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Maria F. Arisi

Thomas Jefferson University, maria.arisi@jefferson.edu

Vincent Pepe

Thomas Jefferson University, vincent.pepe@jefferson.edu

John McKeegan

Thomas Jefferson University, john.mckeegan@jefferson.edu

Caleb Dafilou, MPH

Thomas Jefferson University, caleb.dafilou@jefferson.edu

Rickie Brawer, MPH, PhD

Thomas Jefferson University, rickie.brawer@jefferson.edu

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A PhotoVoice Project with Latino Youth in Eastern North Philadelphia

Maria F Arisi, Vincent Pepe**, John McKeegan**, Caleb Dafilou*, Dr. Rickie Brawer*.

Introduction: Eastern North Philadelphia is home to both the highest density Latino population in Philadelphia and some of the poorest health measures of the city. This Latino population is known to face a multitude of barriers to health, such as high rates of poverty, low educational attainment, and language barriers. There is little data showing what the self-identified priority needs of these Latino populations are, and even less showing the needs of Latino youth. Understanding how youth perceive the impact of their social and built environments can bring attention to the issues that the community needs addressed.

Methods: We conducted a PhotoVoice project with Latino youth in the Eastern North Philadelphia area. 34 participants (aged 12-18) from three youth centers were recruited, trained in photography, and asked to take photos that addressed the question: “what helps and what prevents you from being healthy in your community?” The photos and their themes were discussed during individual sessions. During group sessions, students participated in thematic analysis and prioritized the most urgent needs. Sessions were recorded, transcribed, and coded on NVIVO12 software by multiple researchers to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Results: The priority action items identified by the youth in this study fell into four main categories: 1) mental health, 2) trauma, safety and violence, 3) built environment, and 4) health education and behavior.

Conclusions: Through a PhotoVoice project, Latino youth in the Eastern North Philadelphia area identified priority action items. Students also participated in an exhibit where they showcased their photos and priorities to community leaders.