

# Exploring Digital Storytelling Applications in the Community: Implementation and Impact of Four Community Forums in King County, Washington

Samantha Benson

**Purpose:** The Mapping Our Voices for Equality (MOVE) program targets communities disproportionately affected by tobacco and obesity and uses digital storytelling to promote healthier neighborhoods. During 2011-2012, MOVE hosted community forums that brought community members, leaders, and policymakers together to discuss policies and problems highlighted by local story producers. The goals of the community forums were to increase community members' understanding of health disparities and inequities, mobilize members, and advocate for policy changes. The overall goal of this project is to evaluate the impact of MOVE's digital stories on forum attendees and to assess if any community actions and policy changes occurred as a result of the forums.

**Methods:** A total of four community forums were hosted in King County, Wash. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with community leaders and policymakers (n=11) in attendance and open-ended surveys were collected from community members (n=38). Structured observations of each forum were recorded and debriefs with MOVE staff were conducted. Interviews and surveys assessed attendees' reactions to MOVE's digital stories. Community actions and policy changes resulting from the forums were documented.

**Results:** Forum attendees perceived MOVE's digital stories as authentic. Many felt the stories enriched their understanding of health disparities and related a fresh perspective on health topics not typically captured in media. All four community forums resulted in community actions or policy changes around topics highlighted by MOVE's digital stories. Examples of community

actions include the mailing of 250+ postcards from local Latinos to Washington State legislators in favor of Tobacco Quitline Services and the initiation of plans for a mobile grocer to locate in a neighborhood with limited access to healthy foods. Examples of policy changes include the restoration of operating hours slated to be cut from a community center and planning to pilot new school lunch policies at a local elementary school.

Conclusion: Findings indicate that MOVE's digital stories were informative and inspiring to policymakers, community leaders, and other community members in attendance. Concrete community actions and policy changes arising from MOVE's forums suggest that digital stories may be a potentially effective media tool for accomplishing positive community change.

Thesis Committee:

Rosa Solorio, MD MPH (Chair)

Allen Cheadle, PhD