



# Photovoice: Intersectional Experiences of Recreational Therapists

## The Problem:

Recreational therapy (RT) is a diverse and evolving field, yet the personal and professional experiences of its practitioners remain underrepresented in academic research. Gaps persist in understanding the intersectional and complex realities that recreational therapists navigate daily. These realities that shape professional identity, practice, and growth. A more complete picture of who practitioners are and what they encounter is needed to advocate effectively for RTs and advance the profession.

## The Purpose:

This project aimed to address this gap by capturing the lived experiences of recreational therapy practitioners through photovoice, an innovative qualitative methodology that combines personal photography with narrative reflection. Grounded in the philosophical assumption that visibility leads to strength, growth, and unity (Eneyo, 2019), this study sought to amplify practitioner voices and generate insights that could serve as both a scholarly contribution and an advocacy tool for the field. Photovoice an emerging methodology in RT academic contexts, making this project a novel methodological contribution to the discipline.

## The Results:

Recruitment yielded a modest sample of eight practitioners who completed the survey and uploaded photographs. The majority of responses consisted of brief, single word answers that did not provide sufficient context for meaningful analysis in relation to the accompanying photographs, and several submissions were excluded due to insufficient reliability and depth. Despite these limitations, one participant's submission emerged as a robust and richly detailed case study. Through multiple rounds of inductive thematic coding, Leisure Education solidified as the dominant theme with an emancipatory sub theme, offering meaningful insight into how one practitioner understood and articulated their professional role and purpose.

*Continued...*

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification®  
*Protecting and Promoting Since 1981*



### The Conclusion:

While the full scope of the study was constrained by a low response rate and limited data, the resulting case study demonstrates the potential of photovoice as a powerful tool for illuminating practitioner experience in recreational therapy. The emergence of Leisure Education as a central theme suggests this is a meaningful area warranting further inquiry. Future research should prioritize improved recruitment strategies to increase both the quantity and quality of participation. Clearer prompting instructions and more structured participant training on the photovoice method may yield richer narrative responses. The findings from this case study also warrant replication and expansion to determine whether an emancipatory practice of Leisure Education reflects a broader pattern across the field. With methodological refinements, photovoice holds strong promise as a vehicle for advocacy, professional development, and scholarly advancement in recreational therapy.

**Sandy Heath, PhD, CTRS**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Parks and Recreation Management**  
**Department of Geography, Planning, and Recreation**  
**College of Social and Behavioral Health Sciences**  
**Institute for Human Development**  
**Northern Arizona University**

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification®  
*Protecting and Promoting Since 1981*

nctrc@nctrc.org | 845 639 1439 | [nctrc.org](https://nctrc.org)