

Workshop 4

Using photography in critical health psychology research within communities experiencing health inequalities: theory and practice

As health psychology researchers are increasingly recognizing the limitations of one-off interviews, and the taking of photographs to document aspects of day-to-day life has become a quotidian habit, so critical psychology research integrating a photographic component is flourishing. In this workshop, we reflect on our experiences of integrating participant-authored photographs alongside interviews in critically oriented research. As critical health psychologists, our focus has been on aiming to develop genuinely collaborative and inclusive research partnerships with communities who might be considered marginalized or hard-to-reach.

Thus, our objectives for this workshop are as follows: (1) We argue for an expansion of conceptual and methodological approaches in critical health research incorporating visual methods -primarily photographs. We explore issues pertinent to ontology, epistemology, critical theory and researchers' reflexive stance. Thus, (2) we consider methodological, epistemological and ethical aspects with a particular focus on concerns around 'methodolatry'. (3) We discuss the practicalities with regard to designing, applying and delivering this visually informed strand of critical research. (4) We focus on opportunities for expanded participant engagement throughout the entirety of a study incorporating meaningful post-research dissemination activities. We illustrate our arguments using examples from several recent research projects around chronic illness and disability within various disempowered communities. We conclude with some thoughts about what a scholar-activist approach should mean in relation to research which co-employs photography.

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Dr Iain Williamson is Principal Lecturer in Health Psychology at De Montfort University, Leicester where he has worked since 2005. He has many years of experience in undertaking qualitative research and in teaching critical health psychology and supervising and assessing postgraduate students. He has carried out research in partnership with members of a number of communities experiencing social injustice and stigma including young offenders, LGBT communities and members of minority faith and ethnic communities and much of his recent work has focused on the intersection of inequalities incorporating theories around syndemics and compound discrimination. He has advocated the utilization of a varied palette of multiple qualitative methods in various fora and has particular interest in audio-diaries and visual methods. He has published in a variety of journals including *Journal of Health Psychology*, *Diversity and Equality in Health and Social Care*, *Social Science and Medicine* and *Psychology and Health*.