



STORY PRESERVATION
INITIATIVE
PHOTOVOICE GUIDE

STORY
PRESERVATION
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LEARNING LAB

Photovoice Field Guide, Students Grades 7-12

What is Photovoice?

Photovoice is a form of visual ethnography. Ethnography is the “systematic collection of living people’s oral or written testimony about their life experiences within a clearly defined community or geographic area. The primary purpose of ethnography is to gain insight into a specific geographic, social, or cultural group.”

Ethnography results in new and insightful discoveries that build knowledge and understanding for the benefit of the community.

Photovoice is a grassroots, participatory research methodology that combines visual and narrative data collection and analysis to allow people to record and reflect on their community's strengths and problems. Doing so promotes dialogue through group discussion and public exhibition and engages community members, leaders, and policymakers in conversations about needs assessment, evaluations, and social change.

Public health experts Dr. Caroline Wang and Dr. Mary Ann Burris developed this method in the 1990s. They drew on feminist and participatory theory, critical education theory, and documentary photography to create the Photovoice concept—initially applied to find a more community-driven, public-facing methodology within international development and public health projects.¹

¹ Wang, C. and M. Burris. 1997. *Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment*. Health Education and Behavior, 24:3. pp. 369-387.

Photovoice uses cameras as tools for research participants to record images of what matters to them. It is a flexible and adaptive research methodology. It prioritizes the insight and knowledge of people on the ground as sources of expertise. It trusts their abilities to bring the most important strengths and challenges of the community to light. Importantly, Photovoice has been used—both nationally and internationally—to successfully advocate for community-driven policy development and social change. This makes sense since the Photovoice process allows community members to highlight the realities of their daily lives, clearly communicate their points of view and experiences, prioritize concerns, discuss problems, and collectively come up with solutions.

Photovoice is not just about research participants taking photographs, but it is about capturing the community's perspective and sharing stories with a broader public. After photographs are taken, participants and researchers collaboratively craft written and/or oral narratives that contextualize the pictures through ethnographic interviews and focus groups. Photos are selected to be part of a public exhibit, captions are written, and collectively, key themes of the project are determined.

Photovoice Planning Page ²

Use this planning page to help you think through all stages of a Photovoice Project. Know that some of your initial plans and strategies will change as the project begins—that is to be expected when conducting a participant-driven, participatory research project!

Basic Information about your project

Project Title:

Project Goals:

Project Objectives:

² This planning page is edited from course materials from *'Talking with Pictures': Photovoice*. For more information about the course and examples of successful projects, visit www.photovoiceworldwide.com

Stakeholders:

- *Who are your stakeholders? How can they help with planning, implementation, funding, or dissemination/outreach?*

Project Staff/Team

- *Who will help you facilitate your project or activity? What if any assistants or support will you need? How will you recruit them?*

Develop a Budget and Secure Funding

- *How much funding do you need for your project? Monetary or “in-kind” support?*

Getting Started

Topic and Photo-Taking Questions:

- *Develop a topic and questions on your own, with your core team, stakeholders, and/or participants.*

Participants and Recruitment

- *Who will participate in your project or activity? How will you recruit them? What materials do you need to support recruitment? If more people want to join than you can accommodate, how will you choose who gets to participate or not?*

Training Sessions

- *Develop a training session (or two) for research assistants (or other stakeholders) and participant-photographers. These training sessions might include an introduction to Photovoice and/or a discussion of cameras, ethics, and power; ways of seeing photographs; and a philosophy of giving photographs back to community members to express appreciation, respect, or camaraderie. Your training curriculum may then move to address mechanical aspects of camera use, depending on the comfort level of your participants.*

Timeline

- *How many sessions will your project/activity have? For how long each session? For example, depending on what makes the most sense for your community, you might schedule 4 sessions of 3 hours each or 8 sessions of 1.5 hours each. Record these sessions! Take notes, or use an audio or video recorder.*

- *An 8-session project timeline might include, 1) Introductions to the project and Photovoice, 2) Ethnics and Photo-taking instructions, 3) Discuss photo-taking experience and participant photos, 4) Discuss photos, begin to analyze them, and start planning an exhibit, 5) Continue with analysis and caption of photos, exhibit planning, 6) Finalize exhibit, 7) Exhibit and 8) Debrief and celebration.*

Ethics

- *What if any ethical issues do you need to plan for? How will you keep your participants and their families and communities “safe”? Have you developed a consent form for your participants? Use the consent forms provided, or create ones (written, audio, or video) that make sense to you and your community.*

Practical Aspects of the Research Project

Equipment and Supplies

- *What cameras will you use? What if any adaptations do you need to make to accommodate people with disabilities? What other supplies might you need (voice recorders, notebooks, other office supplies, etc.)?*

Location

- *Where will you meet with your participants to talk about their photos, conduct interviews, and plan for the final exhibit? Is there a central location that is accessible to all involved?*

What happens after your participants have taken their photos?

Data Interpretation

- *This is where the participatory nature of Photovoice comes into play! So that participants can lead the discussion, it is they who choose the photographs. They select photographs they consider most significant, or simply like best, from each roll of film they have taken.*
- *What approaches might you use to interpret and/or organize data (photos and text)? Utilize the PHOTO tool for discussion, or come up with your own way to start conversations about your participant’s photos!*

Dissemination/Outreach

What audiences do you want to reach, and why (what do you hope will happen as a result of your project)? How can you reach your audiences? What are opportunities for “formal” outreach? For informal outreach led by participants?

- *Do you want a more traditional, in-person exhibit, or will you create a virtual exhibit space?*

Evaluation

- *Will you evaluate process or outcomes – or both? What do you want to know about the impact of Photovoice – on participants? On practice or policy?*

Wrapping up the Project and/or Saying Goodbye

- *Are you planning to support any follow-on? Who might be interested in further action? How will you celebrate a successful project with your participants?*

Attached:

Photo Permission Form

Photo Analysis Tool

Photo Permission Form – Photo Subject

A photographer has taken a photograph of me for the _____
photovoice project. I understand what the project is about and how my photograph
might be used.

By signing this form, I consent for my photo to be included in:

- Group discussions for the project
- A project exhibit
- A project report
- Presentations and other educational outreach and advocacy sharing the
perspectives of people with brain injury

I have checked off the photo uses that I agree to.

Contact information and signature:

Name: _____ (printed)

Signature: _____ (signed)

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

If you have questions or want to learn more, please send an email to:
[Insert your contact information here]

(For Guardian permission, if needed, see Page 2)

Photo Permission Form – Guardian of Photo Subject

A photographer has taken a photograph of my ward _____ for the _____ photovoice project. I understand what the project is about and how the photograph might be used.

By signing this form, I consent for a photo of my ward to be included in:

- Group discussions for the project
- A project exhibit
- A project report
- Presentations and other educational outreach and advocacy sharing the perspectives of people with brain injury

I have checked off the uses that I agree to.

Guardian contact information and signature:

Name: _____ (printed)

Signature: _____ (signed)

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

PHOTO

A mnemonic for Photovoice discussion and writing

Question	Notes
1. Describe your Picture.	
2. What is H appening in your picture?	
3. Why did you take a picture O f this?	
4. What does this picture T ell us about your life?	
5. How can this picture provide O pportunities for us to improve life?	

Source: Hergenrather, 2009