

PhotoVoice  
Fact Sheet Issue

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Newsletter

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Center for  
Psychiatric  
Rehabilitation  
940 Commonwealth  
Ave.  
Boston, MA 02215  
Phone: 617.353.3549

[www.bu.edu/cpr](http://www.bu.edu/cpr)  
Fax: 617.353.7700

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## Using PhotoVoice to Combat the Prejudice and Discrimination of People Diagnosed with Mental Illness

# FactSheet



PhotoVoice is a powerful tool for social justice that engages people to take photographs and write narratives to expose phenomena in their lives that greatly affect them. The Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University has conducted classes in PhotoVoice inviting people with mental illnesses to document their experiences of stigma.

The resulting compositions of photographs and narratives deliver compelling evidence of the lived experience of stigma in the lives of people with mental illnesses.

Lectures on the technique and exhibits of the photos have taken place in a number of locations including MassBay Community College Libraries.



Spread your wings!  
Fly!  
You can soar!

Vera Elizabeth Cayforc



"PhotoVoice exhibit on display at Boston Public Library".

PhotoVoice was created as a research methodology in the early 1990s by Dr. Caroline Wang at the University of Michigan and Mary Ann Burris of the Ford Foundation. It is a tool of social activism and a means for personal reflection. Its intended use is to take the concerns of a particular community and translate it into a "voice" that can be heard by society at large.

Usually the community concerned is underrepresented, disenfranchised or disempowered.

Coming together as a group, individuals discuss their concerns, self-perception and place in society as well as the new role they may envision for themselves. Often, going through the PhotoVoice process can bring self-empowerment and validation. The end result of this process is a set of photographs, each one with an accompanying narrative or poetic text that voices the participant's appreciation of the photograph and the general concerns of the group. The text can expand the meaning of the photograph and portray the individual's concerns in either a positive or negative light.

*... if it's all in good fun, I say "go nuts."*

Looking Beyond the Label



"Sugar Mamas" is a candy store in Newtonville. I know this sign should offend me as a mental patient but it doesn't. I like it and it makes me smile. My sense of humor is my greatest survival asset. Life has made me tough and I don't sweat the dopey stuff. Trying to do the right thing is hard and I expend my energies on that and not on stupid, trivial stuff. Everyone likes to go nuts is a fun way every now and then and if it's all in good fun, I say "go nuts."

*Ice-olation... thrown away like garbage.*

Looking Beyond the Label



Ice-olation - this picture shows how it feels to be stigmatized, isolated, lonely, cold and thrown away like garbage.



"PhotoVoice exhibit on display at MassBay Community College"



An oasis in the City

A gateway easily seen through  
Invites us forcefully into  
An oasis in the city  
Gives us calm ability  
To feel relaxed with agility

Sunlight kisses fruit tree tops  
Then bursting with flavor herbal crops  
And topsy turvy tomato plants  
Help us understand our cans and can'ts  
In our city oasis we love to dance.

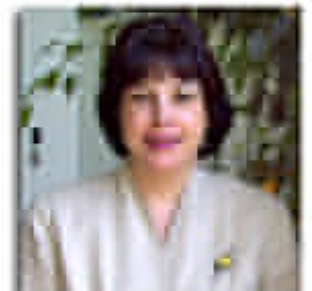
Outside the garden oasis the world rants and raves. Not surprisingly much of the population must deal with mental health issues whether their own, or their friend's or family's or just in the news. Digging in the garden is sometimes called horticultural therapy. Every day there one can see growth and change, beauty and development and the miracles of nature that nurtures our very souls. Sitting at the picnic table on the patio can give calmness in the times of stress and strain for all.

Cathy



Philippe P. Bloch, M.Ed., has made numerous presentations on PhotoVoice. He is a co-author of the Workbooks and Training manuals available through Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and can be reached at either 617-353-3549 or [bloch@bu.edu](mailto:bloch@bu.edu)

To obtain information on research regarding PhotoVoice, contact Zlatka Russinova, Ph.D. Senior Researcher at 617-353-3549 or by email: [zlatka@bu.edu](mailto:zlatka@bu.edu)





### The Bridge

In the picture, we can see a small bridge surrounded by small trees. The leaves are green and the sky is blue, it's also a nice sunny day. In the background we can see the river. For me, this picture represents how beautiful I hope to feel inside every day. The bridge represents how connected I would like to feel with nature and people.

Thamara Saint-Surin

For more information on PhotoVoice go to:

<http://cpr.bu.edu/resources/multimedia/photovoice-posters>

Watch the Video Beyond the Shadows of Stigma on Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/user/bucpr> or visit us on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/BUCPR> and view the photo gallery.

PhotoVoice posters are available for viewing and at-cost sales on the web:

<http://cpr.bu.edu/resources/multimedia/photovoice-posters>

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