Lesson Six:
Identifying Community Assets and Barriers

Objectives

1. To teach students to use PhotoVoice, mapping techniques, or prescribed Community Inventory worksheets to record resources (goods and services) and policies in their community that function as assets and barriers to health.

2. To recognize real-life applications of Lessons 1-5.

Outcomes

1. Students will photograph, map, or conduct inventories of resources (goods and services) and policies in their community. They will determine if those resources and policies protect or harm the health of the community.

2. Students will understand their role in advocating for health improvements in their community.

Activity

Students will participate in at least one of the following three activities (listed in recommended order):

1. PhotoVoice

2. Mapping

3. Community Inventory

NOTE: Instructors may implement one or all of the three methods of recording community-based assets and barriers to health (listed in recommended order), or allow students to choose.
Activity 1: PhotoVoice

Purpose

The purpose of the PhotoVoice\(^1\) activity is to form groups of students to photograph assets and barriers to health found in their school or local community.

Required Materials

The PhotoVoice activity requires the following materials:

1. Cameras or cell phones with cameras (for each student or each group of students).

2. Release Form, needed for photographing or interviewing individual people.

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Instructions

Follow the instructions below to implement the PhotoVoice activity.

Prior to class

1. Students will determine if they will take photographs of their school or local neighborhood. **Encourage** students to work in groups of three to six if possible.

   **NOTE:** Alternatively, you may complete this activity as a class field trip. If so, complete permission forms or other paperwork required by your school, arrange transportation, and recruit chaperones. Additionally, you may consider pre-arranging health-related presentations for students, such as a tour of a community clinic or interviews with staff at an adult education center. If so, encourage students to brainstorm questions prior to the event.

2. **Instruct** students to bring cameras to class to practice taking pictures that illustrate assigned scenarios.

During Class

1. **Explain** the PhotoVoice activity using the script below:

   Now that you have learned how social, economic, and political factors may shape individual health, we will explore local communities to document what resources (goods and services) and policies you believe promote health (i.e., assets such as farmers markets) or are detrimental to health (i.e., barriers such as tobacco or alcohol advertisements).

   Take as many photographs as you would like, and choose your top 3-5 images. Print them and bring copies to class or submit (email, USB, etc.) them to me ahead of time. Write a one sentence caption to describe each image and explain why you think it represents an asset or a barrier to health. We will share and discuss photographs in subsequent sessions. Many of you will be surveying the same community and even sharing cameras. Remember to document images based on your own opinions and without influence from your peers. Please complete the project independently.

   There are no right or wrong answers, and photography skills and artistic talents are not required for this exercise.

   If you have the opportunity, engage with community members – storekeepers, shoppers, pedestrians, people you know who live or work in the community, people of all ages and backgrounds – and ask their perceptions of the primary health issues, and assets and barriers to health in the community. Ask their permission to photograph them and...
record their responses. Please ask them to sign release forms – which I will provide you – indicating their permission for you to share the photograph(s) or interview notes with the class.

This technique of photographing the community from your perspective is called PhotoVoice. It is a popular tool used in public health and social science research (though our version of PhotoVoice is abbreviated). The purpose is to understand community issues from the perspective of those who live in the community, especially those who may be disadvantaged or are unable to express their opinions. Ultimately, the goal is to reflect on the PhotoVoice experience and for it to serve as a catalyst for social action and policy-level change.

Today we will decide who will visit which neighborhoods, practice using cameras to capture appropriate scenarios, and answer any questions.

2. **Ask** students to choose if they will photograph their school or their local neighborhood.

3. **Instruct** students to sit with groups of students surveying similar neighborhoods (e.g., students photographing the school, north section of town, shopping district, etc.). **Distribute** Sample PhotoVoice Projects to each group. Ensure that each student has a camera, or instruct students to partner with someone who does have a camera.

4. **Provide** students time to practice taking photographs, suggesting they document images that represent scenarios that may relate to health (e.g., social consciousness, cooperative learning, school spirit, etc.) that can be found in the classroom.

5. **Review** any applicable school regulations and **distribute** Release Form.

6. **Assign** PhotoVoice as homework.
Activity 2: Asset Mapping

Purpose

The purpose of the Asset Mapping activity is to prepare students to identify resources (goods/services) and policies that function as assets and barriers to health in their school or local community.

Required Materials

The Asset Mapping activity requires the following materials:

1. Detailed maps of areas to be surveyed (completed by instructor or students prior to class, example provided at the end of Lesson Six).
2. Stickers or markers of two distinct colors (e.g., red and green).
3. Release Form, needed for photographing or interviewing individual people.
Instructions

Follow the instructions below to implement the Asset Mapping activity.

Prior to class

Students will determine if they will photograph their school or local neighborhood. Encourage students to work in groups of three to six if possible.

**NOTE:** Alternatively, you may complete this activity as a class field trip. If so, complete paperwork and permission forms required by school, arrange transportation, and recruit chaperones. Students should complete their maps independently, but groups of students may survey the same location. Additionally, you may consider pre-arranging health-related presentations for students, such as a tour of a community clinic or interviews with staff at an adult education center. If so, encourage students to brainstorm questions prior to the event.

During Class

1. **Describe** the Asset Mapping activity to students using the script below:

   Now that you have learned how social, economic, and political factors may shape individual health, we will explore local communities to document what resources (goods and services) and policies you believe promote health (i.e., assets such as farmers markets) or are detrimental to health (i.e., barriers such as tobacco or alcohol advertisements).

   You and your group will walk or bike through assigned neighborhoods. Take a pen, notebook, and two colored markers with you. You will also have a map to mark what resources (goods and services) or policies that you think are positive (assets) or negative (barriers) influences on health. Use one color marker to indicate assets and a different color to indicate barriers.

   If you have the opportunity, engage with community members – storekeepers, shoppers, pedestrians, people you know who live or work in the community – and ask their perceptions of the primary health issues, and assets and barriers to health in the community. Ask their permission to photograph and record their responses. Please ask them to sign release forms – which I will provide – indicating their permission for you to share the photograph(s) with the class.

   Though many of you will be surveying the same neighborhood, please complete the project independently; there are no right and wrong answers, so it is important to think about what we learned in class and decide on assets and barriers for yourself. After we complete the exercise, we will share responses, so be prepared to describe what you found, and how you think it affects the health of the community.
Today we will decide who will visit which neighborhoods, divide into groups, and answer any questions.

2. Ask students to indicate if they will map their school or local neighborhood. Instruct students to sit with groups of students mapping similar neighborhoods (e.g., students mapping the school, north section of town, shopping district, etc.). Distribute school or neighborhood maps to each group. Remind students to circle the area that they visit and that they may take photographs.

3. Review applicable school regulations and distribute Release Form.

4. Assign Asset Mapping activity as homework.
Activity 3: Community Inventory

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Inventory activity is to prepare groups of students to complete a prescribed worksheet in which they identify assets and barriers to health in commercial stores and recreational areas in their community.

Required Materials

The Community Inventory activity requires the following materials:

1. Community Inventory Worksheets (provided at the end of Lesson Six, and which will require a pen or pencil).
2. Release Form, needed for photographing or interviewing individual people.
Instructions

Follow the instructions below to implement the *Community Inventory* activity.

Prior to class

1. **Identify** several neighborhoods (with varying income levels and quality of recreational areas and commercial districts) based on the number of students and groups (three to six students per group, one group per neighborhood).

   **NOTE:** Alternatively, you may complete this activity as a class field trip. If so, complete paperwork and permission forms required by school, arrange transportation, and recruit chaperones. Assign students to complete all three *Community Inventory* worksheets individually, or delegate small groups of students to different neighborhoods and/or parts of the community.

During Class

1. **Describe** the *Community Inventory* activity using the *Community Inventory Worksheets* and the explanation below:

   Now that you have learned how social, economic, and political factors may shape individual health, we will explore ______ [insert chosen location(s)]. Using the worksheets that I will distribute, you will determine how resources (goods and services) and policies listed on the sheet may promote or hinder health in the community. Once finished, you will share your findings with the class. Today we will divide into (number) groups, decide who will visit which neighborhoods and be responsible for what aspects of the worksheets, and answer any questions.

2. **Instruct** students to list their top three neighborhood choices from the list provided.

3. **Determine** groups by student interest and assign students to neighborhoods in order of their choices. For example, students will be assigned to their first neighborhood choice, and hopefully this division will balance naturally. If certain neighborhoods are more popular than others, reassign students to their second and third choices.

4. **Instruct** students to sit with their groups and **distribute** the *Community Inventory* worksheets to each group.
5. **Provide** students several minutes to:
   a. Review the three required subsections of the *Community Inventory Worksheets*:
      - Worksheet 1: exterior of commercial district
      - Worksheet 2: interior of commercial store
      - Worksheet 3: recreational area
   b. Determine who will complete each *Community Inventory* worksheet (recommended: minimum of two students per worksheet).
   c. Report assignments to instructor.

6. **Review** applicable school regulations and **distribute** *Release Form*.

7. **Assign** *Community Inventory Worksheets* as homework.
Sample PhotoVoice Projects

These photographs exemplify a typical PhotoVoice project in which students capture images representative of assets and barriers to health found in their communities. Each image is coupled with an explanatory caption.

Barrier

At left, liquor stores, with windows covered in alcohol and tobacco advertisements, dominate the landscape of this neighborhood.

Barrier

Below, abandoned lots and buildings provide space for gang, drug, and other illicit activities.
Asset

Above, vegetables grown locally are available in this neighborhood store. Signs are bilingual, and represent the primary languages spoken in this community.

Asset

At right, stores promote a sense of community and social cohesion by selling culturally relevant goods in this neighborhood.
Release Form

As part of a public health project in my school, I am identifying goods, services, and policies that influence the health of this community. I am requesting your participation in this project by allowing me to photograph or interview you and to share the images or your responses with my classmates. Photographs and interview responses will not be circulated or sold. Should you agree to participate, please read and sign below.

I hereby authorize __________________________ to use photographs in which I am featured or the content of our interview for the purposes of the student’s public health project. I waive the right to review the photograph or transcript prior to use.

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Student Signature      Date

_________________________________________
Name of School

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Name of person being photographed/interviewed      Date

_________________________________________
Signature of person being photographed/interviewed  Date
Assets
1. Hospital
2. Supermarket
3. Sidewalks and streetlights
4. Pharmacy
5. Mural
6. Park

Barriers
7. No bicycle lane
8. Fast food restaurant with few healthy choices
9. Bar with loitering outside
10. Abandoned building
11. Unleashed dogs
12. Traffic congestion
