3-19-2014

Photovoice: Assessing Barriers To Health Among Maine's Somalian Refugee Women

Lilia Bottino
University of New England, lbottino@une.edu

Collyn Baeder
University of New England, cbaeder@une.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://dune.une.edu/ssw_artisttalks

Part of the Art and Design Commons, Art Practice Commons, Photography Commons, Social Work Commons, and the Sociology Commons

Preferred Citation
http://dune.une.edu/ssw_artisttalks/6

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Applied Arts and Social Justice at DUNE: DigitalUNE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Applied Arts and Social Justice Artist Talks by an authorized administrator of DUNE: DigitalUNE. For more information, please contact bkenyon@une.edu.
Photovoice: A Visual Narrative into the Perceived Health of Maine Refugee Women

Lilia Bottino, MSW Student
Collyn Baeder, MPH Student
University of New England
What is Photovoice?

- ‘Participatory photography’, or Community-based participatory research

- Caroline Wang, developed Photovoice in the 1990s to help women in rural Chinese villages communicate health concerns

- A collaborative approach between the researchers and community members

- Share experiences, ideas, & strategies for change with the greater community and potential policy shapers
Portland, Maine is a major resettlement area for refugee and asylum-seeking individuals, who according to the US Censes (2008-2012), account for approximately 11.2% of the city’s population.

This population faces major barriers—language, housing, transportation, and cultural barriers, along with a host of other issues.

There is a deficit in information regarding health disparities among African immigrants (Pavlish, Noor, & Brandt, 2010), which can lead to medical facilities and providers lacking in cultural competence and understanding in perceptions of health.
Our Research Questions

• To seek an alternative and creative strategy to **strengthen communication** between health professionals and our community’s refugee population in the hopes of improving health and social services.

• To deepen our understanding of the **barriers to health** faced by refugee women in Maine, that may not be immediately apparent or remain unaddressed by health professionals and policy makers.

• What are the public health issues faced?

• How do Somali refugee women define health?

• What strengthens or inhibits the community’s access to health?
Our Methods

- Portland Community Health Center in the Riverton Community
- Strategies: recruitment, interpretation, cultural brokerage, IPEC Mini Grant funding, budgeting
- Participants: Three adult refugee women living in the Riverton Community

Collaboration between UNE (Lily Bottino and Collyn Baeder), PCHP (Kira Maas), and interpreter/cultural broker (Saharo Sharif-Isaack)
• **Orientation Meeting**: 2-3 hours. Open-ended interview guide, photography education, informed consent

• **Photo-taking**: Participants given 1 month to take pictures, during this time, primary researcher available for assistance

• **Photovoice Workshop**: 2-3 hours. Group gathers to discuss photography, add descriptions to chosen photos, and strategize on interventions

• **Presentation**: 1-2 hours at Riverton Community Center. Community members, UNE members, and PCHC gather to appreciate and reflect on exhibited photography

The Outcomes

• 27 photos identifying barriers/strengths in accessing health exhibited

• In-depth discussion, collaborative strategizing

• Strengthening communication between the Riverton Community, UNE, and the Portland Community Health Center

• Attention from the greater Maine community
Challenging Assumptions

“I took this picture of the fence because if a fence built like this was in between the road and the playground, it would be safer for the children to play.”
"This is my backyard. It is dirty and unhealthy. It needs to be cleaned."
Themes Identified:

Exercise & Culture

• Cultural practices, values, and attire were identified as barriers to physical activity

• Opportunities for gatherings of women

“To me, exercise is important. I would like a place to exercise.”
Themes Identified:

Exercise & Weather

• **Cold weather** was identified as a major barrier to physical exercise.

• The photographs described alternative, limited means to incorporate physical activity into their lives.

“**These are the stairs in my house. That is my place to exercise when it’s cold out. But now since I’m not feeling good it bothers me.**”

“**This is a beautiful place to walk and relax.**”
Themes Identified:

Exercise

• The community room was identified as a potential exercise space.

“In the winter there is nowhere to exercise. We have used the community room in the past, but it doesn’t happen anymore. This may be a good place to use for exercise again.”
Themes Identified:

Community Safety

• Identified the need for interventions (e.g. fences) to make the community safer

“This is the street by the playground. Sometimes when children are playing, they lose a ball in the street while cars are driving by.”
Themes Identified:
Community Safety

- **Littering** was identified as safety concern (broken bottles, cigarettes)

- Individual duty vs. community responsibility

“Portland Housing Authority should clean this. I usually clean as much as I can in my backyard.”

“Someone littered a pack of cigarettes on the street. I took this picture because this is dangerous for my children, who might try to eat them, or even try to smoke them. That is unhealthy.”
Themes Identified:

**Autonomy**

- Self-determination vs. the inability to control one’s environment
- The process helped to *express feelings* of transition, loss, lack of control
- The ability to *control* the lens

“If I had my own store, I would use decorations like this to attract people.”

“This is a multicultural store. I used to have a store like this back home, and it reminds me of this. One day I might have a store like this in the future.”
Discussion and Questions

Thank you for your time.
Please feel free to share your thoughts and questions.