Three Examples of Engagement through Photovoice[1]

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ABSTRACT   Addressing the complex challenges of today's world requires our collective creative capacity (Etmanski, 2014). As such, arts-based methods which promote creativity are increasingly important means of engaging people in the issues that matter most to them. This article focuses on one arts-based method, Photovoice, which is a "process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369) where participants take photos in response to a question or topic of inquiry. To explore this engagement method, we draw from the methodological insights gleaned from three Master's of Leadership capstone projects that employed Photovoice (or variations thereof) as one method of inquiry. The article is organized as follows: We begin by reviewing Photovoice as a research and engagement method and then summarize the three projects, which took place in two non-profit organizations and one public sector institution. In the discussion, we then compare and contrast the methodological insights emerging from these projects, including the extent to which each project: (a) enabled workers at various levels of organizational hierarchies to share their voices; (b) required careful attention to ethics; and (c) generated relationships among participants. As this is a methodological paper, our emphasis here is to highlight the process and impact of using Photovoice as a method rather than sharing each of the study findings and conclusions. In each example, Photovoice as both a research and engagement method enabled participants to play a leadership role in participatory engagement, thus deemphasizing top-down decision-making and promoting more integrated approaches to research and leadership as engagement.

KEYWORDS   photovoice, organizational engagement, creative leaderships

The complex and interconnected nature of today's global challenges invite us to imagine new approaches to leadership, research, and engagement. Coming together to address such challenges involves tapping into our collective creative capacity (Etmanski, 2014). To promote such creativity, scholars, activists, and educators are increasingly arguing that arts-based methods are essential means of engaging people in the issues that matter most to them (Clover, 2014; Erenrick & Wergein, 2017; Etmanski, 2014; Garoian, 2011). This article documents three examples of employing the arts-based method of Photovoice to engage employees in the researchers' own organizations and to promote research-based leadership for positive organizational engagement. The authors are three professionals who currently (Alison) or

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1 The three studies represented in this paper underwent ethical review through the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board.

formerly (Nikki) worked in the Canadian non-profit sector or in a Canadian Public School Board (Michelle). Catherine is a professor in the School of Leadership Studies (SoLS) at Royal Roads University (RRU), in Victoria, Canada. Alison, Nikki, and Michelle are graduates of the Master's of Arts in Leadership from this same school.

This paper begins by reviewing the engagement approach undertaken by the three researchers (Alison, Nikki, and Michelle) and summarizes the three change projects. We then compare and contrast these projects, including the extent to which Photovoice supported organizational change by: (a) enabling employees at various levels of organizational hierarchies to share their voices within organizational change initiatives; (b) ensuring careful attention to ethics; and (c) promoting relationships among participants. In each example, we suggest that Photovoice enabled participants to play a leadership role in participatory engagement, which de-emphasized top-down decision-making and promoted more engaged and integrated approaches to leadership. Readers should note that this is intended as a methodological discussion and, therefore, the emphasis is to highlight the possibilities inherent to Photovoice as a method. We have found there to be a gap in the literature documenting Photovoice as an effective engagement method within Canadian organizations. As will be discussed below, the literature acknowledges Photovoice as a tool effective in empowering the voice of marginalized people (e.g., Castleden & Garvin, 2008; Dixon & Hadjialexiou, 2005; Falconer, 2014; Holtby et al., 2015; Kelly, 2016; Sutton-Brown, 2014; Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997; World Vision, 2010); however, we suggest that its use can be broadened to organizational engagement efforts. Moreover, our experience suggests that within organizations, employees' voices can intentionally or unintentionally be marginalized through organizational structures and processes. Given this context, this paper will focus more on methodological insights gleaned from employing Photovoice within three organizations, rather than on the findings and conclusions from each of the three studies.

Engagement through Photovoice

Scholars are increasingly calling for "research that more closely follows the imaginary and improvisational processes and practices of artists, poets, and musicians as compared with inquiry that is commonly associated with the logical-rational approaches in the sciences and social sciences" (Garoian, 2011, pp. 157-158). As Clover (2014) identified, "symbol, metaphor, and imagery play an important role in reasoning, explaining, and understanding the world enabling new connections between things concrete and things abstract" (p. 142). Such arts-based and arts-informed approaches to research have been gaining momentum in the academy since they provide a unique approach to data collection and analysis processes as well as the research product.

The arts-based method of Photovoice can be understood as a "process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). Photovoice promotes social change through both photography *and* a structured group process (Chonody et al., 2012; Langdon et al., 2014). It promotes "critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small

group discussion of photographs" (Wang & Burris, 1997). In so doing, "Photovoice broadens the nature of photography from being a fine art form to being central to socially and politically engaged praxis" (Sutton-Brown, 2014, p. 170). This intent is in alignment with the capstone projects designed by Alison, Michelle, and Nikki.

As a research method, Photovoice enables "researchers and decision makers to visualize issues from participants' point of view" (Kelly, 2016, p. 64) by putting "cameras in the hands of research participants, giving them a 'voice' to document their surroundings, [and] empowering them to construct the knowledge and representations of their own environment" (Falconer, 2014, p. 2). Wang and Burris (1997, p. 170) identified three key objectives of Photovoice, which have been rearticulated in diverse ways over the years (Castleden & Garvin, 2008; Clover, 2006; Falconer, 2014; Gallo, 2001; Sutton-Brown, 2014; Wang, 1999; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). These are:

1. To empower participants to identify for themselves their community's assets, challenges, needs, or concerns,
2. To create a space for participants to critically dialogue, using the photos as an entry point, and
3. To have an impact on policy makers and enact community change.

Kelly (2016) identified the primary reasons for using Photovoice as follows: (a) the visual display is more impactful for audiences (decision makers) and can call attention to the issue more powerfully than a standard report, and (b) participants find the method engaging and fun (p. 68). As suggested earlier, Photovoice is typically used with "marginalized populations that have been silenced in the political arena" (Sutton-Brown, 2014, p. 169). Examples are primarily found in health contexts (Falconer, 2014; Kelly, 2016; Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997), in the Global South (Falconer, 2014), and with youth (Dixon & Hadjialexiou, 2005; Holtby et al., 2015). There are, of course, exceptions, such as Massengale et al.'s (2016) account of using Photovoice as a pedagogical tool to support students preparing for helping professions. However, despite increasing calls for creativity and innovation in leadership and organizations (Amabile, 1988, 1996; Clerkin, 2015; Goldman Schuyler et al., 2016; Henry & Mayle, 2002; Rickards, 1999), it is difficult to find documented examples of Photovoice used in organizational contexts beyond these oft-cited spheres. As such, the purpose of this paper is to document how the authors, Nikki, Michelle, and Alison, adapted the Photovoice method for the purpose of engaging diverse members of their organizations in their research-informed leadership practice. The following sections present the ways in which this method was taken up and experienced in three different contexts.

Overview of the Three Examples

The three examples profiled in this paper are drawn from Alison, Michelle, and Nikki's Master's level capstone projects or theses. All studies underwent review through RRU's Research Ethics Board, and Michelle's study underwent a secondary review within her School Board.

The following sections provide a high-level overview of each author's organization and her role in the organization. The intention is to provide sufficient context to allow readers to understand the purpose of their studies and overarching research question, their study design and conduct, and how, specifically, they employed Photovoice. As mentioned above, since their study findings and conclusions relate to their unique contexts rather than specifically to the use of Photovoice, they are not presented in depth here. In addition, the organizations for which they work have been anonymized. However, a discussion of the implications of using Photovoice in each context follows in the section below.

Alison's Research in a Mental Health Service Organization

At a time when mental health needs are increasing and sustainable sources of funding are dwindling, I have a heightened awareness that we need to find new and different ways to strengthen mental health in our communities. My project studied the concepts of leadership development and innovation in a non-profit organization that addresses mental health in South-central British Columbia. The purpose was to discover how to best develop a team of coordinators to foster innovation throughout the organization in order to address our community's complex mental health needs. At the time of the study, my role was Wellness Programs Coordinator, and my inquiry question was: How could my organization develop the coordinator team to foster organizational innovation? Briefly, the study conclusions revealed that collaborative approaches to leadership in teams that had a foundation of trust and a desire for mutual learning created fertile ground for both innovation and leadership development in my organization. Additionally, collaborative leadership that transcended positional boundaries further enhanced our team's capacity for innovation. Finally, trust, vulnerability, and courage promoted a willingness to experiment, thus strengthening the capacity for innovation.

In my study, I applied three qualitative research methods in an effort to promote dialogue, co-create new knowledge, and spark organizational innovation. The methods were: participant observation, a three-hour Photovoice workshop, and a one and a half-hour learning circle, each facilitated one month apart. I was a participant observer (Glesne, 2011) throughout the data collection period, meaning that since I participated fully in the process as it unfolded, I observed both the process and myself from the inside. I selected Photovoice for its creative nature, which fit well with the topic of innovation in a community-based non-profit mental health organization. I also chose a learning circle for its capacity to bring out the best in people, resulting in a potentially astounding level of creativity, problem solving, and visioning (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010, p. 6). The open nature of these qualitative research methods lent themselves to the goal of developing the coordinator team, while the emergent nature of the dialogue lent itself to the goal of fostering innovation.

I invited the eight members of the coordinator team to take part in the research. Since I was a coordinator, I too became a participant in this study. My participation was carefully considered by members of the Research Ethics Board because I supervised two coordinators on the team. Seeing as the goal of this inquiry was to develop the coordinator team, and I was a member of this team, the benefits of including all members of the team were seen to

outweigh the minimal risk of including members with an organizational power differential in the two methods. The options were either to exclude myself entirely or to remove the two direct reports, both of which would have undermined team development. The compromise I found was to participate alongside my colleagues as co-inquirers and with a third-party facilitator conducting the sessions, thus lessening ever so slightly the power imbalance, the double power-over relationship as supervisor and researcher. This compromise supported inclusion and participation, as Stringer (2014) noted: "Applying participatory approaches to investigation stimulates feelings of pride, dignity, identity, control responsibility, and unity" (p. 35). Exclusion of any coordinators, including me, would have threatened the opportunity to develop unity and identity in this team. Additional mitigating strategies are shared below in the discussion on ethics.

All eight members of the coordinator team participated in the Photovoice method. The coordinators represented the following organizational areas: housing, navigation and outreach, youth programs, wellness programs, food security, and community education, as well as administration and operations. As coordinators, we all operated on the middle management level of organizational hierarchy. All of us were new to our coordinator positions, having stepped into them within the previous one to two years (thus the organizational sponsor's stated desire for us to develop as a team). The group was assembled and titled "the coordinator team" within the year leading up to the study.

The Photovoice workshop was facilitated in the following way: First, the participants were asked to think of an example of an experience of innovation of which they had been a part. They journaled about the experience in as much detail as possible, including the emotions they felt, the people involved, the nature of the relationships, the environment, support structures, and everything they could think of that contributed to allowing that innovative experience to emerge. Second, the participants were asked to go out and take a picture with their smartphone that represented this experience of innovation or the strongest emotion associated with this experience. In alignment with the Photovoice ethics Wang and Redwood-Jones (2014) raised regarding the respect for privacy law and intrusion into one's private space (pp. 563–564; see also Holtby et al., 2015), participants were asked not to take photos of identifiable people. The participants emailed their photos to a technical support person who quickly organized the pictures in a digital slideshow.

Third, the participants were asked to jot down their observations, thoughts, wants, and feelings associated with the experience of taking the photo, the image they captured, and the experience or emotion of innovation it represents. Fourth, the participants unpacked the photos as a group through three consecutive slideshows that displayed the photos one at a time in no particular order. The first time through the slideshow, the photos were viewed in silence. During the second slideshow, the individual who took the photo was asked to remain silent, but the group was encouraged to share their observations, thoughts, wants, and feelings. In the last viewing of the slides, the individual who took the photo was asked to share the meaning associated with it and any observations, thoughts, wants, and feelings that may have occurred at any point through the workshop so far, especially through hearing others' interpretations of

their photographs. The third-party facilitator allowed for group dialogue to follow each of the participant's comments about their own photo and offered these guiding questions to prompt further dialogue:

- What are examples of innovation at our organization?
- What does an innovative mental health organization look like?
- How could our organization support greater innovation?

I observed and experienced an elevated sense of engagement, curiosity, and excitement throughout the Photovoice workshop. I think this was partially fostered by the sense of shared discovery and learning as we explored and interpreted the photos together.

Michelle's Research in a Canadian School Board
Sahlberg (2014) suggested that the ability to renew and adapt within a changing landscape is an essential task of the education system. The role of education is to equip students with the skills and competencies they need to be successful in the world in which they live, both now and in the future. An education system must by necessity ensure its relevance and be innovative. My use of the Photovoice method occurred while conducting research on innovation within a Public School Board (hereafter referred to as "the organization") where I was employed. Expanding the innovative capacity of school boards helps to ensure that education remains relevant. To support these goals of relevance and innovation; the primary research question of my study was: How can the organization enhance its capacity for innovation? My research concluded that enhancing innovation will require members of the organization to (a) address the existing gap between the espoused value of innovation and the systemic implementation/practice of innovation, (b) acknowledge and manage the impact of their unique organizational context on innovation, (c) utilize innovation-promoting leadership behaviours, and (d) empower staff members and students.

Throughout my research, it was important to consider the prevailing political pressures. Senge (2006) advised that understanding the complex political dynamics of large organizations is essential when considering organizational change. During the course of my research, the organization was experiencing significant labour action, which had a palpable impact on the activity of staff members and the organizational climate. It was important to be sensitive to the challenges of an organization experiencing labour unrest and to acknowledge the possible impact on research participants. In addition, the organization was in transition with significant changes in the highest levels of leadership.

As outlined above, Wang (1999) articulated three benefits of utilizing Photovoice, all of which I considered advantageous in my research: (a) participants are able to document their perceptions using photos, (b) it provides a platform for group discussion, and (c) it could be used to influence or promote system change. Given the circumstances, I chose this particular arts-based method because I had an understanding from the theory that it would help to build trust for participants during otherwise turbulent organizational times. Etmanski et al. (2014)

asserted that arts-based methods can support "collectively co-creating innovative solutions and learning into the future" (p. 82). As will be discussed below, this theory was demonstrated in practice. An added benefit was that using a creative method aligned well with the research and organizational focus on innovation.

The group process I used to facilitate Photovoice in my research was a Focused Conversation (Nelson, 2001) occurring within a focus group setting. The Focused Conversation method was originally intended for reflecting on and understanding art forms, and as such was an appropriate pairing with Photovoice. The Focused Conversation method examines data using an evolving conversation moving through the objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional levels (ORID) of considering data (Nelson, 2001). The level of potential risk-taking evolves throughout the conversation as participants move from an objective description to sharing increasingly personal perspectives. The Photovoice and Focused Conversation methods were integrated to yield a "Photovoice focus group;" this term will be used throughout the remainder of this paper.

I conducted two Photovoice focus groups. The first population invited to participate in a Photovoice focus group was an interdisciplinary regional cross-section of employees of the organization working from a common office location. This location houses offices for approximately 150 staff members from a variety of teaching and non-teaching disciplines. The second population invited to participate in the second Photovoice focus group were members of the organization's Manager's Council. This council consists of approximately 25 middle managers. Of those invited to participate, five participants voluntarily responded to attend the first Photovoice focus group and six attended the second.

In an effort to adapt to the turbulent organizational context, I modified the Photovoice method. Participants were therefore provided the option to either take a photo or select a magazine/online photo that represented their perspective on innovation within the organization. Participants were asked to respond to the prompt: "Think back to a time when you were part of something you would consider innovative. Take or select a photo that represents how that made you feel." At the onset of each Photovoice focus group, participants were asked to submit the photos they had brought with them and the accompanying narrative outlining the context of their photo. For those who chose the option of using a magazine photo, time was provided for them to select a photo during the Photovoice focus group itself and to write their brief narratives.

All images were displayed in the centre of the table and participants were provided with five minutes to examine them. This stimulated interest and set the stage for the Focused Conversation that followed. The Focused Conversation started with participants being asked to reflect on the first photo: "What do you see when you look at that photo? How does it make you feel?" (objective). All participants had the opportunity to respond to that question for the first photo. The second question was then posed: "What does it remind you of in your own experience?" (reflective). This process was repeated for all photos. Following this, the remaining levels of questioning/discussion occurred where participants engaged in a deeper analysis of the photos. The remaining questions were as follows:

- Interpretive Questions
    - o What are the key themes raised in the photos so far?
    - o Which of these is the most important? Why?
- Decisional Questions
    - o What response do these photos require of us if we are to pursue innovation?
    - o What are our next steps?

Overall, I experienced that this arts-based approach allowed me to engage participants more deeply than what might have been possible using a more traditional method of data collection. Further reflections on why this was so will be shared below.

Nikki's Research in a Youth-Serving Non-profit

From my perspective, a non-profit organization's ability to deliver services and achieve their strategic outcomes hinges on their ability to provide a remarkable, supportive, and developmental work experience for their staff members. At the time of this inquiry, the child and youth-serving non-profit organization (hereinafter referred to as "the agency") for which I was the Human Resources Manager was experiencing high levels of frontline employee turnover resulting in, not only increased operational costs, but also reduced employee morale, knowledge loss, and potential failure to meet service delivery objectives (Duffield et al., 2011). Previous data gathering efforts – primarily consisting of employee engagement surveys – had been largely unsuccessful, and the agency sought to consider the issue in a new, creative way, while engaging stakeholders at all levels of the organization. Consequently, I chose Photovoice as the data collection method to engage the frontline staff members in my inquiry into the following question: "How can the agency foster retention in frontline staff members and build organizational capacity?" (for further information, see Bade & Etmanski, 2016).

Participants were divided into three peer groups: frontline employees, coordinators, and managers. In addition, an inquiry advisory team, consisting of agency senior leaders and external advisers, provided insight for each cycle of engagement through data collection in the project. The rationale for including the senior leaders on the inquiry team was to engage decision makers in the process. As each data set was presented, they were able to consider what questions might be important for the subsequent focus groups. The external advisors were included to provide an objective and alternative perspective on the data. Thus, in keeping with the engagement approach, all stakeholders participated in the resolution of the issue at hand.

All 190 frontline employees were invited to participate in the Photovoice workshop as the first iteration of data collection, and 20 in total participated. As the Human Resources Manager at the agency, I held a disproportionate amount of power, real or perceived, over all the intended participants in the study (Glesne, 2011; Stringer, 2014), and as such, I excused myself from conducting the research methods and instead chose to use third-party facilitators for the data collection. To ensure anonymity, I was not involved in the participant selection for any of the data collection events. Employee email lists were given to the third-party facilitator who sent

out the invitations to the various groups from their external email. Given that the Photovoice sessions were scheduled during the workday, some employees were not able to participate due to scheduling constraints. The CEO sent an email to the entire agency expressing her support for the project, encouraging Coordinators to support frontline employees who wanted to participate, and answered questions about pay, time off, and expenses. On completion of the Photovoice method, the data was returned to me with all identifying information removed. Submissions were coded using a numbering system to ensure that each photograph and its narrative had a unique code.

In terms of process, the third-party Photovoice facilitator began with a kick-off meeting to describe the Photovoice method, answer questions about the inquiry project, and prepare the participants to take their pictures. The facilitator also addressed questions about anonymity, indicating that any identifying information would be removed from the data before it was transferred back to me.

Participants were given the following two questions and were asked to provide their response in the form of a picture. They were also invited to provide a short narrative with their photo but were told that the narrative was not a requirement.

- What makes the agency a meaningful workplace for you as an employee?
- What is so important to you that you would change jobs to get it?

Once the photographs and narratives were submitted confidentially via email directly to the facilitator, the participants were invited to a facilitated dialogue session. The participants gathered at a neutral location and engaged in a discussion about their interpretations and experience with the method and then, as a collective, sorted their photographs and narratives into themes. The outcome was a clear picture of those themes that most impacted frontline employee turnover, from the perspective of the frontline employees themselves.

Using the themes generated by the Photovoice method, the inquiry team and I collaborated to construct the questions for the subsequent focus groups with the Coordinator and Manager groups. The focus groups were conducted with the coordinator and manager groups separately, and they consisted of ten participants each. These focus groups provided the senior leaders an opportunity to consider the emerging themes, the photographs, and insights presented by the frontline employees as a single voice, rather than as specific employees' feedback. The team felt that although some of the themes were known issues, the alternate presentation provided new insights that could be acted upon in new ways. This is in alignment with a stated intent of Photovoice: to influence decision-makers.

Discussion of Voice, Ethics, and Relationship in Each Study

Having reviewed how Alison, Michelle, and Nikki each uniquely employed Photovoice to engage members of their organizations, we turn now to a discussion of key topics that emerged through comparing and contrasting their three studies. These topics include the extent to which each project: (a) enabled workers at various levels of organizational hierarchies to share

their *voices*; (b) required careful attention to *ethics*; and (c) generated *relationships* among participants. These topics are fundamentally interconnected, of course, so the act of parsing them out is for the purpose of exploring these aspects in greater detail. Moreover, it is helpful to acknowledge that skillful facilitation of the Photovoice method is essential; voice, ethics, and relationships do not simply emerge on their own. The specific and skillful ways in which Alison, Michelle, and Nikki engaged people through this method served to generate feelings of trust and safety. Therefore, the means and the method were operating in harmony throughout the researchers' respective studies, as will be described in greater detail below.

Voice

As was described in each study, the method of Photovoice provided an entry point for workers at various levels of the organizational hierarchy to engage in dialogue. The facilitators fostered authentic sharing of perspectives and promoted a feeling of psychological safety. Although Nikki, Alison, and Michelle's applications of Photovoice were in contexts different from what is represented in the literature with marginalized communities, in the context of the three studies, the participant groups' voices and perspectives were not normally sought or included in the development of change initiatives due to their location in the organizational hierarchy.

In all three projects, the researchers used Photovoice to engage the frontline/middle management employees in "defining, exploring, and problem solving" (Stringer, 2014, p. 44) and gave them the opportunity to have a voice in the issue at hand. In Nikki's study, this was the first time that frontline staff members were included in a meaningful way in an initiative affecting the whole agency. Additionally, in all three studies, the Photovoice data informed subsequent data collection methods with more senior managers, or recommendations were presented to organizational sponsors who had the authority to implement change.

Notably, in Nikki's study, Photovoice not only gave the frontline staff members a voice, but it also gave the senior leaders ears. That is to say, in being presented with anonymous information that was free from any preconceived perceptions about individuals and program groups, the senior leaders undoubtedly heard that recognition, wellness, and development were meaningful for frontline staff members and thus allowed the policy makers to take action accordingly.

In all three studies, it was noted that Photovoice nurtured deep and authentic dialogue and allowed voice to emerge with greater ease. Nikki found the data emerging from her Photovoice workshop had depth and authenticity and more accurately reflected the reality (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 322) of the frontline staff member experience. Similarly, Michelle observed that Photovoice promoted an open, genuine, and authentic quality of voice that superseded the political challenges facing the organization. Photovoice provided Michelle's participants the opportunity to externalize their opinions/perspective using a photo, rather than having to share their perspective in a more forthright manner, thus enabling a deeper discussion.

Alison was surprised by the depth and richness of comments and dialogue in her Photovoice workshop, noting that metaphors and stories seemed to flow effortlessly. Alison credited the ability to explore far beyond the surface of the topic to the combination of using photography

to creatively capture an experience with individual journaling and group reflection. Although political complexity was not present to the same degree in Alison's organization, she too attributed the openness, ease, and balanced participation among group members to the sense of safety afforded by Photovoice. Alison noted that even participants who tended to be less articulate in other settings shone in this process, at times offering very succinct insights. Alison's experience therefore aligns with Michelle's perspective that Photovoice provides an opportunity for safer participation by enabling participants to externalize their perspective, or shift the focus from personal experience to a symbolic representation.

Alison, Nikki, and Michelle's combined experiences demonstrate the power of Photovoice to engage people to share their voices with relative ease and authenticity. Moreover, as suggested, this enabling of voice rested heavily on the researchers' ability to practice ethically and to create a trusting environment for participants. We now consider how the three researchers created this space, in which participants felt able to share their voices.

Ethics

All three projects required the researchers to establish conditions of psychological safety for participants and carefully attend to ethics throughout the process. Although the challenges for each project were different, ensuring participant comfort and/or confidentiality in the face of power imbalances and/or political turmoil emerged as key considerations. The following paragraphs provide a brief description of how the researchers mitigated the individual ethical challenges of conducting insider Action Research within their own organizations (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2005) and how Photovoice further reinforced safety for participants.

As employees of their organizations, all three researchers were stakeholders in the leadership initiative, and in two cases they were supervisors. Not only did that mean they were fundamentally concerned about the ethics of the research, but also, simply by nature of them being researchers, they had a "*duty of care* in relation to all people [… engaged] in processes of investigation" (Stringer, 2014, p. 89). This requires researchers to conduct themselves ethically throughout the research process.

For Alison, as mentioned in her story above, a power-over relationship existed. Since a process of developing the coordinator team was already underway in her organization, she aligned her study with this effort and, as a result, the choice was made to include all members of the team, even though there was a reporting relationship from some of the participants to Alison. With guidance from the research ethics board, she mitigated the power dynamic by involving a third-party facilitator, and also by acknowledging the collegial relationship in the invitation to participate to ensure transparency in creating the conditions for free, informed, and ongoing consent. She also chose to focus on what was working well, rather than delving directly into any sensitive issues within the organization. As a final mitigating strategy, the third-party facilitator clearly communicated to the participants that raw, or identifying, data would not be shared with the project sponsor (who had a power-over relationship with all members of the team), nor would he be informed of who had declined to participate.

Alison also ensured the third-party facilitator understood the importance of confidentiality regarding the free and informed choice to decline participation.

Nikki faced similar power challenges in her role as researcher, supervisor, and Human Resources Manager. As described, Nikki used a third-party facilitator to conduct the research and excused herself from the whole data collection process. Additionally, Nikki's direct reports, also members of the Human Resources team, were excluded from the project, except in support of assisting the third-party facilitators with organizational information (e.g., contact information for recruitment purposes). Additionally, the Photovoice process and subsequent focus groups were conducted at offsite, neutral locations to further maintain participant confidentiality.

Although Michelle was not in a power-over position herself, she was careful to remain aware of any power over implications between and among her participants and mitigate them by carefully constructing her participant groups. There were no supervisory relationships amongst participants, and two separate Photovoice focus groups allowed Michelle to engage two levels of the organizational hierarchy separately, so each group participated with same-level peers. This ensured positional power was mitigated so that people could speak freely. In conceptualizing the interdisciplinary group, Michelle wondered whether there might be a perception of power dynamics due to differences in skill sets or expertise; however, Michelle observed that using Photovoice managed any perceived power differentials (of skillset or expertise) by not privileging one discipline's expertise over another. The Photovoice process provided a common, neutral starting place that did not require any particular knowledge or skill base. Using photos mitigated the possibility of participants leveraging perceived power as holders of knowledge and facilitated a dialogue that revolved around feelings and experiences, rather than knowledge and skills. Nikki and Alison also found that using the photographs as the focus and driver of the dialogue removed the personal attachments to the issues and supported participants to consider the topic with a wider lens, often resulting in a deeper understanding and agreement on the most pressing themes.

In a modification of the Photovoice process, Michelle provided participants with the option to select from magazine photographs (rather than only requiring picture taking). An unintended consequence of this was that any barriers to participation, including fear of judgement of photographic skill or economic barriers/differences, was also mitigated. This was also true of the anonymous submission that was used in Nikki's and Alison's processes. Participants were able to consider the image in terms of the message it was relaying rather than qualifying it as a piece of art, which allowed for the dialogue to focus on each image, unaffected by perceptions and beliefs held about the person who took the photo. Moreover, the anonymous method of submitting their photos encouraged participants to express their perspectives without fear of conscious or unconscious reprisal within their organizations.

All three researchers agreed that efforts to ensure ethical research were improved by using Photovoice. It provided a low-risk entry point for participants to engage in a dialogue about their own organization by enabling communication through a conduit. Participants were able to share and reflect objectively, establishing trust through their common experience, which ultimately led to a deeper discussion. Overall, the use of Photovoice enabled the researchers to attend to ethical considerations in a new and creative way that engages participants to be the

observers of their own experience. Additionally, it was an opportunity for participants to freely express their opinions and work collaboratively to address issues that directly affected them. It is this collaborative quality and validation of one another's experiences through listening and being heard that promoted the development of relationships as part of the Photovoice process. This will be discussed in the following section.

Relationship

Michelle, Nikki, and Alison agreed that one of most surprising outcomes of their projects was the generation of relationships among participants. More specifically, the researchers observed that, although they had read about this possibility in the literature, they did not anticipate the degree to which a sense of team and collective empowerment would result from employing Photovoice as a data collection method. Michelle's participant groups did not involve individuals who were members of a common team and as such, there were few existing relationships among participants. With limited levels of exposure to and experience working with other participants, Michelle was concerned that not having a foundation of trust could impede participants from engaging together in a conversation about their organization. However, here concerns were quickly alleviated. She observed that the Photovoice process of relaying one's perception of a photo was a low-risk initiating activity that did not require a high level of trust and provided a safe starting place for individuals. As participants engaged in the Focused Conversation, they were able to move from an initial place of comfort towards increased levels of risk as the process unfolded and relational capital increased.

For Alison, some relationships existed in her participant group, but a sense of team had not yet been established, as group interactions were limited to a handful of meetings and one collaborative project, at the time of the study. Based on what she had read, Alison hoped that Photovoice would offer the coordinator team an opportunity to strengthen communication and build relationships, and indeed it did. Alison noticed both a sense of excitement and ease as participants shared their experience of their colleagues' photographs and of their own. As a participant in the Photovoice workshop herself, she too left feeling more closely connected to the members of her team. Alison perceived that engaging in a creative process outside of the usual means of interaction bonded the participants.

In Nikki's organization, strong relationships already existed between and among the participant groups and, as such, separating the participant groups into peer groups served to establish a comfortable environment. Grouping participants in this way allowed her to leverage existing relationships to generate richer and more authentic data. Following the Photovoice process, frontline employees identified that they collectively felt more empowered to more publicly articulate their opinions and perspectives on issues relating to the Agency.

As supported by Etmanski's (2014) assertion that arts-based methods hold potential for building empathy, understanding, and trust among participants, all three researchers experienced that the Photovoice method created relational safety, reinforced pre-existing relationships, and/or initiated new relationships amongst participants. These relationships served to enhance the organizational leadership initiatives at the heart of all three of the studies.

In Summary

Each of the research projects described above promoted organizational learning and allowed the researchers to initiate an inquiry that was meaningful to their own organization. Through employing Photovoice to engage stakeholders in important leadership initiatives inside their own organizations, participants and researchers alike experienced the benefits of a skillfully and ethically facilitated process in promoting voice and building relationships. In addition to serving as a data collection method, Photovoice also increased engagement in support of the change initiative and, in this sense, the medium operated in alignment with the message (McLuhan, 1964). Photovoice enabled participants to play a leadership role, however small, in participatory organizational change, and this took steps toward de-emphasizing top-down decision-making and promoting more engaged and integrated approaches to leadership.

With creativity increasingly touted as "one of the most important business skills for the next century, and the 'ultimate resource' in a technology-and-information-based culture" (Clerkin, 2015, p. 178), we conclude by encouraging leaders in all sectors to place greater value on creative methods. As just one example, Photovoice can be adapted in a variety of organizational contexts to engage stakeholders in both strategic planning and problem solving. As mentioned at the outset, Photovoice continues to be an effective tool for empowering the voices of diverse groups of marginalized peoples and, with this paper, we encourage broadening its use to organizational leadership efforts. Methods such as Photovoice are not simply "fun, but somehow unnecessary activities. [They] are essential" (Etmanski, 2014, p. 265) for tapping into employees and stakeholders' creative capacities when engaging in meaningful leadership.

About the Authors

Nikki Bade is driven by her passion for creating remarkable and engaging workplaces. Professionally, Nikki is the Director of Human Resources at Sundial Growers Inc. and academically, Nikki is completing her Doctor of Social Sciences research focusing on how Canadian organizations on Treaty 7 territory can foster Indigenous engagement in their corporate cultures.

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