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Latinos in Rural America

Clara Roman-Odio

Kenyon College, romanodioc@kenyon.edu

Patricia Mota Ms.

Kenyon College, motap@kenyon.edu

Amelia Dunnell

Kenyon College, dunnella@kenyon.edu

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**ABSTRACT**

Latinos in Rural America (LiRA) is an oral history project designed to broaden knowledge, engagement and understanding of the Latino/a experience in rural Ohio. The project pursues the goal of providing an intimate window into the lives, origins, and aspirations of Latinos in Knox County. LiRA is rooted in interviews and direct personal interactions with members of the community who represent diverse economic conditions, stages of life and aspirations within the broad social fabric of Knox County. During the summer of 2015, the team conducted research on and with local Latino community members to produce the bulk of the materials for this oral history, including: archival work on the history of Latinos in Knox County, video and audio interviews of local community members, and the production of short multigenerational narratives and photography. Through transcription, coding of texts, and interpretation, the research team identified six recurring themes that characterize the experience of Latinos in Knox County: circular journeys, a sense of place and displacement, values and culture, intercultural identities, visibility/invisibility, and dreams and aspirations. This content will serve as the basis for **Latinos in Rural America: Stories of Cultural Heritage, Values, and Aspirations**, a bilingual exhibition that will travel locally and throughout Ohio between December 2015 and March 2016. Through LiRA, we were able to uncover Latinos’ distinctive challenges and rewards as they conduct their daily lives in rural Ohio.

**KNOX COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS (2013)**

Nationalities of 789 Latinos in Knox County

Employment and Poverty By Ethnicity

Income By Ethnicity

**OBJECTIVES**

- Increase knowledge, engagement, and understanding of the Latino/a experience in rural Knox County.
- Develop intercultural exchange and relationships between the local Latino community and other Knox County and Ohio residents.
- Increase awareness of Latino/a contributions to the life of Ohio.
- Offer Latino youth new opportunities to interpret their past and articulate their future and, in this way, gain access to relevant educational and social goods.
- Establish partnerships with local and state organizations and researchers to support intercultural development between Latinos and other state residents.

**RESULTS**

We assumed an interpretive approach to oral history and coded the transcribed text for recurring themes. From this method, we uncovered six main themes:

- **Circular Journeys**
- **A Sense of Place and Displacement**
- **Values and Culture**
- **Intercultural Identities**
- **Visibility/Invisibility**
- **Dreams and Aspirations**

The final product of the project includes:

- A bilingual ten-panel display that presents the six main themes as well as background information and demographic statistics about Latinos in Knox County
- A 22 minute long compilation video of selected interview quotes
- A reflection piece where viewers can interact with the project by providing feedback
- A brochure with selected images and bibliographical information
- A primer that provides background information on cultural and communication norms for successful intercultural interactions with Latinos

**VENUES FOR THE EXHIBITION**

- Kenyon College Olin Library (December 1-18, 2015)
- Mount Vernon Public Library (January 13-27, 2016)
- Global Gallery in Hagerty Hall, OSU (February 9-23, 2016)
- McMillan Hall Gallery, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio (March 30- April 12, 2016)

**WEBLINK TO LiRA**

http://www.kenyon.edu/academics/departments-programs/latino-studies/lira/

**REFERENCES**

LaVERDAD Ohio Hispanic Dashboard. https://public.tableau.com/profile/laverdad.marketing.media#/vizhome/OhioHispanicDashboard/


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