



SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Adapting in Place: Exploring Community and Environmental Wellness in the Time of Climate Change

What is the background for this study?

This study examines how people’s understanding of environmental and physical conditions connects to community health, well-being, and civic engagement. Syracuse residents are diverse in race, ethnicity, class, and culture, and its neighborhoods tend to be segregated by race and income, with disinvestment in low-income neighborhoods of color. The city is also experiencing changing weather conditions that impact health. The study engages a diverse group of community members across Syracuse to inform findings and collectively explore actions to respond to community priorities.

What are the research questions?

This study seeks to better understand community members’ knowledge of and interest in the conditions of their neighborhood. The research questions include:

1. How do community members define and understand community health and well-being?
2. How can coalitions that cross neighborhood boundaries effectively address social and environmental inequities and promote well-being?
3. What role can coalitions have in shaping environmental actions and outcomes that promote health, well-being, and community capacity?

Who are your community partners?

The research team partners with the Syracuse Department of Neighborhood and Business Development and is guided by a project advisory committee (PAC) representing leadership from different community organizations.

How are community members engaged in the research to action process?

Community engagement is critical to this study. The PAC guides the decisions for defining and selecting neighborhood areas for research, refines research questions, and provides an essential link between the academic team and community members. Community members also engage in the research process through a neighborhood gathering event, where they discuss research findings, attend panel discussions, and participate in action-focused breakout sessions. Events and activities are guided by the priorities that community members identify in focus groups and provide opportunities for community members to discuss actions to improve these priority areas in their neighborhoods with other community leaders.

Study At-A-Glance

Study Title
Adapting in Place: Exploring Community and Environmental Wellness in the Time of Climate Change

Researchers
Joshua Cousins, PhD
Jean Kayira, PhD
Jean Yang

Grant Cohort 2022

Timeline 2022-2025

Study Location Syracuse, New York

Study Topic Area(s)
Community Development
Environment and Climate Change
Senior Development
Social Equity

What data and methods are used in this study?

This study uses mixed methods developed in collaboration with the PAC, including surveys, focus groups, mapping, storytelling, Q-methodology, and photovoice. Researchers collect data through two sets of focus groups in five Syracuse neighborhoods with over 50 community participants. The first set of focus groups generates ideas on neighborhood health and wellbeing, and then the second set of focus groups uses Q-methodology to understand how people prioritize these aspects of neighborhood health and well-being.

How does this research translate to community action?

This study helps establish connections between the research team and community participants and expand participants' knowledge and understanding of their own and other neighborhoods. Through this research, community members and participants gain a more comprehensive understanding of the assets and characteristics within their communities that significantly contribute to their health and well-being. This understanding provides valuable guidance as participants identify and implement necessary changes and improvements within their communities.

What are potential opportunities to apply study findings and/or build on this research?

This study contributes to a growing body of research on the health impacts of neighborhood conditions and provides insights into what motivates individuals to engage actively in community initiatives and how communities can sustain this involvement.

For more information on the study:

Study Website	Adapting In Place (google.com)			
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