**Photovoice as a Tool for Social Change: An Introduction and Guide through the Methods of Photovoice**

**Proposers: Olivia Andringa & Anthony Webb**

**Location: University of Washington – Tacoma**

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**Introduction/Background**

Photovoice is a participatory action research method employed by social scientists that encourages community members to identify concerns in their environment, and, through the use of their own images and words, empowers them to be active participants in the process of social change (Wang, Morrell-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004; True, Rigg, & Butler, 2015). When utilizing the photovoice method, participants take pictures in order to document their concerns, and write captions explaining those images (Woods-Jaeger et al., 2013). The participants are further encouraged to initiate social change by presenting their photovoice to individuals of influence.

**Project Summary**

**Team Goals**. We propose a presentation on the tenets and methodology of the photovoice method. The goals of this project are twofold: 1) to assist students in recognizing their power to promote change in their communities, and 2) to promote social engagement amongst UWT students.

**Measuring Success**. In the most ideal scenario, students will actually approach us for guidance in the creation of a photovoice of their own. It is not our intent to simply discuss the merits of the photovoice process, rather, we hope that they will take the initiative to produce a work of their own. Within the tenets of community psychology, it is not the researcher’s role to tell the community what it is that they need; the researcher’s role is to serve as a support and a resource for community social engagement.

**Project Description**

**The Team**. Olivia Andringa and Anthony Webb are both psychology majors completing their senior year at the University of Washington Tacoma. In addition to their work on this proposal, they are also team members on the Community Psychology Research Group. Together, they have created surveys addressing the development of critical consciousness, conducted peer-to-peer interviews, and presented research findings at the Community Research and Action (CRA-W) conference and the Western Psychological Association annual conference.

**Purpose/Motivations**. In Spring of 2016, Dr. Hershberg’s Community Psychology class produced a photovoice project addressing various issues students were having on the UWT campus. During this process, a number of cohesive themes began to emerge. It was clear that many student needs were not being heard or met, and creating this project helped to provide a voice to those feeling disaffected. Moreover, we were actually able to present our photovoice to administration. In teaching this very simple process to others, we hope to help students recognize their inherent power to promote change. And, through the collective nature of photovoice, we hope to encourage greater social bonds here on the UWT campus.

**Materials & Resources**. Materials needed to present this project are minimal: an open room, a computer, and a projector are all we need. Something like an empty classroom would be ideal in order to present to the greatest number of students. However, even the space in the Center for Service and Leadership could suffice for a presentation. Besides a space to present in, we will require some way of getting the word out. Flyers and word-of-mouth help, but if we can access an email list, that would be ideal.

**Date of Accomplishment**. We would like to complete this presentation before the May 13 LEAD & CEL due date, and most certainly before the end of Spring Quarter, 2017.

**Roles**

**Anthony**. First, and foremost, I bring knowledge of the photovoice process and community psychology ideals, as a result of my research experience with Dr. Hershberg and the Community Psychology Research Group. Besides that, I bring a strong work ethic and commitment to social change, as well as experience in research presentations.

**Olivia**. Since I have participated in two Photovoice projects I am knowledgeable about the tools and skills necessary to teach others. Additionally, I am passionate about Photovoice and I would love to share my knowledge with others so that they can make a difference in their community. I am extremely detail oriented and organized, so I will assure that our presentation has all of the essential material in it and I will plan when and where our seminar takes place.

**Applicable Leadership thoughts, ideas, and practices**

**Anthony**. One of the most important lessons I learned while attending LEAD seminars, was to ask the question, “Who is on the bus with you?” This question is meant as a reflection of who you have in your corner. Who are the people you choose to associate with? What are their values? Are they helping or hindering your progress? I asked Olivia to be my partner specifically because I could speak to her quality of character and work ethic. Through working with her over the last year and-a-half, I have witnessed her dedication to excellence, and commitment to getting the job done. I knew she was someone I could rely on to be as committed as I am.

Relating more to the project at hand, attending the City University Reckoning & Repair conference helped to reinvigorate my commitment to social change. In particular, during my breakout session with Brittany Packnett, she spoke to the practice of not telling community members what they need, but rather allowing them their own agency in whatever directions their community takes. This reminded me of community psychology, and, more aptly, photovoice. I was also inspired to find a way to bring disparate individuals together on the UWT campus in the same way that City University was able to do at the Reckoning & Repair conference. In order to bridge the ideological gap, we need to build communities that allow for open and respectful conversation.

**Olivia**. A common theme that arose throughout all of the LEAD workshops that I attended was to always be conscious of your goal and to stay true to the people you are working with. The three core values that I took out of my experience with LEAD was knowing your community and yourself, being passionate, and having a purpose. When speaking with my mentor, Dr. Rachel Hershberg I have noticed that we have similar leadership values. I believe that it is important to work with individuals who have similar goals and values so that goals can be attained. Through my community work and our proposed project, I have stayed true to my core values and I will continue to do so throughout my life.

When I first got involved with LEAD I thought that a leader was someone who was in charge of people who gave others orders, like a CEO of a company. However, now that I have completed all five of my workshops my views of a leader have completely shifted. I now know that anyone can be a leader if they are driven, **strive to withhold high integrity, and work with others to achieve a common community goal. I will not only take this ideology to apply it to my career and everyday life, but I am determined to share my thoughts and ideals with people who view leadership as a role that people with power can only possess.**

**Team Work Plan**

To start, the team got together and developed a plan of action. Because of her organizational skills, Olivia would produce the PowerPoint presentation; although both of us would submit notes. Olivia and Anthony’s familiarity with the photovoice process, and preexisting materials and resources, allowed us to get a fast start on this process. And, as of this moment, the PowerPoint is near completion. Collectively, the group also created a shared Google Drive space for sharing ideas.

Moving forward, Anthony’s responsibilities include outlining the research proposal (with notes from Olivia), and researching resources for presenting our photovoice seminar. The actual presentation will be a group effort between both group members.

**Your Leadership Approach**

**Anthony**. I believe that *good* leadership is about three things: vision, communication, and adaptability. A quality leader needs to know where they are going, they need to be able to effectively communicate their needs and ideas to subordinates and peers, and they need to be able to modify their leadership approach in order to accommodate varying learning styles. Through the Leadership 101 orientation, I have learned that I am very much a laissez-faire style leader. It is never my intention to tell others *what* to do, rather, I prefer to encourage others to act in a capacity befitting their skills and desires. In this group, the academic strength and dedication of my partner means we do not require a central leader to produce results. Moreover, because I know my group mate very well, I know that we can always engage in fruitful and judicious discussion of ideas. Ultimately, my role is to maintain positive lines of communication within the group, and assist where needed.

**Olivia**. A leader is someone who can not only inspire and motivate others, but themselves as well. I believe that anyone can become a leader as long as they strive to withhold high integrity and work with others to achieve a common community goal. After learning about the different types of leadership in Leadership 101 and through my volunteer work, I have learned that I am a mix of two different leadership styles, laissez-faire and a servant leader. When working in a group setting I provide the other group members freedom and autonomy to do their part in the project, but I always provide support and resources when needed. I prefer to lead by example with high integrity, rather than tell others what to do. My main goal when working with a group is to meet the needs of others. Anthony and I make a great team because we are both motivated individuals who are able to work together, or independently to achieve a common goal.

References

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