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Photovoice: An Educational Method for Students to Learn about Community, Culture, and Storytelling

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Introduction

Many occupational therapy educational programs require a final project to integrate and apply knowledge and skills developed during the program. Photovoice is a method that uses photography and narrative to give people a unique way to describe their lives and communities. Students at St. Catherine University used Photovoice as a final project to enlighten others about the lived experiences of people representing diverse communities.

Objectives

Participants will be able to describe how Photovoice can be used:

1. as an occupation to identify community concerns
2. to increase student awareness of community and the power of storytelling.
3. to achieve educational program goals.

Description

Photovoice is a visual and narrative storytelling technique that was used as an educational method to help students develop understanding of a community and demonstrate leadership skills. The method was a final project for 31 students from 3 classes. Students completed the Photovoice experience themselves and then created and facilitated a 6 week Photovoice course for a community group.

Results

Photovoice was a successful project for occupational therapy students and the participants in 9 community groups. Students learned about photography as an effective occupation for storytelling and conducted classes, created written and oral presentations, and organized a gallery show. Photovoice provided 75 participants opportunities to develop new friendships, communicate their views on life, and advocate for change. The project provided the occupational therapy educational program with visibility and new academic and community partnerships.

Conclusion

Photovoice was an effective educational method that required students to integrate knowledge and skills from their academic program. It helped students learn about culture and prepared them to work with diverse communities in their future practice. Photovoice participants took pride in their individual projects and gained a stronger sense of community.

Contributions

Photovoice is a creative occupation that can be used to help people learn about their community and share concerns as they develop stories about their photographs. It has applications for diverse populations served by occupational therapy. Photovoice may be a practical and effective approach for occupational therapists who want to empower individuals and work toward social change.

