

Seeing, listening, and measuring: A student-faculty visual and mixed methods research collaboration to understand community integration of older adults with brain injury

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Abstract

The Independent Research Study program at Brandeis University offers an excellent opportunity for undergraduate students to integrate academic learning with faculty-sponsored field research to create a holistic and rigorous student-faculty learning experience. We will describe and critically reflect on a specific example of this program in action during the 2014-2015 academic year, when a Brandeis undergraduate and a faculty member collaborated on an interactive, hands-on research study using both qualitative (Photovoice and photo-elicitation) and quantitative (survey) methods to understand community integration of five older adults with acquired brain injury and other neurological conditions in one Massachusetts community. In exploring our processes and experiences, we will examine three types of study data and the mutual learning that took place: visual data (photographs) and narrative data (photo captions and interviews) generated by participants as they explored environmental and personal factors related to their community integration in an 8-week Photovoice project and subsequent photo-elicitation interviews, and quantitative data from a pre-post survey intended to understand the impact (if any) of Photovoice participation on participants' Satisfaction with Life. We will present our processes for collecting and analyzing these data and our perspectives on our mutual learning, challenges, and study findings. We will suggest strategies for future student-faculty collaborations using participatory visual and mixed methods to explore deeply personal topics with critical health policy implications.

Keywords: Photovoice, Photo-elicitation, Visual analysis, Coding, Mixed methods, Social policy

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