

# Photovoice as a popular education and CBPR methodology

SW 504  
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Fall 2017

# Project Aims



- To examine the potential effects of environmental hazards on the health and well being of children enrolled in Detroit Head Start programs.
- To build awareness and knowledge of environmental hazards among parents of children in Detroit Head Start.
- To develop capacity for community activism and advocacy among parents of Head Start children.



# Project Description



- Began with analysis of secondary data on environmental hazards in Head Start communities
- Merged databases from EPA, MI Dept of Environmental Quality, MI Dept of Education, MI Dept of Community Health, US Census, Detroit Public Schools Head Start enrollment files.
- *The data found exposure to environmental hazards in the ZIP codes where Head Start children live compared to the 28 other ZIP codes in Detroit/Wayne County.*

# Photovoice



- Photovoice, a participatory action methodology that blends photography and social action, as a tool for increasing awareness and promoting a grassroots response to addressing social problems in marginalized communities (Wang & Burris, 1997) .
- Three goals of Photovoice:
  - To enable people to record and represent their everyday realities, e.g., community's strengths and concerns
  - To promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs
  - To reach policymakers to create change

# Photovoice



- Tool for community engagement and education
- Community assets and needs assessment tool
- Process enables full participation in the research process, including problem identification, prioritization of issues, data collection, collective analysis, and dissemination through the exhibition of work
- Results in an increased critical consciousness among participants, stronger sense of personal and group agency, and long-term political activism and change.

# Photovoice

- Using the photovoice methodology, participants allow their photographs to raise the questions, “Why does this situation exist?” Do we want to change it, and if so, how?”
- Participants complete a “free write interview” using the SHOWeD guidelines
  - What do you **S**ee here?
  - What is really **H**appening?
  - How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
  - **W**hy does this problem or strength exist?
  - What can we **D**o about it?

# Method



- Recruited 20 members of the Parent Policy Council between 2004-2006.
- Introduced project and provided basic EJ training in collaboration with local EJ organizations
- Met to discuss the task at hand: taking pictures of ways in which environmental hazards, such as lead, pollution, etc, affect your child's well being.
- Also asked parents to take pictures of positive ways in which the environment impacts child well being.
- Pictures developed and focus group convened to share pictures and tell the story behind the pictures.
- Project presented to policy makers at planned community forum

# Themes from Photovoice



- Parents were concerned about the impact of urban blight, e.g., vacant lots, illegal dumping, abandoned homes and buildings, and their impact on children's sense of hopefulness and helplessness.
- Concerned for the health and safety of children expressed for the proximity of hazards to their homes and where children play
- Parents discussed how they were unaware of the tie in between hazards and their health conditions
- Saw schools, churches, community organizations, and new housing development as important positive sources of hope and assistance
- Community involvement necessary to combat these issues















“This house has been there for quite awhile, it is available to squatters, crack heads, homeless folks, and drug dealers. It is an eye-sore to parents who don't like seeing it walking their children to school everyday and our kids could be subject to rape or abuse (by those using that building).”



“I feel really bad, wow look at all that mess. It’s the Mayor’s responsibility to make people want to stay in our communities, but people didn’t enforce (them to work) in our neighborhood so the City didn’t take care of it. If the community demanded that the City do something better it would happen.”







“This is in the middle of the neighborhood and this neighborhood doesn’t really have anything else positive in it but the school. Education is important, the school gives the positive image of a positive outlook.”

“I see the church as a place for our children and youth to get off the streets, away from drugs and other vices and to captivate their time not just on Sundays but through after school programs, day care, Head Start, and through other programs. The church helps you from the cradle to the grave.”



## Hidden Dangers in Our Own Backyard: Does Detroit Deserve Clean Air?

The Skillman  
FOUNDATION

**Date: 5/3/2007**

**Time: 9:30am-1:00pm**

Location: UM Detroit Center,  
3663 Woodward Ave. (at Mack)



Has your neighborhood been a victim of illegal dumping? Did you know that children in Detroit suffer from asthma two times that of the national average? Did you know that Detroit is home to over 40,000 toxic sites? Why? The parents of DPS Early Childhood Education PreKindergarten Program wish to invite you to an Environmental Justice

Forum to share their stories and photographs. Please join us as we talk with community members and policy makers about what can be done to create a healthier Detroit.



For more information contact Barbara Maddox:

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DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
SKILLMAN FOUNDATION  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

















# Major Accomplishments

- Parents trained in the impact of environmental hazards on children and provided with advocacy training by local E-J CBO.
- Environmental justice committee formed within DPS Head Start Parent Policy Committee
- Developed parent guide and mini-trainings on environmental hazards
- Parents made presentations to Head Start parents and staff, National Head Start Parent Training Conference, and National Head Start Research Conference
- Parents are involved in EJ movement, e.g., serving on Board of EJ organization, Governor's Environmental Policy Board, and City of Detroit's Healthy Homes/Healthy Start Program, participating in hazardous waste training, participating in organizing effort to close the Detroit incinerator

# Limitation

- Problems limited to what you can see, e.g., physical structures
- Taking photos pose both risk and benefits, can be used in voyeuristic ways
- Turnover in the Head Start population makes follow up challenging
- Policy change and advocacy not central to our initial process
- Problems are huge and difficult to impact immediately
- “Raising awareness without also raising awareness of the possibilities for change is a prescription for despair. It is unethical to do one without the other,” Tatum (1994)

# Future Directions

- Parents continue to receive basic EJ training with assistance from former Head Start parents and local organization
- Policy change and advocacy training in local communities
- Participation in the “bucket brigade”
- Continued advocacy for issues and concerns that impact the well being of low income, children of color in Detroit

# Special Thanks

- Detroit Public Schools Head Start Families, Staff, and Administrators
- Environmental Justice Initiative (EJI), University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and the Environment
- The Skillman Foundation
- Foundation for Child Development
- Rackham Summer Interdisciplinary Institute, University of Michigan Rackham School of Graduate Studies