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“I Bloomed Here”: A Guide for Conducting Photovoice with Youth Receiving Culturally- and Community-based Services

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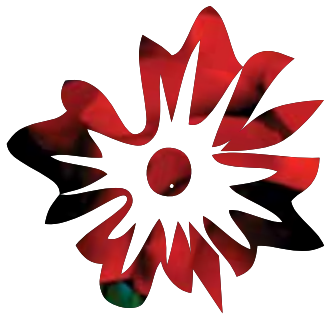
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“i bloomed here”



A Guide for Conducting Photovoice with Youth Receiving Culturally- and Community-based Services

Photovoice (PV) is a way to get young people engaged in their communities and be featured as “experts on their own lives” (Wang, et al., 2004). The process involves giving youth cameras they can use to document the realities of their day-to-day experiences and highlight the strengths and challenges within their communities. The photographs they take and the stories that emerge from small group discussions around the pictures are used to engage in important discussions with policymakers, community leaders, and power brokers within the community in order to promote positive change.

In this guide we have provided helpful strategies based on lessons learned from the youth who participated in our photovoice project as well as from knowledge we gained from the day-to-day experience of implementing a photovoice project.

In this guide you will learn:

1. How to prepare for implementing PV in your community;
2. What materials are needed;
3. Strategies for engaging youth in discussions amongst themselves and with community leaders to effect change;
4. What “photo ethics” issues need to be reviewed with youth;
5. About additional readings and resources for understanding the principles and concepts of PV.

Section 1: Preparing to Implement Photovoice in Your Community

Photovoice (PV) is based on the belief that individuals are the experts on their own experiences, and that photography provides a powerful way people to share these experiences in order to help create change within their communities. In order to successfully implement PV in your community, here are practical suggestions for beginning the PV process (we also suggest you review the materials in Section 5 if you wish to conduct a more research-based PV project).

Have a Clear Goal for Your PV Project: A clear, concise goal that can be easily communicated to youth and community leaders will help keep your project on track. Stating the goal (e.g. “The goal of this project is to find out what you would like to see change in your neighborhood to make it a better place to live”) at the top of all project handouts will help keep the project focused and remind youth of the purpose of the project. This is especially helpful when people ask youth why they are taking pictures.

Find Enthusiastic—and Committed—Youth Participants: It is essential to recruit a group of youth that are interested in the project and who can commit to attending meetings for reviewing photos, discussing them in small groups, and presenting to the larger community. Whenever possible, have a list of all dates youth need to be present in order to participate in the project so they can plan ahead. Meeting



reminders the day before are also helpful! Remind youth to bring their cameras too. There are numerous videos of youth PV projects on YouTube that can be used to get youth excited about participating in your project. Showing one of these videos can help youth understand what they are going to be doing (see Section 5 for an example).

Know Influential Community Leaders: Identifying influential community leaders that can effect change and who are willing to engage with youth around their photographs is crucial to a PV project. Ideally, making these contacts starts at the beginning of the PV process and continues throughout, culminating in one or more public dialogues between youth and community leaders. Both youth and adults can identify and invite leaders in the community to participate in these discussions.

Resources: Resources include money for materials; space for group meetings; support from community/agency/Tribal leaders; and dedicated staff time for group meetings, printing, and preparing materials for group meetings and public discussions.

Section 2: Materials Needed

» Cameras

If using digital cameras:

- **Computers** for downloading/saving pictures
- **Printers** and special paper for printing photos

If using disposable cameras:

- **Resources and time** for printing pictures prior to meetings
- » **Pens/pencils and folders** for youth to store their photos and handouts
- » **Materials for displaying photos** in public (poster board, picture frames, etc.)
- » **Dedicated space** for group discussions
- » **Audio recorder** or person willing to take notes during group discussions
- » **Larger meeting space** for public presentation, dialogue with community leaders/policymakers

Camera selection should be based on the resources available to you (computers, printing capabilities, etc.). Some agencies have received cameras through donations. If using digital cameras, it is advisable to provide youth with a thumb drive (flash drive) to store their photos. If using disposable cameras, making duplicate prints of photos is suggested.

Section 3: Photo Ethics

The following is a list of basic photo ethics to present to youth. This list can be adapted to adhere to the values of your specific Tribe/agency/community.

Photo Ethics:

- » **No trespassing.** Pictures should be taken on public property. Ask permission to take pictures on private property.
- » **Respect privacy.** Do not take pictures that invade another's privacy.
- » **Get permission.** You must get verbal consent to take pictures of a person or a small group of people. Taking pictures of large groups of people without permission is okay.
- » **Do not take pictures of illegal activities.**
- » **Don't hide!** You or the camera should not be hidden while taking pictures. Make yourself visible. Explain what you are doing if anyone asks why you are taking pictures.

It is helpful to provide this photo ethics list as a handout for youth and to review it during each meeting.

Finding a professional or hobby photographer that is willing to volunteer time to teach youth how to use cameras and how to compose photographs professionally can yield higher quality photos and help develop a new skill set for youth.

Section 4: Strategies for Engaging Youth in Discussions

Keep a Consistent Schedule: Whether your PV project is structured to occur over weeks or months it is helpful to maintain a consistent schedule to increase the likelihood of continued youth participation. If using digital cameras, time for downloading and selecting photos should be built into meeting times. If using disposable cameras, photos should be developed prior to meetings.

Encourage Storytelling: Storytelling is a form of research. It is helpful to have a Tribal/community leader discuss the role of storytelling within your community with youth at the beginning of the PV project. This frames PV as another way of passing on cultural, community, and individual knowledge.

Prepare Youth with Writing Exercises: Writing exercises are helpful both before youth take cameras into their communities and after they have selected the photos they want to share for small group discussion. Putting their ideas on paper helps them to organize their thoughts. Activities that prepare youth for taking photos can be as simple as asking them to write down what things in their community they would like to photograph to demonstrate what they would like to see change or improve. Such an activity helps make the goal of the picture taking more concrete and focused.

After youth have selected 1-2 photographs (per session) to share with the group it is helpful to have them engage in writing about their pictures. Mnemonic devices (strategies to help us remember) can help youth focus their discussion. One such device which can be turned into a writing exercise is the mnemonic SHOWeD, which poses the questions:

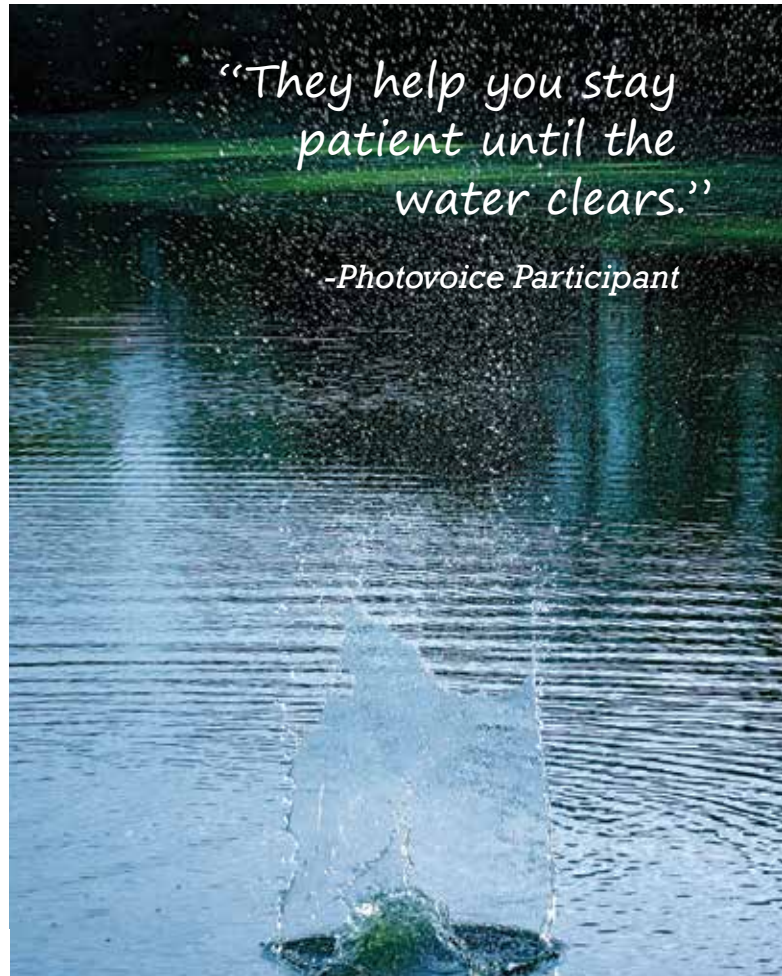
- » What do you **S**ee here?
- » What is really **H**appening in this photo?

- » How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
- » **W**hy does this strength or problem exist?
- » What can we **D**o about this?

Create a Safe Space for Sharing: PV projects ask youth to share experiences that can leave them feeling vulnerable. It is essential that staff create a safe, supportive environment for sharing stories and photographs. In addition, it is important to prepare youth for sharing their stories with those that hold power in the community. A link for a helpful strategic sharing guide is provided in Section 5.

“They help you stay patient until the water clears.”

-Photovoice Participant



Section 5: Additional Resources

Youth Participation in Photovoice as a Strategy for Community Change

<http://phdresearchdesignandimplementation.yol-site.com/resources/photovoice%20strategy%20for%20community%20change.pdf>

Carolyn Wang originated photovoice as a research method. This article describes photovoice theory and methodology and briefly highlights ten youth photovoice projects designed to promote health and well-being.

The Community Toolbox. Implementing Photovoice in Your Community

http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter3_section20_main.aspx

An extensive guide to implementing photovoice that begins with a description of photovoice theory and methodology.

Health in My Hometown – A Youth Photovoice Project

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8lSw5Cdi8k>

A ten-minute video based on a photovoice project about how youth define health across 13 counties in Minnesota. Links to other YouTube videos on photovoice appear to the right of the video.

Strategic Sharing Workbook: Youth Voice in Advocacy

<http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbStrategicSharingGuide.pdf>

A guide for helping young people share their stories while reducing risk for retraumatization.

For additional information about implementing PV in your community contact:

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