

An ethnographic exploration of Latino immigration to North Carolina, United States.

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Latinos are the largest minority in the U.S. and the Census Bureau projects that by 2050, 1 in 4 Americans will be Latino. Issues related to the rapid escalation of the Latino population and their activities within the U.S. permeate media headlines, policy development, and general popular culture. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of research inspecting the qualitative experience of immigration including the effect on occupational behavior. Undeniably, U.S. research on Latinos predominantly collects demographic data framing issues in economic, political and resource management terms. Moreover, traditional models of acculturation erroneously espouse unidirectional change processes assuming immigrants progressively replace former lives with an American way of life.

Consequently, there is a gap in our collective understanding of the qualitative changes immigrants experience through adaptation to life in the United States. This masks transformations occurring with family relationships, habits of occupational participation, and well-being. Indeed, immigrants create fluid social spaces that change occupational behavior in the country of origin as well as in the U.S. Scholars are beginning to view immigrants as transnational, living simultaneously in two cultures but never fully part of either.

To complement and expand the current research base, this project will conduct an ethnography exploring the Latino experience of immigration and adjustment to life in the United States. Through semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the project will garner rich qualitative data to uncover the subjective experience of immigration. The rationale for this project stemmed from an informal case study with a local Honduran immigrant who immigrated without his family.

I have formally submitted and defended a dissertation proposal to conduct this project in Goldsboro, North Carolina. During the next 12 months, under the guidance of scholars at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I will collect and analyze ethnographic data ultimately completing the project before WFOT. As a researcher fluent in Spanish, who has personally experienced immigration to the U.S., I am prepared to carry out the proposed research in a matter that is culturally sensitive and appreciative of the challenges one must face when adjusting to life in a foreign country.