

405 Stagerline Road
Hudson, WI 54016

Photovoice is the qualitative research component of the St. Croix County Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP) – in joint partnership with:

 **Hudson Hospital & Clinics**
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Photovoice

Photovoice
Using
Photography
to Hear the
Voices of
Mothers
Raising
Children in
St. Croix
County

As part of the St. Croix County Community
Health Improvement Process

Photovoice



This project is the qualitative research component of the St. Croix County Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP). A joint partnership was formed by professionals from Hudson Hospital & Clinics, St. Croix County DHHS - Public Health, and Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC), University of Wisconsin - Madison to hear the voices and see the views of mothers raising children in St. Croix County regarding community strengths, needs, and concerns for the purpose of relevantly targeting programs and community planning that supports families. This research was approved by and conducted in accordance with the University of Wisconsin - Madison Institutional Review Board.

Methods

We selected a method called Photovoice, developed by Dr. Caroline Wang. Photovoice places cameras in the hands of local residents to enable them to depict their everyday lives through visual image. It has been used by county health professionals, educators, and community organizers throughout the nation to improve the living conditions of members of vulnerable populations who typically do not have access to decision makers. We recruited three groups of six women raising children in St. Croix County: (1) mothers who are concerned about maternal and child health issues; (2) mothers who are of Hispanic ethnicity and do not speak English; and (3) mothers who are concerned about healthy eating and active living for their children. We held two workshops for each group during the summer and early fall of 2008. In Workshop I, training was provided about the purpose and methods of Photovoice. During Workshop II, mothers shared and discussed the meaning of their photos, and what they would like to see changed in the community to foster quality family living.

Limitations

This information is not generalizable to all mothers raising children in St. Croix County since it was obtained from three non-randomized, small convenience samples that consisted of six women in each group. The findings were based on mothers' perceptions; as such, they may lack scientific precision.

Strengths

The strength of these findings is that they allow community stakeholders to directly hear the voices and see the views of mothers in a real-world context regarding community needs, assets, personal reflections and parenting strategies related to raising healthy children in St. Croix County. This information provides insights into existing services that are valued by residents as well as how to more effectively support parents through community planning. The study empowers parents to be partners with decision makers by including their perspectives as an integral part of the community health improvement process.

Acknowledgement / Disclaimer

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Discussion & Recommendations

Major themes related to community needs, personal reflections and parenting strategies, and community assets included topics such as, transportation, pedestrian safety, environmental health, nutrition, language barriers, and the meaning of community. The findings will be examined in combination with relevant county statistical information collected as part of this community health improvement process. Mothers recommended action steps in a group discussion which are reflected in the following approaches:

- Discuss the possibility of incorporating nutrition information in existing parenting education classes
- Examine the feasibility of implementing on-site organic gardening in new green schools as curricula to teach youth about healthy food choices
- Investigate approaches toward development of walking/biking paths in city planning to promote healthy lifestyles
- Study feasibility of incorporating public transportation between neighboring cities
- Further assess need and funding mechanisms for establishing a community organization center to address issues among Hispanic immigrants, including:
 - parent/teacher communication
 - adverse living conditions in rental properties
 - garbage disposal and burning according to state laws and municipal/township ordinances
 - social impacts of current laws related to obtaining drivers licenses

Research Team

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Cover photo by Saul Baumann

Findings

Barrier | Need Transportation

"When we don't have a driver's license, the road ends and we need to keep on going. That's what the picture represents."

Interpreter: "[The picture] represents the barrier that many Hispanic people have. She said, 'Thank God I can drive,' but many of her family and friends can't because they don't have the documents or whatever is needed for them to get a license. They don't want to change the laws, they realize they can't, but they would like to have some kind of permit that would allow them to drive to the grocery store, to bring their kids to school, just the basics."

Mother of Hispanic Ethnicity from Hudson

Barrier | Need Pedestrian Safety

"That picture is right by my older daughter's school, the middle school in New Richmond. It's Main Street in New Richmond. It's a horrible intersection that always looks like that. You have cars going all the time and for kids to have to cross that street is horrendous. The kids have to cross that street if [they] are walking home. I pick up my children to avoid this intersection. There have been several pedestrians hit up there."

Mother from Star Prairie

Community Need Nutrition Education in Schools

"This is lunch at school. It seems as though no matter what's on the menu, they would pick the things that aren't the healthy choice... Sometimes I watch what these children eat because I go to lunch often to be there as a support for my children. It's kind of saddening to me that we're not incorporating as a community this health and wellbeing through our schooling and providing our children with education that says these are the things that are super healthy for you. I don't think we do enough to get that across to our children through our schooling."

Mother from Hudson

Community Need Parental Language Barrier in School System

"Because of the language barrier we don't get informed as well as the other parents – that is the problem of us not learning the language fast enough. But not all is bad – the teachers are excellent and help me with the kids, and guide to give them a better education."

Mother of Hispanic Ethnicity from Somerset

Community Need Paved Pedestrian and Bike Pathways

"This is called 'Our Daily Walk'. These are my kids and my dog. This is the path we go down and if you look way ahead there's a woman there pushing a stroller and the path isn't easy for her. Once we passed her, I realized she was really struggling. I kept [this] picture because it's great for us, but it wasn't so great for her. We don't have any [paved] paths in Glenwood. So it's beautiful, but maybe not easy for bikes [or] strollers."

Mother from Glenwood City



Findings

Reflection The Value of Community

"The chain represents where I fit into the community. We all work better as a whole and it is important for families to have others in the community to rely on. The circle symbolizes how it keeps going and never ends."

Mother from Somerset

Parenting Strategy Mothers Modeling Physical Fitness for Their Children

"This one I named "Free to Be Fit" because of the Olympics and spirit of that this summer – seeing some of the Olympians with their flags around them as they were celebrating their accomplishments. I thought in our country one of our assets in our community is that it's safe to be outside. There are a lot of opportunities to be active and physically fit. The education [is] there for people to utilize to be fit. Opportunities are there. On the flip side there's also the freedom to not be fit. You have the choice. These are just some of my running friends that are all mothers and all of our kids are seeing us continue to have fitness as a daily part of our lives and a very positive part."

Mother from New Richmond

Community Asset Paved Pedestrian and Bike Pathways

"This is a picture of the trails, a part of the trail system that is actually in the town of New Richmond. It provides an opportunity for people who need paved pathways to partake in exercise whether it's on their bike, rollerblades, strollers, walking or jogging. These are very well cared for and the system keeps expanding so that it's functional as well, so you can get to the schools and to some major destinations by using [these] trails."

Mother from New Richmond

Community Asset Farmers Market

"This produce was available at a local farmers market this summer. The presentation was wonderful and the joy of selecting and [the] cooking quality [of] locally grown produce is even better. Our family visited the market each week, selecting our purchases together, and then we went home to prepare meals together. My three year old has discovered a love of snapping beans while my five year old has discovered a love of eating them fresh."

Mother from Roberts

Community Asset Charter School for Early Learning

"This is the good part. This is a program that started last year for children four years old. It was his first year of school... [charter school for early learning] in New Richmond... It's free [and is held for] four hours [a day], 12:30 to 3:30 in the afternoon."

Mother of Hispanic Ethnicity from New Richmond

