

# Photovoice 101: Building Skills to Lead Innovation in Public Health Services in Michigan

---

SHANNON MCMORROW, PHD, MPH

Associate Professor and Director, Master of Public Health

Western Michigan University

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

Adapted from: Jean Breny and Shannon McMorrow CT SOPHE 2023

# MALPH Conference Objective:

Identify models to empower community partnerships and lead innovations in public health services.

## Presentation Objectives

Explain

what photovoice is and how it can be used in public health practice.

Formulate

ideas for how you could implement photovoice in your public health work.



- ❑ Overview of photovoice
- ❑ Photovoice practice session
- ❑ Discussion of future uses of photovoice in public health



# What is Photovoice?

---

HISTORY, PURPOSE, FOUNDATION



A participatory needs assessment or evaluation method that can also be a group health promotion intervention.

---

Community members take photos in their lives and environments, share them with the group, discuss them, and share them publicly.

---

“My vision of photovoice as a process of critical consciousness is that each person will dedicate themselves to the practice of learning how to talk with people, which really means learning to listen to people, especially to people with less power than, say, the person who is reading these words.”

DR. CAROLINE WANG

*The Tai Qi of Photovoice (2022). Health Promotion Practice, 23(2), 205-210.*

# Photovoice Overview

---



Community-based participatory approach



Qualitative method: research, needs assessment, evaluation



Grounded in Freirian and feminist principles

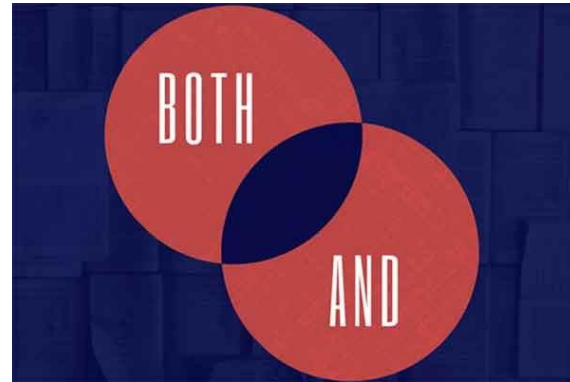


Simultaneously serves as a health promotion intervention



Reveals social determinants of health

Photovoice can  
serve as an  
“intervention”  
tool and a  
research  
method at the  
same time.





# How can you use Photovoice?

## Photovoice:

- intervention alone for empowerment, group social support and learning, and more
- needs assessment for a program, evaluation, or both
- can be impressive to funders to include as part of your work in grant applications
- include intentional planning and commitment to publicly sharing results for awareness and advocacy
- every photovoice project looks a little bit different, has unexpected twists and turns, and will an adventure!



# Uses of Photovoice

	<b>Evaluation Research</b>	<b>Academic Research</b>
<b>Problem Identification</b>	Needs Assessment	Generating Research Quest
<b>Planning</b>	Program Development	Research Design
<b>Implementation</b>	Process Evaluation	Data Collection
<b>Assessment</b>	Outcome Evaluation	Data Analysis





# HISTORY

# MATTERS

---

Photovoice originated a needs assessment tool in a large scale women's health needs assessment in China

**1992:** Caroline Wang (U of M) and Mary Ann Burris working on a large needs assessment of reproductive health with women in rural China; used “photo novella” as one component

**1994, 1996:** Published seminal articles (along with Ping) describing the method and its utility for “changes in consciousness and informing policy” (1994), particularly for women's health

**1997, 1998:** Coined term “Photovoice”; published on use for participatory needs assessment (most cited article in 1997) and participatory health promotion (Wang, Yi, Tao & Carovano, 1998)

Adapted for use across the world and in many disciplines with huge variation in applications of original ethos of the method

# 3 goals of photovoice are to:

---

1. Enable people to record and reflect community strengths and concerns

2. Promote critical dialogue and knowledge through discussions of photos

3. Reach policy makers



# Brief Summary of how you meet those goals

---



- Series of group meetings
- Initial training and building rapport
- Members go out and take photos individually
- Come back together with fellow participant co-researchers
  - discuss the photos
  - collaboratively reflect on the experiences shown
  - dig into root causes and potential solutions to the problems captured
- Share publicly for awareness, advocacy, aiming to affect policy

# Steps for Photovoice



## 1. *Read and consult to understand the ideals of the method:*

- Participatory
- Participants as co-researchers
- Iterative
- Aiming for advocacy and sharing results beyond academic dissemination in a public forum

## 2. *Identify population, community, health topic (if applicable), community partners (if applicable)*

## 3. *Plan logistics of your project depending on resources*

- How many participants? 5-15
- How many meetings? Minimum of 2; more recommended
- Community-based meeting site
- Transportation
- Refreshments
- \$\$ support for co-researchers
- How and when will you share photos?
- How many photos will you advise them to take?
- Other needs such as interpretation, accommodations in the space
- What might the public showcase/advocacy event look like? (will plan later with co-researchers)

# Steps for Photovoice



4. *Have a project management system in place before you start-* lots of details to organize and track even before you get to collecting data

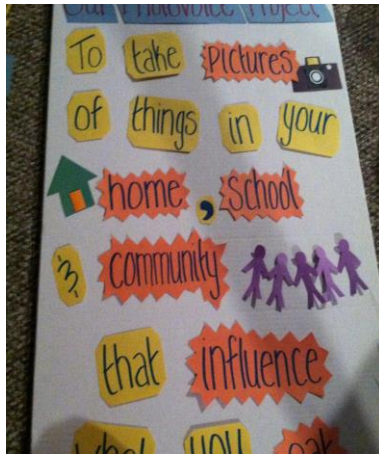
5. *Hold Photovoice meetings*

- minimum of group formation, ethics and safety training, discussion of photo mission or “assignment”, and returning to share and discuss photos together
- If time: photographer come as guest speaker, practice session for taking photos, multiple meetings for sharing and discussing photos, meetings built in to plan event

6. *Work with participants (who want to) to plan a public event to share photos*

- *School board meeting*
- *City council meeting*
- *Visits with representatives for Lobby Days*
- *Virtual event*
- *Community event*
- *Ongoing exhibit at a local library, art space, community center*





I have back to back classes on all three floors of the school. This affects obesity because in school when you have to walk up and down stairs it's like cardio and a work out. It prevents obesity.



...the first time you told us about this, I am going to be honest, I was a little scared or nervous or I don't know what to expect. But as we are doing this, you make me so happy because you gets us together and it gives us power in this country and the love that you put in between us...I want you guys to continue doing stuff like this, gathering together, its something they are not able to do a lot here and it is something very, very nice to warm hearts...



1. Enable people to record and reflect community strengths and concerns

2. Promote critical dialogue and knowledge through discussions of photos

---

# What Question(s) are you Asking

---

## **General/Geographic Based**

What do residents of 49507zip code view as strengths and needs in their community?

## **Health Issue specific**

What types of things in your home, school, and community prevent or worsen obesity?

# Ethical Considerations

---



- Privacy and protection
- Institutional Review Boards (if applicable)
- Inherent power and resource imbalances
  - Ground rules
  - Ice breakers
- Discussing stressful topics
- Safety and anonymity in photographs

## Investigating Social and Environmental Cues for Relationship Power

### Photovoice Photo-Release

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ *<insert your name>* \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with Southern CT State University. I am involved in Photovoice research project, where students from Southern are taking photographs of messages in the community that represent gender roles, can perpetuate gender roles in relationships, and also show relationship power. The photographs will be used to create discussions about youth and our community. The project is lead by Dr. Jean Breny at Southern Connecticut State University.

The photographs I take will be used for research and education purposes only, including use at lectures, conferences, and with published materials. No photographs that identify your family, other individuals, or me will be released without the written consent of those photographed.

I need your approval to use any photographs with you in them. If you agree, I need your signature on this photo-release form.

Please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Recruitment

---

## Research Participants Needed



- ❖ Purposive sampling
- ❖ Homogeneity
- ❖ Over recruit by 1/3 in some settings
  - ❖ Compensation for time and work
- ❖ 6 to 10 participants is ideal for management
- ❖ Monitor recruitment

# In sum....

---



- Online vs In person
- Setting boundaries/ground rules
- Costs/incentives
- Logistics
- Time/schedule
- Project management



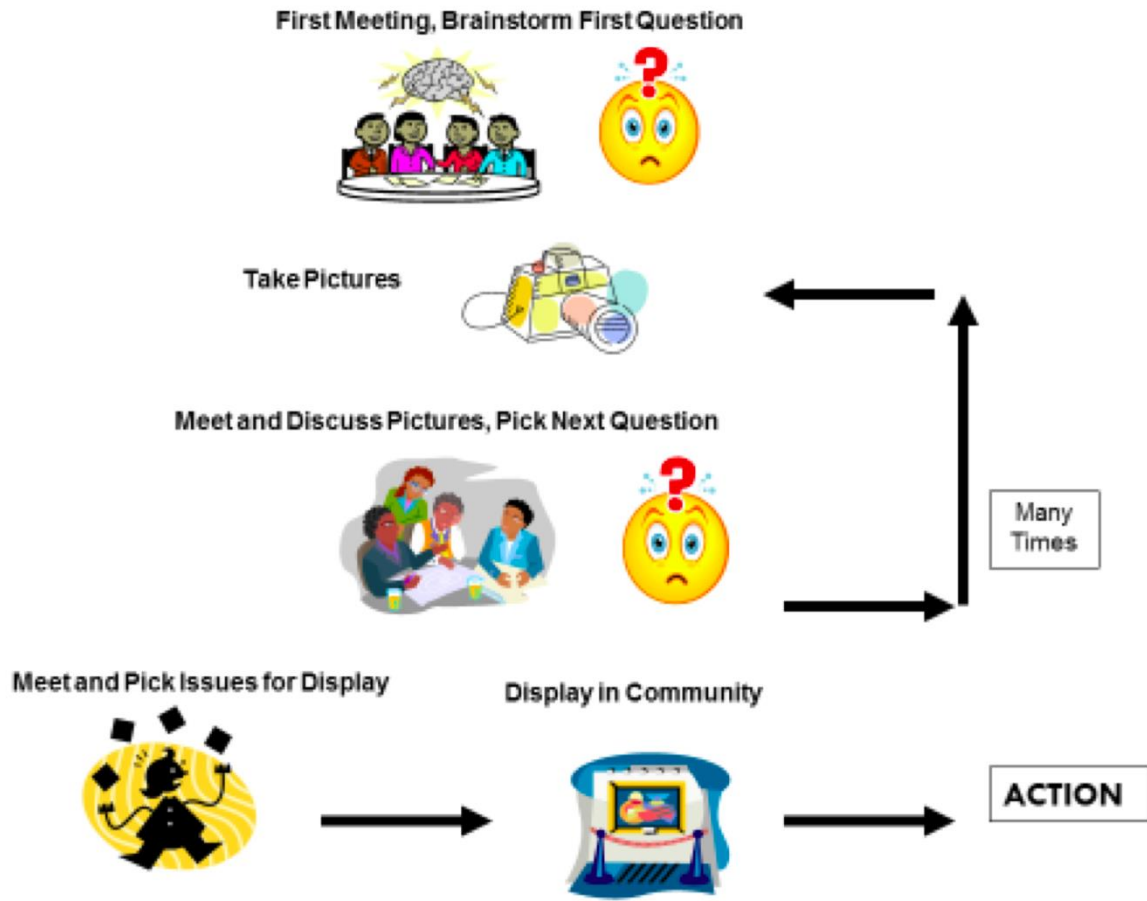
# Facilitating Photovoice Groups/Data Collection

---

FACILITATING, LISTENING, MANAGING



Figure 4.1: Photovoice Data Collection and Analysis Process



# First Meeting Agenda

- ❖ Introductions/ice breaker
- ❖ Overview of research aims/questions
- ❖ Logistics
  - How to take photos/number of photos to take
  - Frequency and overview of upcoming meetings
  - How meetings will be facilitated
  - Communication among team members
- ❖ Brainstorming first photo assignment
- ❖ Wrap-up/reminder of next meeting

**Table 1: Photovoice Sessions**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Session Goals</b>
1	<i>Introduction</i>	Explained photovoice method. Administered informed consent.
2	<i>Training &amp; Ethics</i>	Reviewed photography processes and safety. Set ethical guidelines for taking photos, especially of other people.
3	<i>Photo Practice</i>	Practiced taking photos in the community, as a group, to ensure that all participants have a full understanding of the processes and ethical issues.
At the close of Session #3, participants were assigned the task of taking photos on their own during the following week.		
4	<i>Reflection Meetings</i>	Each study participant selected one photo that she felt best represented her life and the story she wanted to tell.  All participants met as a group. Within this group, each study participant was asked the following photovoice SHOWeD questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you <b>See</b> here?</li><li>• What is really <b>H</b>appening?</li><li>• How does this relate to <b>O</b>ur lives?</li><li>• <b>W</b>hy does this problem or strength exist?</li><li>• What can we <b>D</b>o about it?</li></ul> These discussions were audio-recorded for data analysis purposes.
5	<i>Storytelling Sessions</i>	Group discussion of photos and accompanying narratives. Each participant presented two photos and describe how the image is meaningful to her. All sessions were be audio-recorded.
6	<i>Debriefing Session</i>	Participants were asked to reflect on the photovoice experience and what they learned about themselves and others through participation. Feedback about process were solicited.
7	<i>Celebration/ Information Session</i>	Images and accompanying narratives were shared with the community at an evening event in the city.

# *Getting to the Root Causes...*

---

For every photo discussed, we ask:

1. What do you **S**ee in this picture?
2. What is **H**appening here?
3. **H**ow does this relate to your lives?
4. **W**hy do these issues exist?
5. What can we **D**o to address the problem?

Schaeffer, 1984

# 3. Reach Policy Makers

---

PHOTOS TO ACTION



# Disseminating Results

---

1. Do the participant co-researchers want to exhibit photos online, in person, or a combination of both?
2. How can I best utilize social media and/or online organizing to achieve social change?
3. How can I best utilize the online platform for advocacy and connecting with policy makers?

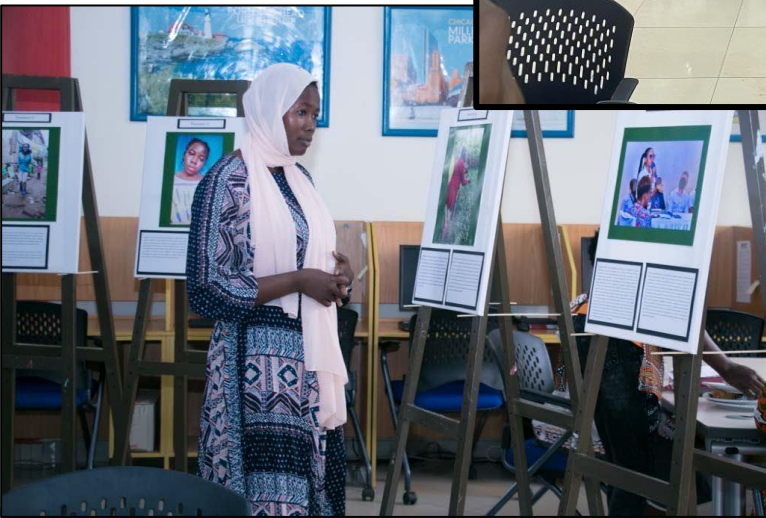
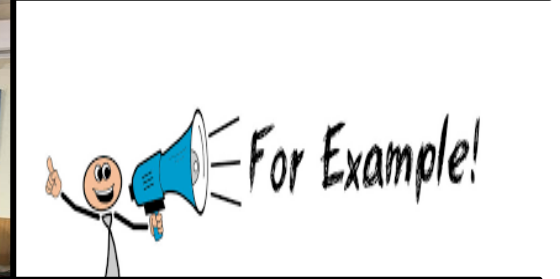
# Disseminating Results

---

*Work with participants (who want to) to plan a public event to share photos*

- *School board meeting*
- *City council meeting*
- *Visits with representatives for Lobby Days*
- *Virtual event*
- *Community event*
- *Ongoing exhibit at a local library, art space, community center*





# Examples

---

- Photovoice for World Refugee Day
  - Indianapolis 2016:  
<https://vimeo.com/171463855>
- Photovoice with women of color and international university students: [Local News Coverage of Photovoice 2021](#)



Let's Practice!



Your photo mission:

To take photos of anything in and around this building that you think impacts environmental wellness, *both positively and negatively.*

# Note That.....



**NO RIGHT  
NO WRONG**

NEW COLLECTION FROM DKLEIN

- No right or wrong picture!!
- Interested in your perception of environmental wellness

## Brief Modified Discussion

- Describe your picture
- What is happening in your picture?
- Why did you take a picture of this?
- What does this picture tell us about your life and community?
- How can this picture educate leaders and others with power/ opportunities to improve environmental wellness?

# Reflect and Discuss

---



How might Photovoice be beneficial to you in your work?

What are you thinking of as potential challenges when using Photovoice?



1. It may take longer than you think

---

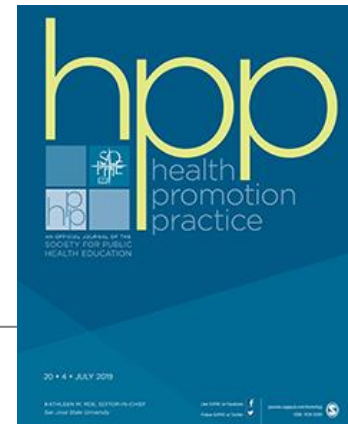
2. Be patient about recruitment
3. Sparking dialogue
4. Facilitate, don't control
5. Journaling and other options
6. Watch privilege and power
7. Anticipate that not all participants will come to every session
8. Consider technology, ahead of time
9. Know when to fold them
10. HAVE *FUN!*



**Breny, J, Lombardi, D., Smoyer, A. & Madden, D.** (2017). Getting men to explore safer sex responsibility: The use of Photovoice in health promotion research. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*.

# Links to Resources

---



[Photovoice Reading List](#)

[Photovoice: The Little Method that could Change the World/HPP](#)

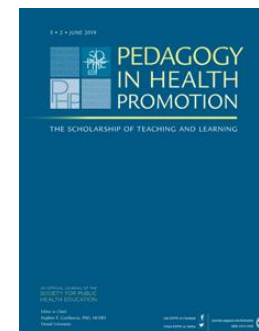
[HPP PV Podcast series](#)

[Methodspace Video with Jean & Shannon](#)



[Body Image and Media Tumblr page](#)

[Photovoice for Social Justice book](#)









# References

---

- Breny, J. M., & McMorrow, S. L.** (2022). Research Engagement in a Virtual World: Strategies for Maintaining the Power and Impact of Photovoice Research Online. *Health Promotion Practice, 23*(2), 235–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248399211065713>
- Breny, J. & McMorrow, S.** (2021). *Photovoice for Social Justice: Visual Representation in Action*. Qualitative Research Methods Series. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Breny, J, Lombardi, D., Smoyer, A. & Madden, D.** (2017). Getting men to explore safer sex responsibility: The use of Photovoice in health promotion research. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*.
- Breny, J., & Lombardi, D.** (2017). “I don’t want to be that guy walking in the feminine product aisle”: A photovoice exploration on college men’s perceptions of safer sex responsibility. *Global Health Promotion*.
- Freire, P.** (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder & Herder: New York, NY.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A. M. & Saldana, J.** (2019). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ruff, N., Smoyer, A. B., & Breny, J.** (2019). Hope, Courage, and Resilience in the Lives of Transgender Women of Color. *The Qualitative Report, 24*(8), 1990-2008.
- Shaffer, R.** (1984). *Beyond the dispensary. On giving community balance to primary health care*. African Medical Research Foundation.
- Wang, C. (2022).** The Tai Qi of Photovoice. *Health Promotion Practice, 23*(2), 205-210.
- Wang, C. & Burris (1994).** Empowerment through photo novella: portraits of participation. *Health Education Quarterly 21*(2) 171-186.
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A.** (1997). Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behavior, 24*(3), 369–387.