

Look Beyond



INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR CAPTURING PATIENTS' EXPERIENCES - A PHOTOVOICE EXAMPLE

PROJECT AIMS

To provide people with a creative method to explore and communicate their experience of mental health difficulties

To challenge the wider public to Look Beyond the stigma and labels often associated with mental health difficulties

To start a conversation - creating understanding and empathy for people's experiences

RESEARCH METHOD

- Photovoice is a participatory, person-centred research method
- Facilitated group discussion combined with photography as a tool of expression and communication
- Capture peoples lived experience in a creative, deeply nuanced manner

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

- Two groups of 16 participants
- 5 ♀ / 11 ♂
- 250+ photographs taken over one month
- 90 photos selected to caption and share publicly

5-STEP PROCESS



CREATION OF 'SAFE-SPACE'

Space where people feel comfortable to share their feelings and experiences



INTRO. TO VISUAL LITERACY

Creative exercises to get people comfortable using the method



FACILITATED GROUP DISCUSSION

Participants decide on themes to guide their photo-taking



SHARING OF PHOTOS

Each week the group share and explain selected photos



FINAL SELECTION & CAPTIONING

Each person selects photos to share publicly and is facilitated in captioning process

WHY PHOTOVOICE?



- Inclusive form of knowledge construction - inquiry into people's realities carried out **by** and **with** people instead of **'on'** people in ways that aim to empower, and which value knowledge grounded in experience
- Powerful tool to explore complex multi-layered phenomenon such as mental health¹
- Roots in social activism - knowledge that results is **practical** and directed towards **action**. Aim is to create conversations which lead to positive **social change**²

FINDINGS

Mental health difficulties distort, isolate and exhaust

Recovery is characterised by hope, resilience, connection



'DISTORTION'

This picture shows how my depression distorts real life and how I saw things in the darkest days. I knew the beauty was out there but I just couldn't get to it. The rope brought to me thoughts of suicide, but also, of the support I received in recovery. (Gerry)

I feel the connection with people over a simple cup of coffee is a very powerful tool in recovering. The connection with people helped me feel less isolated and gave me a sense of belonging to the group. This photo brought to mind the support I had received, and was so grateful for. That was a big thing for me - helping me recover, people, just talking to people. (Gerry)



'CONNECTION'

This is a picture of only one part of me. I don't want to be known. I don't want to be seen in the photograph. When you have the illness...you don't want people to know everything about you. You don't want people to know about your illness. (Dáire)



'ISOLATION'



'HOPE'

For me goals are key to my recovery which included going back to college and getting a degree. A key for getting my life back together. The goals further represent future aspirations and hopes which also include career, my own house and family. (Andrew)



'EXHAUSTION'

I see water as a life-force, without it we wouldn't be alive. So this fella (pictured) is squeezing this cloth and he's squeezing the life out of it. That's what I interpret as depression, it really does, it puts a bit squeeze on you. (Michael)

My ship that has weathered my storms of darkness lays battered and broken, decaying in time and yet, life still breaks through my weakened mind. (Rick)



'RESILIENCE'

1 Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1994). Empowerment through Photo Novella: Portraits of Participation. Health Education and Behavior, 21, 171-186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/109019819402100204>

2 Johnson, D., Russinova, Z., Gagne, C. (2008) Using photovoice to fight the stigma of mental illness. Recovery and Rehabilitation, Vol 4, No. 4. Boston University Centre for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.; Han, C., and Oliffe, J. (2016) Photovoice in mental illness research: A review and recommendations. Health Vol. 20(2) 110-126

Look Beyond, a participatory photography project conducted by Dr Maria Quinlan and Dr Etain Quigley on behalf of See Change. The full report can be downloaded at <https://seechange.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LookBeyond.pdf>

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