

Tackling inequity through a *Photovoice* project on the social determinants of health

Translating Photovoice evidence to community action

Nasim Haque¹ and Brian Eng¹

Abstract: St. Jamestown is the most densely populated vertical immigrant-receiving urban neighbourhood in Canada. The *Photovoice* project engaged and empowered immigrant residents of St. Jamestown to influence public policy and secure improved local services for promoting health and well-being. Twenty-seven residents used photography and storytelling to record neighbourhood characteristics and their implications on residents' health and well-being. Eight participants presented recommendations actionable at neighbourhood level to the councillor and worked with the city to carry out the recommendations made that were recognized as important for neighbourhood residents' health and well-being. The results indicate *Photovoice* can be used to generate dialogue on community concerns and priorities and promote community action. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): pp. 16–19)

Keywords: emigrants and immigrants, evidence-based practice, health promotion, organizational case studies, public health

Context

St. Jamestown (SJT) is an established immigrant-receiving area of great ethno-racial diversity in downtown Toronto. It is the most densely populated area in Canada with 64,636 people/km² living in 18 aging high-rise rental apartment buildings. The St. Jamestown Initiative is one of the few community-based research (CBR) projects that engages community residents to understand their perspective on how social determinants of health (social, physical and economical attributes) at neighbourhood level can affect immigrant residents' health and well-being. The initiative also focuses on developing strategies that help newcomer communities influence public policy, secure improved local services, and enhance existing community strengths that promote health and well-being.

Evidence supporting the intervention

The *Photovoice* project was conducted between May and December 2007. In this study, immigrant residents' perspectives on neighbourhood factors and their implications on health and well-being were gathered through photography and storytelling (1). Health was defined using the World Health Organization's definition, and neighbourhood was very loosely defined (2). Participants were recruited through a collaborating grassroots organization in the neighbourhood, and through word of mouth. Thirty participants were recruited; however, three participants dropped out of the study in the first four weeks.

The final group consisted of 16 female and 11 male participants representing a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, including Tamil, Chinese, Filipino,

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Somali, Kenyan, Arab, Tibetan, Bangladeshi, Nepali, Pakistani and West Indian. Their ages ranged from 18 to 68 years and their residency in SJT ranged from 6 months to 26 years. Most participants had either a high school or university education from their home countries.

Two half-day workshops were organized, one in the beginning and one towards the end of the project period. The first workshop explained the project, the expected roles and contributions of participants, and the expected outcomes of the work. Participants were given four weeks to take pictures. They were required to take at least eight photos to continue in the project. The photos were then developed and shared with respective participants. Each participant was asked to select and write a one-page story on the three photographs that best represented how they felt about the SJT neighbourhood and its relationship to health and well-being. Two participants who were not comfortable with writing were provided with support. Through this process, 150 photos and 77 stories were collected.

In the second workshop, participants shared their experiences and work with each other. They also discussed ways to move their work forward. The group decided to organize a Community Forum and Exposition to share their work with the community and others. To this end, four participants from the project were nominated by the group to join a resident action group along with four other residents nominated through a similar process from another project. The resident action group and two researchers met regularly over several months to prepare for the event.

Data analysis was two-fold. For the purpose of presenting findings to the public and to policy-makers, the researchers worked with the group to capture the authors' key messages regarding each photo. Using as many of the participants' own words as possible, short captions from the photo-stories were created. These captions were reviewed by each member of the working group until all members agreed that participants' messages were adequately represented. Through this process 77 photos with captions were finalized.

For the report, data was analyzed through content analysis, first case-by-case and then compared across all the photo-stories to identify important themes. The 77 photo-stories were read, analyzed and discussed by two researchers to determine how

the information should be categorized. Through this process, 197 concepts were identified and classified under five main themes and sub-themes. The draft report was reviewed by several members of the working group and changes were made based on their inputs.

The results indicate that the themes captured in participants' photo-stories cover a diverse range of topics which may require inter-sectoral and cross-government actions. The findings are categorized under: (i) physical issues such as overcrowding, housing conditions, open space, public facilities; (ii) environmental issues such as noise, pollution, and garbage; (iii) social issues such as meeting spaces, isolation, neighbourliness; and (iv) economic issues such as employment, recognition of foreign qualifications, and health services accessibility. The categories include both positive and negative factors associated with health.

How the evidence was used

In March 2008, the Community Forum and Exposition was attended by over 300 people from within and outside the neighbourhood. In September 2008, the resident action group displayed their research photos at Toronto's City Hall Rotunda. The two successful events encouraged the group to move forward with their goal of translating their research findings into community action. The group decided that they would like to present the research findings and recommendations to the city Councillor's office. A meeting was arranged in November with the help of the researchers.

To maximize the chances of success, it was decided to present selected research findings that warranted city and community level action. The researchers helped the group to prepare a PowerPoint presentation with five specific recommendations. The meeting was a great success: it was attended by the city Councillor and 15 self-invited municipal representatives from a broad range of departments providing services to the SJT neighbourhood. An important outcome from the presentation was the relationships developed with program managers and with the councillor's constituency assistant.

The recommendations made to the city authorities were modest and related to day-to-day living issues affecting all age groups in the neighbourhood. Bicycle theft due to improperly maintained bicycle

racks was identified as a common problem (Figure 1). Since biking is the main mode of transport for many residents in this neighbourhood, safe bicycle storage is a daily stressor for many residents. In the summer of 2009, the action group worked with city authorities to take an inventory of all bicycle racks, arrange the removal of broken bicycles from existing racks, and install new racks in the neighbourhood. The decision of city authorities to remove broken and abandoned bicycles from the neighbourhood was directly related to the *Photovoice* research findings. However, research alone might not have been effective in bringing action if it had not been coupled with a wide display of neighbourhood pictures and strong advocacy work by the resident action group.

Garbage and litter was another burning issue highlighted throughout the *Photovoice* project. However, the action group wanted to determine the knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) of residents to help them to ask relevant authorities for specific interventions that might promote recycling in the neighbourhood. The action group requested that the initiative support be a neighbourhood student as an intern and help him to carry out a KAP baseline study. The city is currently working

with building management and residents to introduce recycling facilities in apartments. The KAP report of the student is being used by the city as baseline measure to monitor progress over time.

Lessons learned

Photovoice can be effectively used to enter research-resistant communities, engage disadvantaged populations, and establish trust in a community. The technique helps to identify important community issues and pursue action and further research, and the process helps disadvantaged residents improve their leadership skills and resident empowerment level (3). By placing power and ownership in the hands of participants, a balance of power between researchers and the participants is created. We found this ownership motivated participants to stay committed to their work and the project. The successful dissemination of research findings and realization of the recommendations are testimony to this ownership. The methodology also helped to successfully create a working partnership between residents and the city government. Presenting in the councillor's office generated city stakeholders' interest in the group and their neighbourhood.



Bicycles are a primary mode of transportation in St. Jamestown. Our neighbourhood needs to have special bicycle rooms or sheds in each building. Maybe even a monitor to prevent stealing.



The action group worked with city authorities to arrange the removal of broken bicycles from existing racks, and install new racks in the neighbourhood.

Figure 1. Example of the Photovoice bicycle project

Source: The photograph on the left (illustrating broken parked bicycles) was taken by Ms. Yan Mei Zhang, a Chinese newcomer resident of St. James Town (summer of 2007). The photograph on the right (new bicycle rack) was taken by Mr. Sailaivasan Vettivelu, a resident and member of the St. James Town Residents Action Group (summer of 2009). He is a university student.

Although the resident action group worked as volunteers, they require some incentive(s) and long-term support to get established. It is important that projects allocate a substantial budget for community and leadership development and are flexible with their time.

The group was successful in advocating for changes which required intervention at the city level; however, the bigger issues identified in photo-stories such as employment opportunities, recognition of foreign qualifications, building maintenance, and health care accessibility remain a problem. The action group has not yet been able to develop relations with the media – a powerful method to draw the attention of the general public and authorities.

The initiative used successful strategies to engage a diverse group of residents; however, building management authorities were not engaged in the project. It would have been easier to share the research

findings regarding building maintenance issues with the managers if their support had been gained at the outset. In neighbourhoods where multiple land ownership exists, such as in SJT, it is important to engage all stakeholders from the very beginning of a project, otherwise it can be challenging to implement community action.

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Efficacité de la promotion de la santé pour prévenir le tabagisme chez les jeunes adolescents en Inde

Les données scientifiques documentent un Programme national de Lutte Antitabac

M. Arora et M. H. Stigler

Cette étude de cas a deux objectifs. Premièrement, elle décrit les stratégies d'intervention de deux programmes en milieu scolaire et destinés à prévenir le tabagisme chez les adolescents en Inde. Deuxièmement, elle explique comment les données tirées d'essais randomisés contrôlés sur ces programmes d'intervention ont été utilisées par une organisation non-gouvernementale locale de Delhi afin de plaider pour que les efforts déployés par le Gouvernement indien en matière de lutte contre le tabagisme soient étendus et incluent les interventions pour la santé en milieu scolaire comme une composante du Programme national indien de Lutte Antitabac. Cette étude de cas illustre la nécessité pour les pays en voie de développement d'effectuer des évaluations rigoureuses afin de fournir des données pertinentes pour leur contexte avant d'étendre les interventions. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): pp. 9–12)

Le programme *Bolsa Família* (Bourse familiale) à Manguinhos : défis et enseignements tirés d'une étude de cas

Processus de mise en œuvre : développement de stratégies et de données probantes

R. Magalhães, R. Bodstein, A. V. Coelho, M. Ferreira Nogueira et C. Bocca

Cet article discute des résultats d'une évaluation scientifique de la mise en œuvre de la *Bolsa Família*, un programme conditionnel destiné aux familles défavorisées de Manguinhos, au Brésil. Ce programme poursuit deux objectifs principaux : réduire la pauvreté actuelle et promouvoir le capital humain par le biais d'une plus grande utilisation des services d'éducation et de santé. La mise en relation de différents organismes et parties prenantes, et le développement des capacités de collaboration sont deux stratégies associées à l'efficacité du programme. L'évaluation de la mise en œuvre a montré qu'à Manguinhos, il existait de grands fossés au niveau de la pertinence des actions par rapport au contexte spécifique de leur mise en œuvre, à la collaboration intersectorielle et au partage des connaissances. Les données scientifiques provenant de ces travaux ont été utilisées pour effectuer des changements concrets dans les politiques au niveau local. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): pp. 13–15)

Lutter contre les inégalités grâce à un projet *Photovoice* sur les déterminants sociaux de la santé

Traduire les données Photovoice en action communautaire

N. Haque et B. Eng

Au Canada, St. Jamestown est le quartier urbain le plus peuplé et celui qui accueille la population immigrante la plus nombreuse. Le projet *Photovoice* a engagé et a donné aux résidents immigrés de St. Jamestown les capacités et les moyens d'influencer les politiques publiques et de garantir des services locaux améliorés afin de promouvoir la santé et le bien-être. Vingt-sept résidents ont eu recours à la photographie et au récit pour relever les caractéristiques de leur quartier, et leurs implications sur la santé et le bien-être des habitants. Huit participants ont présenté au conseiller local des recommandations applicables au niveau du quartier et ont

travaillé avec la ville pour mener à bien celles parmi leurs recommandations qui avaient été reconnues comme importantes pour la santé et le bien-être des habitants du quartier. Les résultats montrent que *Photovoice* peut être utilisé pour susciter un dialogue sur les problématiques et les priorités de la communauté et promouvoir l'action communautaire. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): pp. 16–19)

Lait répandu : un partenariat intersectoriel qui n'a pas réussi à rendre le lait plus accessible aux mères célibataires disposant de faibles revenus en Nouvelle-Écosse, au Canada

L. McIntyre, N. T. Glanville et A. Hilchie-Pye

La politique agricole canadienne soutient le prix élevé du lait. Par conséquent, les familles pauvres n'ont pas les moyens d'acheter du lait en suffisance. Dans la province canadienne de Nouvelle-Écosse, les mères célibataires disposant de faibles revenus ont suggéré les stratégies qu'elles préféreraient pour améliorer l'accès au lait. Nous avons ensuite développé un soutien intersectoriel pour une intervention politique afin de prendre en compte leurs recommandations. Notre processus pour traduire la recherche en action a abouti à un dialogue politique pour la mise en service d'une carte électronique qui aurait permis aux foyers défavorisés de se procurer du lait à moindre prix. Si tous étaient d'accord pour dire que la précarité de l'accès au lait était une question importante, le projet a finalement échoué en raison des positions rigides adoptées par les groupes influents au sein des parties prenantes. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): pp. 20–22)

Preuves scientifiques et changement de politiques : abaisser le taux d'alcoolémie autorisé au volant à 0,08% aux États-Unis

D. A. Sleet, S. L. Mercer, K. Hopkins Cole, R. A. Shults, R. W. Elder et J. L. Nichols

Aux États-Unis, les Centres de Contrôle et de Prévention des Maladies (CDC) ont mené, avec des partenaires clés, une revue systématique sur l'efficacité des lois fixant à 0,08% le taux de concentration d'alcool dans le sang sur la mortalité sur la route due à la consommation excessive d'alcool. Les résultats de cet examen, qui se sont avérés fortement probants, ont été présentés par les différents partenaires devant le Congrès des États-Unis et ont contribué à faire passer un projet de loi requérant des états qu'ils abaissent le taux d'alcoolémie autorisé au volant à 0,08% (80 mg d'alcool/100 ml de sang). Cette loi a ensuite été signée, faisant de 0,08% la nouvelle norme nationale. Une diffusion étendue et ciblée des données probantes et des recommandations aux principaux partenaires et parties prenantes est venue soutenir un changement des politiques au niveau de chaque état. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): pp. 23–26)

Voisins solidaires : l'utilisation interactive de données issues de méthodes et de disciplines multiples dans le développement et la mise en œuvre de Voisins solidaires

J. Lezwijn, J. Naaldenberg, L. Vaandrager et C. van Woerkum

Voisins solidaires est une intervention communautaire aux Pays-Bas. Elle a soutenu les personnes âgées actives dans l'organisation d'activités sociales pour leurs voisins âgés moins actifs, avec l'aide matérielle et financière des Services de Santé communautaires. Cette intervention est le résultat d'un regroupement d'interviews semi-structurées avec les personnes âgées, avec les organisations qui s'occupent des seniors et avec les responsables politiques locaux, de données épidémiologiques et de discussions interactives, tout cela avec l'idée qu'en s'engageant dans des activités sociales, on peut favoriser le vieillissement en bonne santé au

Eficacia de la promoción de la salud en la prevención del consumo de tabaco entre adolescentes en la India

Los resultados de la investigación configuran el Programa nacional de Control del Tabaquismo en la India

M. Arora y M. H. Stigler

Este caso práctico tiene dos objetivos. En primer lugar, describe las estrategias de intervención de dos programas de base escolar concebidas para prevenir el consumo de tabaco entre adolescentes de la India. En segundo lugar, explica cómo una organización no gubernamental de Delhi utilizó la evidencia derivada de ensayos controlados aleatorios de dichos programas de intervención para defender la ampliación a escala de las iniciativas del gobierno de la India para controlar el consumo de tabaco, de manera que las intervenciones de salud escolar constituyeran uno de los elementos del Programa nacional del Control del Tabaquismo en la India. El caso ilustra la necesidad de que los países en vías de desarrollo lleven a cabo evaluaciones rigurosas para ofrecer evidencia pertinente en relación al contexto antes de ampliar la escala de las intervenciones. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): 9–12)

El programa *Bolsa Família* (Beca Familiar) en Manguinhos : retos y lecciones aprendidas de un caso práctico

Procedimiento de ejecución : desarrollo de estrategias y evidencia

R. Magalhães, R. Bodstein, A. V. Coelho, M. Ferreira Nogueira y C. Bocca

Este artículo comenta los resultados de un estudio de evaluación de la ejecución de un programa de subvenciones condicionadas dirigido a familias pobres de Manguinhos (Brasil), denominado *Bolsa Família*. El programa persigue principalmente dos objetivos : reducir la pobreza actual y promover el capital humano a través de una mayor utilización de los servicios educativos y sanitarios. Las dos estrategias que se relacionaron con la eficacia del proyecto fueron la conexión de diferentes organismos y grupos de interés y la capacitación para la colaboración. La evaluación de la ejecución mostró que en Manguinhos existen grandes lagunas en relación con la adecuación de las acciones respecto del contexto de ejecución, la colaboración intersectorial y el intercambio de conocimientos. La evidencia derivada de este estudio se ha utilizado para impulsar cambios concretos en determinadas políticas a nivel local. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): 13–15)

Luchar contra la desigualdad mediante el proyecto *Photovoice* sobre los determinantes sociales de la salud

Transformar la evidencia de Photovoice en acciones comunitarias

N. Haque y B. Eng

St. Jamestown es el barrio urbano vertical receptor de inmigración más densamente poblado de Canadá. El proyecto *Photovoice* logró la participación de inmigrantes residentes en St. Jamestown y los capacitó para incidir en las políticas públicas y asegurar la mejora de los servicios locales a fin de promover la salud y el bienestar. Veintisiete residentes utilizaron fotografías y relatos para hacer un recuento de las características del barrio y de su repercusión en la salud y el bienestar de sus habitantes. Ocho de los participantes presentaron a la autoridad

local recomendaciones aplicables a nivel de barrio y trabajaron con el ayuntamiento para llevar a cabo las recomendaciones que fueron calificadas de importantes para la salud y el bienestar de los residentes. Los resultados indican que *Photovoice* puede utilizarse para generar diálogo en torno a las preocupaciones y prioridades de una comunidad y promover la acción comunitaria. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): 16–19)

***Leche derramada* : partenariado intersectorial que no logró asegurar el suministro de leche a madres solas de bajos ingresos en Nueva Escocia (Canadá)**

L. McIntyre, N. T. Glanville y A. Hilchie-Pye

Como consecuencia de la subida del precio de la leche, apoyada por la política agrícola canadiense, las familias pobres no tenían suficiente dinero para comprar la leche que necesitan consumir. Las madres solas de bajos ingresos de la provincia canadiense de Nueva Escocia expresaron las estrategias que preferían para poder solventar el problema. A continuación, buscamos apoyo intersectorial para llevar a cabo una intervención a nivel de políticas que abordara sus recomendaciones. El procedimiento que utilizamos para pasar de la investigación a la acción condujo a un diálogo sobre las medidas a adoptar que contemplaba la expedición de una tarjeta electrónica, con la cual las familias más pobres podrían comprar la leche más barata. Si bien todos estuvieron de acuerdo en que la inseguridad en el acceso a la leche era una cuestión importante, el proyecto al final fracasó a causa del inmovilismo de las posturas de los grupos de interés influyentes. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): 20–22)

Evidencia científica y cambios en las políticas : reducción a 0,08% del límite de alcohol en sangre permitido a los conductores en EE.UU.

D. A. Sleet, S. L. Mercer, K. Hopkins Cole, R. A. Shults, R. W. Elder y J. L. Nichols

Los Centros americanos para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades de los EE.UU. (CDC) llevaron a cabo en colaboración con contrapartes importantes un estudio sistemático de la eficacia de las leyes que establecen el límite de 0,08% de concentración de alcohol en sangre (BAC) respecto de la mortalidad derivada de los accidentes de carretera relacionados con el consumo de alcohol. Las diferentes contrapartes presentaron pruebas evidentes de esta eficacia en el Congreso de los EE.UU., lo que contribuyó a la aprobación de un proyecto de ley que exige a los estados rebajar el límite legal de BAC a 0,08% (80mg de alcohol/100ml de sangre). El proyecto de ley fue aprobado, con lo que el 0,08% se convirtió en el nuevo límite legal nacional. Para conseguir el apoyo al cambio de política a nivel de cada estado, se realizó una divulgación exhaustiva y con destinatarios definidos de la evidencia y recomendaciones a las principales personas y grupos interesados así como a las contrapartes del proyecto. (Global Health Promotion, 2011; 18(1): 23–26)

Vecinos conectados* : el uso interactivo de la evidencia interdisciplinaria y derivada de métodos diversos en el desarrollo y ejecución de *Vecinos conectados

J. Lezwijn, J. Naaldenberg, L. Vaandrager y C. van Woerkum

Neighbors Connected (Vecinos conectados) es una intervención de base comunitaria de los Países Bajos. El Servicio de Salud Comunitario presta apoyo práctico y económico a personas de edad activas para que organicen actos sociales para sus vecinos de edad, pero menos activos. La intervención es el resultado de una combinación de entrevistas semiestructuradas con gente mayor, con organizaciones de tercera edad y con los responsables de las políticas locales, junto con datos epidemiológicos y discusiones interactivas, todos los cuales apoyaban la idea de que la participación en actividades sociales ayuda a envejecer con más salud dentro de la

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