A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PHOTOVOICE: SHARING PICTURES, TELLING STORIES AND CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Beverly Palibroda with
Brigette Krieg, Lisa Murdock
and Joanne Havelock

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Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) is one of the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health, funded by the Women's Health Contribution Program of Health Canada. The PWHCE supports new knowledge and research on women's health issues; and provides policy advice, analysis and information to governments, health organizations and non-governmental organizations. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policy of the PWHCE or Health Canada.

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PRAIRIE WOMEN'S HEALTH
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
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Front Cover Photo:
'Without a world, there are no friends.. Without friends, you have no

“Exposed Broken Old Tree”

Lisa Aymont-Hunter 2005

I know money isn’t the most important thing, but I know it is the root cause for a lot of dis-ease, dis-harmony, and social problems.

I’m not a mathematician, but come on! Don’t wait until we are sick, and scared and alone.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In recent years, Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) led five photovoice research projects in communities across the prairie region of Canada. Researchers and community members worked together to gain the first-hand experience and knowledge about photovoice that is reflected in this manual. We want to offer our appreciation to all those who were involved.

PWHCE is especially grateful for the contributions made by the courageous prairie women who offered a part of themselves through personal stories and photographs. The women generously dedicated time, hard work and their unique perspectives that made each photovoice project one of a kind. These gifts will not be forgotten.

We would also like to thank and honour: Kay Willson for her coordination of the Saskatoon project; Rachel Rapaport Beck for coordination of the Winnipeg project; Stacey Guy for originating and Diane Martz and Joanne Havelock for coordination of the Regina projects, as well as April Buffalo-Robe and Stacey Mustatia for their work as facilitators; Brigette Krieg for her work coordinating photovoice in Prince Albert. The assistance of Kay Willson and Linda Snyder in reviewing the draft of the manual is also appreciated. You have all shown that by working together, the goals of photovoice can be achieved and many lessons can be learned.

Caroline Wang and her colleagues, the researchers recognized for developing photovoice, have also earned our deep appreciation. The early photovoice research continues to inspire community groups and researchers throughout the world to use photovoice as a tool of empowerment and social change.

PWHCE receives financial support from the Women's Health Contribution Program, of the Bureau of Women's Health and Gender Analysis, Health Canada. This allowed PWHCE to support our own photovoice projects and to develop this manual. The projects took place in different communities allowing us to develop a broad understanding of photovoice and greater confidence to pursue the creation of a manual. Without financial support each step of the way we could not have done this work.

FOREWORD

Photovoice is a ground-breaking approach to ***participatory action research.*** In recent years, PWHCE has learned a great deal about ***photovoice.*** We have learned about the theory and research methods of photovoice and we have learned how to work with community groups to carry out photovoice projects in practice. We have learned that, through photovoice, marginalized community members are empowered to share their words and photographs as a way to reach decision-makers and implement positive change in their home communities. We have learned that marginalized individuals, community workers and advocates, community groups and researchers alike are interested and eager to learn more about photovoice as a creative tool for health promotion and social change.

Indeed, we are enthusiastic about our photovoice journey and want to share what we have learned with others who are interested in community-based research. For this reason, we have created this manual as an invitation to you, the reader, to join us in our journey of discovery. Through this manual we intend to provide diverse groups of individuals with the tools necessary to engage in photovoice.

Whether you are a community member, advocate, possible photovoice participant, student or researcher, this manual has something to offer. It promises to:

- increase understanding of photovoice by providing a clear definition and explanation of the research method;
- offer practical guidance and a step-by-step process for using photovoice; and
- Motivate others by sharing compelling stories, photographs and case studies of actual photovoice projects.

We have designed this manual to include:

- sections to easily find information;
- a glossary of terms for quick reference;

- text boxes to highlight key points and lessons learned from our experiences;
- practical tips and things to consider when conducting your own photovoice project;
- a checklist to help with the planning and organization of your own photovoice project; and
- suggested resources for further learning.

The beauty of photovoice is its diversity; every photovoice project is different, and each project has a different focus. With photovoice, different stories are told, different photographs are captured and different outcomes are sought. Despite the many differences, common to each photovoice project is its effectiveness as a method to reveal real life experiences and empower marginalized individuals. As such, PWHCE has enabled girls and women to use photovoice to represent their health-related needs and interests.

The selected case studies included in this manual represent our experiences; the information presented is meant to inform and spark interest in community-based photovoice projects. Before you begin your own unique photovoice journey, we want you to understand that your photovoice experience will be your own. It is our hope that the sharing of this information with a broad spectrum of readers will result in diverse projects that give voice to marginalized members of our communities.

We wish you the best of luck on your photovoice journey.

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PART ONE

Bad Weather
Elaine Gamble, 2006

This is a picture of me driving out to my reserve to try to get financial aid because my power and my rent was due. My husband lost his job and we're having a really hard financial time. I had to take my kids on the highway in this kind of weather because if I didn't, my power was going to get cut off and I wasn't going to have a place to live with my children. It was a gamble to go out because I wasn't guaranteed anything, and, in fact, I didn't receive anything.

INTRODUCTION

Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) is an organization dedicated to improving the health status of Canadian women. With offices in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, PWHCE represents a large geographic area and a diverse cross-section of women. Federal funding from the Women's Health Contribution Program, through the Bureau of Women's Health and Gender Analysis of Health Canada supports the research carried out by PWHCE.

As one of the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health, PWHCE has a long history of collaborative work with community members and developing partnerships with academic facilities and various levels of government. Rigorous community-based research into the social and other determinants of women's health has allowed PWHCE to develop a level of expertise in policy-oriented and community-based research and analysis on women's health. With this expertise, PWHCE is in a position to advise on policy changes that may make the health and social systems more effective in improving the health and lives of women and girls.

Currently, PWHCE focuses attention to four broad program areas, including:

- Women and poverty;
- Aboriginal women's health;
- Rural, remote and northern women's health; and
- Gender and health planning

Through our extensive collaboration and sharing of research results in these four program areas, PWHCE has assisted in expanding our understanding of women's health issues on a local, regional, national and even international level.

PWHCE has an abundance of vision, energy and commitment to issues related to women's health. We are fortunate to have skilled

research staff and associates who continuously seek out fresh and creative ways to generate new knowledge about women's health and the lives they lead. Photovoice is but one example.

With an emphasis on empowerment, creativity and social action, photovoice caught the attention of PWHCE. Almost immediately, this method of doing community-based research appeared to be an excellent fit for the community development, research and policy work carried out by PWHCE. Very soon, efforts were made to begin the process of supporting women in the community to develop photovoice projects.

Since 2002, these early efforts have resulted in five successful photovoice projects that were carried out in different locations throughout the prairie region. All of the projects proved to be rich and rewarding experiences that have helped PWHCE to achieve a mandate of working with others toward improving the health status for women and girls.

Most of the time, we only have one choice when it comes to certain situations. Whether it is a decision coming from your family, a gang, or even an abortion clinic, we don't have the resources most people do. It's one way future if we don't rise up and take the reigns.
A.D. 2007

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

As you read through this manual, you may come across some terms used to explain and describe photovoice that may not be familiar to you. The following Glossary of Terms was designed as a quick reference to help with those terms and concepts.

Codifying: the process of identifying and sorting data into categories of meaningful issues, themes or theories. Codifying takes place in photovoice through group discussions where participants share photographs and discuss common themes and issues.

Co-Researcher: a member of a group who shares responsibility for planning and carrying out a research project. In photovoice, community members are co-researchers along with a photovoice facilitator. Together, they make decisions about the focus of the project, collect and analyze data, create new knowledge and share findings with others.

Contextualizing: understanding or explaining how something fits within a larger set of circumstances. In photovoice, contextualizing takes place as photovoice participants tell stories about the photographs and discuss what the photographs mean. As they engage in dialogue with other photovoice participants they can voice their individual and group experiences. For example, a photo of a substandard apartment can lead to a discussion of a larger context which includes the lack of affordable housing, low wages, social service shelter allowance policies and power relationships between tenants and landlords. Individual journaling can also be used as a way of contextualizing the photographs.

Data: all of the information gained through the research process. The photographs, taken by community members, and their own words describing and explaining the photographs, are the main data collected in photovoice.

Data Analysis: the process of carefully exploring, examining and comparing the data collected. In photovoice, data analysis develops a better understanding of the issue of concern being addressed by photovoice. By analyzing the data, co-researchers can determine

general themes and patterns, and identify how individual issues relate to the experiences of others.

Data Collection: the process of gathering information through a variety of activities and events. Taking photographs, participating in group meetings, recording discussions, guided dialogue, journaling, exhibition feedback and debriefing are all opportunities for data collection in photovoice. Data collection is ongoing in photovoice because information is gained right from the beginning until the end.

Decision-makers: those members of the community who have the ability or power to influence and make decisions on behalf of others. The group of decision-makers includes policy-makers, those who determine public guidelines and policy. The target audience in photovoice includes decision- and policy-makers.

Ethical Guidelines: all research is governed by strict ethical considerations and guidelines. Researchers are expected to do no harm through research activities. The ethical principles ensure that photovoice participants and other individuals or groups are not harmed as a result of photovoice activities.

Experiential Participants: refers to participants who have first-hand experience and knowledge. Photovoice participants are involved in examining an issue of concern or focus of research. Participants are considered experiential if they have gained knowledge from actual lived-experiences.

Informed Consent: agreement to do something or allow something based on having all the facts and being educated on risks and benefits. Photovoice participants must be educated about the complete photovoice process, the multiple roles and responsibilities and the advantages and the possible risks of participation. Only then, once fully aware can community members agree to participate.

Marginalized Groups: groups of individuals who are most excluded from public discussion and who have limited access to centres of influence and power. Through photovoice, community members from marginalized groups are able to have their voices heard and bring forth ideas to influence the decisions and policies that affect their lives.

Participatory Action Research (PAR): a method of collaborative research that involves increased understanding of an issue of concern and efforts aimed at improving social conditions through individual and group action. Photovoice is a form of PAR.

Photovoice: is a participatory action research method that employs photography and group dialogue as a means for marginalized individuals to deepen their understanding of a community issue or concern. The visual images and accompanying stories are the tools used to reach policy- and decision-makers. The aim of this research method is to improve conditions by making changes at the community level.

Photovoice Facilitator: an individual that has a range of skills necessary to facilitate the form of participatory action research called photovoice. The photovoice facilitator requires knowledge of the investigative research process, ethical guidelines and the photovoice method. The facilitator assumes the role of co-researcher and works closely with community members.

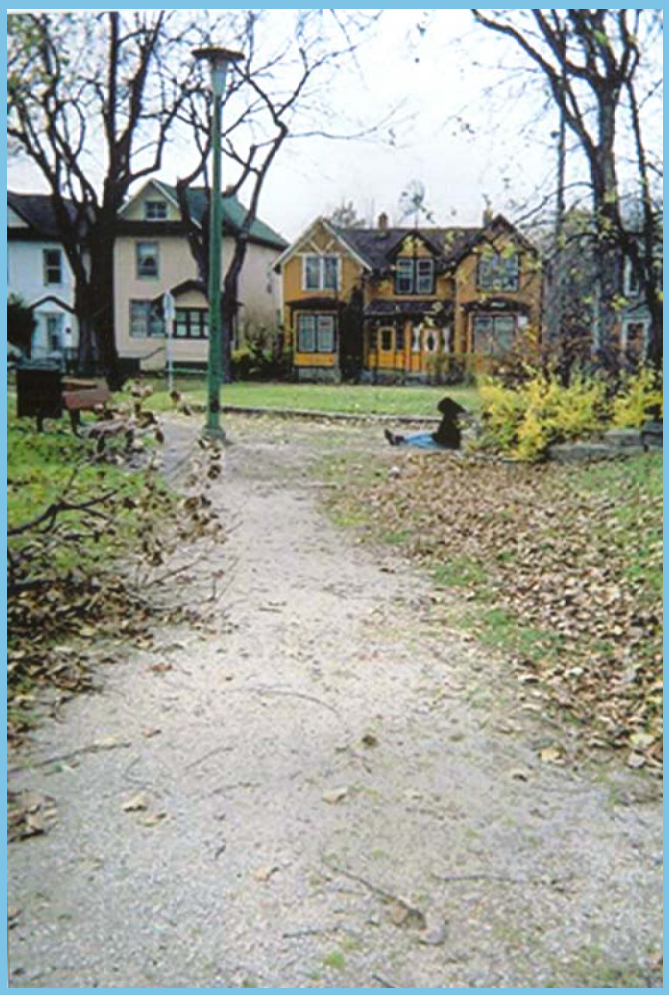
Photovoice Participant: an individual community member representing a marginalized group who agrees to take part in photovoice. A photovoice participant fulfills several roles in order to achieve the goals of the photovoice project.

Research: a methodical investigative process that seeks to gain information and insight into a specific subject area. Photovoice includes setting research goals, data collection, data analysis, determining research outcomes and sharing of research findings on a specific issue of concern.

Target Audience Members: members of a group who are selected to hear the message about the issue of concern conveyed through photovoice. Target audience members are selected based on their ability or power to influence decisions and policies and to make changes that can improve the lives of community members.

VOICE: an acronym for Voicing Our Individual and Collective Experience. This acronym is used during guided discussion to remind participants to think, not just about their own life conditions, but also about shared life events and conditions.

PART TWO



It was ironic because this is a path. It shows a sense of loneliness, nowhere to go and obviously no support. To me, it was a very lonely place of unworthiness.

Valerie Charles 2005

WHAT IS PHOTOVOICE?

The heart of ***photovoice*** is the intermingling of images and words. This blending of images and words is not a new idea. In fact, we humans have used different kinds of images and words to express what we need, what we fear, what we cherish, what we dream of and all sorts of other ideas for as far back as we know. Photovoice is one recent example using this form of expression.

In the early 1990s, Dr. Caroline Wang, a professor and researcher with the University of Michigan, School of Public Health, developed photovoice, a creative approach to ***participatory action research*** (Wang 1999). Using community-based research activities, photovoice is a method designed to empower members of ***marginalized groups*** to work together to "identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique" (Wang and Burris 1997). Photovoice creates opportunities for those who are marginalized; it allows them to actively participate in enhancing their communities by giving them a chance to tell their stories and have their voices heard. Photovoice equips individuals with cameras so they can create photographic evidence and symbolic representations to help others see the world through their eyes.

The actions taken through photovoice, taking photographs and telling stories as they relate to the photographs, are empowering. With these feelings of empowerment, community members are likely to possess greater authority to advocate for an improved quality of life for themselves and for other members of their communities. Photovoice requires that community members take on multiple roles. As a ***photovoice participant***, individuals share ideas and concerns about their experiences and their community. They also take on the role of photographer where they have the responsibility of capturing photographic evidence. Additionally, participants assume the role of ***co-researcher*** with responsibilities around setting ***research*** goals, ***data collection***, ***data analysis*** and sharing research findings. Throughout this manual, you will see the multiple roles and responsibilities of community members who become involved in photovoice.

Photovoice can help individuals to move away from the very margins of life. In keeping with the three main objectives of this method, photovoice may enable community members to:

- identify and record their community strengths and struggles;
- explain their experiences through critical reflection and group dialogue; and
- inform ***decision-makers*** and influence policy (Wang and Burris 1997).

KEY CONCEPTS OF PHOTOVOICE

Since its beginning, photovoice has gained a broad appeal as an effective form of participatory action research. Many community researchers from around the world have used photovoice as a creative approach to explore different human experiences and to work for social and personal change. By design, photovoice is a flexible approach that produces research as varied and unique as the individuals and communities that it involves.

Although photovoice offers room for flexibility, five key concepts have been identified to unite the different ways in which photovoice is applied to research. These concepts are discussed below (Wang 1999; Wang and Pies 2004).

Images Teach

The camera is one of the most widely available, popular and magical tools used by humans to creatively capture and share our life experiences. Consider how we linger over photo albums filled with images of special events, vacations, births, weddings, cherished mementos, family members, friends and pets. These images that are often saved in albums, teach our chosen audience about who we are; they tell our stories and reveal what is important to us.

This same approach can be used to tell other stories to other audiences. Images captured through photovoice tell stories that identify concerns, depict struggles or show a particular view of a community. Through photographs, marginalized individuals offer insight and teach others about their experiences.

Pictures Can Influence Policy

Visual images influence each one of us on a daily basis. Advertisements and billboards that we see in our daily lives influence decisions about what we buy, where we eat or what services we use. Images play on our emotions. Have you ever looked at a picture that pulled at your heart or caused you to feel anger at an injustice shown in the picture? Photographs offer powerful concrete evidence of a reality in a way that words simply cannot capture.

Photovoice capitalizes on the power of photographs and cleverly uses the photographs as a tool to influence public policy. Photographs can capture the attention of policy-makers and influence their awareness and understanding of a specific issue or of a reality that is quite different from their own. Increased awareness and knowledge about experiences differing from their own can help policy-makers to develop a broader and more inclusive understanding of a range of issues. With a more complete understanding of human experiences, policy-makers can make better decisions about public policy that are fairer and that can improve the lives of disadvantaged groups. The photographs force the viewer to see an experience from the standpoint of another person.

Community Members Ought to Participate in Shaping Public Policy

Photovoice is not just about individuals capturing images. It is also about marginalized individuals discussing and critically reflecting on those images. As photographers, individuals must question how they have represented and defined their communities and

experiences. They must consider how they relate to their community and how broader social issues influence their lived experiences in that community. This process can aid community members in understanding that they have a right to have a say in shaping the public policies that influence their health and the health of their family and friends. When individuals have a say in policy, those policies will serve them better and meet their needs. It is not just the right of individuals to shape public policy; it is a responsibility. Photovoice really creates an opportunity for people to get involved and do what they can to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Influential Policy-Makers Must be Audience to the Perspectives of Community Members

An important part of photovoice that must be carefully planned is the sharing and exchange of information between community members and those who traditionally have the power to create public policy. These influential decision-makers need to be the audience. They need to listen to the stories and view the photographs of the photovoice project so that the ideas and experiences of community members can inform their policy decisions.

Photovoice Emphasizes Individual and Community Action

Photovoice and other forms of participatory action research emphasize action. This means that the information and evidence is not created simply for the sake of creating knowledge, but it is created for the purpose of social action and social change. It is not enough just to examine community problems and struggles; there must be energy put toward identifying community solutions and doing what is needed to implement those solutions.

WHEN TO USE PHOTOVOICE IN COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Photovoice was designed as a flexible approach to research, suited to examine and reveal a wide variety of issues. It is especially fitting as a way for marginalized and under-represented groups to have a way of representing their own lived experiences rather than having their stories interpreted and told by others (Wang 1999).

Researchers, community groups and ***photovoice facilitators*** have used the photovoice method in many different settings and with diverse populations. Some of the photovoice projects that have been carried out include research on the following topics:

- Rural Chinese women (Wang 1999)
- Social and health issues of women (Havelock 2007; Krieg 2008; McIntyre 2003; Willson et al. 2006)
- Social and health issues of youth (Strack et al. 2004; Wang 1999)
- Homelessness (Wang and Burris 1997)
- Poverty (Havelock 2007; Willson et al. 2006)
- Mental health (www.bu.edu/cpr/photovoice)
- Indigenous research (Castleden et al. 2008; Krieg 2008)
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (Mothers from Sioux Lookout 2008)
- Youth with disabilities (Whitney 2006)
- Mothers with learning difficulties (Booth and Booth 2003)

The stories and experiences of people with less power are often silenced and ignored by those with greater power; groups with greater power make decisions for others. As a result, the social, political and economic systems set up to serve the population as a whole do not usually represent, nor serve, marginalized groups of people very well. The above-noted list of issues explored through photovoice show both the flexibility in the approach and the usefulness of photovoice when working with oppressed and marginalized groups.

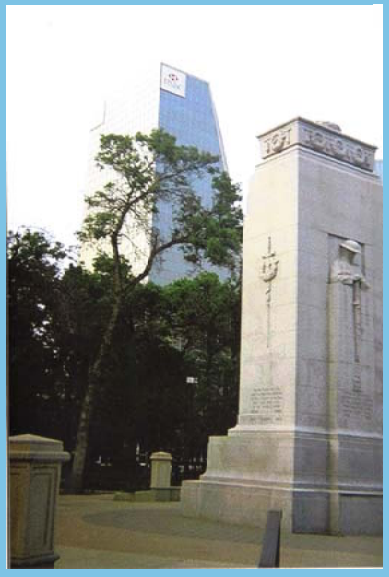
There are several reasons why photovoice is an effective approach to community-based research with marginalized individuals. Photovoice is an empowering practice as it offers an alternative way for individuals to come together and reveal their concerns. Even though photovoice is most often used to examine serious issues, the photovoice method incorporates fun, creativity and collaboration, in a way that encourages participation from community members (Blackman and Fairey 2007).

Photovoice emphasizes the importance for community members to have a say and to take action to inform decision-makers about the reality of their lives. By providing this information, the intent of the method is to influence public policy and improve lives (Wang and Burris 1997). Consider why it is important for individuals to have a say in the issues that influence their life circumstances. Why is it particularly important to find ways to encourage or empower marginalized groups to be heard by others?

While most of us would agree that the lives of people around us are rich and varied, we may not always see the extent of the human experience. Experiences that are hard for us to witness or highly stigmatized, such as poverty, homelessness or mental health issues can be brought to the attention of the greater public and policy-makers through photovoice research.

Freedom?
K.S. 2007

Our grandparents fought for our freedom, signed treaties for our education and health in trade for the land and we are still subject to oppression.



ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF PHOTOVOICE

If you are considering using photovoice, it is helpful to think about the advantages and limitations of this method. Outlined below are a number of advantages and limitations arranged in separate categories including the advantages and limitations related to: photovoice participants, the research and photovoice facilitator and the community.

ADVANTAGES OF PHOTOVOICE

Photovoice Participants

Photovoice offers an opportunity for everyday citizens to take part in collaborative research and work for community change. This opportunity is empowering to participants and can result in considerable, lasting personal growth. The following list offers some noteworthy benefits experienced by photovoice participants.

Participants may:

- Gain valuable skills in reflecting on the realities of their lives, are supported to see both sides of an issue, to see what is not obvious, and to educate others about these things (Wang 1999).
- Develop skills in reflecting on and understanding community functioning.
- Expand their knowledge of how the individual experience is part of the whole; the personal is political (Blackman and Fairey 2007).
- Learn skills in critical thinking and critical analysis (Blackman and Fairey 2007).
- Gain confidence in their ability to assert ideas and engage in self advocacy (Blackman and Fairey 2007).
- Have improved self esteem from skill building, competently taking photographs and general participation (Blackman and Fairey 2007).

- Understand the right to be heard and the responsibilities that come with sharing your voice and ideas.
- Participate in decision making and problem solving skills, collaboration and consensus through group process (Blackman and Fairey 2007).
- Stimulate creativity and learn photography skills for group members who may not otherwise have this opportunity.
- Explore their own reality, celebrate their joys and successes, and examine struggles.
- Discover ways to share ideas with others, advocacy, lobbying.
- Support other members of a group in the telling of their experiences; develop a sense of belonging.
- Participate, even if tentative or inexperienced since the process does not solely rely on ability to express self verbally; photographs assist with this, "accessibility ... ages, cultures and skill sets" (Blackman and Fairey 2007) each person can contribute
- Offer an opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives (Blackman and Fairey 2007).
- Engage in boundary crossing by narrowing the divide between community and policy and community and academia.
- Improve their ability for self-expression and use of language skills.
- Develop a better understanding of the influence of socioeconomic status and culture.

Research Process and Photovoice Facilitator

Clearly, you can see that photovoice offers many advantages to participants. There are also advantages for the research, which is the body of knowledge created, and for the photovoice facilitator. These include:

- The active participation of community members as co-researchers provides a level of expertise and knowing that would otherwise not be accessible to the photovoice facilitator.
- The photovoice facilitator gains valuable insight and understanding of important issues. The opportunity to learn from the actual lived experiences of the participant researchers is invaluable.

- If the photovoice facilitator did not make room for co-researchers, and remained in the academic realm and position of power, information would be out of reach and unknown. Photovoice creates a power-sharing form of research that differs from traditional research.
- Valuable information is shared through photovoice because participants are empowered to reveal their experience from behind the lens. Participants capture through photographs what may not have been revealed through other means.
- The collaborative nature of photovoice produces meaningful results where individuals can offer varying skills. Local community members are valued for their specific knowledge and are empowered to get involved, not just to improve their own conditions, but the health and socials conditions of others as well. They are in a position to inform others in their community. This helps to ensure project and research success as individuals are genuinely involved.
- Photovoice emphasizes empowerment and offers a non-oppressive way of engaging marginalized individuals and groups to gather their own research information.

Community

Because the photovoice method identifies social change and social action as a primary goal, the community stands to benefit from the photovoice process. Advantages to the community include the following:

- The opportunity for community growth and improvement based on the activities of photovoice participants.
- When community members gain an increased understanding and awareness of community strengths and struggles, they are better equipped to get involved and work toward change.
- Armed with good information and a willingness to educate and inform others about what they have learned they can advocate for better services and programs along with policies that support community members' health and well being.

- If some community members are active around an issue, it is more likely that others will add their energy and help with the effort.
- A sense of belonging and working together is created and local community members work with each other to use resources to address problems in ways that are appropriate to that area. Genuine community involvement is a respectful way of investigating community issues.

LIMITATIONS OF PHOTOVOICE

Every research method has certain limitations. It is wise to consider the limitations of any approach to research because you may be able to address the limitations or minimize the problems.

Photovoice Participants

- The time commitment may be taxing for some individuals or it might be difficult to commit to a project that continues over several weeks.
- Participants might have trouble presenting complex or abstract ideas through their photographs.
- Close examination of an issue of concern can cause negative feelings.

Research Process and Photovoice Facilitator

- Again, the time commitment necessary for photovoice may be daunting. This needs to be considered carefully when planning a photovoice project.
- Though the costs related to photography have come down in recent years, cost of equipment and developing can be a concern.
- The loss of, or damage to, cameras is a possible risk.
- A wide range of skills is necessary to complete the photovoice research and project activities. For some researchers community work may be a new and unfamiliar experience.

- Participants continuously make choices about what they select as subject matter for their photographs. They also make choices about what is not included in their photographs. These choices obviously influence the research findings.
- Due to ethical considerations and the process of seeking consent, participants may choose to take fewer photographs of human subjects.

Community

- The actual outcomes of the photovoice activities may not be as significant as expected by community members.

It's Like You're Handicapped
Elaine Gamble, 2006

This is a picture of my daughter's prosthetic limb. It helps her overcome her limitations. When you're living in poverty it is like you are handicapped because there are so many restrictions, so many limitations.

Someone can go in the store and buy a magazine or a shirt that they need for their kid. They can go ahead and buy it, but you can't, because you have to think about other things. You have to think, 'Well, if I buy that, then I can't pay my phone bill. If I buy that, then I can't get this for my kid.' You're always shortchanging. Sometimes my daughter needs something at school—a book fair or school function. She can't go or participate because I had to buy Pampers or wipes for the baby instead.

PHOTOVOICE AND WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

PWHCE worked with community groups to facilitate photovoice projects that enabled low income women and young Aboriginal women to represent and reflect upon the circumstances which affected their own health and wellbeing. Photovoice is a fitting approach to revealing the depth and complexities of these issues.

In the past, women's health experiences have often been overly scrutinized and stigmatized or overshadowed by the male experience that was presumed to be the norm. In other circumstances, women's health experiences were surrounded by myths, missing information and misunderstandings. Clearly, there is a need for a truer and more-balanced picture of women's experiences and how these experiences relate to their health. The views and voices of women are critical to this process.

The focus for PWHCE research, policy work and social action is the improvement of women's health. We know that good health allows women to participate fully in all areas of life. When women have the best health possible, they can lead safe and productive lives and help their children and loved ones to live balanced, healthy lives.

In many cases, women have a high level of expertise and understanding about the health and wellness of themselves and their families. They have ideas, from lived experiences, about what will help them and their families to be healthier and what makes it harder to be healthy. Local women have specific knowledge of what might be needed to promote health and what causes poor health in their area and can best represent local strengths and struggles. It makes sense then, to seek information and knowledge from the local women and to find ways to encourage these women to express their ideas and share this knowledge. Photovoice is an approach well-suited to learning more about women's lives.

PWHCE SELECTED PROJECTS

This manual is written, as we've mentioned, following our experience with five different photovoice projects. We summarize them here, and have used them to help shape our recommendations on the best ways to proceed with your own photovoice experience.

Poverty: Our Voices, Our Views And Looking Out Looking In: Women, Poverty and Public Policy

In the fall of 2005, PW{P P HCE began working on two photovoice projects, one in Winnipeg, Manitoba and one in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. PWHCE was interested in continuing our work with women who live with low-income. While earlier work involved women making recommendations for change, photovoice was a way to move further from a purely research basis, to a method that would allow women to use creative strategies for sharing research findings and making policy recommendations. The projects came out of a desire to work with the photovoice method and to develop stronger ties with some of the community agencies we knew. In Winnipeg, PWHCE partnered with the Winnipeg North End Women's Centre on the project, *Poverty: Our Voices, Our Views*. Likewise, in partnership with Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition, PWHCE staff supported the photovoice project entitled, *Looking out Looking In: Women, Poverty and Public Policy*.

The photovoice projects were undertaken for the purpose of enabling low income women to express ideas about poverty and public policy in words and images. Public policies have a big impact on the lives and health of women living in poverty, yet low-income women are rarely given a voice in shaping these policies.

Low-income women are often subject to careful scrutiny and surveillance by others. Rather than put them under the lens, we hoped these projects would put the women behind the lens and allow others to see the world through their eyes.

In both projects, we asked the organization to invite women to participate. Staff of PWHCE or a skilled community leader coordinated and facilitated the groups. The photovoice participants took part in meetings held over several weeks. During the meetings, participants learned more about the photovoice process, the risks and benefits of the project, the goals of PWHCE and community partners, and then were supported to identify their own goals for the project, so that it would truly be their project.

The women received training from a professional photographer and discussed the ethics of taking pictures of other people. Each woman was then given a disposable camera to begin taking photographs. During the weeks of photography, the women learned more about how to capture the image they wanted, how to use photography as a form of self-expression and received encouragement to express meaning through photographs. The women were encouraged to use the camera to take pictures that would represent their experiences of living in poverty, the barriers and the supports found in her community and the policies and programs she would like to change or keep. PWHCE was clear throughout the project that the photographs and words belonged to the women who created them. We appreciate their kind permission to share them here and on our website.

After taking their photographs, the women met several times to share their pictures with each other and to talk about what the photographs meant to them. The facilitator guided the discussion and helped the participants engage in critical analysis and reflection as a means of moving from personal experiences to understanding the political implications. With their permission, discussions were tape-recorded. The recorded discussions were used as the basis for creating captions for each photograph. Each woman selected which of her photographs and words she wanted to include in a public display. The photographs were then enlarged and mounted on plaques.

We held private showings in each city for the women photographers, their families and close friends. These events were soon followed by public showings of the women's work.

In Winnipeg, the photovoice exhibit, entitled Poverty: Our Voices, Our Views, was on display at the University of Winnipeg and since then has been shown in the Millennium Library, as well as at local galleries and other events. The North End Women's Centre also developed a calendar using some of the women's photographs. The calendar was distributed widely. Photos from the project have also been reproduced by the Social Planning Council and in national online magazines.

In Saskatoon, the photovoice exhibit, *Looking Out/Looking In: Women, Poverty and Public Policy*, was launched at the SCYAP Gallery on May 9, 2006 and remained on display until May 31st. The Saskatoon group has also made several presentations and displayed their photographs and words in a number of other locations and events. At each presentation or display, the women who took the photographs have always been involved. The photographs and accompanying captions are valuable resources to help the women to speak with a variety of audiences including social workers, health care providers and university classes. Additionally, the women have shared their experiences the International Conference on Community Campus Partnerships for Health, a National Workshop on Women's Poverty, and has been a part of and provided a major display for the Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition's Poverty Awareness Week. A presentation is also online at the PWHCE website.

The photovoice exhibits continue to be available for display to raise public awareness of the realities of living in poverty and to stimulate action for just social and economic policies to improve the conditions of women's lives.

Photovoice: Freedom from Poverty

Soon after the first two projects were released, a community group in Regina approached PWHCE for support to create a similar project in their city. Twelve women, from Regina Saskatchewan, participated in the *Photovoice: Freedom from Poverty* project. Coming from diverse backgrounds and social locations, the women examined

how poverty limits choices and steals the dignity of those affected by poverty. In many ways this project took on a different flavour than the first two. The group was committed to being ready for display within a few months and this shortened the timeline for going through the steps in developing their project.

The participants took photographs and wrote text to accompany their pictures – their storytelling becoming a complement to their visual images. Through the project the women received training in the use of a camera and learned how to critique photographs. The women participated in discussions about their photographs and determined what messages they wanted to convey. Having set a very short timeline on project activities, this photovoice project was rushed and some activities were limited by the timeline.

The photographic images and text in this exhibit provide a new view on poverty. They challenge societal opinions and promote a critical reappraisal of public policies that affect the finances of everyday citizens. These women challenge others to question how poverty influences social inclusion or more often social exclusion of people living in poverty.

The first exhibition of *Photovoice: Freedom from Poverty* opened in Regina on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The efforts of the Regina women who participated in this photovoice project and exhibit built upon the similar projects held in Winnipeg and Saskatoon. These three projects, with a focus on women's poverty and supported by PWHCE, were a valuable starting point for community examination and problem solving around of the issue of poverty.

Young Aboriginal Women's Photovoice Project

The Youth Photovoice project in Prince Albert was entirely community driven. The project began with communication between an Aboriginal organization and a PWHCE researcher concerning the experiences of young Aboriginal women living in the urban area of

Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The conversation recognized that Young Aboriginal women, specifically between the ages of 15 through 18 years, are a vulnerable population; services and programs often target this group, yet individual group members are rarely consulted about their ideas, about what they need or what doesn't work for them.

Following community consultation and discussion, three main reasons for using photovoice with young Aboriginal women were identified:

1. Photovoice would serve as an effective tool to help young Aboriginal women express their ideas about important issues, community programs and public policy.
2. Photovoice results would deepen understanding of how public policies and program development affect young Aboriginal women.
3. Aboriginal girls could be involved in seeking solutions and developing policy recommendations around issues that they see as important.

Like other photovoice research projects, photography, critical reflection, discussion and the creation of an exhibit revealed important research results. The young women defined for themselves their ideas and concerns and captured those ideas on film. They explored issues of violence, racism, poverty, education and substance abuse. With the photovoice facilitator, they discussed how these serious issues influenced the delivery or accessibility of community programming and identified the importance of cultural continuity in addressing the needs of young Aboriginal women living in urban areas.

These discussions prompted the young women to brainstorm possible solutions and look at the role that youth programming and policies played in igniting change at a local level. The young women were also given the opportunity to present their findings at the CUExpo in Victoria, British Columbia in 2008 receiving incredible feedback from the attendees.

PART THREE

"Women are not Garbage"
Lisa Aymont-Hunter 2005

Another one of our community women was murdered and her body was disposed of in a BFI bin. And it really touched, hurt, struck a deep cord in all of us as women… that she was thrown away like garbage.

STEPS IN THE PHOTOVOICE METHOD

Part One and Two of this manual introduced you to photovoice and offered examples of successful PWHCE photovoice projects. In this section, the suggested steps of the photovoice process are explained in detail, in a series of nine steps along with a suggested 14 session outline.

Photovoice does, in some ways, progress in a step-by-step fashion but, some project activities will overlap. You will see that some activities must have a clear start and finish before the group can move on to the next step, while other activities will continue over several weeks. Every photovoice project is different. How a group moves through the suggested steps will be influenced by differences in the projected timeline, budget, photovoice participant goals and objectives, community resources, and of course, community needs. We are sharing an overview of each of the suggested steps to help with planning and implementation of your photovoice project.

A Quick Glance at the Steps in Photovoice

1. Connecting and Consulting with the Community
2. Planning a Photovoice Project
3. Recruiting Photovoice Participants and Target Audience Members
4. Beginning the Photovoice Project
5. Photovoice Group Meetings
6. Data Collection
7. Data Analysis
8. Preparing and Sharing the Photovoice Exhibit
9. Social Action and Policy Change

STEP ONE: CONNECTING AND CONSULTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Photovoice, like all forms of participatory action research relies on a connection between community organizations, community members, researchers and other groups who are involved. Building strong respectful relationships among all those involved should be a starting point for photovoice. Good relationships take time and effort. For this reason, the stage of connecting with the community must not be rushed.

When the photovoice facilitator has spent a good amount of time and energy developing relationships, the community members will then be ready to share their ideas, offer feedback, answer questions and consult with the photovoice facilitator about important and sensitive issues. Good connections and fair consultation with the community will build a strong foundation for the photovoice research and project. This beginning stage of the photovoice process, community connection and consultation, helps to accomplish four tasks as outlined below.

Establish Trusting Relationships

Trust is essential to all relationships, especially when interacting with marginalized individuals and working with community groups who may have reasons to mistrust others. It is essential that the photovoice facilitator earns the trust of the community and also trusts the community members.

Groups may at first feel cautious or hesitant about research. If a mutual relationship of trust is built and genuine connections are made, individuals will feel they are a part of the process right from the beginning and can better participate in a project, in a meaningful way.

Identify Research Focus and Issues of Concern

It is likely that community members, community organizations or researchers will begin with some ideas or have certain project goals that they hope to accomplish. That is quite fine, but there must be room for other outcomes not already identified. The other outcomes will arise because of this phase of community consultation and relationship building.

Community members are in a position to share the best information. The identified issues of concern will come from the community not from an outside researcher. Community members have insight and knowledge that is only possible because of their position within that community. Community connections and consultation must define the research and generate the guiding research question.

Involve Community Members and Potential Participants

Photovoice creates an opportunity for community members to voice their concerns about important issues, share ideas about community struggles and help to identify community strengths. Some people may already be active in the community. Others may have wanted to see changes in their community, but did not have a place to begin. This opportunity to speak directly to the photovoice facilitator and be involved in photovoice is an excellent way to encourage and nurture community involvement from a diverse group.

Meeting and consulting with the community shows potential photovoice participants that they are a part of the process right from the beginning. Because of early involvement, a sense of engagement is developed and these individuals will be more willing to continue to be involved. Some possible roles for interested individuals include becoming a photovoice participant, providing guidance and feedback, offering program and policy advice, helping with strategic planning, or sharing networking skills and connections.

The different roles, filled by different individuals, create a strong

and diverse group where individual strengths are offered for the good of the research project. This is important because these connections will help you to move through the research project and policy phases of photovoice.

Photovoice offers community members, who understand the problems faced by their friends and neighbours, continued involvement. Participants have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way, from the very beginning right through to the stage of identifying possible solutions and working to implement changes.

Build a Bridge Between Research and the Community

The philosophy of collaboration between the co-researchers is essential to photovoice. Photovoice participants must be empowered throughout the process and it must be known that the photovoice research and project is their work.

By building a bridge between research and the community, sustainability is created. This means that even after the research and the project activities are over, project participants who have been involved in each phase are able to continue to work in the community to

How to Connect with the Community

Depending on the situation, it can be difficult for a photovoice facilitator to begin building relationships in the community. Here are some hints to start this process:

- Plan to take the time needed to get to know community members and for them to get to know you.

- Reach out to individuals you already know or groups that you might have worked with in the past. This is a great way to start and lets you can build on already established relationships.

- Get involved in community meetings, planned activities, regular community events or even informal gatherings. You will develop new connections through your own community participation and will have opportunities to meet community activists and others.

- Gain allies by demonstrating genuine interest in learning more about community issues. Listen and learn carefully and respectfully.

achieve and maintain changes. If the relationship with the photovoice facilitator is strong, the bridge will remain.

STEP TWO: PLANNING A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Once community members have learned about photovoice and have become involved, it is time to plan the specific details of a photovoice project. The facilitator must keep in mind that planning and decision making should be as collaborative as possible. The photovoice facilitator, who understands the whole photovoice process and has a specific set of skills, will need to take the lead on planning various activities. Some examples of planning activities include setting a project timeline, managing the budget, organizing equipment, arranging a location for meetings, planning group meetings and planning photovoice events. In addition, the photovoice facilitator is responsible for thinking ahead to consider possible barriers or problems that may arise during photovoice. Community members and the photovoice facilitator can also work together to identify ways to reduce barriers and solve problems.

The photovoice facilitator has the ability to make this experience a positive one for community members by planning ahead to prevent as many difficulties as possible. Being well prepared will show participants a high level of commitment and demonstrate how valuable their time is. Participants will also recognize the efforts made to empower them so that they can present their ideas and can represent their community.

The photovoice facilitator is responsible for arranging all administrative details associated with project implementation including planning all meetings, setting and adhering to timelines and being mindful of funding and budget information.

Funding and Budget for a Photovoice Project

The issue of funding for a photovoice project is complicated. There are many different funding opportunities available. It is generally

the responsibility of the photovoice facilitator or interested community groups to seek out and secure funding from community, government or academic sources.

In securing funding, an anticipated budget will need to be prepared. It is essential that the photovoice facilitator manage the budget well. This means carefully tracking all spending, maintaining receipts and being accountable for project costs. A clear project timeline or schedule of events will help in planning for anticipated project costs.

Meetings

The group meetings are central to the photovoice process. Details related to the meetings should be arranged early on in the project. A suitable location will need to be arranged; necessary materials such as pens, markers, journals and flipchart paper will need to be purchased; a guest photographer will need to be booked; consent forms will need to be developed; and additional community support and referral services will need to be arranged.

Equipment

Generally, the photovoice facilitator will select the type of camera to use photovoice. The budget might be a deciding factor when selecting cameras for the project. Disposable cameras that come with film and a flash are a good option. Depending on the brand of camera selected, the cost of a disposable camera can range from as low as $5.00 to as much as $20.00 each.

Another kind of camera used in several photovoice research projects is the Holga medium format camera. This camera, while fairly inexpensive, has more options and the possibility to layer photographs, distort images and use colour filters to modify the images. These options allow photographers the opportunity to be more creative in their photographs and less literal in their representations (Wang et al. 2004). It is worth exploring the possibility of getting cameras donated for the research project, but keep in mind that this work

might be time consuming.

The photovoice facilitator will also need to determine, along with photovoice participants, whether the group sessions will be video-tape recorded or audio-tape recorded. With either option, equipment will likely need to be purchased, rented or borrowed. Through a partnership with another group or agency, you may be able to borrow or rent this type of equipment. Some meeting rooms also have audio-visual equipment available at little or no cost for community groups. Whatever decisions are made around equipment, these details should be finalized as early on in the project as possible and in keeping with the set budget.

Ethics and Photovoice

An important responsibility of the photovoice facilitator is to ensure that all activities of photovoice are done in a fair, respectful and ethical way. Like all research, photovoice must conform to specific ethical guidelines. ***Ethical guidelines*** ensure that research offers potential benefits, the benefits outweigh any risks and participants and other individuals and groups are not harmed in the research process. All research is governed by strict ethical considerations and researchers must ensure that they do no harm through their research activities. Similar to our own value and belief systems that influence our daily actions and interactions, ethical guidelines in research govern how actions are carried out and outline accepted ways of doing things.

The photovoice facilitator should have a solid understanding of the ethical considerations regarding the project. Also, she should have the ability to determine ways to address ethical issues prior to beginning the photographic process. Every research project must be accepted by an ethics board, so this is an additional way to be sure that ethics are upheld. Ethical considerations that weigh-in heavily in terms of the photovoice process are discussed below.

Ethical Considerations—Photovoice Facilitator

The photovoice facilitator is responsible for providing complete in-

formation about the photovoice process to all prospective participants. Participants must have the opportunity to consent to participate in the project, based on full and complete information about both the advantages and disadvantages of participating. Participants must be made aware of expectations of participation, including issues such as length of the project, time commitment and project activities. Participants must also be informed about how they can withdraw from participation.

There must also be clear and open communication around the opportunity for social action, possible changes resulting from social action and best practices for working within the political arena. The potential for personal emotional responses resulting from participating in the photovoice process must also be talked about. Participants should be informed that critical examination and reflection of sensitive issues may cause stress or other negative emotional responses. As well, the possibility of not achieving the desired response from the target audience may result in feelings of frustration or disappointment. Training during the Photovoice process must include examination of the possibility of unexpected outcomes (McIntyre 2003; Strack et al. 2004; Wang and Burris 1997; Wang 1999; Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001).

The key message is that participants must be fully informed about the project before they agree to take part in the project. ***Informed consent*** is an extremely important ethical issue.

Ethical Considerations—Photovoice Participant

The role of photovoice participant also comes with a range of ethical considerations. Because photovoice participants are co-researchers and co-creators of data, they must conduct themselves in fair, ethical and appropriate ways. They will need to be educated on the research process of informed consent and on the process of operating in political arenas (Wang and Burris 1997; Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001).
If photographers are taking pictures of human subjects, they must fully understand the notion of individual privacy (Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001) and the process of gaining informed consent from

subjects. Informed consent must be obtained correctly and written consent must be obtained from the subjects of the photo. This process ensures that privacy has not been invaded by the photographer.

The expectation of training photographers to obtain informed consent presents obvious methodological issues. Ensuring informed consent is obtained for the photographs taken may make photographers uncomfortable, causing them to produce more images without human content.

Further to individual representation of the issues in the photographs are the decisions around which photographs will be chosen for the presentation to the target audience. The photographers must also ensure the photographs taken not only accurately represent the issues, but also the people in the photographs are representative of the community as a whole (Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001). Sensitive issues, like the privacy of children, personal dignity, photographs of illegal activities or photographs that portray individuals in a negative way all must be handled ethically.

In addition, participants must remember that their own safety and well-being are vital. They will need to take extra care to maintain their own safety and learn skills to safely take photographs in the community. Wang (2003) recommends addressing possible risks, including physical harm and loss of privacy that may result from participation in the photovoice project. Also important is training about power and authority that comes with using a camera in the community (Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001).

I am sacred, I am Cree and I am Proud

V. Mc. 2007

Every research project will have specific ethical issues. This discussion of ethics is intended to prompt further thinking about possible ethical considerations in your own photovoice research project.

STEP THREE: RECRUITING PHOTOVOICE PARTICIPANTS AND TARGET AUDIENCE MEMBERS

Recruitment is the practice of attracting interested individuals from the greater community and inviting them to participate in photovoice. Some of the individuals with whom you connected during the community consultation phase might be recruited to take part in the project, in a more in-depth way. Individuals may be involved as ***photovoice participants*** or as ***target audience members,*** with both groups playing a distinct role.

The photovoice participants hold the responsibility of creating the photographs that will eventually educate others and raise awareness and understanding of the chosen social issue. On the other hand, potential target audience members are asked to provide feedback to the photographers, share the project outcomes, provide a specific set of skills or expertise in networking or have specific connections or ability to influence policy and decision-making. Because of the importance of dialogue and discussion in photovoice, recruitment of both groups is a fundamental part of the photovoice process. The photovoice facilitator must dedicate significant energy to linking the photovoice participants with the target audience.

Recruiting Photovoice Participants

When recruiting photovoice participants, it is important that a range of potential community members know about the photovoice opportunity. Using several methods of recruitment or invitation to participate will help to reach more community members. Participants can be recruited through formal and informal means. For example, posters, notices, flyers and email invitations are more formal methods of recruiting. Other community-based organizations that provide support or resources might be a helpful way that a researcher or facilitator can formally reach potential participants.

Informal means of recruitment also work very well. A participant might invite a friend or neighbour to take part in the project. Individuals might be a member of another group, like a walking, parenting or support group. They can inform others of the photovoice project and help in recruitment.

Whether through formal or informal recruitment methods, it is good to keep in mind that a more diverse group with members from different cultural backgrounds, neighbourhoods or life experiences can provide a broader perspective on an issue.

Depending on the particular subject, you might use different ways of inviting and recruiting participants. Ideally, the participants who will take photographs should identify with and be passionate about the issue. In the case of PWHCE, the social issues to be examined were the linkages between poverty and health and the experiences of young Aboriginal women. It is important that the photovoice participants are ***experiential*** participants, meaning that they have first-hand knowledge and experience about the issue they are to address. They should be willing to be actively involved to the best of their ability and be willing to learn and gain skills throughout the process.

Participants need to know that the project will generally require a long-term commitment; therefore, they must be willing and interested in working toward long term change. They should be enthusiastic about working as a group, and of course, must be willing to openly share their own experiences with the other participant group members, and eventually, with the public. Group members must understand and agree with project goals and be aware that the group will be responsible for the direction of the project (Blackman and Fairey 2007).

Ideal participants should possess many of the traits described above. Participants with these traits will help to maintain interest throughout the project, as well as after the project has concluded.

Recruiting Target Audience Members

Like the photovoice participants in a photovoice project, the target audience for a photovoice project must also be recruited while keeping in mind factors like project goals and project timeline. When thinking about the target audience, you might want to ask questions like: Who should hear the messages? Who has the ability to make changes? Which groups have the ability to influence decision-making? Which community members have shown an interest in similar issues in the past? Asking a variety of questions will generate good ideas for selecting target audience members.

Ideally, target audience members should be individuals who have the power to make decisions that could eventually improve the everyday lives of photographer participants or have the influence and position to advocate for change. Target audience members can be approached during the early stages of the photovoice process and from a variety of sources (Wang 1999) or they may be approached during the later stages of the project as ideas are generated by the photographs and discussion.

Target audience members should be considered good candidates if they have the skills and ability to continue the momentum of the project and implement the proposed changes brought forward by the group. The target audience acts as both audience members and the advisory committee and includes members of the community at the local, municipal and provincial levels.

The photovoice facilitator and participants can share the responsibility for approaching and informing community members about the project process and intent, as well as engaging audience members in dialogue about important issues alongside project issues. After viewing the project display and presentation, the target audience will advise the photographers about political and social climate, as the project advances from research to policy.

Target audience members can be drawn from a wide variety of sources, including:

- City or town council;
- Human service agencies;

- Community-based groups that work closely with issues important to the photographers;
- Policing bodies;
- Aboriginal groups;
- Schools;
- Interested community members; and
- Government agencies and departments.

Bridging the Divide between Photovoice Participants and Target Audience

The strength of the photovoice project is in the back and forth communication between photovoice participants and the target audience. The dialogue and open exchange of ideas is a significant part of photovoice and will require effort on the part of the photovoice facilitator and participants to ensure that target audience members get involved and remain involved.

The photovoice facilitator and photovoice participants share responsibility for a number of tasks, including:

- Contacting organizations to inform them about photovoice;
- Meeting with individuals from organizations or departments to gain support for the photovoice concept and project;
- Developing community support;
- Making future arrangements for photovoice presentations;
- Inviting guests to presentations and showings; and
- Contacting individuals or groups to discuss specific issues that may be in their program area.

My Bike is My Car
Genevieve Jones*, 2006

I cycle from about April to October as the weather allows and when I feel well enough to do so. I walk often, but this also takes better shoes that I cannot afford. Bus money is very limited. I hope Saskatoon soon passes at least a trial bus pass for a minimal amount for people in poverty, like Regina this past year.

STEP FOUR: BEGINNING THE PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

As you have learned so far, a photovoice project involves many people, meetings and varied activities over an extended period of time. It is essential for the photovoice facilitator to be highly organized and willing to work hard, long before the first photograph is even taken.

At this stage in the process, it is time to implement some of the planned project activities. Two important tasks must occur for this to happen: First, a well-planned timeline for the project must be finalized with the specific dates and meeting times for your project; and second, the potential photovoice participants must come together and establish the photovoice group. Both of these important tasks are outlined in this section, beginning with a brief discussion of the project timeline. For your reference, we have provided a sample session outline based on PWHCE projects. The 14 sessions can take place over several months to ensure time for all activities.

Project Timeline

The project timeline should be completed during the earlier planning stages of the project. However, now that you are ready to begin your project activities, you can insert scheduled dates and times for meetings, as well as a brief outline of the planned activities of each meeting. Finalizing the timeline will prove to be a useful activity since it requires you to review the many details involved in the photovoice project, from beginning to end; it offers a good chance to catch details that you may have been previously overlooked.

Project participants need to be fully informed of the photovoice process and the time commitment that is expected of them. The structure of the timeline will help the photovoice facilitator to stay on track with activities and be accountable to the photovoice participants.

For your reference, following is a 14 session sample outline. This

suggested schedule will help you to plan your own unique photovoice project. Do not be alarmed if your own timeline changes slightly as your project moves along; participatory action research needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the community participants. Still, it is advisable that you do try to be mindful of your set timeline, as it will help to ensure that all planned project activities are completed and the work for social change can occur

14 Session Sample Outline

Session One: Meet with prospective participants so they can learn and ask questions about the Photovoice process and the focus of the project. Clearly let them know about the time expectations. Invite them to return the following week if they are able to give the time and are interested in being a part of photovoice.

Session Two: Further discuss the Photovoice process and the central role of participant. Spend time discussing the underlying issues around the use of the cameras, issues of power and ethics, potential risks to the participants and how these risks could be minimized (Wang 1999), sign consent forms.

Session Three: Arrange to have a local photographer attend the meeting to teach participants about use of cameras, perspective, lighting, balance, contrast and other techniques that will help them to represent their experiences, strengths and struggles through photographs.

Session Four: Discuss the process of informed consent of subjects of the photographs, details of subject consent forms, distribute cameras and give participants a week to take practice pictures.

14-Week Sample Meeting Timeline Continued

Session Five: Meet to collect film, discuss feelings about taking pictures, share experiences and talk about challenges they may have experienced. Depending on the group, the participants may be having difficulties. Develop all film prior to session six.

Session Six: Look at and discuss practice pictures, this helps stimulate ideas about pictures, replenish film, set due date for film to be handed in. It is recommended that photovoice groups continue to meet throughout the time devoted to taking pictures to keep everyone motivated and supported.

Session Seven through 10: Continue to meet regularly so that participants can hand in film, get more film as needed replenish and support each other in this process. Ensure that film is handed in by session 10.

Session 11: Develop film and distribute the developed pictures to photographers. During this session data analysis is well underway and will progress into the coming weeks.

Session 12 through 14: Data analysis continues. The group prepares the photovoice exhibit and shares the exhibit with the community and target audience members.

Establishing a Photovoice Group

All of the advance planning, organization and finalizing of the timeline prepare you for the first meetings of photovoice where the photovoice group is established and group members begin to learn more about the photovoice process. The photovoice group is made up of community members who will take on the roles of photovoice participant and co-researcher. The potential photovoice participants that were invited or recruited already will need to be informed or reminded of the meeting details, including the location, time and agenda items.

The first meeting is an opportunity for potential group members to learn more about the photovoice process and to begin to get to know each other. Bringing individuals together as a group is an interesting process that can be made easier with a warm welcome, a fun activity or two and informal introductions.

It is good for the group to establish group rules or guidelines around issues of respect, listening, sharing and confidentiality early on in the meeting. The facilitator should strive to promote feelings of safety and belonging within the group. The group guidelines can be reinforced from time to time, especially if discussing sensitive issues. Maintaining confidentiality can be especially complicated if group members know each other very well, such as the case in rural communities.

The next task of this meeting is to inform the group about photovoice. Three central principles should be emphasized during this first meeting:

1. The photographers' role as experts;
2. The potential to educate and inform others about important community issues; and
3. The potential to influence public policy (Wang 1999).

The group will benefit from seeing a clearly laid out timeline of the photovoice project. They can ask questions, share concerns and ideas, understand general project goals, gain a clear idea about the time commitment required, learn about the concept of social action

and policy change, and get a realistic understanding of possible outcomes. The photographers also need to be aware of the possible risks and benefits that come with participation. Once potential participants have a clear understanding and have had an opportunity to discuss photovoice, they can make an informed decision about whether they are interested in participating.

Size of Photovoice Group

There are a number of details to think about when determining how many participants to recruit. The photovoice facilitator will need to consider the timeline, the goals, budget of the project and of course the ability to manage the workload of a photovoice project. A group of seven to 10 photovoice participants has been suggested as an ideal size (Wang 1999), and in fact, PWHCE had success with groups of this size.

A gathering of seven to 10 individuals is large enough to offer a variety of experiences and ideas, yet also allows enough time for each person to contribute in a meaningful way. Groups of this size are small enough so that members are able to feel safe to share and take part in discussions. A group of this size can nurture a sense of belonging and group commitment.

A group of this size is usually works well for the facilitator. During the learning portions, the facilitator will not feel stretched as ample time will be available to address diverse learning styles and answer questions. Having enough time during meetings also becomes important when addressing sensitive issues. A smaller group will help to ensure that individuals feel listened to and are responded to in a sensitive and respectful way.

Maintaining Interest and Group Participation

Because a great deal of time and effort is put into community consultation, creating connections, planning, recruitment of participants, the photovoice facilitator, of course, hopes that all participants will continue with the project until completion. This is not always the case. Some photovoice projects begin with a large group, but become smaller as the project goes on. Participants might withdraw because of the time commitment required to complete the project, while others might withdraw due to complicated life events or loss of interest. If concerned, it is advisable that the facilitator ask participants what would help them to stay involved. Find out what individuals need and use those ideas whenever possible.

When the photovoice facilitator is planning the photovoice project, it is important to mull over all the possible reasons why individuals might not continue with the project. You will undoubtedly come up with possible barriers that would make it hard for marginalized individuals to continue, especially as the project will last several weeks. Your task is to begin to find ways to accommodate or address these barriers and to support individuals to participate as best as they can. It is important to involve the participants in a discussion about barriers as well.

Some potential barriers might include the following:

- Transportation issues: is the cost of transportation a barrier? Can you provide bus tickets? Is there a suitable bus route? Can you arrange ride sharing?
- Potential costs: are all necessary materials provided at no cost?
- Lack of or cost of suitable childcare: is there a suitable and available caregiver? Can you partner with a community organization that offers childcare? Can child care costs be covered?
- Location of meetings: is the location easy to find? In a familiar and central neighbourhood? In a comfortable, safe and welcoming facility? Is the facility wheelchair accessible?
- Conflict with group members: what is the cause of the conflict? Can you facilitate or arrange the group differently to avoid conflict? Can this conflict be a learning opportunity?

- Perceived lack of interest in group process: can you provide incentives like nutritious snacks and meals? Find out if something else is going on. Does this individual have different learning needs? Literacy issues? Physical health issues? Problems at home?
- Lack of engagement in group process: do members feel safe? Can you encourage a sense of belonging? Take time for socializing and getting to know each other. Be sensitive to different interaction styles.
- Divide tasks: do members need to build confidence? Help participants feel ownership by recognizing different skills and encouraging them to complete tasks that use those skills. Do they need a challenge? Offer chances to try new things.
- Shared decision making and shared problem solving: empower group members to do their part to make decisions. Do they feel responsible to themselves and to the group?
- Facilitate the group skilfully: have you, the photovoice facilitator, done what you can to maintain interest and motivation. Group facilitation is a complex topic and when done well is a blending of skill and art. Ultimately, the facilitator must lead the group in such a way that the facilitator can disengage at project end and the group members will have gained skills to continue the group activities.

Over the next several weeks of the project the group will meet. A suggestion is to meet once each week, but that decision can be made by group members based on needs, availability and preferences. Photovoice participants will spend time learning about photography, discussing their photographs and sharing their ideas about the issue of concern or focus of the research. This is a substantial amount of time spent together as a group, and therefore, it is important that the meetings are positive and productive. What follows is a brief discussion of photovoice group facilitation that might be useful when thinking about this topic.

A Brief Look at Photovoice Group Facilitation

Most people at one time or another have taken part in a collaborative group process. We all know that working together as a group comes with benefits like shared energy, increased enthusiasm and more ideas to work with. As part of a group, participants gain the ability to compromise, see different strengths, learn from others, share individual skills and improve interpersonal communication.

Group efforts can also be hard: Making decisions can be time consuming; it can be difficult to come to a consensus; individual group members may have different work styles; there can be an imbalance in the division of labour; quiet or shy members may be less involved or overpowered by more active and vocal members; or group conflict can arise. A group facilitator has the responsibility of leading the group to ensure that the benefits of group efforts are enhanced, while addressing or minimizing the difficulties that can be a part of group work.

Group meetings for photovoice participants will likely experience some of the common advantages and difficulties faced by other groups. As a facilitator, it is important to not take a position of having a superior understanding or greater knowledge (Blackman and Fairey 2007). All participants have ideas to contribute and are co-creators of knowledge.

Photovoice projects are generally carried out with marginalized individuals who are marginalized by mainstream society and may face barriers to social participation (Blackman and Fairey 2007). In addition to this vulnerability, participants are engaged in the activities of photography, group discussion and close examination of an issue of concern, most often a serious and sensitive issue. This concentrated examination of the issue may result in participants feeling emotional, upset, or frustrated with their life or the social conditions of their community. These emotions signify personal growth and change and as most of us know, that can be painful. It is wise to plan ahead and know how this situation might be addressed if or when it comes up.

One option could be asking a group member with skills in peer sup-

port to offer assistance as a peer mentor. Along with a peer mentor, the facilitator can arrange professional support services. A trained counsellor or support worker might be willing to offer services in kind to support the project participants. The facilitator should also know in advance what services are offered by community agencies and how to access those services.

STEP FIVE: PHOTOVOICE GROUP MEETINGS

At this stage, the photovoice project is underway and the photovoice participants are ready to begin regular group meetings focussed on working together as a group, learning about photography and taking photographs and engaging in group discussion related to the issue of concern. All of these activities are opportunities for data collection that take place throughout the project. In the sample outline these activities occur over 14 sessions.

There are four things that must be accomplished during the early meetings. The group must be informed about the photovoice process, they must discuss and understand the issue of concern (or research focus), identify goals as a group and finally each group member must provide informed consent to participate in photovoice.

Photovoice Process

First, group members should have a chance to learn more about the details of photovoice. The central role of each photovoice participant and the value of what each person brings to the project should be emphasized during this discussion. A sufficient amount of time should also be spent discussing the underlying issues around the use of the cameras in the community. Issues of the power they hold as a photographer, ethical concerns around taking photographs and the potential risks they may experience as a photographer participant must be talked about. Participants need to be fully aware of how to participate in photovoice in a fair and ethical way. They also

need to know how to minimize risks to themselves (Wang 1999). Issues of photograph copyright will need to be discussed along with decisions around which methods participants are willing to have their photographs shared.

Issue of Concern

Second, the issue of concern or research focus of the photovoice group needs to be discussed. Photovoice participants should have a chance to explore how this issue influences their own lives and how they might capture photographs that reveal their life experiences related to this issue. Initially the photovoice facilitator might need to present a theme for taking pictures as a way to stimulate ideas. You can even provide examples of potential photographs and discuss this as a group. Of course, photovoice also involves exploration of group-identified themes on the key issue and the variety of ways that the group members can represent ideas on film. The group members are an excellent source of ideas and they can learn from each other. Throughout this discussion, group members can also begin to brainstorm on possible solutions to the issue and the roles that they may play in igniting change at a local level (Wang and Burris 1995).

The photovoice participants can also be given a journal to write down their ideas around the central theme. Along with the journal entries, photovoice participants can write down or sketch possible photographs to accompany their ideas. The journal entries provide room for the photovoice participants to independently choose their own subjects and express their own ideas of what this topic means to them.

This combination of group discussion and individual effort creates a good balance that will aid in photovoice success.

Identify Group Goals

Third, the group members will need a clear understanding of the general goals of the photovoice project. There must also be room for

additional goals as identified by the group members and decided on collectively. This collaborative goal setting strategy will help the group to function in a way so that the photovoice participants can achieve what they have set out to achieve.

Informed Consent to Participate

Finally, all interested photovoice participants who have returned following the first meeting and have participated in the second meeting will need to read and sign plain language forms of informed consent for participation in photovoice. Participation is voluntary and individuals are able to discontinue at any time throughout the project. But, PWHCE has found that even during difficult times, photovoice participants will often continue. It is good to offer encouragement for photovoice participants to continue to attend meetings and stay involved. The group can be a good source of support and activities can be modified to meet diverse needs.

Photography

During the next meeting, the focus is on the camera and photography. A local photographer can be invited to attend the meeting as a guest speaker. The local photographer can share a level of expertise and insight that will serve group members and the photovoice project well. Some of the things the local photographer can cover are discussed below.

How to Use the Camera

It is important to talk about how to use a camera. Photovoice participants might have little or no experience using a camera and every camera has differences. The guest photographer can explain specific details about the camera such as: how and when to use the flash, how to advance the camera to take the next picture, how to handle a camera and how to store and keep the camera working well. Even if some participants have more experience or their own camera, it is best for all participants to use the same kind of camera

to ensure fairness and consistency in the photographic quality.

How to Take Photographs

Taking photographs is an activity that sounds quite simple. Just point and shoot, right? Really, there is much more to taking great photographs and the guest photographer can spend time with the group exploring specific techniques. Participants will be more satisfied with their photographs if they learn about perspective, lighting, balance, contrast, composition, capturing the viewer's attention and other photographic techniques. The techniques will help them to represent their experiences, strengths and struggles through photographs in ways they can be proud of and that will produce satisfying results. The guest photographer can also discuss how to use photography as a form of self expression and creativity.

Subject Matter and Theme

It is a good idea to review and discuss the issue of concern that has been selected by the photovoice group. Some participants may feel hesitant to begin or be unsure about how to capture photographs of that subject. They may need encouragement to try this new and creative approach. The guest photographer is an excellent resource in this discussion and will likely have ideas about how participants can arrange photographs to represent their ideas. We have all seen carefully set-up professional photographs in magazines or on display. The guest photographer can also talk about capturing images that are unplanned and natural yet perfectly represent an experience.

Professional photographers are very knowledgeable about the symbolism of images and symbolic content of photographs. Photovoice participants can learn how to use the camera to represent symbolic experiences and abstract ideas. This discussion is not intended to make photovoice participants feel that there is a right or wrong image to capture; rather it is intended to prepare them to take better pictures that capture both the strengths and the problems in their community.

Special Consideration Human Subjects

Participants must be informed about the ethics of taking photographs of other people. The professional photographer and group facilitator can help photovoice participants to learn about how to gain the informed consent of people as subjects of photographs and how to use a prepared consent form. Photovoice participants then, armed with the knowledge of consent, can keep copies of consent forms with them so that they may capture the photographs they desire.

With this information, participants should now be ready to receive their camera and begin to take photographs. Over the next week, they can go out into the community to practice taking photographs using all of the information they have learned.

Over the next meetings, week four, five and six in the sample timeline, photovoice participants will continue to meet. The meetings are important as the photovoice participants need to hand in film for developing and get more film to continue to take photographs. The group meetings are a perfect opportunity to build group relationships. Participants can share what they learned and help each other with tips and tricks for taking better photographs; they can ask questions and just check-in with group members for support. The group process is important to photovoice. Time spent together helps to build the trusting relationships necessary for close examination of personal and perhaps painful life circumstances. The group dialogue will be more open and honest if group members feel a sense of unity and togetherness.

As the project progresses, photovoice participants will improve their skills and confidence as photographers and creators of information. They will become more familiar with the camera settings and practice taking photographs that visually represent their ideas about the subject. The group should be encouraged to discuss feelings about taking pictures, to share their experiences and to talk about any challenges they may have experienced. The group will spend time looking at and discussing the pictures they have taken. This discussion helps stimulate ideas about pictures.

Depending on the group, the participants may be having difficulties with things like knowing what to photograph, with emotional reaction to the subject matter or with balancing life demands and project goals. These kinds of difficulties are not uncommon and can be approached in a sensitive way by a skilled facilitator.

Things to think about…

- Ensure that participants have specific dates to hand in completed film so the project stays on track
- Develop all completed film for the next meeting so participants can see their photos
- Replenish film as needed
- Continue to meet for support and motivation

STEP SIX: DATA COLLECTION

Data collection in photovoice is an ongoing process. Data collection begins in the early implementation of the project and continues through the final stage of sharing the photovoice exhibit and engaging in community-based social action. Because data collection takes place over an extended time it is constantly evolving. Each discussion, presentation and each photographer's new experience produces additional data. The activities of taking photographs and meeting as a group for recorded discussion, guided dialogue, journaling, exhibit feedback and debriefing comments all provide the data for collection and analysis.

Photovoice generates a large amount of data. A photovoice facilitator must develop ways of keeping the data highly organized and manageable. Careful records of group meetings and other project activities will maintain high research and ethical standards.

The process of data collection, followed by data analysis, is an im-

portant step in moving photovoice from project to research. Research results and evidence, gained through data collection and data analysis, are used to further the stage of working for social change and attempting to influence policy. The movement from project implementation to research and social action is a strength of the work carried out by PWHCE.

Photovoice Data Collection

- Taking photographs
- Recorded discussion and guided dialogue
- Journaling
- Photovoice Exhibit-feedback and debriefing

In the sample outline, sessions seven through 10 focus on the data collection aspect of photovoice. In the previous weeks, photovoice participants had the opportunity to learn and practice taking photographs and sharing their ideas. Following this initial phase, the participants have more time to go into the community to take the remainder of their pictures.

The group should continue to meet throughout the next weeks to maintain group motivation for taking photographs and to support those who are having difficulty finding visual representations of their thoughts and ideas (Wang 2003). Not to be underestimated is the need for support during this time. Participants are focusing a keen and critical eye on their life experiences. This may be difficult for some. A skilled facilitator will help the participants to learn to support each other in this process. The meetings also present a chance for participants to hand-in film to be developed and to get more film as needed.

Some photovoice participants might finish their photography sooner than others might. The timeline should allow enough time so that all participants feel satisfied that they have taken enough photographs to represent their experiences. The facilitator should give a date for all film to be returned for developing. This clear expectation will maintain the project timeline and ensure that all activities are completed as planned. In the sample timeline, we suggest that all film should be handed in by Week 10.

All those involved in photovoice will be invited to keep journals to document their reflections on the process and the insights gained. Photovoice participants, the photovoice facilitator, group facilitator and advisory committee members may use journaling during photovoice to reflect their different experiences and ideas. Journal entries can be shared during the group discussion sessions. Sharing journal entries is an excellent way to encourage quieter group members to include their voices in the discussion or can be a good opportunity for some to highlight strong writing skills.

Discussions are audio-tape recorded and transcribed for further analysis at later group sessions. At that time, individual participants will have the opportunity to add to or make changes to their statements. They may also want to clarify the meanings they attach to the photographs and their perceptions of the issue and how public policies influences that issue.

STEP SEVEN: DATA ANALYSIS

Even though data collection and ***data analysis*** are distinct activities, there is overlap in the timeline. While data continues to be collected, the photovoice facilitator or group facilitator can begin to guide participants in their role of co-researcher toward the process of data analysis. In photovoice, data analysis involves skilfully applied techniques intended to promote discussion among the group members. Each photographer has the opportunity to present photographs to the group. Participants offer ideas and insight, while the facilitator uses open-ended questions to elicit discussion of the photographs.

When all photographs have been taken, all film developed and the photographs have been distributed to the photovoice participants the group will continue to meet for data analysis. The group will meet to discuss the completed selection of photographs in a methodical and thorough way. Again, with permission of group members, the discussion is audio-tape recorded and transcribed. The written transcriptions are then taken back to the group to ensure

the transcriptionist has accurately captured the information shared with the group. When the transcripts are accepted as accurate, the photovoice facilitator can analyze the data using computer-assisted analysis, which is then compared to the participatory analysis completed during the group discussions.

There are three main ways to carry out the participatory analysis of the data (Wang and Burris 1997):

1. Selecting Photographs: The process of selecting photographs has participants choose photographs they think reflect their community strengths and struggles. They choose the photographs they want to be included as photovoice evidence and photographs they feel are representative of their experiences. This stage of analysis helps to open the door for dialogue.
2. Contextualizing: Participants contextualize the photographs by telling stories about what the photographs mean to them. They tell their stories through dialogue with group members and through journaling. It is during the dialogue and guided discussion that participants can voice their individual and group experiences. The acronym VOICE, standing for Voicing Our Individual and Collective Experience, reminds participants to think not just about their own life conditions, but also about shared life events and conditions.
3. Codifying: This is a process of identifying and sorting data into categories of issues, themes or theories. When codifying an issue of concern it is important that the concern targeted for action is one that can realistically be achieved (Wang and Burris 1997). For example, when examining the issue of women and low-income, themes that may arise include the cost of and access to nutritious food, access to affordable housing, transportation or health risks associated with low-income. The group will need to determine realistic outcomes and desires.

Selecting Photographs and Telling Stories

There is some flexibility in the process of photo selection and telling stories about the photographs. Some researchers have developed techniques that are less structured and more open-ended while

other researchers use a structured set of specific questions to promote dialogue. The group members and photovoice facilitator can discuss the options and choose the technique that works best.

Caroline Wang (1999) suggested a structured technique of photo selection and guided dialogue. Each photographer is to select five to seven favourite photographs. The dialogue around the photographs is guided by a photovoice technique is called, **"SHOWeD."** The letters of this acronym each correspond to a question and the series of questions prompts the participants to critically analyze the content of their photographs. The participants then codify their issues, themes and theories emerging from the photographs and the discussions that arise from the photographs (Wang and Burris 1997).

SHOWeD
"What do we **S**ee here?
What is really **H**appening here?
How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
Why does this situation, concern or strength **E**xist?
What can we **D**o about it?"
(Wang 1999: 188)

Wang's (1999) approach to interpreting and analyzing the content of the photographs has not always been successful. Another researcher identified that in her work with experiences of Irish women, the approach called SHOWeD was constricting and limited the personal interpretation of the individual photographers (McIntyre 2003).

Out of this came a less structured technique where each participant selects five to seven favourite photographs and discusses why those photographs are the most significant. McIntyre (2003) suggests the photographers rely on instinct when choosing photographs. The participants then interpret and analyze the photographs by responding to more personal questions. See the text box for the guiding questions. Although the questions stray from Wang's (1999) set of questions, the importance of dialogue is still emphasized in order to help the participants gain a clearer sense of the stories they want to accompany their photographs (McIntyre 2003).

In the less structured manner, the photographer tells the story in

the picture to the small group of other photographers and the photovoice facilitator. In this story, she explains why she chose the picture and tells of any stories shared by the person photographed. In the second round of analysis, the small group chooses two to four photographs and organizes them into topic groups. Together, the group members cluster their ideas, identify similarities across photographs and construct a holistic analysis of the clusters of photographs through open dialogue (Lykes 2001).

Whether the group uses a more structured or less structured method of dialogue, it is likely that other group members will be able to relate to the stories and find similarities in their own experiences. This is an important step in seeing the links between personal and common experiences. Group members will begin to see that the public policies and practices that shape their own lives also influence the lives of their family, friends and neighbours. The discussion, sharing and recognition of common experiences reflected in their photographs takes great courage. Photovoice participants reveal parts of who they are and expose their own vulnerabilities. This can be a difficult time, but also one of celebration and of survival and strength in times of trouble.

McIntyre

"What did the photographs mean to them?
What was the relationship between the content of the photographs and how the women perceived the community?

How did the women see the photographs as reflecting issues that are salient to them as women in their community?"
(McIntyre 2003: 53)

STEP EIGHT: PREPARING AND SHARING THE PHOTOVOICE EXHIBIT

During the final weeks of photovoice the group members work to prepare and share a photovoice exhibit. The weeks of data collection and data analysis have done much to prepare the photovoice participants to communicate their findings to others. As co-researchers, the photovoice participants and photovoice facilitator work together to determine research results and find ways to share the photovoice results with a chosen audience. The previous discussions have provided participants with resources to engage in social action directed at influencing public policy. This stage holds great promise for the possibilities that come with influencing public policy. In the sample timeline provided, this includes weeks 12 through 14.

Preparing the Photovoice Exhibit

During data analysis, participants will have selected photographs and prepared written statements to accompany the photographs. One of the main tasks in preparation for the exhibit is for photovoice participants to make final decisions about which of their photographs they would like included in the exhibit. Participants also need to finalize the captions that go along with each photo. Following this task, the photographs and captions need to be enlarged and mounted to create a visually appealing display.

There are several things to consider when preparing items for an exhibit:

- If the captions and the photographs are mounted separately, they need to be organized so the right caption goes with the right photograph. Another option might be to mount the photograph and caption as one item to avoid confusion.

- Another consideration is that the elements of the display need to be transportable, readily hung on a variety of surfaces and sturdy enough so that they will hold up for numerous showings. Organize exhibit materials so that setting up and taking down the exhibit can happen with ease.
- Because the photographs and captions offer up compelling results intended to inform and educate, the exhibit offers a great opportunity to gather feedback. A comment box or a comment book is a good way to do this.
- During an exhibit, it is likely that group members will discuss the project and photographs with audience members. Some group members will have mixed feelings about this so it is a wise idea for all members to debrief following an exhibit.
- With a photovoice exhibit, group members may also choose to offer an oral presentation along with all of, or a selection of, the images.

Sharing the Photovoice Findings

The photovoice group can decide on the best ways to communicate their findings. Some ways of sharing photovoice findings might involve creating written documents about the project, holding media events, making public presentations and most importantly, offering a private and then public photovoice exhibit.

Depending on the target audience, there will be different goals and outcomes as a result of sharing photovoice findings:

- The photographs can challenge negative stereotypes about that group.
- The images, by offering up a truer version of the reality of human experiences, can capture attention and gain support of decision and policy-makers.
- The exhibit can inform decision-makers and cause decision-makers to think about the influence that public policy has on individuals.
- The exhibit might address and bring attention to a specific policy and lead to a decision to change that policy.

Promotion of Photovoice Exhibit

The exhibit represents the coming together of several weeks of effort. The photovoice activities are meant to increase awareness and understanding, inform others about specific issues, reach influential decision makers and work toward improved policies and improved social conditions for marginalized groups. Communication and promotion of the exhibit is a vital step in achieving these goals.

The group should brainstorm ways to promote the exhibit and decide who will do what. Here are a few suggestions to promote the photovoice exhibit:

- Posters in prominent community locations and bulletin boards
- Announcements at community events or meetings
- Email promotion through community organizations or groups
- Website links and notices
- A media press release to inform newspapers, radio stations and television stations
- Word of mouth is always a valuable and reliable method (Blackman, A. and Fairey, T. 2007)
- Articles can be written for publication in journals, magazines or community newsletters
- A PowerPoint presentation can be available on a website

Private Opening of the Photovoice Exhibit

Though not all groups choose to hold a private exhibit, a private opening of the photovoice exhibit is a great trial run. A smaller more intimate gathering allows the participants time for celebration with close and meaningful friends, family members and supporters. Some participants may want to have their involvement anonymous due to the subject matter. Others may have personal safety reasons for avoiding publicity. It can be an important event for photovoice participants to stand back and see what they have accomplished together. The private showing also gives participants a chance to review the exhibit at their own pace and with less pressure.

Public Showings of the Photovoice Exhibit

Most groups prepare for a public photovoice exhibit. More likely, there will be a number of opportunities for public photovoice exhibits in varying locations and reaching different audiences. The public exhibits are intended to reach the wider community and members of the selected target audience. The target audience will be a source of ideas for possible locations to hold an exhibit, can provide valuable feedback on the project results and can aid in the important task of reaching influential decision-makers.

Like the private showing, the public photovoice exhibit is a celebration of the work of the participants. The exhibit honours the photographs and stories of participants and brings together the assorted representations of their community as a formal art exhibit. This phase of photovoice may be a time of mixed feelings for photovoice participants; while the public exhibit is a celebration, participants might also feel anxious or worried about presenting their work to others. It is a courageous step to attempt to generate meaningful community change (www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook) and for this reason, the photovoice group members will need to continue to support each other with great care and sensitivity.

STEP NINE: SOCIAL ACTION AND POLICY CHANGE

Photovoice emphasizes social action. This means that the actions of photovoice participants are intentionally chosen to bring about lasting social change that extends beyond their own experience. The final weeks of photovoice are dedicated to setting the foundation for this this important step. Actual changes will take much time and continued involvement of participants and others to create changes in policy. In the sample timeline these are sessions 12 through 14 and beyond.

The photographic evidence and accompanying text that photovoice participants have created will go a long way to presenting credible policy advice and program recommendations. The aim of public policy is to promote a set of guidelines and practices that will maintain the well-being of all members of the population. Specific sectors such as health, education, justice and the social sector each have a set of policies that provide a framework of practices and legislation. The policies and practices in each of these sectors influence the population as a whole and individually. When you think about this, you realize that the policies do not serve the needs and interests of all members of the population in the same way.

Not all members of the population have the same opportunity to provide input into policy. Obviously, individuals and groups have differing needs and the policies that shape our experiences should be fair and equitable in meeting these needs, yet they often are not. Fortunately, public policy does change as our society changes and photovoice is one means of influencing that change from a grassroots community level.

Policy may be influenced through photovoice activities by:

- Promoting questions about which policies are fair and which policies create disadvantage.
- Developing and strengthening links between community members and influential policy-makers.
- Empowering and supporting photovoice participants, as co-researchers, to bring forward concerns and policy advice.
- Fostering community discussion and collaboration on the issue of policy recommendations based on research done within the community.
- Sharing knowledge with existing systems so that planning and programming can be more effective and responsive to identified needs.

"Speaking Out for the Missing Women"
Lisa Aymont-Hunter 2005

You can see "Have you seen this girl". It's a picture of a beautiful girl, smiling. And she's missing. Me as a woman thinking: "Will there come a time when my picture is up?" I don't think the rape and murder of women is about beauty or youth- it's about power.

PART FOUR

Journey
Virginia Beebe, 2006

This is like a path, a journey—the journey I have been on since I became a teen parent. Always searching for ways to break out of that box, break out of that system, and to be who I was inside and not what everyone would tell me I was.

SUMMARY

Photovoice offers up a powerful, unique and innovative way to learn about and change the issues that concern people in their home communities. Participants of photovoice are creators of knowledge and are involved in several important activities:

- learning photography skills,
- telling stories and sharing ideas,
- creating rich research data,
- offering critical reflection,
- working with group members,
- engaging in social action,
- influencing public policy; and

increasing awareness of personal and community issues.

By engaging in all of these activities, marginalized individuals who are most often excluded from public discussion can have a say about what they want, in their own words, to an audience with the potential to create positive change (Wang 1999). Photovoice is a flexible approach, and therefore, the methods can be used in a variety of settings and with a variety of groups. However, all photovoice projects should remain true to the key concepts and general goals as outlined in the manual.

We have learned that photovoice offers numerous, and often long lasting, advantages for individuals, communities, academic researchers and community researchers. Photovoice also creates a unique opportunity to bridge the gaps between research, community and public policy development. Interestingly, even when photovoice ends, it does not mean that the work toward improved social conditions ends.

Some photovoice groups may continue to work together and offer photovoice presentations and displays. In this way, photovoice participants go on to educate and inform more audiences about their

issue of concern. Through ongoing discussion, there is the possibility to generate new ideas and solutions.

In other cases, groups do not continue to work together. Members of such groups still take with them the experience of being involved in photovoice and all the skills gained through participation. Photovoice participation nurtures skills in advocacy, knowledge of policy development and critical thinking that will be with participants for a lifetime. The opportunity for community involvement and the empowerment that comes from being heard may just motivate participants to continue to work in this area and seek further change. These individuals are a valuable community resource. They began a photovoice project with many unique skills and gifts and likely gained more from the process.

PHOTOVOICE CHECKLIST

If you are thinking about the possibility of photovoice, here are some things to think about:

- ✓ Are you genuinely interested in community-based collaborative research?
- ✓ Have you done background reading or learned enough about photovoice to feel comfortable with this method?
- ✓ Have you secured funding for photovoice research or a photovoice project?
- ✓ Are you prepared to seek funding by writing funding proposals or connecting with funding agencies?
- ✓ Do you have, or are you willing to develop, strong connections with the community?
- ✓ Is there an issue in your community that you are deeply concerned about?
- ✓ Do you have ideas about possible solutions or policy improvements related to that concerning issue?

Once you have begun your photovoice experience, the following questions might help to keep you on track. :

Planning ahead will help to ensure success? Have you...

- ✓ Identified possible allies and developed strong connections with the community?
- ✓ Consulted with a number of community members to hear what they have to say, asked for their ideas, input and involvement?
- ✓ Clearly identified an issue of concern, or a research focus, through a process of community consultation? Is there flexibility and room for other outcomes?
- ✓ Developed a reasonable timeline for the photovoice project?
- ✓ Developed a budget and a method to track all expenses?
- ✓ Arranged a skilled group facilitator, if different from the photovoice facilitator?
- ✓ Brainstormed possible barriers to project success and addressed the barriers in your planning?

Are you ready for photovoice group work? Have you...

- ✓ Invited or recruited a group of approximately 10 photovoice participants who know and understand the issue of concern?
- ✓ Prepared plans for the group meetings that include some flexibility, time for fun and take different learning needs into consideration?
- ✓ Organized details like a suitable location, necessary equipment and all project materials?
- ✓ Made arrangements with a local photographer to provide photography expertise?
- ✓ As a photovoice group, have you identified specific goals and objectives? Signed plain language consent forms? Discussed all ethical considerations? Discussed the specific issues around safety and ethical use of a camera?
- ✓ Determined who might provide counselling or emotional support for photovoice participants if there is a need?
- ✓ Provided the necessary support and guidance to aid photovoice participants in capturing enough photographs?

Data collection and data analysis—have you…

- ✓ Identified you your means of data analysis?
- ✓ Thoroughly discussed the photographs in order to deepen understanding?
- ✓ Developed highly organized ways to collect and store data?
- ✓ As a group agreed to tape-record or transcribe group dialogue for further analysis?

Social action is an important part of photovoice. Have you…

- ✓ Recruited a target audience of influential decision-makers, supportive community members and those with the ability to offer guidance and influence policy?
- ✓ Discussed the policy implications of the issue of concern or arranged a guest speaker on this topic? What policy changes would help? Which policies are problematic?
- ✓ As a group, have you learned from each other and discussed the issue of concern as it relates to individuals and the greater community?

Are you ready for a photovoice exhibit? Have you…

- ✓ Selected favourite photographs and prepared captions?
- ✓ Enlarged and mounted photographs and captions?
- ✓ Selected and booked a suitable location for the final photovoice exhibit?
- ✓ Used a variety of ways to promote the photovoice exhibit?
- ✓ Re-connected with the target audience members to ensure that the message of your exhibit will be heard by those who make decisions about policy.

Final thoughts. Have you…

- ✓ Maintained high ethical standards throughout the process?
- ✓ Celebrated your achievements?

CONCLUSION

This manual was an invitation to you, the reader, to join in a journey of discovery about a kind of participatory action research called photovoice. Throughout the manual, we have discussed the combination of research, grassroots community work and social action necessary for photovoice to be as successful as possible. To arouse the interest of our readers, we have shared compelling images and words from some of the photovoice projects held in the prairie region of Canada. The images and captions, when combined with practical suggestions, will aid others in their own photovoice experience. It is our hope that community workers, advocates, researchers, grassroots community groups and individuals from marginalized standpoints, who might be interested in photovoice, will use this manual to achieve goals in a variety of communities.

Photovoice, founded on a philosophy of collaboration, empowerment and creative self- expression, is a method that promises possibilities and opportunities. By combining rich research data, photography, stories, critical reflection, group efforts, social change, and increased awareness of personal and community issues, this is a truly innovative activity well suited to many.

Sunggled in a Moss Bag
V. Mc. 2007

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Caroline Wang has been credited with pioneering photovoice in the early 1990's. The photovoice technique was applied by Wang and her associates in number of projects. A series of research articles describing photovoice followed, and from her work on the projects and the articles, photovoice gained recognition as an innovative research method.

Photovoice is described as "highly flexible" and able to be "adapted to specific participatory goals, different groups and communities, and distinct public health issues" (Wang and Burris 1997). The distinctive method of photovoice, with clear differences from more traditional research methods, developed out of a number of practices and ways of understanding the world including: documentary photography, public health promotion, grassroots social action, feminist theory and Paulo Freire's theory of critical consciousness (Wang 1999; Wang and Burris 1994; Wang and Burris 1997). This blending of less conventional theoretical thought and innovative practices resulted in a flexible approach to social research that challenged existing research methods. A brief discussion of this blending of ideas will help you to better understand photovoice. Following this section, a list of suggested resources will offer further reading if you want to learn more.

You can easily see the influence of documentary photography and filmmaking in the photovoice method. What sets photovoice apart from much of documentary photography is that in photovoice the camera is in the hands of community members rather than in the hands of an outsider (Wang 1999).

The influence of feminist inquiry on photovoice can be seen in several ways. Feminism can be credited for a growing questioning of traditional research methods, practices and ways of understanding the world. Many researchers were looking for alternative ways of doing research that were more equitable and addressed the power differences that existed between the researcher and the research subject. Researchers began asking different questions and were seeking creative ways of engaging the community. Photovoice incorporates these aspects of feminist inquiry and more.

For example, photovoice places emphasis on the following ideas:

- Subjective lived experiences of individuals,
- Individual representation of her or his own reality, and
- Empowerment of under-represented, silenced and excluded groups.

All of these ideas have clear roots in feminist theory (Castleden et al. 2008). Feminist theory is based on the notion of equality and the right for individuals to take action toward improved social, political and economic conditions. This unique blending of theoretical ideas and practical activities leads to a distinct photovoice technique that can be defined as a community-based participatory action research method.

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." (Dr. Wayne Dyer)
Nadia, 2006

The reality is—I am disabled. I am a woman. I live in poverty, my voice is not heard. The truth is—my spirit has risen above this.
There are times, though, when people or situations come along to remind me of what I am and try to put me back in my place. You cannot understand how I feel by studying books, by taking courses. You can only understand how I feel by crawling into my skin and living my life.

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A Safe Place to Live
Smith*, 2006

I live in the Saskatoon Housing Coalition which has three apartments and a group home for people who have mental illness. I am fortunate living at the Housing Coalition. I've been there sixteen years. They need lots of buildings because there is a long waiting list for people with psychiatric problems who want to live there.

We are dead centre in the inner city where there's crime, because that's all we could afford. Guys have been beaten up because it's not a safe area. Inside the buildings we're very safe. They shouldn't put them all in the high-crime area.

*Some of the women have chosen pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.