Using Google Maps to Study Health Disparities in US.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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Abstract

Health disparities continue to be a pressing problem in American society. Although this topic is often a fundamental concept for an introduction to sociology course or upper-level medical sociology course, there are few exercises available to show students real-world explanations of health disparities using an active learning framework. With this gap in mind, this in-class activity uses google maps to introduce students to health disparities, critically analyze the ways in which geography exacerbates health disparities and creatively develop policy solutions.

Details

Subject Areas: Medical Sociology

Resource Types: Class Activity

Class Levels: Any Level

Class Sizes: Any

Usage Notes

This activity should take no more than 30 minutes in class and can be easily adjusted to fit an online modality. To begin, instructors should lecture on health disparities and provide empirical evidence of health disparities by race, class, and gender. I've attached PowerPoint for guidance. My slides are bit outdated by now, so I suggest instructors update their lecture using information from CDC (Centers for Disease Control) website.

Once the lecture is complete (about 10 minutes), instructors guide students through an in-class activity, which asks them to use google maps to search for health providers, grocery stores, and gyms in different areas of the United States. The activity can be administered individually, but in my experience, it works best in small groups, because students can delegate different ways of searching in google maps while tech savvy students can help others.

Lastly, students complete a small written assignment individually which assess the causes of health disparities and policy solutions to address them. Be advised that some students may need help using google maps. Hence, it is a good idea to walk them through a couple steps before you begin the exercise. I typically tell students to search a particular zip code or neighborhood, type "grocery store" (or any business/building) and use the "nearby" function in google. I also run through the street view function on google maps (the little yellow person in the bottom right of the screen).

For assessment of the in-class activity, I rely on low-stakes grading. That is, the activity is worth 5 points and they either receive all 5 points if they complete the activity well, 3 points if they barely complete the assignment, or 0 points if they did not participate in the activity. The short writing assignment is worth 5 points. Depending upon the assignment modality, I have provided a rubric below that helps to explain my assessment process of the in-class activity. See attached ppt and word doc.

Learning Goals and Assessments

LEARNING GOALS

Introduce students to health disparities (remember).

Critically analyze the ways in which geography exacerbates health disparities (analyze).

Use google maps to analyze health disparities and provide policy solutions (apply).

ASSESSMENTS

A short lecture and in-class activity.

An in-class activity and future exam questions.

A short take home assignment.

Resource Files

DOCX
PPTX
DOCX