Using Photovoice to engage youth in health and wellness

Linda Zittleman, MSPH
University of Colorado Department of Family Medicine
Qualitative Methods Showcase
Oct 2012
Photovoice Overview

A practice based in the production of knowledge with 3 main goals:

- Enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns
- Promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through group discussion of photographs
- Reach policy makers

“What experts think is important may not match what people at the grassroots think is important.”

— Caroline Wang, developer of Photovoice
FIGURE 1  I took this picture because it is an abandoned building, and nobody pays it attention. It’s somewhere that I have visited, and I’ve seen the inside. I knew there was more to it than just what is on the outside. I noticed the flooding in the basement. I noticed the holes in the ceilings and floors. Also, I noticed rusty elevator shafts. One whole floor had metal rails all across it. The entire floor was nothing but metal rails. Kids go there because it’s fun, and it’s a place to get away from adults nagging. It was once a nice building, and now it is decayed. I think it’s a bad idea for kids to go there, but it’s fun.
SOURCE: Youth photographer, age 14.
Photovoice: Community Action and Change

- Uses stories + images to share an idea or thought
- Obtains data and information otherwise difficult to collect via surveys or focus groups
- May show problems and strengths that are different from what others think are problems and strengths.
- Gives people who are often left out of the decision-making process a way to share their stories.
FIGURE 3  My middle school is a bad school. The ceiling is falling apart and it is not good.
SOURCE: Youth photographer, age 12.
"Fast Food Alley"

Age 16
These photos are of the newly built fast food restaurants in a highly populated area of Antioch. The super-sized sign reveals the number of fast food places located in this center. Long lines of cars wait at the drive through at In-N-Out Burger. It is important to have healthy, affordable, places to dine in a community, instead of fast-food alleys.
I on Health: grounded by Photovoice

- Rural school- and community- based youth health intervention.
- Engages rural youth in an interactive exploration and education program to:
  - improve their knowledge related to physical activity and healthy eating.
  - increase their positive health and wellness behaviors.
High Plains Research Network

- Practice-based research network based CU Family Med
- Founded in 1997
- 16 counties of eastern CO
- 55 primary care practices
- 16 hospitals
- 150 primary care providers
Along any highway in NE Colorado
## State of the Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Health Risk Factors and Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk Factor or Indicator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke (population %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokeless Tobacco Use (population %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight (population %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity (population %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Inactivity (population %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular disease (age-adjusted mortality rate per 10,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes Mellitus (age-adjusted mortality rate per 10,000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment:
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. [http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hs/brfss/index.html](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hs/brfss/index.html)
- Colorado Health Information Dataset. [http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/cohid/](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/cohid/)
I on Health v1.0

- C.A.C. identified child obesity, as a key health issue in eastern Colorado and drafted original program protocol.

- Purpose: *Using Photovoice*…
  - Learn what kids think of health and the influences on health choices, focusing on nutrition and physical activity.
  - Determine if we can generate culturally relevant health messages for kids in eastern rural Colorado.

- Target group: 4th grade students

- Utilize high school mentors to facilitate Photovoice activities
Photovoice Process

- Consent and Assent procedures
- Instruction on photo topics (activities or things in daily life that are healthy and unhealthy)
- Instruct students on how to use cameras
- Photos taken at home, school, and in community (10-14 days)
- Parents given opportunity to review and remove photos
- 4-5 work sessions with high school student mentors
- Board presentations
SHOWeD Method

- What do you **see** here?
- What’s really **happening** here?
- How does this relate to **our** lives?
- Why does this problem, concern, or strength exist?
- What can we **do** about it?
SHOWed-inspired Questions

1. Which photo is your favorite? Tell me about that photo.
2. What do you see here?
3. What is really happening here? What is going on in this picture?
4. What does this photo mean to you? What do you think about?
5. Do you like <this food>/<this activity>?
6. How often do you (fill in for each photo: do x, go to x, eat x)?
7. What is healthy or unhealthy about what’s going on in this picture?
8. For problem: What can we do about it? What makes it hard for you to x?
   What would make it easier for you to x?
9. For strength: What makes it easy for you to x? What helps? Why do you do x?
On Health

Eating Chocolate is healthy because it has whole grains and it contain chocolate, which is a good source of energy.

Breakfast is most important part of the day. Having a good breakfast gives energy otherwise do whole day.

Sitting and watching television is unhealthy. Getting up and being active, like doing exercise outside is better for you.

Please eggs are healthy, but you shouldn't eat more than one a day. They add extra protein to your meal.

Haggis are eaten in large quantities when you're overseas.
Data Collection

- Qualitative data from Photovoice
- Feedback from interviews with mentors
- Child baseline and post written surveys
Presentations and Discussion

• Poster board presentations
  ▪ 2-3 students per board
  ▪ Recorded and notes taken

• Group discussion:
  ▪ What makes it easier in your life to do healthy things? Harder? What do you want to tell other kids about being healthy?
  ▪ Notes taken by research team during presentations and group discussion

• Research team reviewed field notes and identified themes.
Mentor and C.A.C. Recommendations:

- Photovoice is making kids think more about their health and priming them to learn.
- Develop *I on Health* into an innovative intervention for health education and behavior change for youth.
- Use information derived from Photovoice to inform educational content.
RISKS

If you never try anything new, you’ll miss out on many of life’s great disappointments.

www.despair.com
I on Health v2.0

- Adds a classroom-based health education intervention
- Uses Photovoice as a mechanism to:
  - Increase awareness of students’ actual environments.
  - Prime students to internalize and apply health messages.
  - Identify school and community-specific concerns, strengths, and potential policy changes.

Use Photovoice for community and individual action.
Classroom Lessons:

- reading food labels
- portion size
- role of the cardiovascular system in overall health
- recommended amount of physical activity
- simple ways to increase physical activity and eat healthier
Group Discussions

• What makes it easier for you to do healthy things? Harder?

• What are you doing differently since *I on Health*?
### Results

**Table 1** Change in knowledge and behavior in 4th grade *On Health* participants (n = 180)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of recommended frequency of physical activity</td>
<td>Increase of 6 percentage points (68% to 74%; p=0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students reporting daily physical activity</td>
<td>15% increase (p=0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/TV screen time</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I believe gobstoppers have a lot of sugar in them which makes them unhealthy. I only eat candy such as gobstoppers once a week, but I know I should be making a better choice such as eating yogurt.
The computer is a “danger zone”. You can stay on it too long and not get enough sleep or exercise.
This is the only field in town. The school uses this for games mostly.
Chocolate chip cookies are a delicious snack that I enjoy eating. I think that they are unhealthy for me because it has chocolate and sugar in it. When I have them I usually eat one to two cookies.
Results: Emerging Themes

- Sugar = bad
- Grasping sophisticated concepts, such as portion size.
- Barriers to health:
  - Availability of healthy foods at school and home
  - Not included in family meal planning or grocery shopping
  - Danger in bicycle riding on country roads
  - Computer or watching TV
Results

• Changes in health behaviors
  ▪ Routine of family walks
  ▪ Playing outside after school
  ▪ Increasing physical activity during periods of less healthy eating
  ▪ Trying new fruits and vegetables
  ▪ Limiting amounts of unhealthy foods (portion)
Now I usually try to have a vegetable or two with all of our meals.

Now I’m going to look at the back (label) and see how much sugar it has and if it has vitamins like A, B, D…or C in it.

I’m not drinking as much pop…haven’t had any since December.
I used to go home, go to my room, close my door, and read before dinner. Now I have to go out and jump on the trampoline. Maybe I’ll try to read and jump!

I have a bad habit of eating junk food. This made me realize I can make a difference in what I eat.
Photovoice: community-specific policy change

- Review usefulness and utilization of school playground
- Develop follow-up health class for 5th graders
- Supported and strengthened school’s decision to offer salad bars
Photovoice: foundation of *I on Health* v3.0

- Can be done with pre-teen children
- Engages and excites kids
- Generates opportunity for both external and internal change
Next Steps: *I on Health v3.0*

1. Visual exploration and analytic self-reflection
2. Classroom education sessions
3. Home/family curriculum
4. I on Health Benefit Card
5. Identification of school and community policy changes

*Photovoice at foundation of all components!*
Thank you!