

PHOTO-ELICITATION: AN INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUE IN HEALTH PROMOTION RESEARCH

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Introduction:

- Marital influence on physical activity is ambiguous
- The CDC (2004), Waite (1995), and Waite and Gallagher, (2000) reported *increased* levels of physical activity after marriage; Craig (1990) and Craig and Truswell (1988) indicated *decreased* levels of physical activity
- Marriages can be considered “systems” nested within broader systems such as cultural and occupational systems
- Bertalanffy’s General Systems Theory (1976) guided this study, and McGarry’s Family Systems Theory Principles (2002) assisted the understanding of marriages as systems
- McGarry’s Family System Principles (2002): Wholeness Principle, Levels of Organization, Interdependence, and Requisite Variety

Purpose:

- The three objectives of this study were
 - 1) To determine how the marital system influences the physical activity habits of each partner
 - 2) To understand how the other systems containing the marital unit (i.e. cultural, occupational, and familial) influence the physical activity behavior of spouses

Methods:

- Couples were identified using stratified purposive sampling (i.e. couples with and without children/couples from different age groups); criteria for inclusion in this study were couples who were: married, 2) heterosexual, and 3) living in US
- Data collection tools included: in-depth interviews, field notes, observations, and photo-elicitation
- Study data were analyzed using the constant comparative method for qualitative data (Merriam, 2009)
- Peer debriefing memos, audit trails, and transcripts were used as trustworthy documents (Erlandson, 1993)

Photo-Elicitation v. Photo Voice:

- Photo-elicitation was introduced by Collier (1967) as a tool for eliciting unique qualitative data
- Photo-elicitation presents an “intimate photographic account of family culture” (Collier, 1967) and uniquely describes lived experiences (Clark-Ebanez, 2004)
- Photo voice was introduced by Wang & Burris in the mid-1990s as a qualitative technique meant to “give voice” to marginalized people or groups
- Photo voice, distinct from photo-elicitation, is meant to bring about social change and social justice

Results:

Table 1: Summary of Main Themes

Theme	Subtheme	Exemplary Quote	GST Principle
1) “It all comes full circle” (Multigenerational influence)		<i>“My dad was super active so I am too... I want that for my boy, too”</i>	Wholeness Principle
2) “Our culture has certain expectations” (Cultural influence)	“You get married and things change.” (Gender Roles)	<i>“After you marry, your needs come second to your husband and kids.”</i>	Levels of Organization
	“I feel pressure to be thin.” (Body Image)	<i>“Skinny models are the standard of beauty.”</i>	
3) “We feel connected”		<i>“We feed off each other.”</i>	Interdependence
4) “Life changes and so do we”		<i>“Our work, our kids, shoot even the dog make a difference in terms of our activity.”</i>	Requisite Variety

Best Practices for Photo-Elicitation:

- Consider using cameras as incentives for participation
- Be aware of ethical considerations if studying special populations (e.g. children)
- Give participants adequate time to ponder how to express thoughts and attitudes in picture form
- At the start of an interview, allow participants to explain why they chose to take certain pictures
- Stress creativity and higher order thinking

Discussion:

- The principle of interconnectedness was clearly demonstrated in this sample; spending time together as a couple was the most important way the marital “system” influenced spousal physical activity
- Participants identified cultural system influences such as gender roles and culturally-determined body image ideals
- The wholeness principle was seen in the generational “loop” between parents and children of participants
- Marital systems had to adapt physical activity to changes in the environment such as career changes and the addition of children and/or pets

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