Participatory Photography: Methods to Explore Diverse Populations in Higher Education Research

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We would like to acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), as well as the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

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Who we are

- Cheryl Jeffs, EdD, Educational Developer, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning
- Susan Beatty, BLS, MCE, Librarian, Libraries and Cultural Resources
- K. Alix Hayden, MLIS, MSc, PhD, Librarian, Libraries and Cultural Resources
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Acknowledgement

The Indigenous students as partners in this study and their generosity to share their photographs and stories

Theme & Purpose Alignment

Congress Theme A more diverse, sustainable, democratic, and equitable society and world for the future

Our Purpose Explore participatory photography as a method to engage diverse populations in higher education research

**Learning outcomes for this session**

Participants will be guided to

- explore the benefits and application of participatory photography methods

- compare the similarities and differences of photovoice and photo-elicitation methods
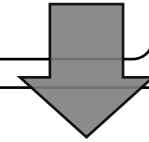
- experience a photo-elicitation activity

Image: Unsplash
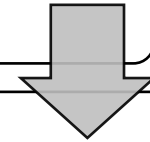
Session Outline

A bit about our study and how we applied participatory photography methods
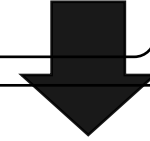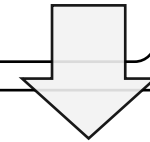
An introduction to Photovoice and photo-elicitation methods

Comparing the two methods: Infographic

A photo-elicitation activity and debrief

Words of wisdom based on our experiences with Photovoice and photo-elicitation

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Our study methods
Photovoice
Photo-elicitation

Research Purpose: To explore and understand how Indigenous students at the University of Calgary experience their learning and library spaces

Initial study: Photovoice

- Undergraduate Indigenous students
- Students took photos of learning spaces on campus
- Pre-study interviews
- Several workshops

Revised study: Photo-elicitation

- Undergraduate Indigenous students
- Researcher-generated photographs
- Pre-study interview
- One photo-elicitation interview

Next steps: Analysis and Interpretation in progress. An e-book is in development.

Photovoice & Photo-elicitation

**Photovoice:
Participant-generated photo**

- Where am I in this photo?

- Who am I as a learner?

**Photo-elicitation:
Researcher-generated photo**

- Where are you in this photo?

- Who are you as a learner?

Photovoice Goals

- to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns

- to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs

- to reach policymakers

(Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 370)
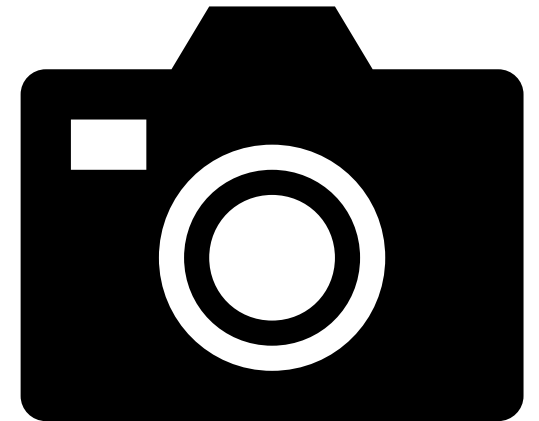
Photovoice Process

Identification of the topic or issue to be explored with participants	Invitation which involves participant recruitment	Education of participants with respect to the photovoice purpose and method	Documentation includes prompts for photos such as *Who am I as a learner? Where am I in this space?*
Narration involves participants, in a group, discussing their photographs	Ideation involves data coding and thematic analysis	Presentation of photos and narratives as exhibition	Reflecting on the process and lessons learned

(Latz, 2017)

Photo-elicitation Goals

- to uncover participants' experiences and perspectives, using the photos to guide the interview

- photos themselves are the focus of the interview, with participants discussing what the photographs means to them

(Bates et al. 2017)

Photo-elicitation Process

Epistemological decision where the researchers determine "the nature of the phenomenon" (p. 468) along with determining if participant-generated or researcher-generated photos

Participant briefing

In a researcher-generated study, the chosen photos are shared with the participants prior to the interview so that they have time to consider and reflect upon the photos

Interviews are semi-structured for researcher-driven studies. The photographs are the stimuli for the conversations

Analysis which can take the form of content or thematic analysis, discourse or narrative analysis, or interpretative phenomenological analysis

Dissemination is often more in the traditional academic vein

(Bates et al., 2017)

PHOTOVOICE

STRENGTHS
- Participants are co-researchers
- Participant generated photos, potentially increasing engagement
- Group support and empowerment
- Storytelling: participants take photos and tell their story; voice of the participant
- Co-constructed meaning

CHALLENGES
- Time intensive
  - Building trust &relationships
  - Ethics of photography
  - Taking photos
- Costs (workshop expenses, cameras)
- Anonymization & confidentiality
- Ownership of photographs

PARALLEL PURPOSES

Group process
All participants and researchers together

Participant generated photographs
Where am I in this photo?

Collective Interpretation of Experiences
Participants share and discuss their photos together; support each other; sharing experiences

Implications
Voice has power to illuminate; empowerment of participants influence change in the community

Individual process
One-on-One: Participant and researcher(s)

Researcher generated photographs
Where are you in this photo?

Individual Interpretation of Experiences
Photos discussed by participant based on interview questions

Implications
Researcher delves into participant's perceptions and lived experiences

PHOTO-ELICITATION

STRENGTHS
- Encourages participants to see themselves in new ways
- Virtual one-on-one interviews
- Targeted photographs – researcher chosen
- Storytelling: participants' reflections and experiences evoked by photographs

CHALLENGES
- Participants may not relate to researcher-chosen photos
- Potential researcher bias is selection of pre-selected photos
- Difficult to build relationships and trust as limited time together

(Adapted from Bates et al., 2017; Latz, 2017)

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Photo-elicitation Activity: Experiencing the process

Part 1
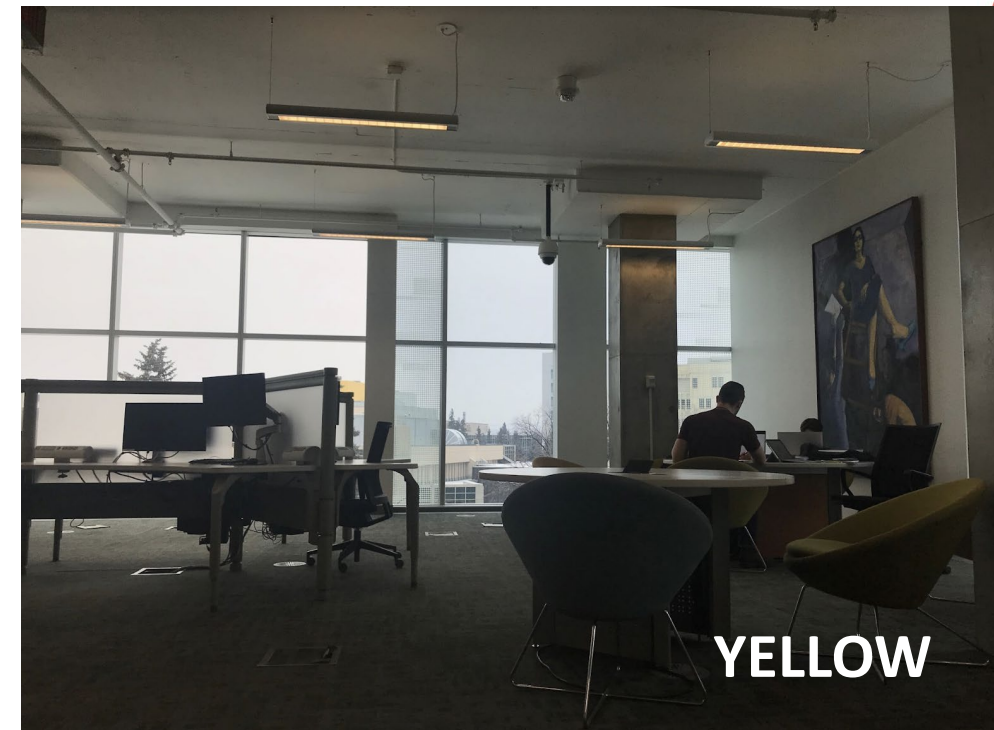- View 5 photos (next slide)
- Enter your reactions to the photos in Chat.   What did you see? What are you curious about? Is there one that resonates for you?

Part 2. Photo-elicitation interview with Volunteer
- Select 1 photo that reasonates with you
- Susan will interview you to demonstrate the process

Part 3. Debrief the activity

VIOLET

BROWN

BLUE

WHITE

YELLOW

BLUE

WHITE

BROWN

YELLOW

Photo-elicitation Activity Debrief

Volunteer: What was it like to experience this activity?

Participants: How could you adopt this method for your research?
What did you observe during this activity?
What surprised you?

Words of Wisdom

What we experienced and what we know about the application of **Photovoice** and **photo-elicitation**. *What really happened (next two slides)*

Commonalities across the two methods
- **Recruitment:**   Connecting with networks, invitations, reminders
  Students are not as familiar with the methods and may hesitate to volunteer
  Students were offered incentives to participate. PV: Camera & Co-curricular credit,
  gift-certificate. PE: Gift certificate
- **Pre-study interviews:** Conducted and recorded for both Photovoice and photo-elicitation
- **Data analysis:**   Abundance of data. Thematic analysis of text. Software analysis more robust (NVivo)
- **Purpose:**   Research question, time, funding (budget) determine the method

Recommended reading
Bartleet et al., (2019). "Building and deepening relationships requires time, awareness, reflection,and understanding"

Castleden, Morgan, V. S., & Lamb, C. (2012). "I spent the first-year drinking tea" Exploring Canadian university researchers' perspectives on community-based participatory research involving Indigenous peoples.

Words of Wisdom

What we experienced and what we know about the application of **Photovoice**. *What really happened*

Photovoice: Participant generated photos. Participant driven

Relationships: Chats over food, getting to know one another, being curious

Attrition: Participants and research assistant disappeared abruptly when the pandemic started

Time: Recruit participants, build relationships, build trust

Support: Brought in counsellor, taking care

Listen: Request for Elder or other meaningful contributors

Share: Workshop dynamics and how to work together

Collaboration: Participants as partners, research question evolved and generated by students

Communication: Connecting with networks, invitations, keeping in contact

Openness: Put aside expectations

Data: An abundance collected

Words of Wisdom

What we experienced and what we know about the application of **photo-elicitation**. *What really happened*

Photo-elicitation: Researcher generated photos. Researcher driven

Relationships: Pre-study interviews

Attrition: Participants disappeared after the pre-study interview

Time: Recruit participants

Communication: Connecting with networks, invitations, keeping in contact with participants

Prework: Researchers select photos

Time: Recruit participants and schedule interviews

Interview process: Probing questions

Collaboration: Our application to this method did not provide for discussion between participants and did not create opportunities for co-researcher roles

Openness: Put aside expectations

Data: An abundance collected

The Powerful Images of Participatory Photography

"This is my boots. I just put myself in that space. There is space for me on these shelves. There's lots of room on these shelves. Doesn't have to be a book. There're other ways of learning, other ways of knowing, other ways of doing."

References

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If time permits or questions about our study, the next three slides on the themes can be used.

Natural World
Representation
Acknowledgement

Theme: Natural World

"This is of a tree, the roots in the atrium and how that green life is just springing between those roots and in the midst of those rocks and then this big concrete building. That life is still present. Growth still continues, growth still happens. The power of mother nature and maybe the spreading and power of other knowledge systems weaving their way through this structure that they're put in. I see that as Indigenous people and their ways of knowing, doing, and being creeping up now and being allowed to blossom in these spaces." Quote: Indigenous Student

Theme: Representation

"I like how it's just that one purple chair though, it's like everything else around brown, green and then its that one purple chair. And that's-...That odd chair. ...We're in a classroom full of... We're the only indigenous people sometimes."
Quote: Indigenous Student

Theme: Acknowledgement

"… we really respect and honour bears … that's something we learned through experiences and through learning from the land. So to bring the kind of learning experience into academia… You learn from your experiences as well and it'd be nice to have those kinds of knowledges validated …. So it's been an experience, so just honouring and acknowledging that we learn from other things. And it'd be cool if we can have those knowledges validated here as well"
Quote: Indigenous Student