Photovoice, Digital Storytelling, and the use of Photography: Theoretical Foundation, Best Practices and Ethical Considerations

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June 2, 2021 OFE Workshop
Presentation Overview

Part I. Methods Background and Theory: Photovoice, Digital Storytelling, and Related Photographic Methods

10 Minute Break

Part II. Examples

10 Minute Break

Part III. Ethical Considerations and Best Practices

Resources + Q & A
Part I. Methods Background and Theory: Photovoice, Digital Storytelling, and Related Photographic Methods
Photovoice

Photovoice is “a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as records, and potential catalysts for change, in their own communities.” (Wang & Burris 1997)
Photovoice

Photovoice (PV) builds off photo novella or digital storytelling, to not only be a community-based participatory research approach to a community needs assessment, but to elicit social justice and change.
Photovoice (Wang & Burris 1997)

There are 3 key attributes in PV:

1) To enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns
2) To promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussions of photographs
3) To reach policymakers
Photovoice Theoretical Foundation (Wang & Burris 1997)

1) Theoretical literature on education for critical consciousness, feminist theory, and documentary photography
2) Efforts of community photographers and participatory educators to challenge assumptions about representation and documentary authorship
3) Experience from the Yunnan Women’s Reproductive Health and Development Program
Photovoice: A Powerful, Participatory Research Tool

Women
Workers
Youth/Children
Peasants
Illiterate
Social stigmatized/marginalized
Photovoice- Why? (Wang & Burris 1997)

Allows researchers and practitioners to “gain the possibility of perceiving the world from the viewpoint of people who lead lives that are different from those traditionally in control of the means for imaging the world”

Powerful descriptive method for conducting a needs assessment.
Photovoice- Why? (Wang & Burris 1997)

Can include and capacity for vulnerable, marginalized groups.

Can record settings and situations researchers and practitioners do not traditionally have access to.

Sustains strong involvement and participation with the target community.
Photovoice- Why? (Wang & Burris 1997)

Can reaffirm or redefine program goals.

Brings more stories, explanations and ideas from the target community into the assessment process.

Tangible and immediate benefits to the community (e.g. giving photographs back to neighbors and friends).

Stimulates social action- goes beyond conventional needs assessments to invite people to be their own advocates for their and their community’s well-being.
Advantages:

Flexible method - can be adapted for different settings, groups, and research and/or practice needs.

Can be used for both assessment and evaluation.
Photovoice- Advantages vs. Disadvantages

Disadvantages:

Political involvement and “repercussions”

What was not captured? (subjectivity)

Simple data collection, however, complex data analysis.
Photovoice - Basic Methodology

Facilitators and Participants.

IRB Requirements, additional consent (permissions, use, ownership photographs)

Medium- disposable cameras, digital cameras, smartphones

Data Collection, selection of primary photographs (3-10)
Photovoice - Basic Methodology

Discussions- individual interviews, small and large group discussions.

Data analysis, final photograph selection for exhibit.

Exhibit (in person, online, print) - community, stakeholders, power players.
Consent With Visual Research: 3 Levels

1) General research consent- what will be asked, what to expect, confidentiality, etc
2) Acknowledge and Release - consent for all individuals in photographs
3) Permission/ownership/use of photographs

**Important to revisit throughout the process!!!**
SHOWeD Interview Guide/Photograph Discussions

What do you **See** here?

**WHat** is really Happening?

How does this relate to **Our** lives?

**Why** does this problem or strength exist?

What can we **Do** about it?

**Can include freewrite per photograph using above as a guide and/or for discussion.**
Photovoice: Why and How to Choose This Method? (Switzer et al., 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Phase</th>
<th>Questions for Consideration</th>
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| Method        | • Why do you want to use photographs?  
• Is the community interested in photography?  
• How will you balance the importance of participation with participants' capacities and needs?  
• Considering resources, project focus, and feasibility, which photo-based methods are suitable for your project?  
• Does the method involve participation in collective dialogue? Will community members feel comfortable discussing this issue with others, or disclosing their identity/practices to others within the research?  
• Do you have the experience on your team to use this method?  
• What are the constraints of this method? |
| Selection      |                            |
| Implementation | • What does the selected method require of participants (e.g. time, resources, energy levels)?  
• How much do participants want to participate? Have you asked them?  
• How do you create opportunities for participation (e.g. advisory board, data collection, analysis, dissemination) that are commensurate with the project and community’s resources?  
• How can you include what people cannot photograph? Is there a way to include this into the interview or focus group guide?  
• What challenges might you encounter in relation to confidentiality, anonymity and space? How can you account for this in your project? |
| Modification   | • What processes will you enact with your team and/or your REB to be able to attend to ethical or methodological challenges as they arise?  
• How can you proactively structure your project to attend to unanticipated changes or challenges?  
• How will you document these issues throughout the process? |
| Analysis       | • What can you learn about your research question by focusing on process of engagement?  
• How do participants make sense of the process of taking photos? Did the act of photography yield any insights about the subject?  
• What do photographs exclude? What is missing in photographs? |

Fig. 6. Methodological considerations for researchers considering participant-generated photo-based methods.
Other Methods

Photo Novella/Photo-elicitation/Digital Storytelling: Photovoice without the “political action” and/or “social justice” component.
Photovoice Use/Examples Part II.
Photovoice and Photo-elicitation/Digital Storytelling

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4zAdktMUNg

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDMdKznQ0L4
Hunger

Figure 1. Selections from the Witnesses to Hunger Exhibit

Challenging Stereotypes: Using WIC

Food and Hunger: Breakfast

Housing: The Search Continues

© Margaret M., Baltimore

“The cashier made me feel so bad about myself for using WIC. As soon as I got in her line she saw my WIC folder, she pucked her lips because she doesn’t like messing with the WIC. She made me feel like I was doing something wrong. Like ‘you shouldn’t be getting this assistance, you should be paying for this.’ I just felt really uncomfortable. And then people are getting in line and the line’s getting longer, so you’re feeling like you’re holding up the line. I started getting embarrassed about it. I didn’t like that feeling.”

© Crystal S., Philadelphia

“With the money food stamps provide, I was able to feed her breakfast that morning. Without it what would she have eaten? I wanted to show that with the help she was able to eat breakfast that morning. She had cereal. She had milk. She didn’t have to go without.”

© Kathy A.*, Camden

“I spent three and a half months in a shelter with my two children and then I got my apartment. The crazy thing about it is that I still have to do house searches to qualify for welfare, even though I have an apartment. My caseworker says that I have to look for something that I can afford, I guess because $850 is too much. I don’t know where I’m going to find a two bedroom for a lower price. All the housing that’s low-income is like a year waiting list or more. I’m on the list through Section 8 and I went over there today and they told me that I might not get called for three years, maybe five.”
Hunger

Opportunity: Enjoying the Ride

“Looking back at this picture, I realized how much I hated to take the T, but my son always seemed to enjoy the ride. He looked like he didn’t have a care in the world. It’s hard for me to do a lot with my son, because I’m always busy, and I barely see him. He goes to school, and I’m working. We don’t really have time in the middle, except for bedtime. I’m telling myself it’s only temporary, because I’m trying to get him stable.”

© Iesha M., Boston

Health: My Daughter’s Health

“I want everyone to see how important her health is to me. She’s been so sick. Her asthma started acting up and then she got cold sores and, forget it! Those are all her medications. She has to take them every day, and one medicine she takes four or five times a day, just to keep her mouth from hurting so bad.”

© Angelica R., Philadelphia

Environment and Neighborhood: Needle in the Playground

“I take my son there, that’s the cleanest park in the neighborhood. That’s a needle and that’s a little boy’s feet. You have to be with them at all times, making sure and inspecting. Something needs to get done because the kids are just going out and seeing everything from the environment. They learn from that.”

© Crystal R., Philadelphia

*Pseudonym used
Suicide (Creighton et al., 2018)
HIV (Teti et al., 2012)
Example of Use:

Newly arrived refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Charlotte, NC

Overcome language barrier and limited dietary assessment tools to investigate dietary habits, preferences to tailor messaging and cultural appropriateness of a community-based hypertensive health promotion and education program.
Our Voice Our Health

- Youth ages 13-17.
- First year in the US, attended a school for Newcomers in North Carolina.
- From all contents and geographic regions and nations - from Iraq to Somalia to Honduras to Vietnam.
- 1-2 weeks, digital camera, food and activities.
- Development of culturally relevant, targeted nutrition and health promoting resources.

A special thank you to all of the service providers and students who participated in this study, as well as the school staff who helped interpret and translate materials for the study and for the Williams Art Health Research Award for funding Our Voice, Our Health through the School of Health and Human Sciences at UNCG.
The Photographers . . .
Sharing Foods
Nutrition and Health Promotion Resources
Nutrition and Health Promotion Resources

Choose Fresh Foods!
Nutrition and Health Promotion Resources
Nutrition and Health Promotion Resources
Nutrition and Health Promotion Resources
Part III. Ethical Considerations
Social Justice and Methods

A Review by Sanon, et al., 2014, found out of 30 photovoice studies, only three included an aspect of transformation and impact with the majority simply raising “awareness”.

Few moved beyond encouragement of individual behavior change- if not supporting greater change, who is truly benefitting from the work? Action of PV continues to lack impact and alignment with true use of the methodology.
Social Justice and Methods

“Researchers must consider the extent of participation in all aspects of the study, and the extent to which social justice awareness, amelioration, or transformation may be achieved.” (Sanon et al., 2014)

For participants and researchers:

Is action take to ameliorate or transform the status quo?

Is the method truly empowering or caught within the rigidity of research design?
Practical Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Studies Using Photo-Elicitation Interviews (Bugos et al., 2014)

Ethical photography practices.

Photo collection process that aligns with study goals.

Choose an interview location that is safe and private.

Systematically sort and label all participant photographs.
Create photo-elicitation interview guide.

Be prepared to respond flexibly in challenging interviews.

Protect Confidentiality and privacy.

Consider the limitations of the photo-elicitation interview technique.
Photovoice Ethics: Critical Reflections from Men’s Mental Health Research (Creighton et al., 2018)

Inedible images- content, copyright.

Representation- subjectivity, variances, conflict.

Vicarious trauma- participants, research team, audience.

Managing the Burden of Participation.

Confidentiality and Digital Image Sharing.

Consent in the Context of Longitudinal Visual Research.

Photographing Children and Children Photographing?

What is an “Appropriate” Photograph and Where Can Photographs be Shown?
Photovoice Ethics: Perspectives from Flint Photovoice (Wang & Redwood Jones 2001)

Image Ethics and “invasion”.

Intrusion into One’s Private Space.

Disclosure of Embarrassing Facts about Individuals.

Being Placed into a False Light by Images.

Protection Against the Use of a Person’s Likeness for Commercial Benefit.
Photovoice Ethics: Perspectives from Flint Photovoice (Wang & Redwood Jones 2001)

Ethical Issues in Recruitment.

Ethical Issues in Representation.

Ethical Issues in Facilitator’s and Photographer’s Participation.

Ethical Issues in Suggesting Picture Taking Ideas.

Ethical Issues in Advocacy.
Table 1. Photovoice Ethics: Minimum Best Practices

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<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provide and review with participants a consent form, regardless of whether required by the facilitators’ sponsoring institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide an “Acknowledgment and Release” consent form on which participants obtain the signatures of the people they photograph, regardless of whether required by the facilitators’ sponsoring institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frame the first training around a group discussion about the use of cameras, power, and ethics, emphasizing safety and the authority and responsibility that come with using a camera</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide written material (such as a brochure that describes the goals of the photovoice project, who will participate, how photographs will be used, and whom to contact for more information) that participants can give to subjects or interested community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a letter for youth or adult participants to give teachers and school principals or employers as applicable regarding the goal and duration of the project and establish whether and how cameras will be used at school or work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide participants with prints to give back to people they have photographed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide and review with participants a consent form indicating permission to publish any photographs, or only specified photographs, to promote project goals, regardless of whether required by the facilitators’ sponsoring institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor project staff and participants on the ethical principles and actions underlying photovoice</td>
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Photovoice as a CBPR Method Among Women Living with HIV/AIDS: Ethical Opportunities and Challenges (Teti et al., 2012)

Opportunities: Strength, Resilience, Empowerment, Resources.

Challenges: Limited Capacity, Illicit Activities, HIV Status and Disclosure, Photographing Others.
Youth researching youth: benefits, limitations, and ethical considerations within a participatory research process (Jardine & James 2011)

Consent and Assent.

Types of Cameras.

** High Involvement of Youth in Design of Study, Questions, and Results
Photography and Social Media Use in CBPR with Youth: Ethical Considerations (Kia-Keating et al., 2017)

Use and Content of Images and Risk.
Incentives and Coercion.
Social Media Activity and Confidentiality.
Additional Resources

www.photovoice.com
Q & A

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References


