WHAT'S WORKING/WHAT NEEDS WORKING ON.
ART AND CULTURE AGAINST DRUGS THROUGH PHOTOVOICE

Mihaela TOMIȚĂ [*]

Abstract

This paper was done based on the rich data base obtained in the period of 2011-2013 due to the implementation of the European project *Promoting the resilience of youth delinquent*, which was a partnership project designed to develop a model of positive intervention for delinquent adolescents, based on supporting their resilience which can foster a better inclusion into society.

Being a research method relatively little known and used, photovoice surprised the research team by the quality of the information acquired, in terms of participants' motivation for change.The research included a total of 12 delinquent childildren, with ages between 16 and 18, interned in a reeducation center and was conducted over 5 days. The special results, the involvement of the children and their "appetite" for this type of activity allows us to apriciate the usefulness of this method of research and intervention.

Expected results from this study were focused primarily on identifying new types of interventions compatible with the age and education of delinquent child through activities that lead to decreased aggressiveness specific custodial environment where they are located.

The most challanging situations were expected in terms of group management and discussion orientation, primarily due to the low intellectual and education level.

Keywords: delinquent children, drug use, photovoice, alternatives

Résumé

Ce travail a été réalisé à partir d'une riche base de données obtenu en 2011-2013 par implémentation du projet européen Promotion de la résilience du jeune contrevenant, un projet de partenariat visant à développer un modèle d'intervention positive pour adolescents délinquants basés par soutien leur résilience, qui peut favoriser une meilleure intégration dans la société.

En étant en une méthode de recherche relativement peu connu et utilisé, PhotoVoice surpris de l'équipe de recherche par la qualité des informations acquis en termes de participants motivation pour le changement. La recherche comprenait 12 mineurs délinquants, âgés de 16 et 18 ans, hospitalisés dans un centre de rééducation et a été réalisée pendant 5 jours. Des résultats remarquables, associer les enfants et leur «appétit» pour ce type d'activité, nous a permis d'apprécier vraiment l'utilité de cette méthode de recherche et d'intervention.

Les résultats attendus de cette étude ont porté principalement sur l'identification de nouveaux types d'interventions, en conformité avec l'âge et le niveau d'éducation des jeunes délinquants dans des activités menant à une diminution de l'agressivité, spécifique pour l'environnement carcéral.

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[*] Associate Professor, West University of Timisoara, Blvd. V. Parvan, No. 4, Timisoara 300223, Timis, Romania, phone: +40-(0)256-592111, email: mihaela.tomita@e-uvt.ro.

Le plus attendus situation délicate en termes de coordination de la groupe et d'orientation des discussions étaient principalement le niveau intellectuel et faible de la niveau d'éducation.

Mots-clés: les jeunes délinquants, consommation de la drogue, PhotoVoice, les alternatives

Rezumat

Această lucrare a fost realizată pornind de la o bogată bază de date obținută în perioada 2011-2013 prin implementarea proiectului european Promovarea rezilienței tânărului delincvent, un proiect de parteneriat, conceput pentru a dezvolta un model de intervenție pozitivă pentru adolescenții delincvenți, bazat pe susținerea rezilienței acestora, care poate favoriza o mai bună incluziune în societate.

Fiind o metodă de cercetare relativ puțin cunoscută și utilizată, PhotoVoice a surprins echipa de cercetare prin calitatea informațiilor dobândite, în ceea ce privește motivația pentru schimbare a participanților. Cercetarea a cuprins 12 copii delincvenți, cu vârste cuprinse între 16 și 18 ani, internați într-un centru de reeducare și a fost realizată pe parcursul a 5 zile. Rezultatele deosebite, implicarea copiilor și "apetitul" pentru acest tip de activitate, ne-a permis să apriciem utilitatea acestei metode de cercetare și intervenție.

Rezultatele așteptate de la acest studiu s-au axat în principal pe identificarea unor noi tipuri de intervenții, compatibile cu vârsta și nivelul de educație al copilului delincvent, prin activități care să conducă la scăderea agresivității, specifice mediului custodial.

Cele mai așteptate situații provocatoare în ceea ce privește coordonarea grupului și al orientării discuțiilor s-au datorat în principal, nivelului intelectual și de educație scăzut.

Cuvinte cheie: copii delincvenți, consumul de droguri, PhotoVoice, alternative

1. Introduction

As with any social phenomenon in the case of drug use we can talk of multidimensionality and the analysis and explanation of drug use can be studied and analyzed from several perspectives.

Thus, drug use phenomenon, especially among minors and young people, be it legal or illegal drugs, has a medical, psychological, anthropological and socio-logical dimension. To guide drug use to the notion of offense means cutting out of the context the drug user and placing him in an environment where the chances for his recovery are almost impossible.

In the case of juvenile delinquents, interned in a reeducation center, the removal from family or loved ones, and the tendency of these children to detach from the adult world to know themselves better, in fact a characteristic of the period of adolescence, makes the credibility of those in the same situation with them, who have lived and are living similar experiences grow highly. The communication with them being made easier, the friends in the center become more important landmarks than teachers and trainers and they are often inclined to adopt still a deviant behavior.

In working with delinquent children, all the recuperative interventions have as a philosophy the identification and elimination of irrational beliefs and learning new

ways to respond in a critical situation and techniques to control negative emotions. Most of these irrational beliefs explain the consequences of maladaptive behaviors, such as aggressive and hostile tendencies, the tendency of permanent victimhood, etc. In addition to the criminal sanction, through the educational measure of internment in a reeducation center, a measure that isolates the child from the community for a certain period of time, the central objective of the correctional context is change. The assessment of the behavior of delinquent children requires, beyond their quality of subject of the offense, a deep concern towards knowledge and their reeducation, according to both their personality structure and the actual resources and possibilities of re-socialization and reintegration. The study of the juvenile delinquent personality is a necessary prerequisite in the reeducation work and is the basis of the optimization of educative actions and of the whole recuperative process. (Tomita 2014). Therefore, the diversification of methods of intervention is a constant challenge of the professionals working with these children. Regarding children who have experienced drug use, the interest for this subject remains very much alive during the execution of the educational measure.

PhotoVoice is part of the family of "participatory photography". This method has its origines in the community photography that has appeared in the U.S. and UK since the 60s, based on informal and popular education theories developed by Paulo Freiere (Paulo Fereire – 1921-1997), named also "the greatest informal thinker" that stressed the important role of education as a means to overcome poverty traps).

Photography was used from years 20-30 as a tool for documenting cases of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Lately, photojournalists have sought alternatives to documentary photography and chose to develop a method that assumed developing a relationship with the subjects of the photographic scene – participatory photography. The relationship could be build in two ways: through direct interaction with the photographic characters or by sustaining them so that they develop their own photos. Thus, the participants, usually persons belonging to vulnerable groups receive training to learn how to use the camera. The camera becomes the voice of marginalized groups that tells a story which reflects the problems faced by those groups[1].

2. The theoretical framework of Photovoice?

Photovoice is an overlap of three theoretical frameworks: empowerment education, feminist theory and documentary photography. All three theoretical frameworks emphasize community participation for the purpose of social action. The theoretical frameworks begin by first directing change at the individual level, transforming perceptions such as self-worth. The focus is then directed to the community level to

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[1] http://www.photovoice.org/shop/info/methodology-series

improve quality of life and then finally to the institution level to enforce change through policies (Wang and Burris 1994).

The group dialogue allows the individuals to build upon each other's concerns, helping shape the identified needs of the community. As members become more passionate about improving the well-being of their community, the individual's self-image will change as well. Residents will then take on the role of community advocates and participate in policy changes (Wang 1994).

One of the theoretical frameworks, documentary photography, has been extensively used to provide vulnerable populations with an outlet to express their stories and perception of the world. Typically women, children and elderly fall under the category of vulnerable populations as they have historically suffered the consequences of structural violence. Photovoice places the control into the hands of the oppressed, allowing them to become the decision makers and elect the themes that are represented among the photos. As members of the community, these individuals are more imaginative and observant of than even the most experienced photographers and photo journalists (Wang and Burris 1994).

Throughout the period of time that participants are taking photographs, researchers should hold at least one group discussion based on the photos using SHOWeD or a similar method to facilitate conversation. Not only does discussion among the participants produce valuable and rich data, it also empowers participants and their communities (Catalani and Minkler 2010). Following the cycle of taking photos and having discussions, researchers should prepare for a community exhibition of the photographs collected. Maximum effort needs to go into promoting the exhibition and inviting policy makers. A final debrief with the participant after the exhibition can help prepare for the next steps of the project whether it be implementing the social action plan or continue with the photography and discussion process.

One of the important correlation with the theoretical framework of Photovoice is the presence of group process and dialogue. Facilitated discussions are a central component of Photovoice as it allows participants to engage with people with similar backgrounds and experiences. Group dialogue allows participants to build upon each others' ideas. The exchange of thoughts connects people, creating a support network to encourage one another. Borrowed from Freire (1970), group dialogue allows critical thinking to occur in such a way that the participants must work together to uncover the source of dissatisfaction (Wallerstein and Bernstein 1988). Group dialogue inspires people to believe in their ability to influence and control their environment. Without the group component, participates are less likely to fully invest themselves in the Photovoice process.

3. Design and research methodology

Photography is generally a more versatile and accessible form to follow creative expression and it provides the opportunity that the perspectives and experiences are

presented using real world in combination with their own choices, thus providing a unique perspective. Photovoice creates, thus, a space for extremely rich and complex communication and discussion.

Photovoice is different from other methods of participatory photography because the images taken must be generated by the participants. This strategy is designed to engage the participants in the process of generating data.

Our research was conducted within an educational camp, with 12 children from a reeducation center. They have become, in this context, active players who have generated a rich informational content.

Photovoice was chosen as a „free" investigative method in the sense that, the children were left the freedom to make those photos that they consider representative to suggest the harmfulness of drugs and the fight against them by choosing art, namely photography, as a healthy alternative of spending leisure time.

Children were explained the role of this activity and that, subsequently, they will have the opportunity to discussabout the photos taken.

3.1. Selection and analysis of photos

The children were reunited with care by the educator coordinator, in a group as a focus group type to select the most representative photos.

Reviewing images is an important part of any participatory photography workshop process, as it creates the space for discussion of the images and boosts confidence by allowing the participants to have their work appreciated and praised by their peers and educators. The focus-group was based on the unstructured dialogue technique and was managed by a facilitator (psychologist).

In order to generate objective discussions, there were selected by the children, only three photos, the other beings kept for exhibition and further activities.

The active dialogue, specific for the focus group method had the advantage of allowing the contextualization of photos and recording the information provided by each of the 12 children.

The photos taken by the children were, afterwards, presented in an exhibition in which children presented their own thoughts and feelings they had when making them.

4. Results and discussions

The custodial environment is particularly pronet to generate conflict situations and the delinquent children are a group with a larger availability for violent behavior.

The profile of the children living within the Centre shows that they have a low resilience and nothing or almost nothing is in place for assisting the development of their resilience.

It is always important to develop participant confidence from the beginning of a project and to continue to develop it throughout the project. Participants who feel

able to express their needs, ideas, perspectives and creative vision will get so much more out of the process of participation. To enable participants to express themselves and to fully engage with a project, there needs to be clear communication between facilitators and participants.

We should consider: the language we use on a project to introduce activities and concepts – this language should be as clear and concise as possible, making it easy to understand; differing levels of literacy in a group; cultural or racial perspectives of all participants – particularly in visual representations, in the materials and the language/terminology we use. We need to be working in an non-discriminatory way that ensures that language used and activities on projects are fully inclusive.

Creating a space that is open to all to participate is really important for working with participants and/or carers. It is important to consider strategies to support participant focus and concentration. We need to consider different forms of communication (spoken, signed, visual and verbal) and how to create a working environment where everyone can participate fully. We are not allowed to identify particular participants by disability or by having an issue as there is no 'normal' or 'standard' approach that is deviated from.

Building trust is achieved by using a number of strategies: fostering an environment of mutual respect; group agreement/ground-rules. It is really important that an agreement is made of acceptable and positive behaviors that are instigated and then agreed by the group. Sometimes this can require some support and guidance but it is designed to ensure that there is opportunity for all to think about and discuss what they feel will enable them to most fully participate – feeling welcome, accepted and safe. We should be modelling a dialogue by asking questions and listening to answers, encouraging response and feedback at all stages of workshop sessions. Encouraging constructive challenge and expression of opinions and setting clear boundaries and supporting people to work with these and the group agreement are essential aspects. We must always try to find something positive to say about all participants' images when reviewing images and ask the group to feed into an exchange that enables participants to explore their own process and think about what they are trying to achieve with an image and whether they feel they have achieved it. If a participant is unwilling to take part in a group discussion, we should take time to work one on one with them after the group activity.

Offering a range of roles and responsibilities on the project as a way to 'experience and practice' making decisions is important for nurturing personal/individual responsibility but also as a way of developing an investment/ownership in the group.

Any project benefits from using visual, aural, inter-personal, intra-personal and physical styles of learning. It is important to consider a range of styles in order to see what works for the participants.

5. Conclusions

As any method of social investigation, photovoice offered us some advantages that we have operated since the beginning of the research. Thus, as we predicted, beyond the direct benefits related to obtaining valuable information and the involvement of children in a type of therapeutic activity, the 4 days in which children photographed and talked among themselves and with other children in the camp have drawn the attention of all children in the camp and, subsequently, through the exhibition, of the community as a whole, over the effects of drug use, especially on children and young people.

Children participated not only in developing and selecting photos but also in their own analysis process.

Being a complex research instrument, photovoice combines several types of actions: sending visual information, group discussions and individual reflection.

Due to the low intellectual and education level, during the focus group, there were many challenges in terms of group management and discussion orientation. The difficulty of concentrating for a certain period of time, 60 minutes, required the use of certain strategies, jokes in order to bring the children in the active field of discussions. Because every child is different, it is very difficult to offer one strategy or response that will work for everyone. As children communicate through their behavior, their often challenging behavior might be a means of communication for them. In order to understand why delinquent children usually use challenging behaviors, we need to be focused on the reason why it occurs and the problem he wants to communicate. They might sometimes feel frustrated and this can turn out to be a segnificant obstacle for achieving the goal of any task or activity they might be involved in. As they are not properly equipped to deal with frustration constructively, in order to manage their frustrations, they must be motivated to get involved in each activity with a focus on finding a solution that will relieve the frustration. Caregivers and teachers must always be centred on not allowing frustration to turn into anger, a typical chain for the delinquent children.

In our activity, by the fact that they interacted with other children and were positively encouraged to get involved in the activities, frustration has been avoided by their motivation and permanent support of the leaders.

The great photos taken by them, have awakened their imagination and have structured ideas and values that they have learned, being very excited by their comfortable state and by their own resources that have been discovered on this occasion.

The most attentive and receptive of them have become accepted leaders for similar sessions that are going to be held. The novelty of the activity, the creative atmosphere and the experience of the facilitator, were the main factors that led to the success of our activity and research, implicitly.

As a result of our Photovoice study, we can report an increase in group cohesion but the question is still whether social cohesion is a byproduct of Photovoice's theoretical frameworks or if Photovoice's success is a result of the natural cohesion that occurs naturally because of the group process. Similar with Wang, Cash and Powers conclusions in their study (Wang, Cash & Powers, 2000), the research team noted how bonds between the children began to form as a result of group dialogues. The children become familiar with one another, building ties and friendships within the peer support group that will prepare them to solve problems and work together.

The expectations of the intervention team are getting were oriented to obtain the visual information, child involvement in enjoyable activities, challenging and exciting for them. Also, the group discussions and motivating children to the individual reflection have been in the attention of the research team.

The most important result remains the one of children response to this type of intervention, their involvement and great availability, appreciation and desire to continue such activities, knowing that , these children have often faced inadequate punitive responses in the community and in school, as a response to their own aggression or violent behavior, responses that include physical aggression, suspension, incarceration, these types of zero tolerance approaches in most cases proving their lack of effectiveness, leading actually to increased violence and aggression.

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