM Club faculty-level advisor who would advocate on behalf of Latino students and the AIM Club; and, service providers in attendance exploring ways to involve Latino adolescents in program development or expansion and as volunteers.

*Subsequent community reaction*

The week following the exhibition brought additional attention to *Realidad Latina*. Rumors regarding the exhibition's content circulated around the high school. Teachers and administrators not in attendance at the exhibition reacted defensively to the themes. This reaction led the principal to convene a meeting with two participants directly involved in presenting the themes, the teacher that attended the exhibition, and the AIM Club's part-time

representative. Project supporters decided to organize a meeting between the principal, local health and educational agency representatives affecting Latino students, project researchers, and *Realidad Latina* participants. The purpose of this meeting was to present and discuss the themes and potential action that the school and agencies could take to address the issues identified. Unfortunately, to date, this meeting has not taken place although the school has selected a full-time AIM Club faculty advisor and has asserted that the club will be added to its website. Previously the AIM Club was conspicuously absent from the school's online list of clubs. A community-based organization that reaches out to the Latino community for service provision and advocacy is exploring funding to develop youth programming, including support for children and adolescents struggling with trauma related to crossing the Mexico-US border and adapting to life in NC.

## **Discussion**

*Realidad Latina* sought to build a partnership among Latino adolescents, a public health educator, a community activist and former migrant worker, a MPH student, and a post-doctoral fellow in order to obtain rich qualitative insight into issues that affect the quality of life of Latino adolescents in this community. The participatory nature of the project empowered participants to identify, describe, discuss, organize themselves and others, and act upon the issues affecting them. From the participants' photographs and discussions emerged contextual descriptions of issues that both challenged and facilitated their adaptation to life in a rural North Carolina town. A number of these issues deserve highlighting and further exploration. The nature of the CBPR research process and its role in enabling such rich information to emerge deserves further examination.

### *Challenges to Latino adolescent adjustment*

Challenges were often school related and illustrated how conditions within the school environment discouraged Latino student achievement. While participants expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to attend high school and the personal development that school provided them, they felt they were not being extended a fair opportunity to excel. These perceptions and experiences may shed light on the high drop-out rates observed among Latino adolescents. When this discouraging environment is combined with other challenges such as limited English language proficiency, the devaluation of their culture, community expectations that factory-based jobs are the only appropriate employment options, and limited options for higher education, the struggle to remain in school becomes very real.

Another challenge to adapting to life in the US deserving mention is that participants described tensions between Latinos that had lived in the US for a number of years and Latinos that had more recently arrived. English language skills were identified as the factor that instigated these tensions between Latinos. Participants felt that shared ethnicity and immigration experience were sometimes less important than how long ago that experience took place. This situation is particularly troubling given the similarities of their experiences and the potential to help each other during this difficult adaptation.

### *Facilitators to Latino adolescent adjustment*

Participant-identified themes can be collapsed into a number of facilitators to the adjustment process. These facilitators included (1) the motivation participants felt upon learning of the success and recognition of Latino classmates and role models; (2) the mutual support provided by AIM Club members; and, (3) the role of adult support in participants' successful

development. Additional facilitators included the opportunity to share and celebrate their Latino identity with other Latinos, and the opportunity to feel part of a larger community through community involvement. This is consistent with a collectivistic orientation identified by other researchers (Marin & Triandis, 1985), wherein individuals develop a positive sense of self through the achievements of a larger group.

These facilitators provide valuable insight into how one might work to counter the negative outcomes of the challenges identified. Finding social networks such as the AIM Club and identifying effective ways to motivate and engage Latino adolescents, can provide useful guidance in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs to improve the quality of life of Latino adolescents.

#### *Strengths of the CBPR approach*

The use of CBPR and photovoice minimized the potential for researchers' prioritized issues to trump those expressed by participants and influence the project's results. Rather, CBPR and photovoice helped establish a trusted relationship among participants, practitioners, and researchers, and allowed themes to go beyond what Scott (1985) calls 'public discourse' to obtain information about 'hidden transcripts.' Hidden transcripts are characterized as 'subordinates gathering outside the gaze of power and constructing a sharply critical political and cultural discourse' (Chavez, Duran, Baker, Avila, & Wallerstein, 2003, pp. 86–87). This critical discourse is likely the byproduct of the CBPR approach and photovoice method.

#### *Limitations of Realidad Latina*

The findings of this project are limited to Latino adolescents who participated in *Realidad Latina*. As such, they are associated with the participants' experiences as high school students and may not be generalizable. However, the purpose of this exploratory research was not to generalize, but rather to discover relevant causal factors potentially missing in existing theoretical models. This occurs when non-directional approaches elicit experiences and concepts relevant to a given context. Our study was committed to being participant-driven and creating positive change for the participants through action.

#### *Exhibition*

The photograph exhibition was an important component of the project because it increased awareness among attendees of the themes represented in participants' photographs, quotations, and discussions. Attendees of the exhibition expressed thoughts that were directed at making changes within the high school and local community. The defensive reactions of the high school teachers, the principal, and a representative from the local migrant education program, revealed much about the strength of the CBPR approach and photovoice method. The findings gave a platform for this marginalized group of Latino adolescents to express their concerns and push for change. Because every aspect of *Realidad Latina* was driven by photographs, quotations, and themes generated by the participants, their issues and assets could not be disqualified by the principal and other teachers. The conflict that ensued after the exhibition provided the conditions necessary for change. As Alinsky (1971), a strong proponent of the need for conflict and controversy to achieve meaningful change, writes:

Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict. (p. 21)

The photograph exhibition was successful in creating ‘friction’ within the school and community and set off a movement toward what was hoped will amount to meaningful change.

### **Implications and conclusion**

Given the recent and rapid growth of the Latino population in the Southeast US, the challenges faced by newly arrived Latino adolescents in their school and community were found to be compounded by issues of immigration to a new social environment.

This study has two implications for the field of public health. First, *Realidad Latina* reveals the relevance and effectiveness of a CBPR approach with Latino adolescents. Latino adolescents need to be engaged in a participatory and stimulating process that allows them to apply their creative assets toward identifying and addressing their challenges. Given the immediate needs that face a rapidly growing Latino community in NC and the US, research that builds knowledge and creates change both within participants (problem-solving skills) as well as within the community, is clearly needed. In this way, photovoice is more than a research method. It is an intervention strategy that facilitates participant empowerment by creating a space for participation and control over the research process and builds the capacity of participants to mobilize to problem solve.

The second implication is that the findings provide an ‘insider’s view’ from Latino adolescents in rural NC on issues that challenge and facilitate adaptation to life and a future in the US. Future research should further detail the relationships between the challenges and facilitators identified in this project and their impact on Latino adolescents. The above recommendations will ensure that research conducted with Latino adolescents provide rich, participant-based information that is both informative to the researcher and to the development of effective interventions.

### **Acknowledgments**

Human subject review and oversight were provided by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Public Health. This study was supported in part by the Community Health Scholars Program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Immigrant Health Initiative, Chatham Hospital. The authors also would like to thank the participants for their leadership in project partnership and their trust in the research team. During implementation of the project, the first author, J. Matt Streng, was a full-time master’s student in the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education at the School of Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### **Notes**

1 ‘Centerville’ is a pseudonym used to protect the anonymity of the places and people mentioned in the paper.

2 ‘Central County’ is a pseudonym used to protect the anonymity of the places and people mentioned in the paper.

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