

Camera

Summary

This is an adaptation of PhotoVoice or photo elicitation.¹³⁰ In this process the child takes photos to help answer the research questions. It has been found to be an accessible method for a range of children with diverse impairments.^{131 132 133 134}

In some PhotoVoice techniques, the child is given the camera to loan or keep for a period of time (e.g. 1–4 weeks). This provides the opportunity for the child to take photos of things relevant to the research that are not available on the day of the visit (e.g. a trip to a larger town or a cultural event).¹³⁵ Some caution is required – in some instances cameras and data have been lost, while anonymity may be compromised if children take photos of other children. Sensitivity is required when photos are taken of children at risk or of disturbing images.¹³⁶ Caution may also be required if having a camera places the child at risk of theft or violence.

There is no one right way to do this process. Allowing the child to take photos is just a prompt to help the child talk or communicate about the questions.

Equipment required

1. Sturdy digital camera suitable for environmental conditions, preferably with a screen on the back.
2. Spare batteries and memory card.

Process

1. Ask the research question/s.
2. Explain that you are going to ask the child to take photos as a way of answering the research question. The photos might be of their village, community or everyday life. You might need to re-phrase the research question into an instruction about what to take photos of (for example, 'take some photos of the things that are important in your life' or 'take some photos of your friends/what you like to learn at school/what you want to do when you leave school').
3. Show the child how to use the camera.
4. Walk with the child while they take the photos. Walk slowly from your starting point, (e.g. the child's house) and move slowly around the area, (e.g. the house and home gardens).
5. Ask questions in response to the child's explanation of what they are taking photos of. Ask follow-up questions to explore the research questions.
6. The researcher must let the child take the lead and initiate the path being taken and the destination.
7. Children can get tired quickly and so there may be a number of camera shoots over different visits. This will take patience.
8. Take notes as the child talks about the photos they are taking.
9. Keep external distraction to a minimum by having researchers and child walk by themselves (unless other people are needed to assist the child communicate, or support the child).

10. Photos should be printed and returned at the next visit. Make time to go through the photos with the child and seek clarification of what the photo is about and how it relates to the research question (remind the child of the research question). Use this time to confirm the information gathered while the photos were being taken. Depending on the research method, the child may be asked to identify which photo they feel has the most significance to the research question.
11. Be positive about the child's choices and what they are telling you.
12. At end of the visit, leave a copy of the photos with the child.

Considerations

1. The child may feel uncomfortable or lack confidence using a camera and may direct the researcher to take the photos. Due to the child's impairment, it may be difficult for the child to hold, manoeuvre or see through the camera. For these reasons, it may not be suitable, or alternatively the child may wish to continue with the activity but may require support to use the camera.¹³⁷ For example, the child can direct the researcher to take the photos as identified by the child.
2. The process can take 1 to 1.5 hours with older children as they may spend more time thinking through the choice of images.
3. There is a risk that the wider community will want to also view the photos taken. The child may come under pressure to explain the importance or meaning of the photos and this may put them in a difficult situation.

Benefits

1. Particularly good activity for older children (aged 10 years and over).
2. When other tools aren't working, then this tool might be helpful in getting the child to share information about the research question.

Skills of the researcher

1. It is important that the researcher is patient and not rush the child when taking photos.
2. The researcher will need basic skills in camera use and maintenance and be able to save, delete, download and print photographs as required.

Practice example

Max attends school where he works very hard. He prefers lip reading to using sign language. Max was intrigued by, and enjoyed using, the camera. When Max was asked what his hopes and dreams were for the future, he explained, 'I took this picture of my mother while she was standing at the front of the blackboard writing. I think that one day I will become a teacher like my mother... because I want to help other children. I think I can do this because I have high scores ... and came second out of 22 students in my class this year. I want to have a job so that I can help my parents and ... I can survive on my own'.

(Max, nine year old boy who is deaf and lives in Vanuatu).

