

# Picturing Adelante: Latino Youth Participate in CBPR Using Place-Based Photovoice

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## Abstract

We applied Photovoice, an innovative methodology, in order to enhance participation by Latino youth living in Langley Park, MD in community-based participatory research (CBPR) and in the ongoing Adelante Positive Youth Development intervention. This study sought to: 1) expand our understanding of current needs and experiences of Latino youth and update our information on the evolving Marketplace; 2) involve youth in the process of developing CBPR intervention and social marketing components; and 3) build skills in photography, critical thinking, and community activism among Latino youth. Using Photovoice, we engaged twelve Latino youth, including six recently arrived to the U.S. and six second generation immigrants, in a dialogue about peer, family, community, and health issues affecting Latinos. Through six sessions, participants developed photography skills, used photographs to stimulate critical thinking and discussion, and suggested solutions for emergent issues. Sixty pictures selected for group discussion all corresponded to one of the three main domains of inquiry: 1) Strengths and needs of Langley Park, 2) Latino youth experiences, and 3) Community health assets and risks. Participants organized a photography exhibition and community forum to raise awareness about important findings. Both recently arrived and second generation Latino youth have important perspectives to share that guide and refine ongoing targeted CBPR interventions. Findings from this study shed light on the most relevant topics for community-based interventions, advocacy, and social marketing campaigns needed in this community. Photovoice is a useful tool for social marketing formative research targeting immigrant youth sub-groups.

## Keywords

youth, participation, research, innovation, bilingual

The U.S. Latino population increased by 43% between 2000 and 2010, equivalent to more than half of the U.S. population growth within this period (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). The Northeast region of the U.S. experienced a 33.1% increase in the Latino population, with a large presence of

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immigrants originating from Central America. The state of Maryland, in particular, has seen a substantial influx of Latinos, with a 106.5% increase during this time period, more than twice the national rate (Ennis et al., 2011).

Langley Park, MD, has been an important destination for both recently arrived and established Latino immigrants. According to the 2010 Census, 76.6% of Langley Park residents consider themselves Latino or Hispanic. This community is also relatively young, with 22% of residents 18 years of age or younger, which has implications for the level of services and programs required to meet community needs related to education, health-care access, adequate housing, social services, and the insurance of a safe neighborhood and clean environment.

Recent studies have indicated that Latino youth experience numerous health disparities, and Langley Park youth do not escape this reality. At the national level, Latino youth experience disproportionate rates of new HIV infections and teen pregnancies, are more likely to have ridden with a driver who has been drinking alcohol, and more likely to be victims of sexual dating violence (Kann et al., 2014). Youth in Langley Park mirror these trends and also demonstrate a co-occurrence of multiple risky behaviors such as substance use, interpersonal violence, and risky sex (Edberg et al., 2010).

To address these disparities in Langley Park, a partnership between the Avance Center for the Advancement of Immigrant/Refugee Health (Avance Center) at The George Washington University and the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center (MMYC) was established in order to plan and implement an innovative multilevel intervention, called *Adelante*, to address risks among Latino youth and their families. *Adelante* is a community-based intervention designed to address the co-occurrence of substance abuse, violence, and sexual risk among Latino youth in Langley Park. The overarching goal of *Adelante* is to build community, family, and individual assets as a mechanism for preventing youth risk behavior. To do this, the intervention is composed of a set of community-wide programs that are available to youth and families in Langley Park and a more targeted set of program components for high-risk Latino high school and middle school students and their families. The intervention uses a modified Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach as a framework to guide the development of all programs (Lerner, 2005; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). *Adelante* also uses branding and social marketing strategies, including the establishment of an *Adelante* brand identity (Evans et al., 2015), the use of multimedia edutainment (Andrade, Evans, et al., 2015), and a media campaign, to increase youth engagement in the intervention and adoption of healthy behaviors.

The intervention design is informed by an active collaboration between community members, organizational representatives, and researchers. This method of research, known as community-based participatory research (CBPR), has been increasingly recognized by public health practitioners and funding agencies as an effective methodology for addressing health disparities and engaging marginalized communities in research. Evidence for CBPR demonstrates that knowledge of complex public health problems can be enhanced, and potential solutions found, if stakeholders and community members are involved (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). CBPR often confronts barriers such as language, literacy, and legal status when studying health and social issues, especially among marginalized immigrant communities.

Photovoice has emerged as a creative tool that blends art and community participation to inform social marketing efforts and the promotion of social change through targeted action. This article describes findings of a CBPR study using the qualitative Photovoice method to (1) expand our understanding of current needs and experiences of Latino youth and their families living in Langley Park and update our information on this evolving *marketplace*; (2) involve youth in the process of developing a targeted CBPR intervention, including social marketing components; and (3) build skills in photography, critical thinking, and community activism among Latino youth. Experiences implementing this research methodology with a mixed population of both foreign-born and U.S.-born first-generation immigrant youth will be discussed. This article also explores how the Photovoice methodology used in this project can be applied to intervention development and social marketing efforts with similar Latino immigrant youth audiences.

## Background and Literature Review

### *Photovoice Method*

As a CBPR methodology, Photovoice provides participants the opportunity to describe salient community concerns through photography. This qualitative methodology entails giving cameras to participants; teaching them how to use the cameras; and encouraging participants to document phenomena, topics, or issues that concern them. Through the use of photos, participants are provided with a mechanism to have their “voices” heard by an audience that is likely to help solve the issues and consider the photographers’ perspectives. The dialogue initiated by the analysis of each photo is led by a facilitator based on the Freirean concept of root-cause question and discussion (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Participants gain empowerment to engage in a critical dialogue to recognize causes and probable solutions to problems. They are enabled to share and enhance their knowledge about community issues, emphasize individual and community action, and connect with policy makers and community leaders to transform their perspective into action (Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardhoshi, & Pula, 2009; Wang, 1999).

This research tool has been employed to explore complex issues within very diverse populations across at a wide range of topics. For example, this method has been used to examine health-related concerns of rural Guatemalan women, perceptions of health among Latina girls, or public housing issues among an ethnically diverse population in the United States (Cooper & Yarbrough, 2010; Stevens, 2010; Vaughn, Rojas-Guyler, & Howell, 2008). According to the creators and promoters of Photovoice, this methodology is based on three theoretical principles: (1) Every human being is capable of looking critically at his or her environment and perceiving the personal and social reality in it; (2) power is held by those who have voice, set language, make history, and participate in decision-making; and (3) photography is an effective way for ordinary people to trigger social change (Wang, 1999; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Among Latino immigrant communities, youth are a vulnerable group, and it is important to ascertain their viewpoints for public health practitioners to design interventions aimed at promoting healthy behaviors and positive changes. For this reason, the Adelante research team had employed different strategies to bring a good representation of Latino youth to the “planning table” both to gain their input on important community issues and to guide programmatic activities and social marketing efforts. For example, we used focus groups, surveys, youth participation in a Community Advisory Board and individual interviews. However, these methods were not always successful at obtaining needed information from this audience. Using traditional methods, we found that youth were afraid of being vocal about sensitive topics, or the strategies to elicit input were not cost effective (individual interviews). Previous studies have used Photovoice with other marginalized groups, helping researchers to break down barriers in participation for those who experience poverty, power disadvantages, or limited influence to address community needs; these characteristics describe Latino youth involved in Adelante (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997). Young people in particular may perceive limited power or influence to change things in their community, or they may have less access to resources to implement their ideas. In addition, a tenet of Latino culture is for youth to have *respeto*, which means to not talk without adult permission and to obey without question (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010). This practice relegates youth to be less participatory in community processes unless a strategy is used to purposefully obtain their opinion. When researchers try to establish the *Price* Latino youth are willing to pay to engage in a dialogue about community need or to advocate for their needs, they have to take into account an adolescents’ stage in development (youth may be embarrassed to speak in front of others) and level of acculturation/time spent in the United States (youth may not be accustomed to speaking out in front of adults and being heard), which could be the potential barriers to engaging in critical dialogue. Photovoice has emerged as a very useful way to involve youth in CBPR and gain their perspective for social marketing (Wang, 2006).

Drawing from recent research on Photovoice, and from the originators of the Photovoice method, our team developed a curriculum tailored to an in-school population of newly arrived and U.S.-born Latino immigrants (Lykes, 2006; Martin, Garcia, & Leipert, 2010; Wang, 1999). The purpose of the Picturing Adelante curriculum, described elsewhere (Andrade, Cubilla et al., 2015), was to introduce Latino youth to a critical analysis of their community, engage them in a dialogue about strengths and concerns affecting their lives, and encourage them to propose potential solutions.

### *Social Marketing, CBPR, and Photovoice*

In the context of CBPR, the Photovoice methodology gives community members an opportunity to express themselves through the camera lens and to draw policy makers' and the public's attention to relevant issues, or related to social marketing, the *Policy* change that is needed in their community. To enhance community participation in social change and elimination of health disparities, and for researchers to obtain accurate information about the marketplace, they must use innovative communication tools to give a voice to those who sometimes go unheard. This includes alternative mechanisms to form *partnerships* through *promotion* of community members' agenda for change, such as through the use of a community forum or photography exhibit that illustrate important community issues or through targeted media campaigns. The audiences for Photovoice projects include both fellow residents (in order to stimulate health behavior change and social action) and decision-makers (to catalyze changes in policies, resources, or support for an issue).

Furthermore, the Adelante program aimed to help youth bring about positive changes in social and health issues previously documented as risk factors for youth in Langley Park (Edberg et al., 2010). The elemental principle of social marketing, "knowing your audience," can represent a challenge for researchers when working at the community level because barriers such as language, cultural tenets, and trust have to be overcome (Evans, 2006). Given the exploratory nature of the Adelante intervention study, our team sought to engage stakeholders in a systematic, iterative program planning process, which included continuously gaining up-to-date information on an evolving community environment or marketplace. From previous experience, we knew that traditional formative research methods (focus group, interviews, and surveys) to elicit information from community stakeholders can definitively provide researchers with useful information to "know the audience" and develop interventions and social marketing efforts. However, we also knew that those methods can lack the engaging element and discretion offered by the lens of a camera (Melton, 2014; Necheles et al., 2007).

The Photovoice methodology offered benefits for working with this group of Latino immigrant youth to obtain critical information for the development of future social marketing strategies and to address relevant health and social issues through the Adelante program. Drawing from the core principle of CBPR—community involvement in research—and the empowerment offered by the Photovoice methodology, we anticipated gaining new insights from our target audience. In other words, Photovoice allows researchers and youth to create common ground through the enjoyment of photography and a common language to guide a critical discussion about community issues that can be shared with stakeholders and researchers.

## **Method**

### *Settings and Participants*

Picturing Adelante was a pilot project implemented with Latino youth living in Langley Park, MD. This community has a population of 18,755 (Ennis et al., 2011) and consists of predominantly low-income Latino families who live in rented apartments. Previous studies have shown that a majority of Latino immigrants living in Langley Park are foreign-born (67.6%) and are originally from El Salvador

(46.53%), Guatemala (32.86%), Honduras (10.41%), and other countries (10.20%; Edberg et al., 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). From this community, 12 youth were selected for the Photovoice project. Since one of our aims was to obtain a deeper understanding of current needs and experiences of Latino youth in this community, we recruited both U.S.-born and foreign-born youth, most accurately representing community and Adelante program composition. The resultant group of participants was a convenience sample of four boys and eight girls between the ages of 12–16 years old, half of whom were U.S.-born and half of whom were foreign-born, with less than 5 years living in United States. All reported their family was from El Salvador, except one from Guatemala. The total number of participants attended either the public middle or high school, where nearly half of students were of Latino heritage (Public Schools K12, 2010).

### **Recruitment**

Participants were recruited based on the following criteria: being between the ages of 12 and 18, currently residing in Langley Park, and self-identifying as Latino. Since our intention was to know more about needs for both recently arrived Latino youth and youth who were U.S.-born, we intentionally recruited half of the participants from each group. Strategies used to recruit participants included verbal invitation at Adelante youth program activities; active recruitment during school lunch; snowball sampling; social media such as Facebook and Kik; and referrals from Adelante case managers, siblings, or friends. To start the recruitment process, Picturing Adelante facilitators contacted prospective participants by phone or in person to offer the program. A week before the initial session, our team contacted youth who showed interest in the program to remind them of the date, time, and place of the first session. Parental consent and assent from the youth were obtained prior to participation. Transportation and a US\$25 gift card were offered to each participant.

### **Data Collection**

*Session logistics.* A total of two rounds of the Photovoice program were implemented, with seven participants in the first cohort and five participants in the second. Each session lasted approximately 2 hr except for the field trip, community forum, and photo exhibits. Attendance of participants to each session was consistent. We established a communication system with participants to send reminders with the date and time for the next session and the photo assignment for each week. Recently arrived Latino youth were more familiar and frequent users of Facebook accounts, but U.S.-born Latino youth preferred using the Kik app or receiving phone calls. All sessions were conducted in English and Spanish as needed. Participants who more recently arrived to the United States preferred to receive instructions and interact with the group in Spanish. Since this Photovoice pilot program was part of the larger Adelante intervention that is guided by a modified PYD framework, a pretest and posttest were administered to participants who measured the constructs, confidence, connection to community and friends, community competence, and multicultural efficacy.

*Photography.* A digital camera was provided to each participant. The first session of the curriculum included essential photography instructions to guide participants in using cameras, framing pictures, types of photography, ethics, and other technicalities. The four photo assignments developed basic photography skills (using a camera and taking portrait, landscape, and macrophotos). Participants were instructed to take pictures following the National Press Photographers Association Code of Ethics and basic principles of ethics developed the creators of the Photovoice methodology (National Press Photographers Association, 2012; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Each participant was instructed to take all possible pictures answering the photo assignment question and to bring the cameras to the sessions where a facilitator would download all images to a separate folder for each participant.

*Photovoice curriculum and process.* Based on a curriculum adapted for this program, we implemented six sessions during which we completed four photo assignments and dedicated two sessions to preparing for a photography exhibition and community forum. The photo assignments focused on answering each of the following questions through photography: (1) What is it like to be a youth in your community? (2) What in my community helps me to be healthy, active, and eat well? and (3) What do you like/dislike about your community? These questions helped us to ascertain prioritized needs of youth, understand the evolving marketplace, gain insights into youth experience and preferences, and conceptualize future directions of the Adelante intervention and the companion social marketing campaign that was in development. In addition, youth were encouraged to take artistic photos that expressed their points of view, and these photos were also discussed and shown in the exhibits.

Each session used the SHOWeD methodology to analyze each picture and stimulate discussion (Wang, 2003; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, Yi, Tao, & Carovano, 1998). This method includes five questions that guide group discussion: (1) What do you See here? (2) What is really *Happening* here? (3) How does this relate to (*Our*) lives? (4) Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist? and (5) What can we *Do* about it? Additional questions were used to probe discussion when participants were hesitant to start the conversation (Wang & Burris, 1997). Participants were encouraged to converse in the language of their preference.

Every participant was asked to present all photos taken for each photo assignment. Photos were displayed during each session using a projector. Each participant presented his or her own pictures and selected, with the help of other participants, the five best pictures in terms of the following criteria: (1) artistic expression/photo composition, (2) content relevance to the photo assignment, and (3) accurate portrayal of community needs/strengths. This process was guided by bilingual facilitators, especially regarding the identification of well-composed, artistically compelling photos. Input from other participants and consensus on each individual photographer's photo content served to validate issues identified and themes that emerged through the Photovoice process. After the group reached consensus about the five best photos, a discussion about the photos was guided by facilitators using the SHOWeD methodology, and participants were encouraged to freely express their ideas and opinions. Sessions were audio recorded using iPhones or iPads.

*Data analysis and interpretation.* Session recordings, along with facilitators' notes, were transcribed and translated to English for analysis using the NVivo 9.0 software (QSR International). We analyzed the narrative data and photos for thematic commonalities and coded according to the questions posed in the photo assignments (Bernard, 2011). Analysis also reflects information that arose but did not directly correspond to the predetermined areas of inquiry (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Themes that were identified are discussed in results, and excerpts from discussions with participants are included to illustrate these themes.

### ***Building Advocacy Skills Among Participants***

Another important aim of our Photovoice program was to engage youth in activism through photography. To accomplish this objective, participants and facilitators worked as a team to organize a community forum to exhibit the selected pictures from each session. The community forum was held during a monthly meeting of the Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI) in Langley Park, a coalition of community stakeholders. Participants exhibited the Photovoice findings and proposed potential solutions to community leaders where needs arose. Photo exhibits were available online and three in-person exhibits were held in strategic venues to help youth to have a voice and to raise awareness about issues affecting their community.



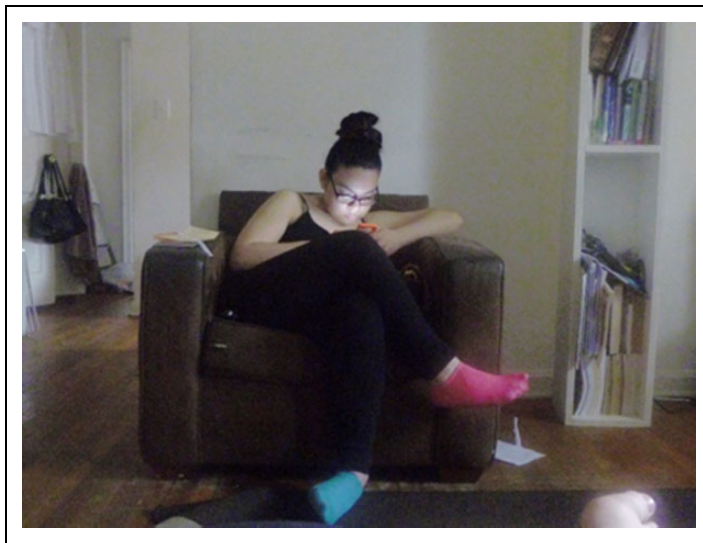
**Figure 1.** Meow.



**Figure 2.** Full of trash.

## Findings

The 60 pictures selected for group discussion all corresponded to one of the three main domains of inquiry: (1) strengths and needs of Langley Park (Research question: what do you like/dislike about your community?), (2) Latino youth experiences (Research question: what is it like to be a youth in



**Figure 3.** Con-cel-trated.

your community?), and (3) community health assets and risks (Research question: What in my community helps me to be healthy, active, and eat well?).

### *Strengths and Needs of Langley Park*

Youth photographers captured and acknowledged positive things in Langley Park. For example, there are playgrounds for younger children and a significant number of green spaces available to do sports and recreation. However, adolescents felt afraid to use those green spaces because of the presence of gang activity and drug sales. Youth expressed the need for more safe recreation facilities that are appropriate for adolescents and equipped for sports like basketball. Another issue identified by almost all participants was an overabundance of trash in the community (see Figures 1 and 2). Youth revealed some of the barriers faced by tenants in many apartment buildings located in Langley Park: apartment complexes lacking dedicated resources to trash removal. Participants voiced the need to increase awareness among residents about littering in public places (bus stops, Laundromats, parks).

### *Latino Youth Experiences*

Youth felt pride in Latino traditions and cultural celebrations organized by community members (strength). Several participants described their active involvement in religious traditions, but they mentioned the inconvenience of not having a church where they could hold mass. Instead, the Latino Catholic church services they attended are held at the elementary school gymnasium. Another participant highlighted how much he appreciates having Latino teachers at school who serve as positive role models and encourage Latino students and are available for help.

Like adolescents from every cultural heritage, Latino youth enjoy using technology. Figure 3 depicts a common practice among youth: the use of electronic devices for communication with friends, for fun, or as a way to connect with their families left behind in the home countries.

An interesting finding was the dialogue that developed around Figure 4. The photographer expressed his feelings of “soledad” (loneliness). Several participants felt the same way, highlighting the irony of living in a densely populated urban area, yet feeling so alone:



**Figure 4.** The spring is coming.



**Figure 5.** Alicia reads.

Spring is almost here, after a cruel winter. It gives feelings of happiness, hope now that flowers and leaves are coming out. But, a single flower means loneliness, like I feel sometimes.

(“La primavera está por llegar, des pues de un crudo invierno. Da sensación de alegría, esperanza el nacimiento de una nueva flor y hojas. Pero también una sola flor inspira soledad, como a veces se siente uno.”)

Many youth participants shared this sentiment, especially those who had recently moved to U.S., leaving behind friends and family.

A photographer captured what is identified as a positive practice among Latinos in this community: Mothers and fathers get together in a project of storytelling for young children in Spanish (also a strength).



**Figure 6.** Drunk.



**Figure 7.** A friend on a bike.

They are trying to preserve their heritage by reading stories and interacting with young community members in Spanish (see Figure 5). As a result, every week, groups of families and friends share the responsibilities of reading stories and speaking in Spanish to U.S.-born generations of Latino children.

### *Community Health Assets and Risks*

Participants expressed their concerns about alcohol consumption in their community. Several youth took photos illustrating this problem in Langley Park. Some of their comments pointed to a serious problem of alcohol addiction in youth and adults, and they identified this issue as something that prevents them and their families from being healthy (Figure 6).



**Figure 8.** Goal.



**Figure 9.** Wide open.

Another participant highlighted the availability of yards and sidewalks for small children to do physical activity, such as play soccer, basketball, and ride bikes. Participants valued these advantages for younger siblings to be healthy. A picture depicting a boy riding a bike elicited discussion about the importance of having access to these spaces for exercise, which were available to some children in the community, particularly those who lived in single family homes instead of apartment buildings: “My neighbor who is 9 years old is always riding a bike. His mom thinks it is safe and good for his health to be out doing exercise every afternoon” (Figure 7).

However, with Figure 8, youth photographers emphasized the difficulty in finding safe places for adolescent recreation. Soccer is a popular sport among the Latino community, but not having safe spaces for boys and girls to play was mentioned as an issue in this community. Participants were cognizant of the importance of doing exercise to be healthy and to fight obesity and their reality of spending long hours doing indoor activities.

For participants, the overabundance of fast food and junk food in their community, otherwise known as a “food swamp,” was a concern. There is easy access to cheap and unhealthy food in restaurants, convenience stores, supermarkets, and from street vendors. They acknowledged the inaccessibility of healthy food due to the high prices and said that some parents may have to prioritize cost of food instead of insuring that the food is healthy. Many of the photos taken were related to the



**Figure 10.** Hang in there.

contrast between healthy food and junk food. Youth expressed their knowledge about the importance of healthier food options but the limited economic resources to buy it: “We know ‘junk food’ is not good, but it’s cheap and tasty, what can you do? It’s there, and it’s easy to buy” (Figure 9).

### *Artistic Expressions of Latino Youth Experiences*

Every participant expressed their daily life as a Latino youth living in Langley Park through the lens of a camera. Some of them demonstrated a very artistic viewpoint of the world around them, and the comments triggered by those pictures gave us a deeper insight into their lives. One participant took a photo that gave us the illusion of an airplane hanging on a tree; discussion of this photo centered on nostalgia and internal conflict of wanting to visit loved ones in the home country but an inability to do so because of their legal status in the United States: “I wish I could go back to see my family, but if I take a plane to go back, there is no return for me because I do not have papers” (Figure 10).

Another photo depicted part of the Prince George’s County area from the air. With this picture, we delve deeper into Latino youth aspirations. The photographer expressed her dream of being a pilot and choosing the route of joining the military to achieve her dreams. Other participants expressed their dreams of pursuing professional careers and the difficulties they face in achieving their objectives, including being undocumented in the United States or lacking financial resources.

### *Community Forum and Exhibition*

The exhibition of the photos was a key part of the project. Youth, facilitators, community volunteers, parents, and Adelante case managers worked together to prepare the exhibition and community forum. Four exhibitions were held and one community forum. The first photo exhibition was coordinated and guided by a senior undergraduate student from The Columbian College of Art and Sciences at The George Washington University. Photos were framed and presented by theme with captions from the photographers. The first exhibition was part of an Adelante Program’s Leadership program graduation. During this event, two youth participants presented to community leaders, parents, friends, and peers the findings along with potential solutions to issues encountered.

During the second photo exhibition, *Picturing Adelante* achieved the purpose of helping youth to raise their voices to be heard by community leaders and stakeholders. Youth were given the opportunity to present the same findings within a monthly session of TNI in Langley Park, a Prince George's County-supported group of community leaders and stakeholders. The discussion that followed this presentation was a rich exchange between community leaders and youth participants about prospective ways to work together in finding solutions. For example, the director of the counseling for substance abuse from the Prince George's County requested a meeting with Photovoice participants and *Adelante* program case managers to start tailoring services for Latinos with substance abuse problems in Langley Park. The outreach representative from Prince George's County Parks and recreation proposed a session with youth to hear some of the suggestions regarding recreational spaces and potential ways to advertise the services available for adolescents. Members of the TNI group agreed to include in their agenda the topic related to frequency of trash removal in Langley Park and to work on this issue. Regarding the designation of Langley Park as a "food swamp," TNI members are working on this topic and have expressed interest in hearing details of the solutions proposed by Photovoice participants. Some of those propositions were expansion of the farmer's markets and the establishment of a permanent open market with fresh and healthy food at affordable prices. In general, the community leaders attending the community forum encouraged our participants for their art and advocacy work for Langley Park community.

Photovoice facilitators also reviewed the findings from every session and identified potential health topics that would be suitable for *Adelante* social marketing campaigns.

## **Discussion**

*Picturing Adelante* provided Latino immigrant youth with a mechanism to voice their concerns about community issues and offer solutions. The Photovoice methodology served as a useful tool to gain insight from this youth subgroup that is often excluded from decision-making regarding community policies and resource allocation. Moreover, the Photovoice project guided the *Adelante* research team in intervention planning and the conceptualization and execution of the companion social marketing effort.

Discussions surrounding the photos taken by youth served as important catalysts for youth empowerment and community change. This critical dialogue between facilitators and youth participants established a shared meaning about challenges for youth as well as solutions that could be communicated to a broader community audience. The ultimate goal of CBPR is to create concrete community involvement, where this participation might not otherwise exist, particularly when language and cultural barriers prevent such integration (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). This is a key part of the pilot project that was accomplished because participants were open to sharing their experiences through photography. Youth participants were also effective in conveying their concerns and articulating solutions to community stakeholders, and none of the Photovoice participants had previously experienced a hands-on opportunity to share their opinions about how to improve their lives and their community.

The Photovoice project also served as a mechanism to reinforce a strong identification with Latino culture among our participants. Half of our participants were first generation immigrants and U.S.-born, and it was important for us to promote pride in their Latino identity as a way to keep them motivated and involved in their community. Foreign-born youth provided a realistic perspective about struggles in adapting to a new country and lifestyle. This unique feature of *Picturing Adelante* opened a communication channel and shared cultural identity among important youth segments of the community we served.

### *Photovoice and Adelante Intervention Planning*

There are numerous ways in which the Adelante research team applied Photovoice findings to guide ongoing intervention activities or inform the development of new components in response to expressed need. Two themes emerged from the area of inquiry, “strengths and needs of Langley Park.” One was related to recreation opportunities for youth and the other is related to trash disposal and community cleanliness. Participants voiced the need for safe recreation for adolescents. During the community forum with the TNI, youth photographers were invited to planning sessions with the County Parks and Recreation Department to include their opinion about recreation spaces. Furthermore, through the Adelante intervention, we added multiple recreational and physical activity options for young people, including soccer teams, dance aerobics classes, jujitsu classes, swimming, softball, field trips to theme parks, museums, the zoo, and the theater. The intervention provided supervised indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities within and outside of the community to also address rising concerns for obesity.

Another need identified by youth was to improve cleanliness of the community. The trash management commission at the county level was very responsive to youth inquiries about improving community conditions. In addition to inviting youth to join the county commission, through the Adelante program, we developed and implemented an Environmental Health Advocacy project with youth, where youth learned about environmental health issues, advocacy strategies, and are working to address the overabundance of trash in Langley Park. This process was successful in linking youth with county representatives and other partners. Our community partner, the MMYC, played an important role in coaching youth to be prepared for each encounter with county authorities. In this sense, Picturing Adelante achieved the goal of acting as a bridge and encouraging youth to be the active community members. The Photovoice project also shed light on an existing gap between knowledge about a healthy diet and ability to acquire affordable, healthy food. To address poor diet in Langley Park, the research team applied for, and was awarded, a Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health). This project includes training and deployment of youth leaders and addresses community and school food environmental risk factors.

Photovoice participants also expressed concern related to mental health and substance use. The Adelante intervention continued substance abuse prevention programming but expanded it to include more in-depth programming for addiction, referrals to treatment, and we expanded the programming and case management for mental health and trauma-informed care. Photovoice findings validated our experiences working with this population that there are still unmet needs, and this continues to be an ongoing challenge. We are currently pursuing additional funding to offer services for mental wellness and treatment for youth having experienced trauma.

### *Photovoice and Adelante Social Marketing Campaign*

The Photovoice project facilitated the formation of new partnerships between youth, community stakeholders, and policy makers for awareness raising of inequities and needed *policies* to address these inequities (the allocation of resources to enable behavior change). Since there is considerable evidence regarding the effectiveness of social marketing as a strategy for promoting health behavior change, we expanded Adelante social marketing efforts in response to lessons provided by the Photovoice project. In addition to development of the Adelante brand and execution elements, including the Victor and Erika edutainment webnovela series (Andrade, Evans, et al., 2015), we launched a yearlong media campaign that incorporated Photovoice findings as part of the formative research. The campaign applied Photovoice findings in the following ways: (1) we chose dissemination channels that included ad placement at bus shelters, posters in the community and schools, and a strong social media presence since youth indicated

an affinity for technology and new media; (2) we developed a bilingual campaign (with an emphasis on Spanish), given the pride that youth expressed in being bilingual and maintaining their cultural and linguistic heritage; (3) we made an effort to depict real-life struggles and risks experienced by Langley Park youth, including situations of violence, substance use, unsafe neighborhoods, and struggles with mental health; and (4) we selected overarching campaign themes that reflected emergent Photovoice themes. Campaign themes included: Adelante is ... (includes resilience, cultural pride, strength); Moving forward is about choices; Live your dream; Be part of something bigger than yourself (your community).

### ***Strengths and Limitations***

For this pilot project, the curriculum was a strength. It was tailored specifically for Latino immigrant youth. Even though Picturing Adelante was a project embedded within a larger intervention, it is a feasible project to implement as a stand-alone project because the logistics are uncomplicated and required materials are easy to find.

During the implementation of this project, the time available for each session was an important limitation, especially when trying to create rapport with youth and extracting all information related to each picture.

Furthermore, there were also a variety of community issues that youth discussed as priorities for them, but participants were unable to capture these issues through photography. Results are limited to those issues that can readily be captured through photography.

Although we intentionally recruited participants with diverse demographics, it was a challenge to have younger participants included with older participants and even a difference of 3 years' introduced challenges. Younger participants were less willing to speak freely when in a session with older youth, limiting to a certain extent their engagement with the Photovoice critical dialogue process. Future implementation of this program should take this into account and create separate sessions with more narrow age ranges.

Finally, there are limitations in the applicability of study results to other Latino subgroups or audience segments (Necheles et al., 2007; Rich, Lamola, & Woods, 2006). For the community under study, most residents are relatively recently immigrated to the United States and are predominantly of Central American origin. While results may not represent the perspectives of the broader youth population in Langley Park, we deem the results as representative of the youth participants in the Adelante program. The intent of this project was achieved, as we were able to engage youth in a dialogue with each other and community stakeholders and our understanding of issues important to youth was enhanced. However, one important finding of the study, the use of the Photovoice methodology with Latino immigrant youth, is potentially applicable to similar growing immigrant communities across the United States.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

Photovoice proved to be an effective tool for researchers to translate community input into operational programs and initiatives to improve the health of Latino youth. The use of a camera lens allowed us to dig deeper into the lived experiences of this population. To our knowledge, Photovoice hasn't been used with this specific population nor has it been used as a culturally adapted strategy to inform social marketing efforts. At times, translating images into words presented a challenge, at least for recently arrived immigrants, who were sometimes unfamiliar with situations where their opinions were considered together with the opinions of adults. However, for researchers seeking to reach this population as an intended audience segment for social marketing efforts or prevention interventions, the Photovoice methodology should be considered as a valuable tool for formative research and campaign

development. While the findings of Picturing Adelante were informative for the Adelante intervention, the methodology of Photovoice is potentially valuable to a broader audience of practitioners seeking to engage Latino youth in CBPR, program development, or social marketing research.

Overall, we recommend the Photovoice methodology for professionals working with more recently immigrated Latino youth in a number of capacities, including programs for youth leadership and development, counseling and mental health treatment, and initiatives to encourage civic engagement, among others. Study findings provide insight into the lives of more recently arrived Central American immigrant youth and also enabled the overall intervention to be more responsive to youth requests and needs. Since the overall Adelante intervention research described in this article is exploratory in nature, it is vital to have ongoing input from community stakeholders, program clients, and youth participants in order to adapt and tailor the intervention. We adapted ongoing programming and created new activities in response to issues that youth identified using Photovoice. Since Photovoice is also a CBPR approach, this also translates to addressing issues related to the overall community environment, policies and allocation of resources for youth services, and improving health inequities. Finally, Photovoice assisted the research team in gaining a more in-depth understanding of the evolving marketplace and youth experiences, preferences, habits, and dreams. For the planning and implementation of social marketing efforts, this insight guided the selection of channels (placement) and potential youth narratives (promotion) that could be portrayed as part of the Adelante social marketing campaign. Through Picturing Adelante, we applied the Photovoice methodology in order to gain insight from a subpopulation that is rapidly growing in numbers (and our primary target audience) yet is traditionally difficult to engage in dialogue regarding community needs and the evolving marketplace. A large portion of the literature has focused on more established Latino populations, such as Mexican Americans. In recent years, the Latino subgroup of recently arrived Central American youth is an important growing population in many communities across the United States. We recommend to other professionals seeking to reach Central American immigrant youth using social marketing strategies to consider alternative methods for formative research, such as the Photovoice methodology, which promotes engagement and provides a voice for audience segments that may be hard to reach or might otherwise go unheard.

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