Engaging the participant: Use of a photographic method

Sue Anderson, PhD, RN, FNP-BC
Disclosure slide

• Author’s name: Sue Anderson, PhD, RN, FNP-BC

• The learner will be able to:
  • 1. Develop an understanding of the process of utilizing photography in a research project.
  • 2. Describe some benefits and challenges of using photography in qualitative research.

• Conflict of Interest Statement: Nothing to declare

• Employer: Indiana University South Bend, Vera Z. Dwyer College of Health Sciences, School of Nursing

• Sponsorship: Self-funded study
Question and method

• The research questions:
  1. How do Hispanic families describe leisure time activities?
  2. How do culture, family, and the community environment influence a Hispanic child’s participation in after-school, leisure time physical activities?

• Spradley’s Developmental Research Sequence (1979)

• Co-creation of knowledge
  • Spradley (1979): “Before you impose your theories on the people you study, find out how those people define the world” (p. 11).
The method

• Recruited mothers of children aged 6-12
  • Invited them to photograph their children engaged in fun leisure time activities

• After pictures were developed
  • In-depth analysis of each photograph
    • Spradley’s (1979) 9 dimensions of social interactions
    • Space, objects, acts, activities, events, actors, time, goal, feelings

• Invited the participants to:
  • Engage in a photo-elicited interview
  • Sort their photographs into categories
  • Name the categories
  • Discuss each category and photograph in detail
Why use photography?

- Based on principles of Photovoice

- “Photovoice gives cameras to people who might otherwise not have access to such a tool, so that they may record and catalyze change in their communities, rather than stand as passive subjects of other people’s intentions and images” (Wang & Burris, p. 370-371).

- Helpful method:
  - Reduces researcher bias
  - Less intrusive
Using photography

• Give clear instructions
  • How to use the camera
  • What you would like for participants to focus on
  • How soon to return camera

• Organize photographs
  • Participant identification number
  • Each photograph is chronologically numbered

• Photo-elicited interviews
  • Longer interviews; less repetition and fatigue
  • Sharpens memory, reduces misunderstanding
  • Reveals multiple meanings
  • Invites participant to demonstrate expertise and take the lead
Ethical issues

• Invasion of privacy – private space and confidentiality
  • Full disclosure of how pictures will be used

• Disclosure of an embarrassing act
  • Only photograph activities you would be comfortable with others seeing. Avoid pictures in “private situations.”

• Being placed in a false light
  • Photo unintentionally gives false impression of participant

• Use of pictures for commercial benefit
  • Selling pictures for monetary gain

• Photography of children
  • To blur or not to blur

• Research with immigrant populations
  • First do no harm
Challenges

• Timelines
  • Requested cameras back within a week
  • Requires multiple meetings with participants

• The Camera
  • Film vs. Digital
  • Using the camera – explain the nuts and bolts of photography
Reality?

- The question about participant-produced photographs
  - “Is it reality?”

- A camera:
  - Is an inanimate object that provides highly-sensitive reflection of photographer’s attitude
  - Provides an image of photographer’s reality
  - Photographs: “communication bridges” that portray multiple meanings
“I’m thinking she need to be a student”
“They’re on sharing behaviors”
“This is our Mexican bingo”
References


References

