**Using Google Maps to Explore Health Disparities**

Abstract: Health disparities continue to be a pressing problem in American society. Although this topic is often a fundamental concept for any 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 social class inequities exacerbates health disparities and discuss policy solutions.

Learning Goals and Assessments

Goal 1 (remember): Introduce students to health disparities (remember).

Assessment 1: A short lecture and in-class activity.

Goal 2 (analyze): Critically analyze the ways in which social class inequities create health disparities (analyze).

Assessment 2: An in-class activity and future exam questions.

Goal 3 (apply): Use google maps to analyze health disparities and discuss policy solutions (apply).

Assessment 3: In class discussion and future exam questions.

Usage Notes: This activity should take no more than 30 minutes in class and can be easily adjusted to fit an online modality. Below, I provide step by step instructions for successfully administering the in-class activity.

1. Before the activity, instructors should choose a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) and gather some background information on two neighborhoods (zip codes) in the MSA. I would recommend using the closest MSA to you and your students. To save you some work, I have provided the requisite information for Dallas, Texas. See the table on slide 6 as well as a link to the census website, where most of the information can be found.
2. Instructors should briefly lecture on health disparities, including some of the sociological explanations for them. I’ve attached a PowerPoint for guidance from my notes. See Cockerham’s *Medical Sociology* for more information.
3. Give a brief introduction to google maps, including how to use the “nearby” function. I have provided a screenshot in the attached PowerPoint.
4. Ask the students to complete the worksheet as a group. They can do this individually if the course uses an online modality, but group work tends to work better.
5. Once students have completed the worksheet, use the 500 Cities link (see slide 5 on ppt) to explore available health data based upon the neighborhoods you chose. For Dallas Texas, I chose obesity and compared north and south Dallas.
6. As a class, or in small groups, discuss ways to alleviate health disparities.

I rely on low-stakes grading for assessment of the in-class activity. 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.

Supplemental Materials: Please see the attached PowerPoints and worksheet to improve the quality of this activity in class.