

Proposal

Title – A basic needs assessment of the Mixteco population near Richmond, Virginia

Program of Study – Public Health

Presentation Type – **Choose one of the following:** Oral Presentation

Mentor(s) and Mentor Email – Dr. Oswald Attin (omattin@liberty.edu) and Dr. Richard Lane (rlane@liberty.edu)

Student name(s) and email(s) – Leslie Stalaker (lastalaker@liberty.edu) and Itza Prieto (iprieto@liberty.edu)

Category – **Choose one of the following:** Experimental (Applied)

Abstract: This research examines the lifestyle of a population of undocumented immigrants living near Richmond, Virginia, known as the Mixtecos. They are a population of approximately 3,000 people that originate from the Oaxaca province in Mexico who speak their own language. Due to the lack of information on this population, a survey was distributed at an event that was held in November 2015 to gain insight on this population. Because this was the first interaction with the Mixteco community, the survey included basic needs assessment questions that would help researchers plan future health interventions and programs in their community. Body mass index (BMI) and blood pressure measurements were also recorded to gain deeper insight into their lifestyles and the health problems that exist in this population. After analyses, the data revealed that the Mixteco population had major problems with nutrition and physical activity. This was demonstrated through the BMI calculations and survey questions that inquired about their nutritional intake and exercise habits. The data also showed that there is a knowledge of medical conditions and symptoms within the population but they do not seek medical care for these problems. One reason for this could be the significant lack of medical insurance within the survey participants. Some of the prominent medical conditions in this population are vision problems, recurring headaches, and high blood pressure. This research

demonstrates a significant need for health interventions in this community to not only improve their health and well-being but also to raise awareness and to empower this community to make better lifestyle decisions.

Christian worldview integration: Although the United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, there are still major gaps between different classes and ethnicities. As an immigrant population, the Mixtecos traveled to and settled in the United States to improve their lives. After settling, they quickly realized that the goals that they had would be hard to reach due to their status as immigrants. It is our responsibility as Christians who work in the field of public health to help them receive adequate health care and to educate them about the components of a healthy lifestyle including proper nutrition, exercise habits, and reproductive health.

This needs assessment will better equip those involved in working with this population to plan for the future. We can plan culturally appropriate activities and programs that are accessible to the community members. God calls His children to be stewards of their time and this includes proper planning (Proverbs 21:5). Proper planning with this population can also include empowering Mixteco community leaders in taking charge and leading their community in implementing proper healthy lifestyle changes. As Christians, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves and to raise awareness and care for those people who do not have a voice. Caring for these people does not only include the physical aspects through public health interventions, but also the spiritual component of each individual's life. Nuevo Amanecer, a local church that we have partnered with for this project, is working with the Mixteco population through evangelism. The combination of public health and evangelism is a holistic approach at improving the lives of the Mixteco people.

