May 10th, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Waiting for the Wisdom to Drop: A Photovoice Exploration of Menopause

Delinda L. Free
Portland State University, delinda@pdx.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium

Part of the Medicine and Health Commons, and the Social Work Commons
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to create a women’s menopause discussion group based on the PhotoVoice method, to use a narrative approach to learn what is currently relevant in the experience of menopausal women, to reveal insights about menopause as a phase of psychological development, and to bring a visual representation together with narratives to tell a story about the collective psychological themes. Participants were asked to meet and reflect on what has changed in their values, attitudes, aspirations, goals, and outlook on life. Then participants were asked to take pictures over the course of a week, and bring them back to the group to share their stories of the meanings of the photos. Photos and recorded narratives were then sorted into themes, and categories were created with photos and narrative to represent the phases of the inner experience of the menopausal transition that the participants had expressed. The categories were found to reveal the arc of a journey representing a rapid change of self-identity with phases of initiation, self-consciousness, effort, perspective, deconstruction, surrender, reorganization, integration, and growth. Participants found value in community connection, with the opportunity to validate and normalize their internal experiences through communication.

Methods

Study Design

Recruitment: crowd-sourced convenience sample
- Age range: 50-60 years
- Two groups, one week apart
- Participants were asked to bring photographs to the second group.

Research questions:
- What about your life is important to you now that was not important to you before menopause?
- How has your culture, aspirations, goals, and outlook on life changed during your menopausal transition?

Objectives

To facilitate a discussion group using PhotoVoice method and a narrative approach to learn what is currently relevant, relevant and important to menopausal women, to reveal insights about the “whole topic” of menopause as a phase of psychological development.

PhotoVoice Method

- Community-based Participatory Action Method based on feminist theory and the cultural pedagogy of Paulo Freire
- Via an all-women’s group, a study is opened by a group interview to explore women’s health in China
- Used to enhance public health and social change because it empowers participants to reveal insights that their own world that a researcher might overlook.

Qualitative analysis

A three-part process: (a) collecting, (b) analyzing, (c) designing.
1) Photographs were categorically assigned, either by researcher or participant-selected meaning. Visual qualities or participant-attributed meaning.
2) Coded data was retrieved and coded into themes. The categories of photographs were named with related comments, made by participants.
3) Photos were named with related comments, made by participants.
- Participants were asked to make comments to reveal insights about menopause. Photos and recorded narratives were then sorted into themes, and categories were created with photos and narrative to represent the phases of the inner experience of the menopausal transition that the participants had expressed.

References


Conclusions

What Was Gained by the Group?
- Normalizing an important life event – Community, connection, validation
- A safe space to connect, share resources, and share stories about this phase of life
- Acknowledging internal agency – The importance of menopause was overlooked until it became relevant and immediate

What Was Learned?
- Menopause, to these women, was a rapid change of self-identity, that was more internally focused than externally influenced
- Process echoed Erickson’s stages of development from generativity vs. stagnation, to age integrity vs. despair
- Body image, relationships and career became less important

What Was Needed?
- Prioritizing own needs, self-care, autonomy, solitude, and

Recommendations for Future Study

Putting aside the tension between the medical model and the “natural” voice will mitigate the restricting effect it has on women’s self-efficacy and self-esteem. Designing research that looks beyond symptom management, sheds lighted expectations of women’s roles, and questions into what is important to older women currently, will better inform social workers in developing psychosocial interventions from a strengths perspective.