

PhotoVoice

Some researchers use a method of qualitative data collection in which participants take photographs of some aspect(s) of their lives, environment, community, etc. The photographs are then used as a basis for group discussions and to elicit important qualitative information about the photographers' attitudes, beliefs, etc. The degree of risk to subjects in such research depends, in part, on what is photographed. For example, this process may pose the risk of self-incrimination to subjects who photograph themselves taking part in certain activities.

From the perspective of the IRB, the "human subjects" in the research are the research participants who are taking the photographs and then presenting their interpretations in group or other data gathering sessions. If the photographers are minors, then written parental consent for their participation in the research is required, along with assent of the minor participant.

Although the individuals whose photos are taken are not the subjects of the research, there may be legal requirements for obtaining permission for using their photographs. If the photographers take photos of other people, then permission to use the photo should be obtained. If the person being photographed is a minor, then permission to take the photo must be obtained from the child's parent or guardian. Those being photographed must be informed about how their photo will be used, and whether they will have the opportunity to view the photo before making a final decision about its use. If the photographs will be publicly displayed, such as at a professional meeting or community gathering, or used in manuals or brochures or other publications, then written consent to take and display the photograph publicly is required. Researchers must have a method to link pictures with the signed permission forms.