
The use of photovoice in research involving people with intellectual disabilities

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Abstract

Although photovoice is increasingly used in research involving people with intellectual disabilities (ID), the number of studies is still limited (for example: Akkerman et al. 2014; Booth & Booth 2013; Jurkowski 2007; 2008). In a comparative analysis of nine studies involving research with people with ID different approaches of photovoice were detected. For example, the studies diverged in how the participants were informed and trained in photovoice (individual or collective). There was also a variation concerning the level of assistance during the photovoice process in the studies. So, the best way to use photovoice remains unclear. The question arises under which conditions photovoice best enables participants with ID to express themselves?

We developed a guided approach in a study involving twelve people with ID. The aim of our study was to explore the usefulness of this guided approach aiming to reveal the voice of people with ID. Participants were asked to photograph people and places in their direct neighbourhood which were of importance for them. The researcher walked together with the participants through their neighbourhood. In some cases participants found it difficult to take the photos themselves for instance because they had difficulties in handling the camera Or in making proper photographs. In those situations the researcher made the photo for them, taking care that the participant always determined the topic and the angle of their photos themselves. In the subsequent interview participants responded in an individual way to the photographs made to underpin the story they wished to tell.

Our research showed that the application of photovoice should be customized for each participant individually, in order to help them to tell their stories. For example, some participants were very able explaining the relation between the photographs and the stories they evoked during the interview. For other participants this was more difficult. But because of the guided photovoice walk together with the researcher through their neighbourhood they all were able to reveal the stories they wanted to tell.

Keywords: Intellectual disabilities, photovoice method

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