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The purpose of this research was to allow Latina immigrants living in the southern United States to document and critique their family and community conditions through photographs and stories of their everyday lives. This research informed by feminist and critical science theory, used photovoice, a participatory action research method, with eight participants. Using interpretive inquiry, key themes were identified and illustrated the participants' experiences. "Improvements with sacrifices" was identified as the overarching theme, with additional key themes of "centrality of family," "hopes for children," and "need for community." This research was empowering for the participants, as it affirmed their community strengths, described their challenges, and provided them with an avenue to share their stories with others.

THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF LATINA IMMIGRANTS IN NORTH

CAROLINA: A PHOTOVOICE PERSPECTIVE

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For the past 500 years, North America has been perceived as the land of abundance and as a place to start a new and better life. During this time, individuals and families across the world migrated to the United States in search of the "American Dream", or the idea that anyone can become prosperous because of the amount of employment and economic opportunities available, and to escape famines, government and religious persecution, and conditions of extreme poverty. Today, increasing numbers of Latinas (i.e., Spanish-speaking women originating from Latin America) and their families are immigrating to the United States for many of the same reasons, carrying with them the hope for a brighter future.

Although Latina immigrants make this incredibly difficult journey (whether legally or illegally) in search for a better life, they encounter many obstacles, such as poverty and discrimination, and often possess limited human capital resources (i.e., English-speaking skills, education, and skills training) that have the potential to alleviate some of these difficulties. Examining Latina immigrants' lives and communities by using participatory action research methods can provide better understanding of how these women perceive their lives, what strengths they possess, how they cope with obstacles, and what changes in macro and micro institutionalized systems need to occur to help them accomplish their goal for a better life and future.

As of 2007, 37.9 million legal and illegal immigrants were living in the United States, which is the highest reported record in the country's history (Camarota, 2007). It is estimated that one out of every eight people currently living in the country is an immigrant, with about one-third being undocumented or illegal (Camarota). In 2003, over half of all immigrants (53.3%) were from Latin America, which includes the Caribbean (10.1%), Central America (36.9%), and South America (6.3%) (Larsen, 2004).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) estimates that over 600,000 residents of North Carolina are foreign-born with 59.4% of this foreign-born population being from Latin America, making up 4.3% of the state's total population. Of the southern United States, North Carolina witnessed the highest Latino immigrant population growth of about 394% between the years of 1990 and 2000 (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). This dramatic population growth can be attributed to three different types of population changes: individuals moving to North Carolina directly from a Hispanic country (38.2%), those migrating from another state or jurisdiction (40.2%), and those born in the state (21.6%) (Kasarda & Johsnon, Jr., 2006).

As stated before, many Latino immigrant families migrate to the United States in search of a better life through obtaining higher paying jobs and higher quality education for their children (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). In qualitative interviews conducted by Bacallao & Smokowski with 10 undocumented Mexican immigrant families, many husbands and wives retrospectively reflected on how they had sought to leave their chronic poverty conditions in Mexico, believing that even the most basic living conditions in the United States would be a substantial improvement. As found by

Campbell (2008), these families have misconstrued and limited knowledge of what their life will be like in the United States from the media (e.g., television) and stories from family members who have migrated before them. Often, when these families reach their destination, their experiences do not meet their expectations.

For instance, poverty continues to be an increasing issue among Latino immigrants in the United States. These immigrants have a 50% higher poverty rate than other U.S.-born citizens. Even after living in the country for 20 years, immigrants are more likely to experience poverty, have no health insurance, and use welfare services compared to U.S.-born citizens (Camarota, 2007). Moreover, immigrants who originate from Latin America have the highest poverty rate (21.6%) of any other foreign-born immigrants (Larsen, 2004).

In the southern United States, the poverty rate for Latino immigrants has increased from 19.7% in 1990 to 25.5% in 2000, despite overall decreases in poverty in the states. Also, most Latino immigrants do not have a high school diploma (62%) nor do they speak English well or even at all (57%) (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Over half of Latino immigrants who settle in North Carolina have less than an eighth grade education and make, on average, about $8,649 per capita annually, which is considerably less than the non-Latino average of $15,480 (Kasarda & Johnson, Jr., 2006). However, some Latino ethnic subgroups have more human capital resources than others. For example, Stier and Tienda's (1992) examination of a nationally representative sample of Latina wives revealed that Mexican immigrant wives average about seven years of formal schooling, which is less than their Central and South American and Puerto Rican

counterparts (9.6 and 10 years, respectively). In this same sample, three-fifths of

participants from Mexico and Central and South American did not speak any English,

whereas only 30% of Puerto Rican immigrants had no such ability.

Due to immigrant Latinos being a smaller minority group (that is rapidly

growing), their increasing poverty levels, and their limited English-speaking ability, this

population faces significant challenges in navigating life in the United States and is

marginalized from the rest of society. Furthermore, Latinas have immigrated in smaller

numbers than their male counterparts as there are 173 Latinos to every 100 Latinas in

North Carolina (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005), which could be due to husbands migrating

before their families and single Latinos migrating alone. Consequently, this makes

Latinas less visible to society. Plus, these women are likely to experience

intersectionality of oppression (e.g., multiple oppressions due to their gender, race,

ethnicity, immigration status, lower and working class status, and limited English-

speaking ability) (Dill & Zambrana, 2009) on a daily basis. These oppressions can

neither be added together nor completely distinguished from one another, but instead

create a linked web of discrimination and disadvantages.

As a result of the growing population of Latino immigrant families and the 2008

economic recession, there has been an increase of academic, government, and citizen

interest in this population, especially in regards to immigrant laws and immigrants' civil

rights. For family studies scholars, this interest has created new research on Latino and

Latina employment, acculturation and assimilation, parent-child and marital

relationships, and how cultural values influence these variables. But the majority of this

research has been quantitative and researcher-driven studies. Hence, few researchers have focused on Latinas' perspectives of their individual, family, and community life, and even fewer have used participatory action research methods for this purpose.

Moreover, many of these studies do not distinguish between recently immigrated Latinas, those who immigrated as children (making assimilation easier), second and third generation immigrants, and citizens (e.g., Mexican-Americans). Also, using vague ethnic categories for participants makes it difficult to fully understand the participants' cultural beliefs, education and employment opportunities, and family ideals and gender ideology.

Despite the growing research literature about Latinas, little is known about how these women use their community strengths (e.g., social support networks) to overcome difficulties and work through cultural differences in the United States. Latinas immigrants' experiences and stories can help researchers, policymakers, and the general public better understand these communities and therefore, better serve their needs. Thus, an incomplete picture of Latinas immigrants' lives, families, and communities exists. How do Latina immigrants living in an urban setting in the southern United States perceive their lives and community? Also, from their perspective, what changes are needed in their communities to improve their quality of life? To answer these research questions, the purpose of this research was to examine the everyday lives, families, and communities of Latina immigrants living in an urban setting in a southern state in the United States. Moreover, this research study aimed to make available an avenue for these women to document, critically reflect upon, and voice their individual and community strengths and challenges to those beyond their community.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To gain a better understanding of Latina immigrants' everyday lives, a variety of topics have been reviewed, which are considered pertinent to Latina immigrants' lives. These topics cover cultural background and gender roles, community structure, discrimination, and family structure and processes. In addition, the theoretical framework used for this research is summarized.

Cultural Background and Gender Roles

Immigrating Latino families bring to their new home cultural beliefs, values, and traditions that influence their family and gender ideology, roles, relationships, and community life. However, scholars, researchers, and community activists who work with Latino immigrants disagree on Latinos' exact native culture values and gender ideology, and to what extent these values and roles transfer into their lives in the United States.

One crucial element to this debate is the use of the terms "machismo," "marianismo," and "malinchismo." Machismo is a Latin term for masculinity and has been defined as everything from Latinos being protective of their families and having strong character to being aggressive, insensitive, and womanizers (Quiñones Mayo & Resnick, 1996). Femininity is dichotomized into two concepts: marianismo and malinchismo. Marianismo is the ideal that women are the mirror image of the Virgin Mary, meaning that they are nurturing, compassionate, and willing to serve others whereas malinchismo is a reference to a woman named La Malinche, a native woman who translated for Hernán Cortés and later bore children to one of his soldiers (Hurtado,

2000). Therefore, the term malinchismo symbolizes woman's betrayal of the native people to the colonizers through cultural and sexual means. These dichotomies deny both men and women real options to develop as individuals with unique characteristics within cultural norms and limits how they are perceived by others, both within and outside their communities.

Depending on the scholar and their definition, these concepts can be as vague and broad as Anglo masculine and feminine ideals. However, Latinas' dedication to their families and Latinos' physically demanding, unskilled waged labor (e.g., agriculture, construction, and factories), make it difficult for some to deny that these gendered stereotypes exists (Hurtado, 2000). Hence, Latino men and women are sometimes labeled with these terms by their everyday actions, which creates stereotypes and negative images of Latinos, even though these characteristics can be identified in many racial ethnic groups who are also dedicated to their families and work physically demanding jobs.

Religion is a major component of culture that structures family traditions (e.g., holidays), morals and beliefs, and how families function (e.g., gender roles and family planning). Roman Catholic Christianity is the primary religion followed and practiced by people in Latin American countries and many Latino families who migrate to the United States continue to practice Catholicism. Throughout history, Roman Catholic laws and politics, as governed by the Catholic Church, have dissuaded individualism, imagination, and enterprise, particularly for women (Quiñones Mayo, and Resnick, 1996), which may have engendered their collectivistic culture.

An ethnographic study by Edgell and Docka (2007) examining the differences between predominately White, Black, and Latino churches in the United States, found that members of a Latino Catholic Parish (originating from Mexcico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Costa Rica) perceived church as more of a family event than the other two racial ethnic groups. Specifically, the Latino members believed church was a place in which the whole family was involved and could participate in all activities together (compared to churches that split children, youth, and adult classes and activities). For these members, church illuminates their family values. The leaders of the Latino parish believed and preached that the ideal household should contain a heterosexual marriage and nuclear family configuration, which follows Christian teachings. Also, the parish leaders expressed that men and women are naturally different and should be perceived as such, especially in how spouses communicate with one another.

As seen through their family participation in religious activities, many Latino families follow the idea of "familism" (Landale & Oropesa, 2007; Simoni & Pérez, 1995), which has most likely originated from their collectivistic culture. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (n.d.) defines familism as "a social pattern in which the family assumes a position of ascendance over individual interest." Even with the changes Latino families undergo in assimilating to Anglo culture (e.g., mothers' employment and children's acculturation), familism continues to remain a familial ideal and sometimes causes tension and stress within families who have to struggle to maintain their collectivistic lifestyle (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007).

According to Simoni and Pérez (1995), the ideal of familism is also connected to two others: "confidanza," which means mutual generosity, and "personaliso," or trusting people more than institutions. If Latina immigrants settle into communities that contain other Latinos (whether related or not), it is expected that they would use each other as a support system before relying on government assistance, such as child care services and financial assistance. These cultural beliefs influence their new lives in the United States depending upon the support systems, available resources, and resource utilization. Yet, Latinos may trust some community organizations more than others, and these organizations can help bridge the gap between Latino families and governmental services. One example of this is the Latino Catholic Parish described earlier that offered a social services VISTA program, which provided the congregation with "English as a Second Language" classes, legal counseling, household goods, and tutoring and after-school care for their children (Edgell & Docka, 2007).

Furthermore, cultural values and traditions (e.g., religion, collectivism, and familism) can greatly influence gender ideology and roles within families, which are intricate components of family and community life. There is some evidence that before Mexican families migrate to the United States they follow patriarchy and traditional divisions of labor with husbands being the sole provider for families and wives being responsible for household and childrearing duties (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). However, there are likely many variations in division of household labor among Latino families because of country differences and demographic diversity, such as educational attainment, age differences, and religions and family values.

The process of migrating internationally has the potential to change gender roles and processes within Latino families. Hondagneu-Soleo's (1992) research study examining the division of labor in Mexican immigrant families found that prior to 1965, husbands who migrated before their families had to learn how to cook and clean their new homes without help of their wives. Whereas husbands who migrated alone after this time period were able to move into communities with other Latinas who provided domestic services, so that they did not have to learn these skills. During the months or years wives were waiting to join their husbands, these women were living with extended family (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007), receiving small and sporadic remittances from their husbands, and engaging in informal employment (e.g., washing and ironing laundry in their homes) to financially support their family (Hondagneu-Sotelo). Although this was undoubtedly a difficult and uncertain time for these mothers, being the head of household and working permitted them to gain autonomy, confidence in themselves, and occupational skills.

When the families reunited, the wives retained their empowering attributes and entered into employment (possibly due to economic need more than gender equality) and the husbands who learned domestic labor skills continued doing these tasks when their wives worked, creating more egalitarian gender roles. On the other hand, the husbands who migrated after 1965 and did not learn domestic labor skills were unlikely to help with household tasks, despite their wives' contributions to the family income (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992). Additionally, Ybarra (1982) found that many Mexican husbands in the United States believed they should help their working wives with both

housework and childrearing when their wives work, and many of these husbands did. Thus, it is possible that Latino men and women who move to the United States, whether single or married, have to learn new gender roles, making them more likely to practice egalitarian roles than if they had remained in their native country.

However, when comparing Mexican families in Mexico to their immigrant counterparts living in Durham, North Carolina, a different picture emerges suggesting that wives' employment is not the only factor in predicting gender roles. According to Parrado and Flippen (2005), wives' employment, which is indicative of wives' human capital and individual resources, is an essential influential factor in eliciting more egalitarian gender roles in Mexican families. But this association is greater for Mexican families in Mexico, increasing the likelihood of husband's participation in housework by 30%, versus 9% for immigrant families living in North Carolina. Through qualitative data, the authors surmised this difference was likely due to the various reasons why these women work (i.e., women in the United States working more out of financial necessity than those in Mexico) and Mexican immigrant families strongly resisting the influences of Anglo culture.

Also, the disproportion of males to females in some Latino immigrant communities could place women at a greater disadvantage in relationship control. For instance, the presence of the husband's extended family members in the immigrant Durham community reinforced traditional divisions of labor because of the amount of housework wives were expected to perform for multiple family members and the encouragement husbands received for not participating in housework (Parrado & Flippen,

2005). However, friendships may be an empowering relationship, as husbands were 11%

more likely to participate in housework when their wives were able to visit a friend at

least once a week.

Acculturation and Community Structure

When Latinos and Latinas migrate to the United States, they are likely to

experience acculturative stress (Smart & Smart, 1995). According to Smart and Smart,

the biggest contributor to this stress is from leaving friends and family behind in their

native country and losing their essential support system. These authors also believe that

many of these families have a difficult time assimilating into their new environment

because they do not know their communities and surrounding culture enough to make the

best judgments and decisions, which could be exacerbated by not speaking English.

In congruence, a study by Padilla, Cervantes, Adonado, and Garcia (1988) found

that 77% of their male participants and 93% of their female participants believed leaving

behind and missing their friends and family was the most difficult experience in the first

year of being in the United States. These Latinos would write letters, call, and send

money, and make short visits to stay in touch with their family, and many wanted to bring

their family to the United States. Sadly, one in six participants felt like there was nothing

they could do and had to accept that they were separated from their family indefinitely.

Padilla, et al. (1988), found other psychosocial stressors of being an immigrant.

Eighty-three percent of the female participants (with a total of 63 male and female

participants) indicated that not speaking English was the most difficult aspect of living in

the United States, which was higher than the male percentage of 64%. Other difficulties

mentioned (in order from highest to lowest) included, unemployment, being "undocumented," transportation and life-style changes, discrimination, and not having enough money. To combat some of these difficulties, the participants wanted to learn to speak English, go out and look for work, and receive help from other family and friends for money and housing.

Similarly, a qualitative study by Campbell (2008) involving 20 undocumented Mexican immigrant women living in South Carolina, discovered that many of the women were lonely, which was also due to being separated from loved ones and not speaking English. However, not only did these women feel lonely, they also felt isolated in their new communities. Indeed, Cheong (2006) found that Latina immigrants perceive their new communities to be unsafe due to high crime rates including gang and drug activities. In these neighborhoods, women are less likely to go outside their homes, which made it harder for them to interact with each other and build new friendships and connections.

However, in Campbell's (2008) research, the women used local adult centers as a way to socialize while they were also improving their education. The women believed increasing their education was a crucial component to establishing a better future and becoming a better parent. These centers provided classes for ESL, basic literacy, preparation for the general equivalency diploma (GED), computer processing, health education, and occupational safety skills. In interviews, Campbell found that the women wanted to express pride in their accomplishments, instead of focusing on their many needs, and emphasized that their new environment and living conditions were better than where they lived in Mexico.

For a Latina immigrant sample in Washington, D.C., these needs included affordable health care services, skills training, literacy classes, higher wages, quality education, legal services for immigration purposes, social support for the elderly, and improved transportation (Strug & Mason, 2002). But despite these needs and their impoverished conditions, many women are unable to or do not wish to take advantage of available welfare services. Their community leaders believe that the complexity and confusion of welfare eligibility and regulations, fear of deportation, Latinas' limited English-speaking skills, and pride keep them from applying for these benefits. Also, Latina immigrants do not trust governmental agencies and feel discriminated against by government employees (Cheong, 2006).

Discrimination

Latina immigrants undoubtedly experience many forms of discrimination in their communities and new environments. As Smart and Smart (1995) stated, some immigrant Latinos are at more risk for certain types of discrimination because of their "undocumented" status. These authors suggest that Latino immigrants live in perpetual fear of deportation and therefore do not trust others. They also do not have any employee rights, as their employers could exploit and blackmail Latinos and Latinas by waiting until assigned work is completed and then reporting them to the Bureau of US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, forming known as INS) for deportation so that the employer does not have to pay for work completed (Smart & Smart).

In searching for everyday perceptions of discrimination, Pérez, Fortuna, and Alegría (2008) analyzed interviews of 2553 Latinos (557 Cuban, 495 Puerto Rican, 868

Mexican, and 614 identified as other Latino) from The National Latino and Asian American Study and found an overall perceived discrimination rate of 30%. Interestingly, these researchers found that Latinos reported experiencing more discrimination than Latinas. Also, those participants who were ages 18 to 44, who migrated when they were younger than 6, who had higher levels of education, and those who had a weak ethnic identity were more likely to report experiencing discrimination. The authors concluded that Latinos who have become more assimilated are more sensitive to discrimination as they have higher expectations of fair treatment.

Family Structure and Processes

Just as there are variations in cultural values and gender roles for Latino families according to their country of origin, socioeconomic status, and individual differences, there are many variances in family structure and processes. However, for Latino ethnic subgroups, it is likely that family characteristics are more similar to one another than they are to other racial ethnic groups living in the United States. When examining family structure differences among White, Black, and Latino families through demographic data, Landale and Oropesa (2007) determined that Latino families are becoming more like White and Black families, especially for second and third generation immigrants who are more assimilated, however there are still some distinct differences.

In particular, Mexican American females are more likely to get married at a young age, as 46% of Mexican American women between the ages of 20 and 24 were married in 2000, compared to 16% Black women (who are the least likely) of the same age group. Even though marital rates have been declining for all racial ethnic groups,

these decreases have been less dramatic for Mexicans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans. Additionally, in 2000, Latina women had a fertility rate of 2.9, which is slightly higher than both White (1.9) and Black (2.2) women, though Latinas percentage of unmarried births has increased from 20% in 1980 to 41% in 2000 (Landale & Oropesa, 2007).

Some of these racial ethnic differences in young marriages may explain variations in family household structures. Latino families are more likely to be headed by a cohabitating couple or single mother than White families, but less likely than Blacks, which may be partially explained by increases in unmarried births for Latinas. Alternatively, Latino families are also less likely to be headed by a married couple than White families, but more than Blacks. Furthermore, between 6 to 10% of Latino households in the United States consist of extended family, whereas only 3% of White families live with extended kin (Landale & Oropesa, 2007).

Landale and Oropesa (2007) attribute these differences and significant changes in family structure to Latino families' familism ideal and their socioeconomic disadvantage. Their collectivistic culture promotes younger and larger families, as they are unlikely to put off marriage and childbearing for personal educational and occupational goals and are likely to have several children. Overtime, these families become more assimilated, with each generation's family structure becoming more similar to Whites and Blacks. Because of their economic disadvantages, Latino families may be refraining from marriage and having more unmarried births (like economically disadvantaged Black families) even though this family structure is not prevalent in Latin America.

Interestingly, Mexican American marital quality and stability appear to mirror that of White couples. As found by Bulanda and Brown (2007), Mexican American and White marriages have similar marital quality, with no differences in marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, or perceived instability, and similar divorce rates. On average, Mexican American and White marriages have higher marital quality, fewer disagreements and problems, and more stability than Black married couples. However, when separating the foreign-born Mexican Americans from those who were born in the United States, a different picture emerges. Even though foreign-born Mexican Americans made up a small portion of the sample, the researchers found that they have lower marital problems than both Black and White couples, and lower marital disagreements than Black couples. This suggests that immigrant marital relationships are different from their U.S.-born counterparts, but to what extent is unknown.

As stated earlier, international migration into a country of differing culture can change and influence Latino family processes, such as gender roles and employment. These changes can either positively or negatively impact the family. Plus, it may affect individuals within the family differently. When Latina mothers participate in employment, they are taking on an additional role to their already demanding responsibilities of being wives and mothers. This may be why Latina mothers experience more negative work-to-family and family-to-work conflict than their husbands (Roehling, Jarvis, & Swope, 2005). Indeed, many immigrant Mexican families (i.e., mothers, fathers, and adolescents) complain about the decreases in time working mothers are

spending at home. This change causes marital and parent-child relationship conflict,

overloaded families, and increases in family stress (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007).

Husbands have the potential for reducing their wife's role strain and stress by

supporting her career ambitions, which has been found for Latinas in more prestigious

job positions (i.e., professional, managerial, and entrepreneur) (Amaro, Russo, &

Johnson, Jr., 1987). Also, when husbands are supportive of their wives through

engagement in more household and childrearing labor, their wives are more likely to have

higher marital satisfaction and thus, fewer depressive symptoms than Latinas who are

responsible for all domestic duties in the home (Saenz, Goudy, & Lorenz, 1989).

To help balance these roles, many Latina immigrant mothers use a variety of child

care arrangements. In California, the most prevalent child care used by Latino families is

nonfamily home-based care (57.1%), followed by Head Start and other state funded

preschools (55%), grandparents and other relative (36%), non-family in-home child care

(e.g., babysitter or nanny) (34.2%), licensed child care (28%), and preschools or nurseries

(24.1%) (Santhiveeran, 2010). Obviously, many of these families use more than one

child care provider, creating a variety of child care arrangements. Due to immigrant

Latino families' limited financial resources and immigrant status, these child care

arrangements are possibly influenced by their income and community availability.

Summary

A review of the current literature gives a partial picture of Latina immigrants'

lives, families, and community. In summary, Latino immigrant families are more likely

to follow traditional divisions of labor, which may change overtime due to physical

separation, financial necessity, and social support systems. Also, these families tend to follow cultural ideals from their native countries, such as familism and Catholicism. When Latinas and their families migrate to the United States, they may often experience acculturation stress due to leaving their family, friends, and essential support systems behind. This acculturation stress is exacerbated by their language barriers, which limits their ability to create social support systems in their new communities. Moreover, some Latina immigrants believe their new community environments are unsafe and discriminatory.

Even though this partial picture of Latina immigrants' lives, families, and communities exists, there is still little knowledge about the family and cultural ideals these women practice in the United States, actual community life, and how they cope with being separated from family and friends. Furthermore, none of the literature reviewed was conducted using participatory action research methods, which would allow participants to be collaborators in the research process from which information about Latina immigrants' everyday lives could emerge.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is based on feminist and critical theory propositions and research. Although many feminist theories have been formulated by different populations of women with a variety of goals and beliefs, the overall assumption is that all women are oppressed. Also, Chicana feminism, which has been developed by women of Latino descent, examines feminist issues from an anti-colonial perspective. These feminists argue that Latino culture has been attacked by Anglo

cultural ideals, which started during the colonization of the Americas. Due to this colonization, Latinas have to balance the cultures of indigenous natives, Mexican culture, and White culture, and identify where they belong within each of these. Therefore, Chicana feminists work towards ending Latinas' oppression, centered around issues brought about by colonization, such as the gendered concepts of machismo, marianismo, and malinchismo, and aimed at keeping at bay the dominate White culture (Anzaldúa, 2003).

Although gender inequality is the primary focus of feminist theory, it also acknowledges that a woman may be oppressed on many levels (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality, class, and sexual orientation) all of which inform each other (Dill & Zambrana, 2000; King, 1989). Each social category of gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual orientation has a distinct hierarchy of who has more power, and therefore resources (e.g., money, education, and housing). Individuals are categorized into these social hierarchies creating a linked web of oppressions or power, depending on the individual's status (Dill & Zambrana). An intersectional approach to research examines the experiences of women of color, individual and group identities and variations, and the uncovering of interconnected systems of inequality, in an effort to promote social change and the elimination of oppression (Dill & Zambrana). This intersectionality of oppression makes it impossible to end women's oppression without addressing all oppression.

Feminist theory also asserts that minority groups have the opportunity for a more complete view of society. Because they are in a world in which they possess little power,

minority groups, out of necessity, have to learn how to navigate their oppressive environment by understanding both their world and the world of those who are privileged. This "double vision" or "double consciousness" is not necessary for privileged individuals in society, who only need knowledge of their culture to survive and be prosperous (Du Bois, 1983; Hartsock, 1986; Nielson, 1990; Thompson, 1992).

Feminist theories are based on the experiences of women's everyday lives and the voices they give to those experiences (Lugones & Spelman, 1986). Consequently, feminist research acknowledges that women, and their stories, are the creators and sources of knowledge (Thompson, 1992). Unfortunately, minority women's voices and experiences have just in the last several decades become more acknowledged and centralized in the feminist movement. This means that fewer documentations of their everyday experiences and stories exist, creating a gap in knowledge of minority women's lives and families (Thompson).

Women's knowledge of their lives, formulated through their experiences, is constructed and conveyed through language and dialogue, as language is the medium individuals use to communicate with others (Brown, 1989). Therefore, language is powerful and holds meaning, but not everyone has the power to be heard (Lather, 1991). Because of oppressed individuals' inability to get their stories told in society or not being listened to when they do tell their stories, their power is diminished. However, through dialogue with others, women can come to a new shared meaning of their experiences and lives, which empowers them through identifying and naming important obstacles in achieving equality and ascertaining how these obstacles are connected to social

institutions (Acker, Berry, & Esseveld, 1983; Van Den Bergh, 1987; Nielson, 1990; Stanley & Wise, 1983).

Similarly, critical theory postulates that oppressed individuals are able to change oppressive forces through dialogue, self-reflection, and critiques of everyday life events (Brown, 1989; Coomer, 1989; Nielson, 1990). This is sometimes referred to as conscientization (a concept by Paulo Freire), a process whereby individuals are able to expose misconceptions and distorted images used to maintain oppression by reflecting upon their positions in a social political environment (Brown; Cook & Fonow, 1990; Liao, 2006; Nielson). Moreover, this discourse examines what changes are needed and the necessary steps to make these changes, making this process empowering and facilitating social change (Coomer).

Hence, both feminist and critical theories contain emancipatory properties and posit that research methods that incorporate dialogue and critical reflection are the best way to empower oppressed participants (Lather, 1986). Inevitably, researchers have more power than their participants, through their control of and access to the data generated by participants' words, feelings, and thoughts. Thus, in feminist and critical research, researchers acknowledge this power and try to diminish it by collaborating with the participants in conducting the research methods, analyses, and results (8et al., 1993; Stanley & Wise, 1983). In addition, researchers establish rapport with the participants that includes reciprocity (Lather) and intersubjectivity so interpretative analyses not only produce predictable themes (Shields & Dervin, 1993; Westkott, 1990), but also become a

product of shared meaning between the researcher and those researched (Acker et al.;

Thompson, 1992; Weber, 1986).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

To adhere to both feminist and critical research principles, this was a qualitative study using photovoice, an innovative participatory action research method. Participatory action research is an empowering methodology designed to lead to consciousness-raising and transformative social action by allowing participants to create, examine, and illuminate data (Lather, 1988; Small, 1995). It is primarily used with marginalized groups to provide the opportunity, through reflection and dialogue, to critically assess their life situations and together visualize a more just society (Lather). Similar to standpoint feminist epistemology, participatory action research is contextually grounded, meaning that it is grounded in history and society and aims to increase knowledge by recognizing marginalized groups as "knowers" (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007). In addition, though engaging in participatory action research, participants have the potential to create positive change in their lives and community through learning new ways to communicate and interact with others (McTaggart, 1991).

In participatory action research, the participants are recognized as a source of knowledge (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007). As such, they are given collaborative control over the research design, analyses, and results so that they become co-researchers with the principle investigator facilitating the research (Brydon-Miller, 1997; Reinharz, 1992; Small, 1995). To create this partnership between researcher and participants, a

communicative space has to be established in which the participants feel included and have a sense of their individual power (Wicks & Reason, 2009). This requires mutual trust, respect, and reciprocity between researchers and participants (Reinharz). In a communicative space, participants can disclose their experiences, begin the process of critically reflecting upon their experiences, and collaboratively create a shared meaning with other participants and the researcher.

The photovoice method was developed by Wang and Burris (1994; Wang, Burris, Xiang, 1996) to assess the health needs of 62 rural Yunnan Chinese women using feminist theory and Paulo Freire's idea of critical consciousness (Wang & Burris, 1997). They believed that photographs are powerful images, which provide unique perspective when taken by those living within oppressed communities instead of from an outsider's point-of-view. They thought images could bring about individual and community action leading to social change. As the name suggests, the purpose of photovoice is to use images (i.e., "photo") and accompanying stories (i.e., "voice") to connect those who ordinarily do not have a voice in decisions about their lives to policymakers and community leaders who have the power to build on their assets and create positive changes (Wang, Burris, & Xiang). Therefore, the "photo" part involves giving cameras to a group of individuals (usually 7 to 10 individuals) to take photographs depicting their everyday lives including the strengths and weaknesses that exist in their community. The "voice" part involves facilitating a way for the participants to critically reflect upon these images and their stories with one another, and thus create a plan of action for change (Wang, 1999).

In photovoice studies, the participants become co-researchers by collecting photographs in their community, selecting the photographs that are the best representations of their everyday lives, contextualizing the photographs with descriptions and stories, and identifying major strengths, weaknesses, and overall themes (Wang & Burris, 1997). Through this process, the participants become the creators of knowledge; by naming photographs and interpreting their meanings, the photographs help redefine their world and circumstances. This is central to the data analysis. These key images, stories, and themes are later presented to the policymakers and community leaders the participants have chosen to see and hear their stories (Wang, 1999).

Another way photovoice is empowering is through raising critical consciousness. Through the data collection and analysis process (i.e., selecting what to photograph, deciding what experiences and stories to share, interpreting the data, and engaging in group dialogue) participants began to critically reflect upon their community and lives, challenge misconceptions and assumptions, and reach higher levels of consciousness (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006; Downey, Ireson, & Scutchfield, 2009). The participants are able to connect the photographs they have taken with their own personal experiences and everyday lives, which are then shared in a group setting (Downey et al.) to create a shared meaning of their community. As Carlson, Engebretson, and Chamerlain found in their African American community photovoice research, photovoice allows participants to move from an emotional state of hopelessness to a better understanding of their reality to, finally, a sense of hopefulness through intentions to act on their behalf for a better future.

Research Setting

   This research took place at a local community center in an urban setting in North Carolina. This urban setting houses universities and colleges and therefore has a variety of habitants from across the nation and world, making it a demographically diverse place to live. However, the majority of Latino residents are lured to the city through different means than educational institutions. Only a small portion of the city's Latino population is made up of middle-class Latinos (i.e., students, businessmen, and professionals), with the majority of the city's Latino population being working class who came to work in agriculture. Some of these Latinos are contracted by the Department of Labor, whereas others came as guest workers for the harvest seasons. In the past, these seasonal workers would come to help in harvesting crops and return to their native countries, but more and more are staying year-around because of ongoing economic hardships in their native countries. Other working class Latinos work in construction and factories, which were the basis of economic prosperity in this city during the 1990s (Center for New North Carolinians; n.d.).

Participants

   The participants for this research study were selected from a local community agency that has a program for Latina mothers with infant and toddler children. This agency works to bring together immigrant populations and communities in North Carolina through education, research, and providing services. This infant/toddler health program has been active within the city's Latino communities for several years and the program coordinator had established rapport with the Latina immigrant residents living

there. The participants were recruited through word-of-mouth (i.e., convenience sampling) through the program's coordinator and other community advocate staff at the local community center until nine Latina immigrant mothers who fit the criterion of being an immigrant from a Latin American country had volunteered. One of these participants voluntarily left the research project due to employment time constraints, leaving a total of eight participants. All of the participants' names have been changed in this research to help protect their identity.

All participants had emigrated from Mexico except for one who was from the Dominican Republic, with the women's time living in the United States ranging from 7 to 17 years. The women's ages ranged from early 20s to mid 30s and they each had two to four children. In addition, each participant was either legally married or living with a male partner whom they referred to as "husband." Furthermore, the participants had few or no close relatives living in the same community. Only one of the participants spoke fluent English, with two speaking some English, and five speaking very little or no English.

Data Collection

The photovoice research was conducted in five meetings over the course of three weeks during June 2010 in conjunction with the infant/toddler health program meetings. During each meeting, the program coordinator and her assistant translated for the author and an additional researcher, who took field notes of these group discussion translations and other observations.

The initial part of the first meeting consisted of establishing rapport through introductions, explaining the purpose and process of photovoice, and receiving participants' consent. The participants were told that the purpose of the research was to learn more about Latina immigrants' lives and communities and they would be asked to take photographs of their everyday lives and discuss as a group what the photographs portrayed of their communities. The researcher discussed how the research could impact their lives by providing visual and written evidence of the strengths and challenges found in their communities. Sharing their photographs and stories with others in and outside their communities would create awareness about their lives. The potential benefits and risks for the participants, their families, and community were also clarified.

During this first meeting the participants were given digital cameras and consent booklets. The researcher gave an orientation on photography using photographic examples and demonstrations on how to properly use a digital camera (e.g., how to turn it on and off, how to keep it protected, not to place fingers on the lens, and how to view their pictures) and basic photography (e.g., taking unposed shots, shadows, and flash features). How to tell a story through photographs, the power of photographs, and the ethics of photographing (e.g., gaining consent and understanding how photographs can portray individuals positively and negatively) were also explained. The women practiced taking photographs using their assigned cameras. They were each given a consent booklet in Spanish that explained what the photographs would be used for and how to gain consent of those they photographed with their initials. Only initials (as opposed to signatures) were required from individuals who were photographed to help prevent

identification and reduce fear of deportation for those who are undocumented. At the end

of this meeting, participants were asked to take 10 photographs that represented their

everyday lives in their community. A contact was provided in case questions or camera

difficulties arose.

Between the first and second meeting the researcher visited each woman at her

home, addressed questions, and downloaded the photographs each had taken that week.

Thumbnail sized (i.e., about 3 square inches) and hard copies of each participants'

photographs were printed in preparation for the following meeting.

At the second meeting, the women were asked to reflect upon their experiences of

being a photographer. This is an important step in the photovoice process and in self-

reflection because using photography as a way to express thoughts and feelings about

their lives is different than everyday camera usage. While the women shared their

photography experiences with one another, they received their photo albums containing

all of their photographs and were asked to select one favorite from the 10 they had taken.

These favorite photographs were taken out of the albums and placed in protective plastic

sleeves and displayed together on the center table. The women were asked to share their

favorite photograph and asked: What prompted you to take this photo and select it to talk

about? and What does your photograph tell us about your community? They were also

asked to elaborate on their descriptions by using a series of questions from the acronym

SHOWeD developed by Wang (1999). What do you See here? What is really Happening

here? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does this situation, concern, or strength

exist? What can we Do about it? After each woman had an opportunity to share their

photograph, a group discussion and reflection ensued about what these photographs meant as a whole. At the end of this meeting, the women were asked to take an additional 10 photographs during the next week.

This discussion of the favorite photographs continued into the third meeting. In addition, the participants were asked to tell about their personal stories of coming to the United States to provide the researcher with more background information that could help inform the discussions and evolving themes. The questions for this discussion included: What country are you originally from? What prompted your move? Do you have family here? How is living here different from your home country? What do you like about living here? What do you miss? and What are your goals for the future? These personal stories lead to a discussion about their social and political context and cultural expectations. The women were asked to think about the key issues (e.g., children's education and health) that were brought up in discussion when continuing to take pictures throughout the week.

Between the third and forth meeting, the researcher again visited the women at their homes to collect photographs and consent booklets. These final photographs were downloaded, printed, and placed in their individual photo albums for the next meeting.

Similar to the second meeting, the fourth meeting started off with each participant selecting two favorite photographs from their total number of 20. If photographs were chosen that were different from their original favorites, they were again asked to elaborate using the SHOWeD acronym (Wang, 1999). After this process, the women were asked to create a collective story of family and community by discussing what the

photographs portrayed using the questions: What do you see as your community's strengths and challenges from your photographs? How can you build on these strengths and meet the challenges? How would you like your community to be? and What did you learn about your community? To create a plan of action they were also asked: Who do you want to know about your community? and Who needs to hear your stories and see your photographs?

During the study, an opportunity arose to display the participant's photographs and descriptions at a local Refugee Day Event. The participants saw this as a way to increase awareness of their lives and Latino families. Thus, the fifth and last meeting began at a local Children's Museum with the participants in attendance. After the exhibit, the group celebrated their hard work with lunch and reflected upon their experience and talked about what they wanted for their children and future. At the end of this meeting, each participant was given $20 for compensation of her time and work plus an album of all the photographs she had taken.

Data Analysis

Interpretive inquiry was used to analyze the data. According to van Manen (1984; Hultgren, 1989), interpretive inquiry attempts to get at the "essence" of a phenomenon, human social behaviors and activities, and everyday life experiences. Interpretivists postulate that humans must interpret their world to understand it and thus, individual's understandings are their interpretations and vice versa (Hultgren; Smith, 1992). Participants' convey their interpretations to others through dialogue and language (Hultgren), which then can be reinterpreted by researchers (Angen, 2000). At its

simplest, interpretive inquiry tries to understand the interpretations participants have of their own environment and lives to gain a better comprehension of participants' everyday lives (Smith). Furthermore, interpretations are not absolute truth nor are they incorrect (Smith), instead they depict an individual's perspective on a collection of data that is socially and historically contextualized and open to further interpretations (Angen; van Manen). The main purpose of interpretive inquiry is to uncover new insights into a phenomenon that can lead to further and new investigations and discussions on the topic (Angen).

Even though there may not be an absolute truth to the data, the final interpretations or themes are created through careful analysis by researchers who immerse themselves in their data (Smith, 1992) and let themes emerge (Tesch, 1987). Also, trustworthiness of themes is created by multiple individuals being able to agree that the themes are appropriate for the participants according to social context and historical place (Smith, 1984). In interpretive inquiry, themes are established by going back and forth between the "whole" and "parts" of the data, which inform each other (Smith, 1984). Furthermore, there is no true beginning or end to the data analysis, but it is complete whenever the researcher feels satisfied or has a sense of the themes being "just right" (Tesch).

In this research study, the data analysis began with the participants selecting and describing their favorite photographs that related most to their everyday lives and communities. The researcher selected her favorite photographs and grouped all the favorites according to similar characteristics and attributes.

The descriptions and discussions were examined carefully and sections of text data were placed into similar categories as the photographs. It was noted that during the discussions, some women spoke more than others and those who were more talkative had higher levels of education and were more fluent in English. Yet the quieter participants verbally or physically agreed (i.e., by saying "sí" and nodding during discussions) to what other women were saying indicating agreement on their individual and collective strengths and challenges.

Reviewing the photographs and their descriptions and the group discussions, the researcher began to name the photograph and description groups to identify major themes. After again reviewing all of the data, the final names were given to the themes. The themes emerged primarily came from the participants' own words, and were changed until the themes felt "just-right." When the themes were written, the researcher selected the photographs and descriptions that best expressed the group's feelings and ideas.

Positionality

As a U.S.-born young adult woman who is White, middle-class, and married with no children, it is impossible for me to fully understand the types of oppression and discrimination Latina immigrant mothers have experienced. Even though I am of the same gender, I have not experienced the various forms of oppression Latina mothers have nor how these oppressions intersect with sexism. So, my experiences of gender inequality are not similar to theirs. Also, I have lived in one state the entirety of my life and cannot imagine having to pick up my life and move to a foreign country in search for a better life. The American culture I have been raised in is very individualistic with

people striving for individual happiness and prosperity, which is very different than the Latino ideal of collectivism. As a feminist researcher, my feminist values conflict with gender ideology and roles that keep women in more traditional divisions of labor, which are often found in Latino families. Moreover, I am only fluent in English and have never experienced the Latin American culture through firsthand experience. These factors place me at a great disadvantage to understanding their lives, families, and communities.

Due to immigration and immigration laws and policies being a frequent topic in the media, it is important to address my perspective on the issue. It is difficult for me to decide who has the right to determine how many of what nationality or immigrants enter the United States. But, I believe that individuals, no matter where they live or where they are from, should have the basic right to change their place of residence even into other countries. This allows people to escape unfavorable conditions in their native country, to secure life and liberty, and to pursue happiness, which are stated as unalienable human rights in the United States Declaration of Independence. Regardless of why, how, or when immigrants moved to the United States, they deserve to be treated equally. In this research, I am promoting understanding of other cultures and people who live within the United States, instead of focusing on the so-called "problems" they create for society. Furthermore, the focus of this research study is Latinas, who are a group of women discriminated against and unfairly treated, which is a feminist issue and concerns me as a feminist.

To help offset the acknowledged researcher subjectivities above, the researcher worked meticulously with participants using a participatory action research method that

gives them collaborative control over how the data were collected, themes identified, and how these themes were presented to others in their community. This helped ensure that the researcher accurately portrayed the women's perspectives, experiences, stories, reflections, and feelings in the final results. In addition, the Thriving at Three program coordinator was asked to alert the researcher when a topic was brought up that could be potentially harmful to the participants, their families, or their community. Furthermore, two local Latina immigrants helped translate and take notes for the project. These women were able to collaborate with the researcher and help place the data within historical and cultural context. Lastly, the final themes were presented to another researcher who participated in the research to make sure the participants' experiences, stories, and discussions were accurately described.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The participant's photographs and descriptions of their everyday lives and community were used to answer two research questions: How do Latina immigrants living in the southern United States perceive their lives and community? Also, from their perspective, what changes are needed in their community to improve their quality of life? Through their photographs and their stories, the women showed that the most important components of their lives are their families, their children's well-being, and having a sense of community. Furthermore, they depicted though photographs and discussions many aspects of their lives they would like to see improved, such as having more time for themselves, and better community connections. They were working on many of these but needed help to create the desired changes in others.

The eight Latina immigrant participants came to the United States for various reasons, but the majority migrated because they wanted or needed to escape unfavorable conditions, such as violence in the home and community in their native country. As Ana frankly stated during one of the many group discussions, "I just want to be in a country where there are opportunities, peace, no violence, and no extortion. I want a president who has those things." Some improvements their families gained by moving to the United States included access to better community environments and health care services, better education for their children, and safety. However, many of these women

voiced having to endure sacrifices to have these life improvements, such as having to leave friends and family, who are essential social support systems. In their new communities, they also experienced discrimination and were concerned about their children being served unhealthy school lunches.

Through interpretive inquiry an overall theme of "improvements with sacrifices" emerged and was expressed throughout the participants' photographs and descriptions. This overarching theme was apparent in the three major themes, centrality of family, hopes for children, and need for community.

Centrality of Family

Family is a central component to these Latinas and their lives. The majority of photographs contained images of families being together and doing activities together. It is apparent that these mothers prided themselves in keeping alive the Latino cultural trait of familism within their families even though they resided in a country with more individualistic ideals. This is expressed by Isabela who said, "We are a very family-oriented culture. We have to teach children that grandparents are important, but not important here." Within the "centrality of family" theme, three subthemes were identified: family togetherness, facilitating family well-being, and placing family first.

Family togetherness. In this research, "family togetherness" refers to families spending time with one another, doing activities together, and having a sense that the family is connected and works together as a singular unit. As stated above, the majority of photographs taken by the participants showed them with their family in various community locations and at home engaging in activities together. Some of these

photographs showed families on an outing at the local park and lake (see Figure 1),

husbands playing soccer with their sons, and children playing together with toys and

coloring inside the house.

Figure 1. Family at Water Park
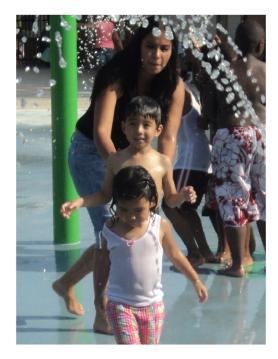
As seen in Figure 2 taken by Mariana, she would take her children grocery

shopping and perceived this responsibility as more than an everyday necessity. In her

own words, "I took this picture and picked it as my favorite because it represents family

and sharing. This gives [my children] an example of family and shopping, and what to

buy. These are moments to share with my kids."

Figure 2. Mother Shopping with Children

Only one of the eight women in the group was employed; the rest of these

mothers stayed at home and took care of the children and house when their husbands

were working outside of the home. Rosa expressed this motherly responsibility by

saying, "The Latino community always takes care of their own children. They don't send

them to someone else unless it is an emergency. They always take care of their own."

By these mothers staying at home and taking care of domestic needs, they are ensuring

that their family stayed close together.

Facilitating family well-being. In accordance with the participants being family

centered, there were several photographs portraying family members being resourceful in

doing different types of duties, chores, and activities that contributed to the family's

physical and mental well-being. For example, two of the eight women took photographs

of gardens they grew on their property for their family to cook; another participant took a

picture of chickens she raises for eggs. These women wanted their family to have healthy

food to eat, and were resourceful in growing a garden and raising chickens for their

family. Similarly, many of the women's husbands did yard work and handiwork around

the house, to keep repair costs down and alleviate financial stress on the family. In

Figure 3, Esperanza's husband is repairing their car, as she described, "My husband is

fixing the car. He almost always fixes it unless he doesn't know what is wrong with it –

then he takes it to a garage."

Figure 3. Husband Fixing Car

Mariana added, "Mexicans love to work and they are fast learners to learn new things,

whatever it is. The car is broken and they are working right there to fix it. They take

charge to fix it. They don't take it anywhere." In other words, the participants' husbands

were willing to put in the time and effort to see if they are able to fix the car themselves

before taking it to someone who would charge money, which helped their families be

able to pay for other necessities and facilitated family well-being.

Placing family first. Due to the participants' strong belief in collective ideals

and familism, the women placed their family first in their lives and everything else came

second. Often, they placed their family needs above their own individual aspirations and desires, which led to them feeling tired and stressed. In Figure 4, Rosa took a photo of a local community water fountain to express her feelings, "Whenever I feel stressed, I look at water and it makes me calm down. I get stressed a lot. The same routine you create for your house, it repeats. I get stressed doing the same things."

Figure 4. Community Water Fountain

After these women have taken care of their children, husband, and other household needs, there is not enough time or other resources to do the things they want. Several of the women wanted to participate in local classes that would advance their careers and build their self-esteem. During this discussion, Mariana and Yuliana shared their thoughts with the group:

Mariana: Moms need help with children since they are stay-at-home moms and want to take courses. Like computer courses. I had to stop nursing classes because of my kids.

> Yuliana: At the beginning it was hard. I would not leave the children and I was very attached to them. But I am changing. Now I feel more comfortable to leave the kids to take courses.

> Mariana: I have a responsibility to take care of the kids, family, husband, and house. I want to do something for myself. I get tired of doing it all.

Every woman in the group agreed that they would like to have more time for themselves and opportunities for personal and professional development, but many thought that this would have to wait until their children have grown up because they did not have the money to pay for child care or did not want someone else taking care of their children.

Hopes for Children

As a result of being family centered, the women were focused on their children's well-being, happiness, and future and had many hopes for their children. In particular, the participants hoped that their children would receive a good education, have the resources to be healthy, and live in a safe environment. To hope for something is to have a "desire accompanied by expectation or belief in fulfillment" (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, n.d.). Also, a hope can be "someone or something on which hopes are centered." This is one of the areas of their family they hoped to improve by migrating to the United States. Catalina explains, "I want my children to have a better life, more opportunities for them to go to school, and to be happy and safe."

The hope for their children to receive a better education was based upon the women believing that the United States has a better educational system and more opportunities for learning than their native countries. During a discussion, Isabela mentioned, "There are no books in Mexico. Parents don't read to their children. There is

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not a lot of education." And Ana added, "There is more accessibility here." The women

knew that their hope could become reality in the United States and fulfilled by their

children studying and working to do well in school.

Therefore, the participants wanted their children to enjoy school and be happy

about school because they knew it could affect their children's performance and how

much their children were willing to work at it. In Figure 5, Catalina's daughter is getting

ready for school. In Catalina's own words, "My children had just woken up in the

morning. They are always happy when they wake up in the morning; they are going to

school. I am always satisfied that they are happy—they are happy in general."

Figure 5. Daughter Preparing for School in the Morning

Also, when describing one of her photographs, Rosa said, "My son always gets home

really happy from school…The schools are good; they treat kids well."

A second hope the women had for their children was that they were provided with

nutritious, healthy foods and appropriate health care so that they could be physically

healthy. As discussed previously in the sub-theme, "facilitating family well-being,"

several of the participants kept a garden in their yard to grow vegetables to cook.

However, many participants expressed concern about the foods their children were fed at

school. Ana took the photograph in Figure 6 to illustrate her concerns, and the group

discussed it in further detail together:

Mariana: The food is bad. Pizza, pizza, pizza. They serve hot dogs and French fries. I want more salad, rice, vegetables, and chicken.

Nina: I go with my child to have breakfast. For lunch they serve biscuits corn dogs, lasagna, tacos, but only cold food in the morning. [For breakfast] the choices are cereal with milk, or corn dog, biscuit, or cereal…My daughter had a nutritionist and [I] couldn't do anything. The school would not work with her.

Ana: I pack my children's lunch. I stopped having them go to breakfast because I give a good breakfast at home.

Nina: All children are made to go to breakfast.

Figure 6. Students being Served Lunch at School

Additionally, three of the eight women took photographs of their children at hospitals and getting check-ups at the doctor's office (see Figure 7). Mariana expressed, "The United States helps people. I am thankful because the people help me. Health care is really different. Even if you don't have insurance, you get served. You have to have money first in the Dominican Republic, and it is really expensive." To the women, health care was a commodity that was not available in their native country. It allowed them to care for their children's health through having access to doctors, medical centers, and medications.

Figure 7. Son in Hospital Bed

The third hope discussed by many of the participants was their children being safe in their neighborhoods and community. The women believed they were living in safer communities in the United States than they had been in their native countries. This perspective was created by comparing their new neighborhoods to the violent environments they experienced in their native countries and stories told by the media and

relatives still there. Ana expressed, "There is so much violence now [in Mexico]. As long as Mexico stays like that I want to stay here…Right between the politicians and drugs are us and they don't care if they kill children or anything." Therefore, many of the women took photographs of their children playing outside in safe environments. As Yuliana discussed when describing Figure 8, "The kids can have fun and they feel safe and there is a lot of space."

Figure 8. Children Playing at Neighborhood Creek

Need for Community

One of the many sacrifices Latina immigrants make to create a better life in the United States is loss of their community, which includes losing crucial social support systems and a sense of belonging within a group of individuals living in close proximity to one another. None of the women in this research lived near any close relatives; however, several had come to the United States to help their sisters take care of their children before moving to North Carolina. Also, moving into a new country and

community required these women to leave their close friends behind. Furthermore, these Latina immigrants experienced discrimination from other community members and authoritative figures, which made them feel unwelcome. Areas in which the women expressed a "need of community" were identified in the following subthemes: loss of family, lack of unity and trust, and discriminatory obstacles.

Loss of family. Every woman in the group discussed how they missed their family, especially their mothers. Some would like to visit their family back in their native country, but do not feel this was possible. In Ana's words, "I miss Mexico, I miss my mom, and I'm scared to go back." Other women wanted their family to join them in the United States. Like Rosa said, "My mom is the most important thing to me and that is what I want. I want my mom with me." Mariana also expressed this sentiment by stating, "I feel good here and I'm trying to get my parents to come. I want to be here until I die. If my parents could be here, everything would be fine—a completed dream."

One of the difficulties of not having close family members living nearby is not having additional help with taking care of the children and offering helpful advice on parenting. As Ana explained, "In Mexico, everyone helps raise kids. Here, there is no one to help you raise them." And Catalina said, "I don't know if I would raise [my children] different [in Mexico]. No one has taught me how to raise them. I raise them however I think is best." All of the Latinas in this sample emigrated as single women with no children. They met their husbands in the United States and settled down to have families. Thus, they have never had their own parents around them to help guide them in raising children.

Lack of unity and trust. Additionally, the Latinas in this research discussed how they did not have many true friends in their new country. In Esperanza's words, "Here, it is really hard to find people who are your real friends. Here it is about being used; it is only about money. You have to repay favors." Ana responded by saying, "[Here] you pay a favor with a favor, but it is usually with money. In Mexico, you give someone a favor and don't expect it back; here it is not the same."

Moreover, these participants did not feel as if they are able to make Latino friends in their new communities. As Mariana said, "There isn't much unity within the Latin community. I have more White American friends than Latino…Latinos call the police on other Latinos and I don't understand why with all of the immigration and deportation issues lately." And due to language barriers, the women who spoke no English, which was the majority of the sample, had a hard time making friendships with White and Black community members. As Catalina voiced, "Yes, I have a hard time making friends. The hardest thing is not knowing the language. Classes would help."

However, some of the participants have found creative ways to become friends with other community members and neighbors. For instance, as seen in Figure 9, Catalina and her family attend church functions, such as this outdoor picnic.

Figure 9. Church Picnic

And Nina's family uses the food they grow in a garden to have cookouts in their local

neighborhood apartment complex. In Figure 10, her husband is cooking over a fire pit.

Nina described:

> I like to eat outside. It reminds me of how life was in Mexico. My husband likes
> to cook and be outside with people…We live with Hispanics around us and when
> I cook, my husband invites people. It always becomes a party. We always end up
> being around one another. Sometimes I get tired of it.

Figure 10. Husband Cooking Over Outside Fire

Discriminatory obstacles. Sadly, when Latinas have encountered discrimination due to prejudice against their race, immigrant status, culture, and from not speaking English, these attitudes and behaviors became obstacles to creating community. In other words, when the participants tried to engage in community groups or activities, the prejudices and discriminations against them created a barrier between them and other community members that prevented feelings of inclusion, value, and safety. The women believed they were viewed negatively and treated unfairly by other racial and ethnic groups in their community. When asked by the researcher what they wanted others to know about them, Esperanza responded, "I want people to know that we are not bad people. Sometimes African Americans believe we come to take their jobs. We are not treated well by them. We just want to live, work, and have our families." Mariana also answered:

> This is nice because you can see what we are like. People think we come here to do bad things. We are all the same on the inside. Imagine how things would be if we all got together; it would be beautiful.

Due to these prejudices, some of the efforts the women made to become more involved in the community failed. For instance, when trying to become more active in her children's Kindergarten graduation ceremony (see Figure 11), Catalina encountered discriminatory obstacles. As she explained:

> We need more help for Latinos in schools. I don't get as involved because they push me out. Other Latinos push me away. I don't like the attitude of the lady translator there. She didn't take the time to help interpret for me. I wanted to

help the teacher with the graduation ceremony. But the interpreter at another school wasn't that way and helped more.

Figure 11. Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony

Furthermore, the women have seen and heard of stories of other Latinos in the community receiving unfair treatment from the local police officers and department. In one of the discussions Nina said:

> My friends were taken by the police, handcuffed on Sunday. They were on probation and weren't supposed to drive. They switched drivers, but the police saw. The ticket was for many things untrue; the police added a lot of charges.

And Rosa responded, "It happens all the time. [The police] put lots more charges than what is true." These Latina immigrants have a difficult time being a part of their new community due to fear of discrimination. Therefore, they cannot fully trust other community members or make true and lasting connections.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Even though considerable research has been conducted on Latino immigrant families due to the increasing interest in this growing population, there is still much to be learned about how Latina immigrants navigate through their new communities and environments while also focusing on their individual and family needs. The purpose of this research was to examine the everyday lives, families, and communities of Latina immigrants and provide an avenue in which the participants could document, critically reflect upon, and voice strengths and challenges in these areas of their lives.

This research was conducted using the participatory action research method of photovoice, which was designed to allow the participants to have an active role in research by gathering and examining their own data through taking photographs and discussing these photographs and relevant topics with each other and the researcher (Wang, Burris, & Xiang, 1996). Using the photovoice method, eight Latina immigrant participants were able to share with each other and the researcher important aspects of their lives. Their photographs and dialogue were analyzed using interpretive inquiry to reveal themes in their collective experience. This participatory action research and the resulting themes has potential to add to the growing knowledge of Latinas living in the southern United States, inform future research, and influence local community agencies who serve this population.

Perception of Lives and Community

      The Latina immigrant participants' photographs, descriptions, stories, and discussion were analyzed into themes to answer the research question, "How do Latina immigrants living in the southern United States perceive their lives and community?" The Latinas in this research consistently considered their families, their children's well-being, and their community environment as being the most important components of their lives and community. They discussed distinct strengths and weaknesses in each of these areas, which were identified and discussed in the overall theme of "improvements with sacrifices" and the three main themes of "centrality of family," "hopes for children," and "need for community."

      To begin, the women portrayed a picture of having accrued improvements in their lives through migrating to the United States, but also of having to endure sacrifices, creating an overall theme named "improvements with sacrifices." The improvements the women photographed and discussed were being able to enjoy time with their family in safe and fun environments, and their children having more and better access to education, healthcare, and safe neighborhoods. The sacrifices they specified included moving away from family and friends, experiencing discrimination from their new community members, and losing a sense of belonging in their communities.

      The first main theme, "centrality of family," focused on the family's involvement and connection with one another. Through subthemes of "family togetherness," "facilitating family well-being," and "placing family first," the women described how they used familism in their everyday lives. To these women, familism and being family

centered was not just a cultural trait they believed in, but was something they worked towards every day through their actions. This included spending time together, doing things for one another, and even placing their own wants and needs last for the betterment of their family. Indeed, the amount of time these women had been living in the United States may have influenced the importance they placed on the family. For instance, Rodriguez, Bingham Mira, Paez, and Myers (2007) found that Mexican immigrants retain their Mexican cultural ideals (i.e., raising children with ethnic values, having pride in culture, and identifying with cultural values) but place more importance on the family the longer they reside in the United States. This may be because American culture typically is more individualistic and Latino immigrants have to work against the dominant culture through becoming even more collectivistic within their own family. Due to the fact that the participants migrated to the United States over 7 years ago, it is likely that they have experienced some acculturation and may therefore place more importance on their families than when they first migrated.

Furthermore, the participants placed a great deal of importance on their roles as wives and mothers. However, this dedication to reproductive roles, as well as their inability to work outside the home, increased their experiences of role stress. This was expressed by Mariana in the "placing family first" subtheme when she stated, "I have a responsibility to take care of the kids, family, husband, and house. I want to do something for myself. I get tired of doing it all." Even though the women loved and accepted their responsibilities as wives and mothers, they also wanted to be able to do things for themselves, such as finish nursing school, take computer and English-speaking

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courses, and engage in other personal and professional enrichment activities. Not only did these activities have the potential to help their families by bringing in income and enable the women to interact with community members and agencies on the family's behalf, the activities would also allow them to do something for themselves that increases self-esteem and pride. However, inadequate child care, either through local centers or from family and friends, made these endeavors, as well as employment, impossible.

Due to the participants' mothering roles and the importance of family, the women placed great significance on their children's general well-being and expressed this as one of the main components of their lives. The second theme, "hopes for children," exemplifies the general hopes and concerns the participants have for their children. Like most parents, the women wanted their children to have a brighter future and easier life than they themselves have had. For the participants of this research study, who came from difficult circumstances in their native country, a brighter future for their children meant receiving a good education with ample education resources, having access to health care services and nutritious, healthy foods, and being safe in their own neighborhoods and community.

The three hopes for children (i.e., better education, physical well-being, and safe environments) described by the participants are understandable given other research on Latino families. For example, previous research found that Latino parents believe their children's education and career choice is essential for their children having social and emotional support, a good job, and a happy successful life in the future (Hwang & Vrongistinos, 2010). It also appears that the importance placed on children's health by

immigrant Mexican mothers is a legitimate concern. Padilla, Hamilton, and Hummer

(2009) found that by the age of 5, children of immigrant Mexican mothers have much

fewer chronic conditions as children of U.S.-born Mexican and Black mothers. The

authors contribute the children's good health to having healthy mothers, parents being

married, and having a support system. However, research by Balistreri and Van Hook

(2009) found that children of Latino immigrants may be at higher risks for health

problems during their lifetime. The authors suggest that these children are more likely to

be overweight or have higher Body Mass Index's (a measurement of appropriate weight

according to height) than White children, which is not significantly affected by

socioeconomic factors such as parent's education and income.

It is possible that hopes for their children are of prime importance to the

participants because it is not certain that ethnic and racial minority children, especially of

lower and working class families, will have the same chance for survival, power, and

identity as White children due to discriminatory environments. Black feminist theorist

Patricia Hill Collins (1998) argues that White, middle-class parents can safely assume

that their children will have physical and mental well-being, whereas minority parents

and those in lower social positions cannot. Because of this, Collins suggests that women

of color engage in "motherwork," meaning "work for the day to come" (p. 234). For

women of color doing motherwork, or actively working to ensure that their children

survive and have a future, sometimes comes at the cost to their own development and

identity. Therefore, these mothers have to support their children using whatever

resources are available, such as the participants growing healthy foods in gardens, trying

to become more involved in their children's school and education, and taking their children to safe parks to play.

Collins (1998) also discusses how women of color have to be concerned with how their children are treated in social institutions (e.g., school) where they are not allowed to speak their native languages and are persuaded to assimilate into the dominate culture. This is further exacerbated by socio-economic status, creating multiple oppressions for women of color. Although the participants did not use the term motherwork, their concerns for their children's education, health, and safety and the wants they had for their children's future reflect the issues Collins highlighted. In addition, they spoke of working against discriminatory practices and the dominate culture to ensure that their children's basic needs were met and so they can have a happy and successful future. The intersectionality of oppression, or interconnected systems of inequality, the participants experienced (i.e., racism, classism, and prejudice due to nationality) made it necessary for the women to engage in motherwork for their children.

The participants spoke about "need for community," the third theme, in many different ways. They discussed missing their families, wanting to travel home to visit, not being able to make many friends, experiencing discrimination in the community, and having difficulty working with community organizations and programs. Having to move away from their families has not only created a physical absence of the people they love, but also an emotional one. As the participants described, in their native countries families usually live close to one another and are a constant support system for mothers. These family members and friends are available and willing to help mothers look after

children, give advice on parenting and household tasks, and give emotional support during stressful time periods. Also, the Latina immigrant participants no longer have access to grandparents and other elder family members. In many families, these elder family members help keep alive family traditions, and relay family history and stories orally to children, helping with cultural socialization of children (Baca Zinn, Eitzen, & Wells, 2011).

In this aspect of their lives, the women have experienced a great loss for which they are still grieving. In addition, the women have not been able to replace their losses of family, friends, and a sense of belonging in the community with new friends or community. This is due to a variety of factors, including language barrier, isolation within the home, and prejudices against them. Even though Latinos may live within the same area, it cannot be assumed that they will be able to create a community with one another. Because the women were participating in a local agency's infant/toddler health program, it was assumed by the researcher that these women would have used this opportunity to create connections among themselves. However, these connections had not been fully developed. This may have been due to the women having residential diversity (i.e., living in different subdivisions of the city) and not having transportation or as the women discussed in "lack of unity and trust," many times they felt they could not trust other Latinos in the community.

The findings of this research is similar to those of Padilla, et al. (1988), who found that Latino immigrants believed leaving their family and friends behind was the most difficult part of their first year living in the United States. Also, Smart and Smart

(1995) believed that Latino immigrants experience acculturation stress from having to leave these essential social support systems behind and moving into a country where they are unable to immediately form new relationships due to their language barrier.

A problem for Latina immigrants is that they are living between two very different cultural ideals: collectivism and individualism. The participants migrated from a collectivistic culture that places a great deal of emphasis on the family but are now living in an individualistic culture. According to Chicana feminism, this means the women had to navigate between these two cultures' expectations and societal norms (Anzaldúa, 2003), which made it more difficult to form a community. As Rosa said, "The Latino community always takes care of their own children." But following this collectivistic ideal of family taking care of their own children was difficult for the participants in the United States because they did not have any family nearby. Therefore, the women alone responsible and were being evaluated on their ability to successfully perform a role based on an ideal that was not their own.

Thus, the women are living collectivistic lifestyles within an individualistic culture. Within the individualistic society, it is likely that community members evaluate Latina immigrants based upon cultural norms that do not fit the women's ideas about how families should be. As Esperanza expressed, "We just want to live, work, and have our families." However, they want to live, work, and have their families following the collectivistic ideals that they believe in, which others in their community may not understand and make it difficult for them to achieve.

Perception of Needed Changes

The second research question regarding changes that are needed in the Latina immigrants' community to improve their quality of life was answered through dialogue among the women. They discussed in depth the sacrifices they had described in the each of the main themes and the corresponding needed changes in their communities. Many of the changes the women had already identified and were working on before the photovoice study began. For instance, several of the women voiced their unhappiness with the school's breakfast and lunches being served to their children. With the participants' hopes for their children to be healthy, several of the women searched for and found their own solutions to this problem, which included asking school personnel not to send their child to breakfast, packing healthy lunches, and growing and cooking healthy foods at home. Another concern was not having a sense of community and being unable to make lasting community connections due to their language barrier, discrimination, and cultural differences. Some of the participants worked to overcome this challenge by having neighborhood cookouts and attending church events, but these solutions did not create a complete sense of community for the women and their families.

However, the participants' discussions made it increasingly apparent that many of their everyday life struggles were compounded and complex; that is, a weakness or challenge in one area of their life often affected the other aspects making it difficult to change any one individually. Specifically, the women wanted to take classes to learn English, computer skills, and for career development (i.e., nursing). However, due to their responsibilities as wives and mothers, the women could not take the time away from

families to attend the classes. The participants spoke of needing more resources for child care. As stated before, in their native countries, these women could have relied on family and friends to help watch over their children when needed, but these were not available options in their communities in the United States. Therefore, the participants were unable to find adequate and trusting child care due to their familism ideals, not having trusting and lasting connections in their community, and having limited finiancial resources. Having available child care would mean more personal time for the women, which could alleviate their role stress and allow them to pursue their interests and develop their potential.

Another major concern of the participants was prejudices and discriminatory acts against Latinos. As stated in the theme, "discriminatory obstacles," the participants felt other racial ethnic groups in the community perceived Latinos to be "bad" people. This was a concern they had been unable to create solutions for individually. However, together they saw the photovoice study as a way to create more awareness of Latinos in the communities. That is, in order to promote more positive images and dispel stereotypes of immigrant Latinos and their families, the women proposed sharing their photographs and stories with others in the surrounding community. As Nina said, "We could put [the photographs] and stories in a place where lots of Americans can see it. The students need to see what we are like, too." And Ana added a unique perspective to share with university students by saying, "The students need to know that we are all Americans; we all come from the American continent." Therefore, the participants decided that their photographs and accompanying descriptions should be displayed in

local coffee shops and at the local university in common areas where many students pass through. It was important to the participants that university students view these photographs because the students are likely to finish college, gain employment, and raise their families in communities they share with many Latinos. A belief shared by the women was that students gaining a clearer and more accurate perception of Latino immigrants could create a better community environment for the participants and their children.

Outcomes of the Photovoice Study

Photovoice was chosen as a participatory action research method in this research not only to answer the two research questions above, but also to facilitate the feminist and critical theoretical aspects of creating social change. This happens by empowering participants who are marginalized in society by bringing them together to visualize better life options and enhance social action possibilities. This empowerment is not only supposed to take place during the photovoice study, but have lasting effects through participants being connected to those who have the power to create change in their community. The process of photovoice provides the opportunity for participants to share details of their lives with other people like themselves, which helps create a stronger group among otherwise marginalized community members who can connect and work together to better their lives. Although the participants did not have a true sense of community with one another, they started building relationships through sharing and bonding over their personal stories and at the end of the study, some of the women exchanged phone numbers and discussed helping one another with child care.

Additionally, the participants in this participatory action research gained a sense of importance, self-esteem, and pride by being able to express what they perceived to be important, sharing it with the public, and knowing that it would continue to be shared with the public by the researcher as requested. For instance, during the photovoice study, the researcher was informed of an opportunity to share the participants' photographs at an exhibit for "Refugees of the World Day" at the local Children's Museum. After discussing the opportunity with the participants and gaining their consent, the women's favorite photographs with their accompanying descriptions were printed and displayed at this community event. The participants and researcher met altogether on the day of the event and discussed the exhibit and their perceptions of the photovoice study. Some of their comments included:

> Nina: [It was] nice. I never have taken pictures like this before. And [I] liked to show them to the public.
>
> Mariana: It feels nice to have someone paying attention to me. It makes me feel important. What you have done for us – I want to thank you.
>
> Ana: As a Latino person, seeing us in a positive way, it is nice to see projects like this that are positive. Usually we see this with African Americans or Hindus, so this is nice.

Additionally, these photographs and descriptions were placed on display in a common area at a local university where many students have had the opportunity to learn more about Latino families and communities through the lives of the eight Latinas.

As intended by the photovoice process, the participants discussed many needs that will be presented to the local agency involved in this research from which they receive

services. This agency has more power in the community than the participants have and it has the ability to connect them to other agencies and individuals who can create change. In particular, this agency can facilitate creating a community among the Latino immigrants living in this urban city, which has the potential to help create a social support system for the participants, such as fulfilling their child care needs. Also, they have the potential to help the women communicate with their school districts and doctor's offices to voice their concerns about their children's education and health.

Limitations

In this research, a number of factors existed which created limitations for the study, both individually and collectively. These issues involved limited time with the participants, aspects of their immigrant status, lack of adequate child care, and language barriers, all of which complicated the development of trust and understanding.

First, the researcher needed more scheduled time with the women. By the end of the fifth meeting, the participants were just beginning to feel comfortable enough with one another and the researcher to fully discuss many of the topics introduced throughout the study. Even though other photovoice research studies have been completed successfully in a short amount of time (see Morgan, Vardell, Lower, Kintner-Duffy, Cecil-Dyrkacz, Ibarra, 2010), more time may have been needed with this group because of other issues; for example, their immigrant status and their residential diversity were both obstacles to building trust with the researchers and each other.

Lack of child care also hindered the utilization of available time to meet with the participants. The researcher was only able to provide one or two individuals to look after

the 15 to 20 preschool children who accompanied their mothers to each meeting. Because mothers and children were in adjacent areas, it was sometimes difficult to hear everything said by each participant. In addition, the children moved in and out of the space occupied by the adults involved in the study, making it difficult for the participants to remain focused at times.

Lastly, the research could also have been improved by having more interpreters available for the meetings. Having an additional interpreter at each of the meetings could have allowed at least one interpreter to take written notes, which would have possibly captured more data when noise levels rose and when more than one participant was talking at the same time.

Implications and Future Research

This photovoice research with Latina immigrants living in the southern United States has several implications for local community agencies who work with Latino populations. First, the results of this research show that immigrant Latinas place importance and their energy on their family, their children's well-being, and in creating true and helpful connections in their community. This information can add to community agencies' understanding of how Latino individuals and families function and aide in helping with their struggles in these crucial components of their lives. Additionally, community agencies can assist in addressing Latino family and community needs, informed by those identified by these participants. Their needs included having more individual time for themselves; classes for career goals and computer skills; adequate and trustworthy child care services; healthy food options for their children; and working on

community relationships through awareness, dispelling stereotypes, and learning English. Local community agencies can help with these goals in numerous ways, such as helping create connections between agencies and the population, support groups for Latina mothers, facilitating classes and mediation between Latina mothers and their children's schools, and general cultural awareness. Because community agencies have more power than the average Latina immigrant, these agencies, and the individuals who work within them, have the potential to bring their community together and advocate for the marginalized Latino population.

The results of this photovoice research have also uncovered some topics that should be explored in future research. For example, the high value placed on family and children, their minority and immigrant status, and limited English-speaking ability may create greater role stress for Latina immigrant mothers than U.S.-born mothers or mothers from other racial ethnic groups. Research is needed to explore the intersection of the specific positions of Latina immigrants in order to identify strategies for empowerment. Additionally, future research is needed on how Latina immigrants communicate and make connections with other community members when they first arrive and if these connections are helpful or are maintained over time. As adequate child care is connected to several other areas of life for Latinas, research is needed on the types of child care Latina immigrants use and why they choose these options. It is unclear what the participants in this research perceived as adequate and trusting child care, but this may be influenced by language barriers, cultural congruency, and the motivations and needs of adults in the family (i.e., beliefs on child care and whose responsibility it is). Further

research in this area can expand understanding of how to better provide services and thus increase options for Latino families.

Furthermore, this research exemplifies why participatory action research methods, such as photovoice, are crucial when doing research with marginalized groups of people. This type of research empowers participants by giving them collaborative control over the research and offers new perspectives on their lives and communities that usually have not been explored. Through photovoice, researchers can gain new understandings of cultural groups within their specific environments while enabling them to create ways of being that better their lives.

Conclusion

The Latino immigrant population is continuing to rise in the United States as these individuals and families are searching for improvements to their lives, such as access to better educations for their children, health care services, and safer environments. However, many of these immigrants have to endure sacrifices for these improvements, including leaving their family, friends, and community behind. Latina immigrants and their families bring with them their own cultural ideals and ways of living into their new communities, but they are also asked to assimilate into American culture by learning English and learning social and community laws and expectations. In addition, prejudices against Latino immigrants marginalize this growing population and prevent them from being fully able to voice their individual and community strengths and challenges to those in the community who have power to create social change.

This photovoice research was used to give Latina immigrants a voice through photographs and group dialogue, to allow them to express their own perceptions about their lives and community and the changes needed for a better life, the life they migrated to the United States to achieve. Specifically, the participants expressed how their families, children's well-being, and having a community were the most important aspects of their lives. In terms of change, the women voiced needing more time for themselves to achieve their own goals and to reduce their role stress; healthier food options for their children; and a true sense of community where they receive support and did not have to be afraid of discriminatory actions. One of the main ways the women proposed to generate change was through creating awareness and positive images of Latinos. This process was started through an exhibition of their photographs and descriptions at a "World Refugee Day" at a local children's museum and at the local university. The participants voiced positive outcomes from the participatory action research, saying that it allowed them to gain pride and self-esteem about themselves and their communities, and created new positive perspectives about Latino immigrants that should be shared with local university students and other community members.

The results of this research study have the potential to add to the growing knowledge of Latina immigrants and help community agencies aid Latino populations. Further research should examine Latina immigrants' role stress in connections with the cultural ideal familism, child care needs, and community connections after migrating. Furthermore, additional research using participatory action research methods, such as

photovoice, should be used with marginalized populations to create empowerment, social

action, and new positive perspectives of these populations' families and communities.

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