

Using Methods that Matter: A Critical Examination of Photovoice for Studying
Supportive Housing

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Dedicated to everyone who volunteered their voice.

This is especially for Davis and for Dorothy.

“My goal in joining this project was to bring to light, and hopefully change how a portion of society entraps us with preconceived views that all social housing is doom and gloom and that we are somehow different from mainstream society. I invite everyone to participate in this photo display with an unobstructed and open mind, you may find that things are not always as they seem. Through community housing we have the ability to provide for ourselves a refuge of warmth and comfort. Through community housing we have the ability to provide for ourselves a place of joy and of happiness. Through community housing we have an environment where we can create a sense of tranquility and of serenity; a space both you and I call home.

I ask you to consider one question...are we truly all that different?”

General Abstract

Photovoice is a Participatory Action Research (PAR) method that generates knowledge about the lived experiences of members of marginalized communities. Participants are understood to be experts of their experiences and are asked to take photos of their lives. Photovoice is highly flexible in application and participants can have varying degrees of involvement in components of the method, from design to dissemination of findings. Although providing opportunity for a high degree of participation is ideal, this is less frequently demonstrated in the literature. To understand the impact of participation on the type of information generated, individuals living in supportive housing were asked to share their experiences of their housing. Perspectives of consumers of supportive housing have had little presence in the housing literature, particularly within a photovoice framework. Therefore, this research asked consumers about their housing as well as how they experienced their participation across two photovoice projects that afforded more and less opportunity for participation.

This dissertation consists of three studies conducted on two distinct projects. Studies 1 and 2 were conducted on the HousingPlus Photovoice Project, an investigator initiated and driven application of photovoice. Study 1 examined what can be learned about supportive housing and revealed rich information about participants' experiences with their housing. Study 2 examined experiences of stakeholders with the photovoice method, including participants and project contributors. Study 2 revealed three distinct approaches to photography: *planned*, *discovery-oriented*, and *task-oriented approaches to photography*. Participants who used a discovery-oriented approach tended to benefit the most from this project. Contributors shared the common value of supporting participation but had divergent perspectives of the photographs, an important

product of participation. Contributors tended to focus either on the *external* or *internal photo narratives*.

Study 3 was conducted on the Home Photovoice Project, which was initiated and run by a community-based agency. This second project provided a point of comparison to determine whether a more participatory application of photovoice would result in similar or distinct findings related to supportive housing and stakeholder experiences with the method. Although the three distinct styles of participation observed in the HousingPlus Photovoice Project were also observed in the Home Photovoice Project, most participants developed a *planned approach to photography* over time. Participants who began with a planned or task-oriented approach tended to benefit the most from this more participatory application of photovoice. More was learned about shared participant experiences and perspectives in the Home Photovoice Project. In contrasting these projects it is apparent that the choice of methodological focus significantly impacts the photos and narratives produced, approaches to participation, and stakeholder experiences of photovoice. This has important implications for the design and delivery of photovoice projects.

Keywords: participatory research, photovoice, qualitative methods

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A Statement on the Dissertation Process

This dissertation is embedded within the preexisting relationship between Dr. John Sylvestre and the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network (OSHN), a group of 14 supportive housing agencies in Ottawa.

The HousingPlus Photovoice Project (Study 1 and Study 2)

Roles and responsibilities. As Ms. Bendell progressed towards developing her Ph.D. research, during the second year of her Ph.D. studies, she approached the Executive Directors of six supportive housing agencies within the OSHN to propose a photovoice project with the focus of understanding tenants' lived experiences of supportive housing. Executive Directors, staff members, and Case Managers within these 6 supportive housing agencies were very interested in this proposal, as they had expressed an interest in learning more about the experiences of tenants in supportive housing. Ms. Bendell, under the supervision of Dr. Sylvestre, successfully applied for the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) External Research Grant (grant number 6585-5186).

In preparing for the development of the HousingPlus Photovoice Project, Ms. Bendell conducted a thorough review of the photovoice literature and designed this project based on established photovoice protocol and within the limits of this funding. She successfully applied for the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board (REB) approval. To create a multidisciplinary approach to photovoice, Ms. Bendell in consultation with Dr. Sylvestre formed relationships with a professor of photography, a professor of art history, two graduate students, and a number of undergraduate students within the University of Ottawa's Visual Arts Department. Ms. Bendell was the lead facilitator and coordinator of all aspects of this photovoice project, working under the supervision of Dr. Sylvestre. With the help of case managers within

the six supportive housing agencies, Ms. Bendell recruited 15 participants. Ms. Bendell facilitated all meetings with all project stakeholders, including those with participants. She also analyzed all data involved with the project. A more detailed review of this process can be found in Chapter 2: Study 1.

Emerging research direction. The initial research question that guided the development of the HousingPlus Photovoice Project and comprised the focus of Study 1 is: What can be learned about supportive housing from a photovoice study? Additionally, questions were also asked about the project process itself to learn about participant experiences, as well as the experiences of various stakeholders, and ways of improving the project.

An inductive approach was used to analyze the HousingPlus Photovoice Project data, which included elements of grounded theory. This analytic approach was selected to ground the analysis and the resulting findings in the data, or experiences of project stakeholders, rather than in prior theory or assumptions of the researcher. Additionally, the purpose was to have an open and flexible approach to identify and pursue unexpected themes as they emerged. As analysis of Study 1 progressed, themes were identified on participants' experiences with the process of photovoice. These themes informed the development of a second research question, which provided the focus for Study 2: What are the experiences of participants and project contributors involved in an investigator initiated and driven photovoice project? A more detailed review of this process can be found in Chapter 3: Study 2.

The Home Photovoice Project (Study 3)

Roles and responsibilities. In June 2011, Ms. Bendell successfully defended her dissertation proposal with the committee members accepting both the methodology and direction of the research. During this meeting it was decided that a second photovoice project would

provide an important point of comparison for the findings from the HousingPlus Photovoice Project (Study 1 and Study 2). As Dr. Sylvestre and Ms. Bendell have an ongoing relationship with the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network (OSHN) it was agreed that Ms. Bendell would approach one of the supportive housing agencies that was in the development stages of their own photovoice project. The Home Photovoice Project became the second photovoice study within this dissertation and the basis for Study 3.

Ms. Bendell successfully applied for Research Ethics Board (REB) approval once again and met with the lead facilitators for the Home Photovoice Project to determine her role and the fit of Ms. Bendell's research within their design. Ms. Bendell was invited to volunteer as a co-facilitator throughout this project with the understanding that she would individually interview participants at the end of the project to learn about their experiences with this application of photovoice. As was agreed upon between the REB and the developers of the Home Photovoice Project, Ms. Bendell did not collect data as she co-facilitated this group. The analysis that forms Study 3 is strictly related to the interviews that were conducted at the end of this project. As such, the appendices do not include the same project information for the Home Photovoice Project as were included for the HousingPlus Photovoice Project (i.e., recruitment flyers, project description, photo-release form, and e-exhibit invitation). Instead, the focus of Study 3 is on the data generated through the interviews at the end of the project, and the appendices reflect Ms. Bendell's circumscribed role within this project. Although thorough project documentation was provided to participants at the start of their participation, the supportive housing agency that initiated the Home Photovoice Project did not permit the inclusion this material in the appendices of this dissertation as this was outside the scope of Ms. Bendell's interview process.

Emerging research direction. As this application of photovoice was more participatory in nature, the research questions were developed as a point of comparison for findings from Study 1 and Study 2 (the HousingPlus Photovoice Project). Therefore the guiding research questions for Study 3 are:

- 1) What can be learned about supportive housing from a more participatory application of photovoice?
- 2) What are the experiences of participants and facilitators in a more participatory photovoice project?

The Home Photovoice Project participants were aware of Ms. Bendell's role from the beginning of the project, including the important voluntary nature of Ms. Bendell's interviews. Throughout the Home Photovoice Project, Ms. Bendell co-facilitated each group meeting with participants and liaised between the University of Ottawa's Department of Visual Arts and the project in order to facilitate a curated exhibit. Six of the seven participants chose to meet with Ms. Bendell and shared their experiences of this photovoice project. The three project facilitators, who were staff members of this supportive housing agency, were also interviewed about their experiences facilitating the project. A more detailed review of this process can be found in Chapter 4: Study 3.

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Chapter 1: General Introduction

General Introduction

In scientific inquiry, the methodological choices that are made determine what can and cannot be learned about phenomena. In quantitative research, participants are typically asked to provide information about a particular area of study through predetermined response options on measures. As a result, participants often have a limited influence or control over the majority of the research process and are treated largely as sources of data. These approaches often do not reflect the people and the relationships among them as fundamental aspects of the data generation process. Participants, through their interactions with researchers and their methods, co-construct the data produced in any particular study (Charmaz, 2006).

In qualitative research the co-creation of data between the participants and researchers is a central assumption (Charmaz, 2006). Qualitative methods are used to describe and understand social and psychological phenomena by seeking to learn more about the experiences of people from their own perspectives (Banks, 2007; Charmaz, 2006). In doing so, they can provide a more flexible and open opportunity for participants to express themselves and maintain a greater measure of control throughout the research process. The hope is that enhanced contributions from participants will lead to increased access to and richer and deeper understandings of phenomena (Sylvestre, Bendell, & Bassi, in progress).

One of the ways that qualitative methods increase participation is by expanding how participants can express or represent their experiences. Although many forms of art in research are possible, there has been a rapid increase in the use of images (Blinn & Harrist, 1991), particularly in projects using the photovoice method. Photovoice, originally called *photo-novella*, is a visually based research method that asks participants to photograph aspects of their lives (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; McIntyre, 2008). Photovoice was developed with the assumption that

individuals are experts of their own experiences, and that their knowledge and perspectives can be captured using photography (Wang & Burris, 1994). Participants use these photographs to discuss their knowledge in focus groups or interviews, and to share their perspectives in some form. Although there are many potential outcomes of photovoice, photography exhibitions are common and policy-makers and community members are typically invited (Wang, 1999).

Photovoice is a transdisciplinary method with a wide breadth of scholarship that continues to evolve. Researchers highlight such outcomes such as participants' increased self-esteem and sense of empowerment (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004), and the rich data from the photos (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, & Radley, 2007; Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000). However, many of the reflections on the photovoice method are those of researchers and project facilitators and, by contrast, fewer reflections from the participants themselves (e.g., Chonody, Ferman, Amitrani-Welsh, & Martin, 2013; Lewinson, Robinson-Dooley, & Grant, 2012; Teti, Murray, LaShaune, & Binson, 2012).

As a method, photovoice is flexible and applicable to a variety of research and social issues. Although most photovoice initiatives involve the standard methodological components outlined by Wang and colleagues (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997; Wang et al., 1998), the majority of studies modify this method to fit the needs of participants, researchers, and the goals of the project (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). Although maintaining a high degree of participation throughout the photovoice process is ideal and in line with participatory action research (PAR) values, it appears that this is less frequently achieved in practice (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). There is a paucity of literature addressing the implications of photovoice projects that offer participants varying degrees of control and influence over photovoice processes, from the inception of a project to the dissemination of findings. In particular, it is

important to understand how more or less participation impacts the photos and narratives produced, and the experiences of participants and other project stakeholders.

As individuals living in supportive housing have had little opportunity to voice their experiences and perspectives within the housing literature, particularly within a photovoice framework, this dissertation seeks to understand consumer experiences of both supportive housing and the photovoice method. To achieve this, two applications of photovoice were used to compare and contrast the type of information generated from participants and experiences of stakeholders with the method itself. The HousingPlus Photovoice Project was an investigator initiated and driven application multidisciplinary approach to photovoice, whereas the Home Photovoice Project was a more participatory, group-based approach to the method.

This introductory chapter provides a framework for this research. First, a comprehensive review of the photovoice method and a summary of research outlining participation in photovoice will be presented followed by other relevant photovoice research. Second, the findings from a photovoice study of tenants' experiences living in supportive housing will be reviewed. Third, the perspectives that informed this research will be highlighted, followed by a description of the gaps in the literature, and rationale for the current research. In the last section of this chapter, an overview of the research design and guiding research questions will be presented followed by a brief overview of the two different applications of photovoice that informed this inquiry.

Review of the Literature

The use of visual material in research. The use of visual research methods began in the early 19th century. Photographs, drawings, and other images were largely used to document

phenomena under study (Banks, 2007). Typically, participants were not involved with, or even aware of, the creation of these visual representations by the researcher. With the evolution of visual research methods, the focus has increasingly shifted away from a researcher-driven use of visual data toward a collaborative approach in which participants communicate their perspectives and needs through the creation of visual materials. One of the earliest examples of collaborative visual research was reported by Worth and Adair (1972) and conducted in the 1960s. This study, entitled 'Through Navajo Eyes' is a series of silent and short documentary films created in collaboration with the Navajo Nation (Worth & Adair, 1972). Worth and Adair (1972) sought to understand how language can influence culture and provided 16 mm film cameras to members of the Navajo Nation, along with training in loading, focusing and film editing. This study is most noteworthy for its groundbreaking work in using visual media to understand an important area of inquiry. In particular, this study was one of the first efforts to put cameras in the hands of research participants with the goal of better understanding their perspectives and needs (Worth & Adair, 1997).

Collier and Collier (1986) photographed the weaving process of Otavalo Aborigines in Ecuador and, once the photographs had been developed, showed the images to the weavers. The weavers disapproved of the way in which the weaving process had been documented, and gave instruction to the researchers regarding the order of documentation during the next phase of the weaving process (Collier & Collier, 1986). Thus, new images, and important information about the phenomenon, were achieved through this collaboration.

As visual research methods have progressed, so too has technology. The camera, in particular, has undergone significant transformation. In the 1980s, the shape and size of cameras began to change as smaller and less expensive models became available. In the late 1990s digital

cameras became widely accessible to the public (Bank, 2007). Advances in technology not only made photography ubiquitous, it also made the use of photography in social research easier. Subsequently, the use of photographs in research was readily incorporated into traditional components of qualitative research, such as the semi-structured interview.

Photovoice

Overview of photovoice. Photovoice involves participants using cameras to document their experiences related to important issues in their lives (Wang & Burris, 1994). The method was developed in 1992 as the Yunnan Women's Reproductive Health and Development Program (YWRHDP) and was based in the Yunnan Province of China to explore rural women's reproductive health needs (Wang & Burris, 1994). Sixty-two village women were given cameras to capture their everyday experiences for one year, and gathered monthly for small group discussions with the researchers (Wang & Burris, 1997). Through this project, the participants partnered with members of All China's Women's Federation (ACWF) at the township level, as well as provincial leaders, Chinese university consultants, and other community members and policy-makers (Wang & Burris, 1997). In a community forum, participants presented photographs to community leaders, and several local changes were made based on the participants' expressed needs. This project marked the initial application of the photovoice method (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Broadly, photovoice involves participants working with facilitators to determine project themes and direction, participating in discussions and receiving some photography training, then taking photos on the agreed upon theme, developing captions for selected photos, and showing the photos in a public forum. The photos may also be used to stimulate discussion in focus groups or interviews (Wang, 1999). The photos taken by participants are thought to be reflective

of the settings, people or things that are important to them. In addition, because the dissemination of findings is an integral part of photovoice, participants can speak directly to community members, to whom they might otherwise not have access, including policy-makers and those with other decision-making power.

Wang (1999) identified photovoice as a community-focused action. Photovoice images can be used as powerful teaching tools to communicate the perspectives of participants on important issues, and to change the perspectives of a broader audience who view the photos (Wang, 1999). Photovoice can help people in the community to become involved in creating and defining the images that shape healthy public policy and policymakers are encouraged to witness the perspectives of community members (Wang, 1999).

Foundations of photovoice. There are three notable perspectives that have significantly influenced the development of the photovoice method (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The first is Paulo Freire's (2000) critical dialogue approach to education, which started as a participatory strategy to teach adult literacy and advanced the notion of co-creating knowledge, such that the teacher and learner engage in co-learning as equals (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006). Freire (2000) delineated three levels of increasing consciousness resulting from ongoing dialogue within a community, and states that the highest level of consciousness is reached when community members begin to recognize how their own beliefs and behaviours shape their reality. In his own work, Freire (2000) listened for particularly emotionally charged dialogue, and translated this into a series of drawings to generate further discussion and co-created knowledge, and with the goal of engaging community members in their own learning and movement toward action (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006).

Second, feminist theory has informed the development of photovoice as it assumes that people have expert knowledge of their own lives (Wang & Burris, 1994). Feminist theory identifies several characteristics of feminist-based projects, most notably, the notion that women and other marginalized groups of people must be active and central agents in any activity concerning their wellbeing, and that these activities must be collaborative and respectful of the experiences and perspectives of these individuals (Linton, 1990). Feminist theory challenges the status quo, instead prioritizing the needs of marginalized women and establishing plans for action (Linton, 1990). In this regard, photovoice reflects its feminist roots.

Finally, photovoice has drawn upon the community-photography approach developed by Jo Spence, a British photographer and educator (Spence, 1995). Spence (1995) gave cameras to individuals to document and discuss their experiences with the goal of confronting stereotypical visual media (Spence, 1995). In the same way, photovoice asks individuals who have traditionally been the subjects of photography to become the photographers of their own lives (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Photovoice and participatory action research. The use of photographic images in qualitative research can be particularly well suited to studies in which participants take a collaborative role in the research process, as is the case with photovoice. Participatory Action Research (PAR) has become increasingly common in many disciplines, including the social sciences and public health. It has emerged as an alternative to traditional research methods in which the researcher examines a phenomenon from a distance (Minkler, 2000). PAR requires researchers to engage in a co-learner relationship with participants (Minkler, 2000). Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin, and Lord (1998) define PAR as: “A research approach that consists of the maximum participation of stakeholders, those whose lives are affected by the problem under

study, in the systematic collection and analysis of information for the purpose of taking action and making change (pp. 885).” PAR places great value on community engagement and encourages the collaboration of important stakeholders throughout the research process (Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Barhoshi, & Pula, 2009). Community members and researchers join together in service of developing in-depth knowledge about particular issues of interest to a community (Dennis, Gaulocher, Carpiano, & Brown, 2009). Wallerstein and Duran (2010) outlined four principles that guide the application of PAR, including: 1) facilitation of co-learning between researchers and participants, 2) generation of research in an area with the goal of building both knowledge and community capacity to improve an issue, 3) generation of knowledge and understanding that is beneficial to all stakeholders, and 4) long-term commitment to improving wellbeing and decreasing health inequalities within a community.

The guiding values and application of PAR compliment the photovoice process. Both are collegial experiences in which local persons and researchers are viewed as colleagues with different skills to offer. Participant ownership with each research process is viewed as paramount and both approaches involve participant-researcher collaboration, to the greatest extent possible throughout all stages of research, to examine issues directly affecting a community of participants (Wang, Kun Yi, Wen Tao, & Carovano, 1998). According to Catalani and Minkler (2010), these approaches share several central principles, including an emphasis on: empowerment, participant-researcher collaboration and co-learning, community capacity building, and social action. The shared goals of PAR and photovoice are: 1) to generate knowledge that can inform social change (Minkler, 2000) and 2) to increase the ability of community members to solve pertinent community problems (Israel, Schurman, & Hugentobler, 1992).

Photovoice outcomes. Researchers in the photovoice literature, particularly related to projects involving youth and young adults, have identified several participant outcomes. Strack, Magill, and McDonagh (2004) conducted an after-school program to test the effectiveness of this approach in working with youth. These authors conclude from observational and interview data that participants experienced a sense of empowerment from participation, and suggest that photovoice projects working with youth must target the individual and psychological needs of this population (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004).

Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, and McCann (2005) examined two specific questions regarding youth and adult experiences of photovoice: 1) what is the impact of participating in a photovoice effort? and 2) how does the method of photovoice foster these impacts? These authors point to participant claims of feeling personally changed by taking photographs and engaging in dialogue with their community, and specify that these impacts ranged from increased self-awareness and sense of control over life to the creation of stronger relationships (Foster-Fishman et al., 2005). Finally, Wang, Cash, and Powers (2000) conducted a photovoice project at a homeless shelter in Ann Arbor, Michigan and found that participants had improved self-esteem, quality of life, and status among peers as a result of participating in this project. The authors also note the enhanced quality of relationships between participants (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000).

Several community-level outcomes have also been reported. The Monument Community Partnership (MCP) Project examined community health needs of a monolingual Spanish speaking community. As a community outcome of this effort, the local health department was made aware of how the community identified their health priorities. Pedestrian safety and healthy eating were named as particularly important community concerns and a joint working

group was initiated to address these community needs, among others (Pies & Parthasarathy, 2008).

In the YWRHDP Wang and Burris (1997) identified photovoice as an effective tool for addressing community health needs and reaching policy-makers. As a community outcome of this project, day care centers, midwifery programs, and scholarships for women were established to better meet the health needs of women living in rural China. Finally, the facilitators of a photovoice project conducted in Flint, Michigan examined and documented community safety concerns, claiming a deeper community-wide understanding of health and safety issues was reached (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004).

Photovoice has also been praised for the creation of wider societal change through prevention efforts. Stevens (2005) examined the perspectives of adolescent women who were parenting with the aim of contributing to the prevention of the early onset of illness in this group of marginalized women. Findings from this study led health care professions to acknowledge adolescent mothers as experts in their own lives and to examine issues of Socio Economic Status (SES) and nutritional deficits within this population. Wong-Kim and Wang (2006) also highlighted the societal change that resulted from the application of photovoice in this instance. In this study, the researchers disseminated important considerations for health practitioners in the early breast cancer screening technique of breast self-examination and presented the need for interventions that are culturally appropriate for immigrant Chinese women to encourage regular self-examination (Wong-Kim & Wang, 2006).

Typical components of the photovoice method. From Wang and Burris' (1997) pioneering project, the photovoice method has continued to evolve, although there are a number of possible components that can be incorporated into photovoice projects. Wang (1999)

summarized these components as: 1) choosing a particular target audience which may include policy makers and other influential community members, 2) recruiting a group of participants within a community of interest, 3) introducing participants to the concept of photovoice and discussing this process, 4) securing informed consent (including discussing ethical issues related to photography, such as photographic ownership and obtaining subject consent with photo-release forms), 5) deciding on a general theme to examine using photography, 6) offering cameras to each participant and providing training on photographic issues, 7) allotting a time period for participants to take photographs, 8) meeting in some capacity to discuss participants' intentions and reactions to their photographs, 9) preparing a forum in which to share selected photographs and stories with policy makers and community members, and finally 10) helping participants to prepare written descriptions of selected photographs, which Wang (1999) terms *free writes*.

Wang (1999) suggested the use of the acronym SHOWeD to help participants contextualize their chosen photographs. The follow questions offer guidance with this descriptive task: 1) what do you see here? 2) what is really **h**appening here? 3) how does this relate to **o**ur lives? 4) **w**hy does this problem or strength exist? and 5) **w**hat can we **d**o about it? This formula can be used at various points throughout photovoice to facilitate discussions about participants' photos in a group format, which can be taped and later transcribed, and to help participants develop written descriptions of selected photos.

The final stages of a photovoice process are particularly important, as participants work with the researcher to choose and contextualize their photographs (Wang & Burris, 1997). Nearing the time of a photovoice exhibit participants choose the photograph(s) they wish to present to the community and give voice to the photographs in narratives derived from

discussions of their lived experiences regarding a particular topic. Finally, participants help to confirm the issues, themes, and theories that may be produced through the photovoice analysis (Wang & Burris, 1997). In consideration of the photovoice objective of giving voice to marginalized individuals, it is of particular importance that participants choose which photographs they want to display and the way that they wish them to be publicly presented. Participants also produce their own freewrites to accompany their selected photographs. In the next section, the flexibility of the photovoice method will be examined as well as the extent to which photovoice has been participatory in practice.

Degrees of participation in photovoice. As a method, photovoice is flexible and applicable to a variety of research and social issues. The flexibility of photovoice has led to its use to investigate of a wide range of topics such as community violence prevention (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004), women's reproductive needs (Wang & Burris, 1994), and the chronic pain experience in older adults (Baker & Wang, 2009). More typical applications of this method have involved young people in student advocacy campaigns (Goodhart, Hsu, Baek, Coleman, Maresca, & Miller, 2006), community building, and investigating the engagement of young people in research (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). Other photovoice projects have focused on adults and policy-makers (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchinson, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004) and exploring the health needs of adolescent women who are parenting (Stevens, 2005).

Although most photovoice initiatives involve the standard components outlined by Wang and Burris (1997), the majority of studies in the literature modify this method to fit the needs of participants, researchers, and project objectives (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). The original photovoice procedure involved researchers initiating and facilitating projects with community

members participating solely during the implementation phase of the projects (Wang 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997; Wang et al., 1998). Catalani and Minkler (2010) examined the photovoice literature and determine variations in levels of participation available in photovoice projects. These authors found that increased opportunity for participation was associated with longer project duration. Approximately 30% of studies demonstrate low levels of participation with median projects lengths of 1.75 months. Studies with medium levels of participation constitute 43% of studies with a median length of 4 months. Finally, high participation studies comprised 27% of the literature with project durations of 4 or more months (Catalani & Minkler, 2010).

Viswanathan and colleagues (2004) highlighted ten elements they believe determine how participatory a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) project is. In photovoice, the more choice and control participants have over the following project elements, the more participatory a project is: 1) selection of the research question, 2) proposal development, 3) financial responsibility for grant funds, 4) study design, 5) recruitment and retention of study participants, 6) data collection, 7) intervention development and implementation, 8) interpretation of findings, 9) dissemination of findings, and 10) application of findings (Viswanathan et al., 2004).

In the majority of photovoice studies, themes are chosen prior to the recruitment of participants (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardhoshi, & Pula, 2009). In many photovoice studies, regular group discussions about photographs and accompanying narratives are not facilitated and participants have less control over how their photos are displayed. In an example of a less participatory project, Baker and Wang (2006) modified the photovoice method to examine older adults' experiences with chronic pain. In this

design, the researchers met with participants for individual interviews and did not provide opportunity for regular group discussions. Although maintaining a high degree of participation throughout the research process is in line with PAR values, it appears that this is less frequently achieved in application (Catalani & Minkler, 2010).

To strengthen the literature base, Catalani and Minkler (2010) called for greater evaluation of the various applications of the photovoice method and the degree of participation therein. In particular, how various opportunities for participation impact the type of information gathered and participants' experiences with the method remains unaddressed.

Photo-elicitation. Photo-elicitation is a common component of visual research and is frequently integrated within photovoice projects (Frohmann, 2005; Higgins & Highley, 1986; Killion & Wang, 2000; Smith & Woodward, 1999; Wang, 2003; Wang, 1998). Photo-elicitation is a form of interviewing that uses photographs to elicit memories, knowledge, and perspectives in the context of a semi-structured interview (Banks, 2007). Photographs used during photo-elicitation can be chosen by the researcher or created and selected by the participant (Banks, 2007). However, the importance of a participant's personal connection with the image is credited as evoking the greatest emotional reaction, and potentially generating richer data (Banks, 2007).

At their core, traditional research interviews are based on a power differential in which an interviewer asks questions of an interviewee who is expected to provide answers (Sylvestre, Bendell, & Bassi, in progress). Although skilled interviewers can minimize this power difference by trying to not overly direct the course of the interview, the focus remains in the control of the interviewer. The use of photographs in interviews can help to create a more comfortable interview process by shifting the focus from the interviewee to the photographs (Collier & Collier, 1986; Klitzing, 2004). McCracken (1988) suggested that photographs allow participants

to establish some distance from their everyday lives and are therefore able to view familiar aspects of their lives in new ways. This medium helps participants to build authority and agency as they vocalize and organize their experience through the use of the visual material, thus creating more open interaction between the participant and interviewer and facilitating a potentially more in-depth interview process (McCracken, 1988; Radley, Hodgetts, & Cullen, 2005). The focus of photo-elicited interviews is on participants' expression of their lived experiences. Their photos serve as stimuli for this dialogue.

Analyzing images: Internal and external narratives of photographs. Banks (2007) defines visual and contextual characteristics of photographs as the *narrative* or the “intentional organization of information presented within an image” (pp. 14) and draws a distinction between *internal narrative* and *external narrative*. According to Banks (2007) the significance of a given photograph cannot be fully comprehended without first understanding what is literally depicted in the photograph, or the internal narrative. Similarly, the circumstances surrounding the photograph, or the external narrative, are essential to ascertain before the meaning of an image can be understood. The external narrative of an image answers such questions as: the time the photograph was taken, for what reason, and who took the photograph. Banks (2007) deems an image to be a product of social reality, such that a photograph cannot be separated from the photographer's lived experience. Images, therefore, offer information about an individual's life and surrounding environment that may otherwise be unattainable through other research means (Mizen, 2005). In visual research, the internal narrative of a given photograph is made apparent by viewing the image. However, understanding the context of photograph, or the external narrative, cannot be adequately accomplished without seeking the input of the photographer (Banks, 2007). This is in contrast to documentary photography, which does not always require

the input of the photographer as the photograph speaks for itself. In photovoice projects that use photo-elicitation to facilitate dialogue, the external narrative is arguably of greatest value as researchers seek to hear from participants about what is important to them, whether or not this information is depicted explicitly in the photos.

Common challenges with the photovoice method. Although the photovoice literature provides many examples of the benefits of this approach at the individual, community, and societal levels, several notable challenges have also been identified.

Wang and Burris (1997) highlighted methodological challenges including problems of power relationships within the project. For example, the control of project resources may serve to reinforce existing power inequalities between the researchers and participants. They also contend that the goals of a particular photovoice project and the accompanying method might not coincide with realistic resources and capacity for the project. In particular, financial resources may be limited in light of the objectives of a particular photovoice project. Similarly, Pies and Parthasarathy (2008) questioned whether dialogue can be readily translated into action and highlight the difficulty in meeting the expectations of all participants, particularly those related to broader community change.

Another important challenge inherent in the photovoice method is the assumption that photography is a familiar activity that provides an alternative means for self-expression for people who may not be as comfortable with verbal expression. Harrison (2003) noted that photography is informed by everyday norms and conventions. However people may be more or less comfortable with photography in general. Taking photographs for a photovoice project may be an unfamiliar context in which to take photos. Klitzing (2004) stated that photography might

be challenging for some participants wishing to represent more abstract concepts. In line with this concern, Guillemin and Drew (2010) examined participants' experiences with taking photos. Although most participants appeared eager to communicate aspects of their lives using photography, they also note that some young participants were less comfortable with the photo-taking process. In particular, some individuals were worried about the content and quality of their images (Guillemin and Drew, 2010). The authors suggest that participants might also be concerned about the potentially revealing process of presenting aspects of their lives. Although the authors do not provide specific guidelines regarding how to build safe and trusting professional relationships with participants, they emphasize the important role researchers play with helping participants feel comfortable about photographing any aspects of their lives that they may wish (Guillemin and Drew, 2010).

Another methodological concern is that, while certain information is revealed through the photovoice process, other equally pertinent information may also be concealed. Hodgetts, Chamberlain, and Radley (2007) discussed the importance of focusing on what participants say about their photos, or the external narrative, as it is often insufficient to ascertain the meaning of images in research by simply viewing what is depicted in the photographic frame.

Ethical considerations in photovoice. Given the intimate and often revealing nature of images, and therefore the potential for misuse of these images, it is particularly important to consider issues of privacy and confidentiality when conducting a photovoice study. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) described four kinds of invasion of privacy that can result from photovoice projects. Discussing and agreeing upon expectations between researchers and participants with regards to clear boundaries of participation can help to protect against the invasion of participants' private space, revelation of embarrassing facts about an individual,

depiction of false information about an individual, and the use of a person's likeness to make a profit at the expense of the individual (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

To uphold participant safety and the respect of privacy, Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) offered recommendations for minimum best practice. These authors insisted that the safety of participants must be given greater priority over the naturalness and spontaneity of photographs. Providing participants with consent forms and reviewing these forms at the onset of a study are just as important as providing photo-release forms for the subjects of photographs to sign. Similarly, providing written material to participants and community members, detailing the various aspects of a project, further facilitates informed consent. Finally, promoting open dialogue around issues of ethics, photography, and the power of the image with participants and project facilitators at the start of a project is recommended practice (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

A Brief Overview of Supportive Housing

Pies and Parthasarathy (2008) cited the use of photovoice as a way for marginalized communities to document and express community health needs to inform the broader community about particular health issues, with the goal of promoting community change and societal development. As housing research less frequently includes the perspectives and concerns of the consumers of this service, photovoice provides a potentially helpful platform to highlight issues that are of greatest concern and interest to these community members.

Supportive housing is a form of social housing that offers support to individuals who have difficulty maintaining their housing independently (Parkinson, Nelson, & Horgan, 1999). Supportive housing programs serve a diversity of marginalized populations who are at risk of

homelessness, including people with mental illness, substance abuse, and chronic illness such as HIV/AIDS (Ward & Doherty, 2008). This form of housing emerged in the 1960s as a result of deinstitutionalization in Canada (Parkinson, Nelson, & Horgan, 1999; Sylvestre, Nelson, Durbin, George, Aubry, & Ollenberg, 2006), and provides individuals with housing and support services to facilitate community integration (Ward & Doherty, 2008). Supportive housing typically provides group living options, such as congregate settings (e.g., converted homes) and supervised apartments (e.g., apartments with on-site professional support) (Parkinson, Nelson, & Horgan, 1999; Sylvestre, Ollenberg, & Trainor, 2007). These services aim to create a community of support for tenants, and offer professional support with a focus on rehabilitation and the resolution of housing concerns, through enhanced decision-making and conflict resolution skills.

Positive outcomes of supportive housing programs have been shown to include improvement in housing stability (Lipton, Siegel, Hannigan, Samuels, & Baker, 2000; Pearson, Montgomery, & Locke, 2009) and reduced use of emergency services (Martinez & Burt, 2006). However, there is also evidence of several obstacles inherent in supportive housing programs such as: tenants' lack of choice and control (Nelson, Sylvestre, Aubry, George, & Trainor, 2007), poor quality of housing available (Nelson, Hall & Forchuk, 2003; Parkinson, Nelson, & Horgan, 1999) and the constraint of having personal support integrated with one's living space (Forchuk, Nelson, & Hall, 2006).

Photovoice applied to supportive housing. Overall, there is a lack of research examining tenants' experiences living in supportive housing. Given the well-suited application of photovoice in learning about the lived experiences of individuals within marginalized communities, it is arguably an optimal approach to understanding the experiences of individuals living in supportive housing.

Schneider (2010) conducted one of the few published previous photovoice studies examining tenants' experiences of *home*. The process of taking and discussing the photos led to the identification of various themes on the elements of housing that were associated with a sense of home, including sanctuary, privacy, safety and security, spirituality, community, and thankfulness. This study produced a dynamic view of the concept, with participants reporting a tension between the care and support they received and their perceptions of control over their own lives. Feelings of instability while living in community based housing were related to the ambivalence people felt about the support they received. For example, tenants were given the message that their recovery is their responsibility, but were concurrently limited by the decisions of their support staff.

Other photovoice projects have been focused on experiences in other forms of housing. Grieb and colleagues (2013) used photovoice to research how men who had been incarcerated and/or struggled with substance abuse saw the relationship between housing and health. These researchers asked their participants the following questions: 1) How does housing (or a lack thereof) affect your health and well-being? and 2) How does housing (or lack thereof) affect the health and well-being of your community? The authors concluded that photovoice was effective in generating knowledge regarding their participants' lived experiences as participants identified a relationship between housing, neighbourhood, health, and incarceration in their community (Grieb et al., 2013).

Finally, Stevens (2010) applied photovoice to the study of a public housing revitalization project in Washington State. They asked participants about their experiences with relocation and asked for recommendations on benefits of their new community. However, these researchers experienced challenges with the University Human Subjects Committee who was concerned that

discussions of photographs would lead to other residents being spoken about without their consent. The participants were also concerned about discussing their housing in case of potential repercussions from their housing agency (Stevens, 2010).

Perspectives that Inform this Research

This section provides a foundation for the perspectives that frame this dissertation. This research is informed by *constructivist* theory and the concept of *reflexivity* that inform the following assumptions: 1) multiple constructions of reality exist, such that what is known depends on the knower (Banks, 2007; Charmaz, 2006), and 2) the researcher, participant, data and analysis are interdependent in the research process (Banks, 2007; Finlay, 2002). Data from research, therefore, are a product of a relationship between researcher and participant in the context of a study. As a result, the contributions of the researcher are critical to the research process and subject to inquiry as much as the contributions of the participants. These contributions can be neither parceled out of the data, nor dismissed as partiality or bias (Finlay, 2002).

Constructivism. In contrast to positivism, which considers data as something independent of the research process to be gathered and studied, *constructivism* values the understanding of, versus the explanation of, a given phenomenon. Charmaz (2006) defines constructivism as:

A social scientific perspective that addresses how realities are made. This perspective assumes that people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate. Constructivist inquiry starts with the experience and asks how members construct it. To the best of their ability, constructivists enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views of it, and

locate it in its web of connections and constraints. Constructivists acknowledge that their interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction (pp. 187).

The constructivist perspective deems data and analysis the result of shared experiences within the research context (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivists view reality as a mental production that is both local and specific and the result of multiple subjective constructions (Annells, 1996). Constructivists study both how and why individuals make meaning in specific circumstances (Charmaz, 2006), and assert that one must examine the dynamics of the research relationship and engage in interactions of shared discourse and meaning to understand a phenomenon of study (Finlay, 2002). This perspective regards data as dependent on the research process, as construed through the interaction of the researcher with those who are researched (Banks, 2007).

Reflexivity. Finlay (2002) described the constructivist perspective as inherently bound to the concept of reflexivity. The relationship between the researcher and individuals who are the focus of research directs and shapes the course of research, rendering findings misunderstood if taken out of the context of this relationship (Banks, 2007). The concept of reflexivity, therefore, guides the unpacking and analysis of co-constructed data from a constructivist perspective.

Though there are many definitions of *reflexivity*, most point to the researchers' self-awareness of their own influences on the course of the research (Banks, 2007). Reflexivity is derived from the assumption that the researcher is as an integral tool in data collection, influencing the research focus and ultimately the participants' responses (Finlay, 2002). Reflexivity in research involves a thoughtful and conscious self-awareness of the researcher and a consideration of how the presence and views of the researcher shape and direct all aspects of the research process (Finlay, 2002).

Reflexivity is distinct from concept of *reflection*, which denotes the action of thinking about a phenomenon from a more removed stance (Finlay, 2002). Reflection occurs following an event and during a distinct time period. Reflexivity, by comparison, is both an immediate and ongoing examination of one's influence on a particular context (Finlay, 2002). Researchers who engage in reflexive research continuously shift between self-examination and practice (Finlay, 2002). One significant benefit of using a reflexive approach in qualitative research is the enhanced trustworthiness of the data (Banks, 2007). As the researcher examines how they might impact participants, how participants in turn impact them, and how this interpersonal dynamic affects the research process, this development is made transparent and accessible to a larger audience (Banks, 2007; Finlay, 2002).

Reflexivity, as a research perspective, can produce several benefits, including: 1) rich insight gained by participants and researchers through the process of continued self-examination, 2) a shift in self-awareness which can facilitate similar awareness in others, whether directly or indirectly involved in the research process, and 3) the consistent evaluation of method and outcomes enhances research integrity, as does the documentation and dissemination of method decisions to a wider audience (Finlay, 2002). However, it is important to note that reflexivity cannot be fully attainable as self-reflection can never be truly objective. This perspective does, though, provide an opportunity for the experiences and views of all roles within a research project to be shared, thereby enriching the research process and increasing the trustworthiness of the data.

Banks (2007) highlighted the particular importance of maintaining a reflexive stance within a photovoice project. As social researchers choose both what and how to disseminate findings, there is potential for the misrepresentation of participants' words and images. As such,

it is of particular importance for researchers to question ethical issues of ownership and representation (Banks, 2007), and just as significant, researchers must reflexively address their own influence on how findings are presented in the literature. In a participatory research project, such as photovoice, it is also important to consider how such process components such as project theme, choice of photographs, photography training, and public displays of chosen photographs can influence the outcome of a project. To do this, seeking the subjectivity of participants and facilitators alike can detail some of the ways in which the research relationship, and each person's experience with the project process itself, can influence the data.

Gaps in the Literature and Rationale for Current Research

It is clear that photovoice is celebrated as a socially engaging, flexible approach to generating knowledge and understanding about the lived experiences of members of marginalized communities. Photovoice literature is proliferating and provides rich examples of reflective descriptions of the content and method of such projects. However, more evaluative inquiries into the photovoice method are less frequent. In particular, it is common to find the documented perspectives of researchers or facilitators (e.g., Chonody, Ferman, Amirani-Welsh, & Martin, 2013; Lewinson, Robinson-Dooley, & Grant, 2012; Teti, Murry, & Binson, 2012) but the perspectives of participants about their experiences with the method are lacking. In addition, there is a dearth of literature addressing how photovoice projects that offer more or less opportunity for participation impact the photos and narratives produced, approaches to participation, and stakeholder experiences of photovoice.

As research on supportive housing often does not adequately reflect the perspectives and values of the tenants themselves (Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007), there is also a need to include within the literature the perspectives of consumers of this housing. The

photovoice method provides an optimal framework from which to better understand the experiences of individuals within this marginalized community.

This dissertation is an evaluative inquiry of the photovoice method that highlights the voices of consumers of supportive housing. Two applications of photovoice with varying opportunities for participation were compared to understand the impact of methodological choices on the information generated, approaches to participation, and stakeholder experiences with the photovoice method. This understanding can inform the work of people facilitating photovoice projects to increase their likelihood of success.

Overview of the Research Design: Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3

In keeping with this focus of inquiry, three studies have been developed to address the following questions:

- 1) What can be learned about supportive housing from an investigator initiated and driven application of photovoice?;
- 2) What are the experiences of participants and project contributors involved in an investigator initiated and driven photovoice project?; and
- 3) What can be learned about supportive housing from a more participatory application of photovoice?;
- 4) What are the experiences of participants and facilitators in a more participatory photovoice project?

These three studies are based on findings from two different applications of the photovoice method, which are outlined below. Information is also provided to situate the projects within the

three studies.

The HousingPlus Photovoice Project (Study 1 and Study 2). The HousingPlus Photovoice Project, hereafter referred to as the HousingPlus project, engaged people living in supportive housing in Ottawa to document their experiences and perspectives on their housing. Participants were invited to participate in the project with a theme and some of the process already established. At key points throughout the project, the research team discussed and collaborated with the participants as much as possible (Bendell & Sylvestre, under review). However, according to Viswanathan and colleagues' (2004) ten elements of participation, this project is considered less participatory in application as participants had only limited opportunity to contribute to data collection over a two-week period, as well as some influence over the interpretation and dissemination of the findings in an exhibit. The HousingPlus project encompassed Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation.

Study 1 used photovoice to examine tenants' experiences living in supportive housing. A critical analysis of the data produced through the HousingPlus project examined the lived experiences of this marginalized group of individuals. As the analysis progressed, unexpected themes began to emerge from the data. Specifically, information about participants' experiences with the process of photovoice itself began to take shape. From this analysis, Study 2 was formed to explore the experiences of participants and other stakeholders with the photovoice process itself.

In Study 2, participant and key project contributor experiences with the HousingPlus project were explicitly examined. Specifically, how this application of photovoice influenced information generated, approaches to participation, and stakeholder experiences with the method

were explored.

The Home Photovoice Project (Study 3). A second photovoice project, run collaboratively by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and an Ottawa supportive housing agency, served as a point of comparison for the HousingPlus project. This supportive housing agency offers housing and support to individuals living with severe and persistent mental illness. The Home Photovoice Project, hereafter referred to as the Home project, focused on participants' conceptions of home. Following the completion of this project, interviews with participants were conducted to understand their experiences of photovoice, and more specifically, how differences in the design and implementation of this project influenced what was learned about supportive housing, approaches to participation, and experiences of stakeholders. According to Viswanathan and colleagues' (2004) criteria, the Home project was more participant-driven and, therefore, more participatory in nature. In this project, participants influenced the selection of the research question, had a duration of 12 weeks to collect data, participated in an ongoing dialogue about interpretation of the findings, and directed the dissemination of the findings in an exhibit and book form. The Home project encompassed Study 3 of this dissertation.

Study 3 was developed based on the Home project, a more participatory application of photovoice, in order to provide a comparison for findings from Study 1 and Study 2. Findings from the Home project were compared with findings from the HousingPlus project to determine how varying levels of opportunity for participation impacted information generated, patterns of participation, and stakeholder experiences with the method.

Description of Analysis: Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3

This section provides a description of the approach to analysis used throughout Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3. An inductive analytic approach informed by work of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2006) was used to analyze the data from the HousingPlus and Home projects. The specific steps of the analysis are more clearly delineated in the upcoming chapters that address Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3 specifically.

Grounded theory. As the initial objective of this research was to understand participants' lived experiences of supportive housing, an inductive approach to analysis was maintained throughout this dissertation to allow findings to emerge from the interview data (Thomas, 2003). The analysis applied elements of grounded theory (GT), which provided both methodical and adaptable guidelines for constructing an understanding of participant experiences that remained grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), this transdisciplinary approach advocates a systematic qualitative analysis of data and theory development (Annells, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Wuest, 1995). GT highlights theory as ever evolving and the discovery of knowledge as both contextual and relational (Annells, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Wuest, 1995). In GT the collection and analysis of data occur simultaneously, and areas of research focus, including the research questions, emerge as this process progresses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). GT is particularly conducive to exploring the multiple and diverse perspectives arising in social processes (Charmaz, 2006).

Ultimately, photovoice is focused on understanding individuals' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon (Wang & Burris, 1994). As the initial focus of the HousingPlus project was to understand individuals' experiences of supportive housing, the approach employed in this dissertation allowed the analysis to remain as close as possible to what participants said about

their housing experiences. As Charmaz (2006) noted, the ongoing interaction between coding and memoing are particularly strong elements that allow the researcher to remain as close as possible to participants' meanings. As the analysis of Study 1 progressed, new themes about participation and experiences with photovoice itself began to emerge. These themes contributed to the development of additional research questions that informed Study 2 and Study 3. Study 2 focused on what participants and contributors said about their experiences with photovoice.

Throughout this dissertation, the following specific elements of GT were incorporated into the analysis: open coding, concurrent data generation and analysis, identification of categories, continued memo writing, axial coding, and constant comparative analysis until full data integration was achieved. The final step in data analysis according to grounded theory is selective coding in which a core category is identified as a means of creating relationships among other categories and developing a proposed theory. Although a formal theory on social processes was not developed, a complex interaction between participants, facilitators/contributors, and context emerged from the analysis, which will be discussed in upcoming sections.

Trustworthiness of the data. The trustworthiness of the data was attended to throughout the HousingPlus and Home projects. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the trustworthiness of qualitative data can be determined through addressing the following criteria: 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. Each will be reviewed in the context of data generated in both the HousingPlus and Home projects.

Credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), data is considered credible if it accurately reflects the perspectives of participants, which can be ensured in a variety of ways.

First, the adoption of a research method that is well established enhances the credibility of the data. Second, developing an early relationship with participating agencies strengthens this criterion. In the case of this research, a preexisting relationship between the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network, the author, and Dr. Sylvestre lead to the development of the HousingPlus and Home projects.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also pointed to triangulation, or the use of a variety of methods used in concert to confirm findings. Throughout Study 1 and Study 2, field notes from four members of the research team involved with the project, as well as the written reflections of two co-investigators, were used to document researcher observations and reflections during each interaction with participants. In Study 3, the authors' journal reflections and data analysis at various stages were shared regularly with Dr. Sylvestre, who challenged and helped to refine the emerging coding scheme. In Study 1 and Study 2, three researchers coded data from the HousingPlus project independently before comparing codes, titles, and descriptions of data. In Study 3, the author and Dr. Sylvestre compared codes, titles, and descriptions of data. Throughout the data collection and analysis stage of all three studies, audit trails were kept and analytic memos were written. Audit trails serve to document all steps taken during the coding of data (Patton, 2001) and analytic memos ensured the consistent examination of data with an increasingly analytic perspective (Charmaz, 2006). Analytic memos, in particular, facilitate the creation of theoretical categories as data analysis progresses (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, theme-validation meetings and member checking meetings were held to ensure the feedback from participants and facilitators/contributors was incorporated into the data analysis. In addition, the coding scheme was refined across Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3 until all cases within the data were addressed.

Transferability. The second criterion for trustworthiness as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is transferability. Transferability is the degree to which the results can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Comparable projects with participants having similar experiences may be used to determine whether findings are consistent across contexts and environments (Shenton, 2004). This is fairly difficult to establish in qualitative research. However, the addition of the Home project, which comprised Study 3 of this dissertation, provides a second study about tenant experiences with supportive housing in Ottawa and during a similar time period as the HousingPlus project. The comparison of findings from these similar, yet fairly distinct, projects speaks to the transferability of the data.

Dependability. The third criterion of trustworthy data is dependability, which is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the possibility of obtaining the same results if the same phenomenon could be observed again. These researchers stated that there is a strong link between credibility and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Addressing the dependability of the data requires that the study processes be reported in detail, as they have been in the current research, such that another researcher could replicate the processes. Specifically, the following elements of the current research, throughout three studies, are outlined in this dissertation: 1) research design and implementation of each project, 2) information detailing how data was gathered, and 3) reflexive evaluation of each project, including the data produced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability. Finally, the confirmability of the data refers to the degree to which the findings can be corroborated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The field notes from four members of the research team throughout the HousingPlus project inform the confirmability of the data within this context. Throughout the HousingPlus and Home projects the author maintained written

reflections to document researcher observations during interactions with participants. In addition, theme validation and member checking meetings held during each project was an important method of confirming and corroborating the findings.

Chapter 2: Study 1

Participant Experiences of Supportive Housing in the HousingPlus Photovoice Project

Abstract

Objectives: To understand what can be learned about supportive housing from an investigator initiated and driven multidisciplinary approach to photovoice. *Methods:* The HousingPlus project was conducted with 15 tenants living in supportive housing. The project was designed and facilitated by the author with the support of a multidisciplinary team of project contributors. Participants were asked to express their perspectives on supportive housing using photography. Participants documented their experiences with their housing and spoke about what their photos meant to them during photo-elicited interviews and at a final exhibition. *Findings:* This photovoice project elicited a fairly comprehensive view of housing, including an understanding of personal experiences, relationships, housing difficulties and supports, and finally broader community experiences. The breadth and highly personalized nature of information generated from this approach to photovoice compliment findings within the supportive housing literature. *Conclusions:* This method appears to be well suited for identifying a broad range of experiences and issues in the lives of participants, including their lived experiences of supportive housing.

Overview of Study 1: The HousingPlus Project

This study was a photovoice project in which people living in supportive housing were asked to express, in a novel way, their perspectives on supportive housing. Through photography, participants documented their experiences with their housing and what it meant to them. Interviews, using a photo-elicitation technique, were then used to understand participants' perspectives on their housing. The guiding research question for this study is:

- 1) What can be learned about supportive housing from an investigator initiated and driven approach to photovoice?

Project Contributors

A diverse group of individuals contributed to the HousingPlus project. This project, funded by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), was designed and led by the author. The co-investigators on this grant facilitated a collaboration between the Department of Visual Arts (DVA) and the School of Psychology (SP) at the University of Ottawa. Students in each department supported the study. The partnership with the DVA enabled the researchers to secure access to artist mentors and a curated exhibit held at the Bytown Museum.

Artist mentors. Two artist mentors volunteered their time to this project. They were both masters' level students in the DVA at the University of Ottawa who helped facilitate the photography workshops and photo-finishing meetings.

Visual arts professors. Two visual arts professors in the DVA facilitated different aspects of this project. One professor taught a curatorial course to undergraduate students in the department. As part of this course, students were required to choose a visual arts project to

curate. The second professor was involved in the design phase of the HousingPlus project. This person was also responsible for recruiting the artist mentors from the department.

Student curators. Eleven students enrolled in an undergraduate curatorial course in the DVA curated the HousingPlus project for their final class project. Subsequently, three curator students volunteered to be interviewed about their experiences. These students were primarily responsible for organizing the curatorial team and liaising between the various contributors to organize the exhibit. Student curators had little contact with participants until the final group meeting held to prepare for the exhibit.

Research team. The author acted as the project lead, liaising between stakeholders and contributors, and was the primary contact with participants. The research team consisted of three undergraduate students from the SP who supported the facilitator during the workshops and photo-finishing meetings. The work of one student formed the basis for a fourth-year honours thesis. She attended all workshops and meetings with participants and contributed to the analysis of data from interviews with project participants. The other students volunteered their time as a means to further their community research experience. These students worked under the supervision of the author and Dr. John Sylvestre.

Participants. Participants were 15 tenants living in supportive housing from three months to 17 years. Eight women and seven men joined the project. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 57 years of age, and were living with a variety of personal difficulties, including severe and persistent mental and/or physical illness, substance use, transition due to separation and divorce, and risk of homelessness. All but one person reported that they lived alone in their housing.

Recruitment. Permission to recruit participants was obtained from six supportive housing agencies. Participants were recruited through a pre-existing collaboration between a research team from the University of Ottawa, and the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network (OSHN). The participants were recruited through word-of-mouth, flyers placed at each agency (see Appendix A for the recruitment flyer), and through staff members. Members of the research team also visited three housing agencies to discuss the project with potential participants.

Methods

Information meeting. An information meeting was held on October 8, 2009 for interested tenants. A brief introduction to the project was given to the eight tenants who attended. During this meeting, the goals of the project and the roles of participants and project contributors were described, and any questions that individuals asked were answered. The timeline of the study was reviewed; thus tenants were made aware of the time commitment that the project entailed. Interested tenants were also given a project description document and consent forms to take home and review (see Appendix B for the project description and Appendix C for the consent form).

Photography workshops. Three workshops were held to familiarize participants with the project, as well as with the use of digital cameras. Seven participants attended the first workshop on October 22, 2009, four attended the second on December 8, 2009, and four attended the final workshop on January 28, 2010. The three workshops followed an identical format. Each participant was given a folder containing a consent form, a \$15 honorarium, a sheet of safety tips, a journal, photo-release forms, a camera-use sheet, an identifying nametag, and business

cards with the contact information of the author (see Appendix D for photo-release form). Before each workshop progressed, informed consent was obtained from each participant.

At the start of each workshop, a brief introduction to the research team and the project was given. The timeline of the project was discussed, and the participants were introduced to the materials in their folders. The participants were informed that they would have two weeks with the digital camera, followed by an individual meeting with the author to review their photographs and select their images for the photography exhibit. Due to ethical and safety concerns, participants were asked to refrain from including people in photographs with negative themes, and to obtain signed consent from any individuals who appeared in photographs with positive or neutral themes. Next, the author facilitated a discussion about the participants' first impressions, concerns, and hopes for the project, and other comments. During a break at the midpoint of each workshop, researchers distributed cameras, memory cards, battery chargers, and manuals. The participants were provided with the cameras to take as many photos as they wished over a two-week period. The participants were asked very broadly to "show us what supportive housing means to you."

The second portion of the workshop focused on photography, facilitated by the author and the artist mentors. The mentors introduced participants to the basic functions of the digital cameras. A slideshow was used to show participants the diversity of photographs they could take. The slideshow included the work of the mentors as well as other images selected by the facilitator and the mentors. During this activity, participants discussed each of the photographs.

Photo-finishing meetings. Following two weeks of photography, participants met with the facilitator and mentors to review their photos and to finish their photos using Photoshop in

whatever ways they wished. Participants could choose to change aspects of their photographs or to leave them in their original form. Facilitators provided one-to-one support for participants who requested help titling their photos and writing a descriptive paragraph for one photo they each selected to be displayed at the exhibit. To help with this process, the SHOWeD method developed by Wang and colleagues (2004) was employed: 1) what do you see here? 2) what is really happening here? 3) how does this relate to our lives? 4) why does this problem or strength exist? and 5) what can we do about it? This exercise served to contextualize the photographs and to document this information.

Each of the photographs selected by participants were printed and professionally framed. Additional photographs were organized in a slide show that could be displayed on a large screen during the opening of the exhibit. In addition to displaying the photographs and the accompanying text, some participants also elected to display their poetry.

Planning, advertising, and curating the exhibit. Beginning in January 2010, the research team worked with students from the DVA to plan, promote, and curate a photovoice exhibit at the Bytown Museum. The Bytown Museum is located in Ottawa's oldest building next to the Rideau Canal locks. Its mandate is to document the history of the city of Ottawa, including providing more recent representations of the city through the works of contemporary artists.

The facilitators and student curators met with participants once prior to the exhibit. During this meeting, participants' feedback on their selected printed images was sought, and the format of the exhibit was discussed with them. Participants were also shown a model of the exhibit showing the layout of the museum space and the location of the photos.

The exhibit was held at the Bytown Museum from April 22 to April 25, 2010 (see Appendix E for photography exhibit e-invite). Participants were asked to invite whomever they wished to this exhibit. Management and staff members from the housing agencies were also invited, as well as policy makers in the supportive housing field in Ottawa, faculty members and colleagues from University of Ottawa, and staff members from the CMHC. The opening of this exhibit was attended by approximately 200 community members, and received local media coverage. Following the completion of the exhibit a theme-validation meeting was held with participants to learn about their experiences of the exhibit, as detailed below.

Data Collection

Interviews with participants. Following the two-week photo-shoot, participants met with the author for a one-on-one, semi-structured interview, which lasted about 1.5 hours. During the interview, the participant and interviewer reviewed the participant's photos and discussed them. The interview, in part, focused on the meaning of the photographs and the reasons why the participant took them. The rest of the interview focused on participants' experiences with different aspects of the photovoice project, including the workshops, camera, and taking photos. Participants were asked about what aspects of the project they found enjoyable or challenging and to provide suggestions for improving the project (the interview questions are found in Appendix F). Each interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed. Interviews were held prior to the final exhibit due to the need to report on early findings to the CHMC, the project funder. However, the theme-validation was held with participants following the exhibit to learn about their experiences with this important project component.

Field notes. The author and three members of the research team maintained descriptive and analytic field notes throughout the duration of the project. These notes were reviewed and incorporated into the data analysis process.

Theme-validation and wrap up meeting. A theme-validation meeting occurred on June 11, 2010. During this meeting, participants discussed their experiences of the project, particularly the photography exhibit, as well as their reactions to the themes generated from an analysis of data from the individual interviews. At this meeting, themes were presented to participants via a PowerPoint presentation. Each theme that emerged from the data was summarized and a slideshow of the related digital photographs was shown and discussed. Participants spoke about their differing perceptions of the digital photos, and shared their own experiences of living in supportive housing. Although some participants were more vocal than others, each individual contributed to the discussion at least once. As with the interviews, the discussion format remained open, but several key topics were generated previous to the theme-validation meeting. Participants spoke about how excited they were by the exhibit, and the number of people in attendance. Most participants spoke of feeling very proud and having a sense of accomplishment as a result of their participation in the exhibit and some stated that they wanted to hold a second exhibit to continue sharing their photos and narratives. A group photograph of participants and research team was taken at the end of this meeting by participant request.

Data Analysis

As previously reviewed, an inductive approach to analysis using key elements of grounded theory provided the analytic framework for Study 1.

Inductive analysis. Qualitative data for Study 1 were generated from transcribed audio-recordings of photo-elicited interviews with participants. That is, the analysis focused on what participants said about their photographs in an interview with the author. The author began this analysis by closely reading through the interview data. This read-through initiated the process of ‘open coding’ during which the author coded the data line-by-line (Charmaz, 2006). To facilitate this process, the author asked the following questions: 1) what is going on? 2) what are people doing? and 3) what do these actions/statements take for granted? (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout the process of coding, the author kept a journal of analytic memos in which emerging themes and ideas about the possible relationships between codes were recorded (Charmaz, 2006). The interaction between coding and memoing helps to ensure that the analysis remains close to participants’ experiences. Several pieces of reflexive information were therefore documented as part of the memoing process: 1) summaries and descriptions of portions of data, 2) key quotes, 3) reflections on the relationship between codes, and 4) reflections on how the codes were related (Charmaz, 2006). This reflexive process, in turn, reciprocally informed the development of codes. Broadly, the important elements of the coding process included: 1) assigning words to segments of text, 2) sorting coded text in new ways, 3) condensing data into analyzable segments, and 4) generating analytic concepts (Charmaz, 2006). QDA Miner, computer software designed specifically for qualitative research, was used to facilitate the coding and analysis of the data. The specific coding process that the author used throughout the analysis of interview data from Study 1 follows below.

Coding interview data. The author initially examined two interviews thoroughly, identifying statements related to participants’ housing experiences. These statements were

provisionally coded. These codes were then grouped into categories that were assigned a label and a description. These provisional categories were then shared with other members of the research team who provided feedback on the categories, labels, and descriptions. Categories were refined and modifications were made in order to ensure that they reflected the data. These categories were then used to code a second subset of the interviews. This second iteration resulted in the addition of some categories and the refinement of others. This process continued until all transcripts had been analyzed. Throughout the process, two additional members of the research team coded the data to ensure coding protocol consistency. As the analysis progressed, fewer changes were made to the coding scheme.

The theme-validation meeting data consisted of audio-recordings and detailed hand written notes. The recordings and notes were reviewed to identify statements about the themes presented to the participants. Statements identified were those that either supported, or did not support, the proposed themes as well as statements that elaborated on the participants' own experiences with the particular theme. These statements were reviewed and then summarized for inclusion in this dissertation. Other sources of data used in this analysis included field notes and on-going analytic memos and reflections as well as participant journals.

Findings

This section examines what participants said about their experiences of living in supportive housing, through their photographs and in their interviews. The analysis revealed some areas of tension between participants and their housing. Participants spoke about the ways in which their lives are inextricably linked with their housing, and also described how their lives are separate from their housing. Participants chose to speak about certain photos in more detail than others,

and in many circumstances the focus of the interview moved away from issues of supportive housing and towards the participants' personal lives.

Themes are presented ecologically, beginning with information about the individual, their housing, and then their experiences with their broader community: 1) *showing who I am*, 2) *showing where I live*, 3) *living in my housing*, and 4) *my community*. Throughout this section, categories will be presented followed by subcategories and a description of each. Example statements will be imbedded throughout the text.

Showing Who I Am

The first category, entitled *showing who I am*, includes statements pertaining to participants' personal challenges, successes, and more generally, their life histories. Most participants took pictures that depicted or represented the self in some way. In contrast to categories in which participants described where they lived and how they felt about where they lived, this category included statements about photographs in which participants sought to express how they see and define themselves. Specifically, this category included three subcategories: 1) *personal struggles* which included participants' past and present challenges and how they have coped, 2) *values and preferences*, including statements describing views of self, perspective on the world, and faith, and 3) *goals* which included participants' goals and hopes for the future. In some instances, participants seemed to speak about their views of the world as a means to give the interviewer a better sense of who they are.

Personal struggles. Eleven participants made statements about their personal histories, including challenges they have overcome and those with which they continue to struggle.

Participants reported experiencing many personal difficulties, including: the death of family and

friends, job loss, surviving abuse, struggling to care for ailing family members, coping with the aftermath of sexual and physical assault, mental health challenges, medical concerns, financial difficulties, and alcohol and drug addiction. Nearly half of participants spoke in-depth during the interview about very difficult experiences. One participant described a time in her life when she struggled with mental illness: “I had about three months of devastation at one point I was so depressed.” Another participant spoke about her experiences with homelessness and drug addiction:

Yes, I’ve been on the street since a young age. Yes, I did crime. Yes, I’m an ex-heroin addict intravenously. Yes, I did a lot of crime. Yes, I went to penitentiary. Just got out and was placed here in Ottawa. Which my journey was a very long journey but something really came good out of it because now my daughter’s coming back...to stay with me.

Many participants continued to struggle with several of these challenges, particularly drug addiction, mental illness, and financial strains. As a result, many participants spoke of additional ongoing sources of stress, such as having fewer social contacts and being negatively identified in their communities, which can be referred to as *stigma*. One participant spoke about her children being taken from her care by the Children’s Aid Society (CAS), and another participant talked of his experience with stigma from police officers: “and the first cop I remember, he was very rude, ignorant, and he started yelling at me and I started yelling back...for what...I said why don’t you bother a crack head. I work.”

Discussing difficult life circumstances led many participants to speak about ways in which they cope with these struggles. Generally, participants mentioned coping in the following ways: individual therapy, religion and faith, support groups (e.g., self-esteem groups, anger

management groups, etc.), caring for animals, avoiding their housing when violence and drug use is particularly prevalent (e.g., staying with a partner, choosing to work nights), choosing to adopt a particular perspective, seeking support from fellow tenants, engaging in meaningful and satisfying creative outlets, and honouring the memory of those who have died. In this last instance, a participant kept a valued possession that reminded her of a deceased friend:

...a girl that lived in the building passed and prior to her passing she gave me Bing. I dress him according to the season and everything and I remember all the good times with her, laughing...it's hard but she was a very happy person.

Another participant described how she has decided to cope by changing her perspective:

And I've taken a lot of the negativity out of my life, you know? And even though things are not where I want them to be, I just feel like thinking positive and just kind of finding time for myself and finding that it's okay to be alone and to sit alone, it'll help you think and it's okay to not ... it's not that I wasn't around a lot of people. It's just I was around a lot of the wrong people. So, I feel like I lost myself, and I don't know how to just sit by myself...

Exceptionally, this participant also spoke about changing her expectations for herself as a way of coping, and how difficult this process has been for her:

...because with my age, I had a lot of expectations for myself growing up...and now, coming into my mid-twenties...I feel like I've wasted a lot of time...I still feel like at this age there's somewhere I wanted to be back when I was in my high school years. And I took a completely different path.

To a lesser degree, participants made comments about their fond memories and successes, such as having children, enjoying employment, and happy memories with their families of origin. One participant shared his memories of traveling with his band and playing at outdoor concerts. Overall, participants talked about their experiences of supportive housing as intrinsically linked to the process of recovery.

Values and preferences. All participants spoke about their values and preferences during the interview. Participants spoke about their personal preferences: “well, environment is everything. It’s true, if things are out of sorts for me I freak”, and how they view themselves: “I’m a real people person”, and “I guess I’m just a more reasonable person a little bit.” Statements about personal perspective provided important information about how participants perceive the world. In particular, participants spoke about their general perspectives on life: “me, I’m an optimist, I keep looking for the cure” and more specifically: “you’ve got to realize that you can be part of the support system or not, or you can sit back and be derogatory. Life is what you make it. If you choose not to participate, well, don’t turn around and say it’s our fault.” Finally, one person elaborated on his faith in a way that offered a greater understanding of his personal beliefs:

It’s funny how you see things in other people’s lives and your Christianity. It’s not that it lessens, it starts to reach out and see...I see the same spirit, the same name, in other people of other faiths and I sense that very much. I can sense goodness there too. There’s a good common ground to start with without the prayers and everything else. I stay away from that kind of stuff.

Goals. Eleven participants talked about their personal goals and hopes for the future. In general, participants seemed to strive for the following changes in their lives: 1) acquiring resources, 2) acquiring new skills, and 3) maintaining positive changes. In the first instance, participants spoke about desiring the following positive material changes: cleaning their apartment, receiving new teeth, getting a new piece of furniture, growing their hair to the desired length, moving to a new apartment, or a larger apartment. In the second case, comments focused on participants' desire to acquire new skills that often centered around education, such as learning to play the guitar, taking courses offered by community centers, and completing one's high school education. Finally, participants also spoke about the more abstract goal of growing as a person and maintaining the positive changes they have made: "but one day I'll have to go, and one thing I'll always hold are the memories that made me feel whole." Another participant shared her perspective on personal growth: "and even the idea of taking that journey from the old place to the new place was just part of...getting rid of the bad and going towards the new."

Interestingly, some of the participants who spoke at length about their personal difficulties also said they desired to help other people cope with similar situations. This goal seemed to manifest most often through writing and art: "I wrote a lot of things that I hope help the mentally ill, myself included." This participant elaborated on this goal: "I wanted to write something called *"The Last Leper Colony"*, just to tell a little bit about my story but also about other people along the way and some of the problems we run into and some of the things that anybody can do to make mental health better". Another participant expanded on the desire to help others in similar situations: "A lot of people know me so I can be someone...not a poster child, but a little bit of a representative."

Finally, four participants chose to share their poetry with the interviewer. In two cases, participants wrote poetry specifically for the project, and in the two other instances, participants shared poetry that was unrelated to the project. All poems were self-revelatory in nature, but the poetry written outside of the context of this project included information about participant's life experiences separate from their housing. In particular, these participants spoke about enduring potentially debilitating challenges and revealed rich personal insight into how these difficulties were overcome.

Showing Where I Live

The second category, labelled *showing where I live*, includes the statements participants made about their housing and support services. The statements described the physical components of *the housing* as well as *the support services* offered by housing agencies.

The housing. Every participant discussed the physical aspects of their housing. Statements were largely descriptive in nature. For some participants this meant literally showing their housing. Statements made about the physical components of housing suggest the value participants place on having control over these aspects. Participants value housing that is not only well resourced but that these resources can be easily accessed when tenants choose. Similarly, participants placed importance on the opportunity to choose how to personalize their living space, including how to decorate their homes. The personalization of space and resources are necessary to make housing a home

Many of the statements about shared space were descriptive and positive in nature (e.g., "this is our beautiful television that's in our lounge", "there is our lobby", and "this is over in the community room.") Generally, participants tended to talk about shared space that added

recreational value to their lives, such as pool tables, televisions, computers and printers, as well as shared space that was comfortable and welcoming (e.g., “it’s got three leather couches and a leather chair. It’s really nice leather”).

Participants also described their personal spaces (i.e., apartments), emphasizing their décor. In general, most participants seemed satisfied with this space and often appeared proud of their choice of decorating: “so this is something that hangs in my living room. It’s a sun...I just bought it. I like doing things like that. Aztec and wooden signs.” In many cases, favoured pieces of décor reflected key relationships in participants’ lives and were likewise a source of pride: “somebody had given me that and I thought it was, I really like, everybody that comes into my place they see that and they’re like, oh, I want it.” Another participant expressed how he feels about his personal space made possible by his housing agency:

...and social housing gives us that ability to live a comfortable lifestyle. Not comfortable, a normal lifestyle. And it’s a warm environment. And it’s a safe environment...it’s beautiful. It is. It’s so gorgeous. I love my apartment. You have no idea how much I love my apartment...I love being at home.

Eight participants reported taking pleasure from caring for plants in their personal space: “that’s the plant I bought and I was proud of it.” Two participants, in particular, described common space and personal space with significant praise and gratitude.

The support services. When participants described particular supports offered by their housing, they often disclosed both personal instances of benefiting from these programs and their knowledge of other tenants’ experiences with these services more generally. In the first case, one

participant shared her experience in a support group: “It was called [name of support group]. That was working on my self-esteem so I graduated that group.” In the later instance, one participant described a program that he knew others benefited from:

...this is the [name if program] and it’s an alcohol program. They get alcoholics off the street and they have a living area for them. They give them one drink, three ounces of wine, an hour from 7:30 in the morning until 9:30 at night.

Another participant described some of the support programs offered through her housing: “There’s all kinds of interesting programs. We run addiction programs and other support programs...there’s a women’s assertiveness group starting at our building, so it’s amazing. This is supportive and healthy and that is what it is. We got it.” Several participants also spoke about the ‘activities board’ on display in the lobby of their agency, which lists available services in a given week, such a tailoring, manicures and pedicures, and social outings. Exceptionally, one participant recognized a need within his housing agency for an increase in mental health services, specifically counselling services, to be made more available to tenants.

Finally, four participants mentioned the security systems in place in their building, and how new security features, such as a gate in one agency’s back entrance, have made participants feel safer in their housing. Housing security seemed to be especially important for two participants who had been personally affected by security issues in their housing. Specifically, one participant had been assaulted on two separate occasions outside of her building, and another had lived in close proximity to individuals using drugs and becoming violent. Understandably, the participants who disclosed feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood spoke with appreciation of

the new security services provided by their buildings and have both joined building watch programs to patrol the hallways.

Living in My Housing

The third category, entitled *living in my housing*, includes statements about participants' important relationships, often within their housing, labeled *the people* in my housing, as well aspects of participants' housing that they described as frustrating, called *frustrations with housing*. This category also highlights participants' sense of responsibility for their housing, including the ways in which participants become involved with improving their housing. This subcategory is labelled *participating in housing*.

Within the subcategory *frustrations with housing*, comments focused on issues of building *maintenance and upkeep*, involving maintenance issues in need of attention, such as a leaky faucet and a hole in the ceiling of a participant's apartment, and upkeep issues that are addressed continuously. Comments also centered on *restrictions and limitations* imposed by the housing agency, and *conflicts with other tenants*.

The people. All participants spoke about the relationships in their lives. The comments indicated that the closest relationships in participants' lives are those with fellow tenants and supportive staff members. Whereas participants described their relationships with family members as distant, they described their relationships with tenants, in contrast, as more satisfying. In particular, participants spoke about a sense of community within their housing, and deriving unconditional support and acceptance from these relationships: "it's a close-knit sort of community...it's funny and you have to be very liberal and open-minded. And we do, we literally get all kinds. We have had a transgender and gay people and all are welcome."

Comments reflected the importance of fostering close relationships with neighbours: “so, at this house, everybody treats each other like family”. Another participant stated: “the people where I live have become like family and they do. Everyone is extremely special in the building”, and a third person said: “there’s fun and happiness in our building.”

Participants described how they enjoyed seeing fellow tenants improve, and reflected on their own personal recovery as facilitated by their housing: “when [name of tenant] first came to [name of agency] she talked to herself rampantly but now she doesn’t” and “I feel like I really just found peace within myself, within my room.”

Participants also described advocating on behalf of each other, and taking care of each other’s physical needs. In the first case, participants spoke about correcting misconceptions about their friends, particularly when friends are identified because of mental health concerns: “She’s barely home and first of all she’s not using drugs. She’s been clean....” In the second instance, participants spoke about sharing cigarettes, beer, and food. For one person in particular, offering unconditional acceptance to individuals addicted to drugs was important, and he spoke of offering his addicted friends marijuana and cigarettes to help them abstain from harder street drugs: “he spends all his money on drugs so I give him five cigarettes a day.” Some participants spoke about experiencing loss while living in their housing, particularly with regards to other tenants dying: “ten or twelve people I know have been dying in the last few years.”

Twelve participants identified supportive relationships with staff members. The majority of participants who mentioned staff members spoke of them in a fairly general and descriptive way (e.g., “That’s [name of staff member]. She works at the soup kitchen”) or told a story about a particular staff member that indicated a sense of closeness with that person: “[name of staff

member] is a manager of the men's shelter and he worked his way up. He started off working in the office and he's a tough, no shit type of character."

A minority of participants talked about having a friendship with a staff member and spoke about feeling personally supported by that person: "this is the lady that saved my life...I've known her for, oh, quite a few years, and she's helped me through a lot of hard times so I've known her for 17 years." Similarly, one participant spoke of the positive difference supportive staff members have made in her life:

And the staff is really great...they came through some pretty rough times and definitely the building is my home, it's my family, my support. And without all of these elements in my place, my personal, and everyone has this quality of life, it just wouldn't be the same.

Another participant agreed: "It becomes your home after a while. You get to know people that come in and they're working with you and it's nice to have some people to talk to, you know, it's nice to see the sunshine in some kind of dark little world." In these instances, participants communicated a sense of gratitude for the personal support received from staff.

Exceptionally, one participant reported her close relationships as existing outside of her housing: "I have more of my connections outside." Another indicated that she derived much support and comfort from her aunt, and maintained more distant relationships with other tenants.

A common theme that emerged from participants' relationships with other tenants is the notion of reciprocity. In many cases participants spoke about their neighbours becoming their close social connections and taking care of each other in a variety of ways. Receiving help from others was important, but returning support was perhaps more important to participants. Having

the opportunity to offer support for another gives a sense of agency and control within one's relationships, particularly if an individual has been marginalized and has had to rely on support from others. Settings such as supportive housing can create important opportunities for reciprocity and the creation of community.

The resources that were valued by most participants were accessible and supportive staff members. In particular, participants appreciated a living space populated by staff members that were available when needed. The personalization of these relationships appeared to be an important factor in making their housing a home.

Frustrations with housing. Most participants made comments about what frustrates them about living in their housing. All frustrations centered on experiencing a lack of choice and control with various aspects of the housing.

Maintenance and upkeep. Eight participants mentioned maintenance and upkeep issues within their housing. Comments about outstanding maintenance problems focused on repairs that were not addressed in a timely manner, and repairs that had been inadequately addressed. One person described repairing her bathroom tile herself because she did not receive timely service: “this is right beside the bathtub and what happened here is the bottom tile fell off and what I did, because they weren't coming to fix it, I took all the insulation out and, yes, it was black and dirty and all that stuff.” Other participants spoke about repair jobs that had been given insufficient attention: “because they were supposed to come and finish repairing and they came, they repaired a bit, and then they left it.” A participant experienced maintenance issues that were created while other repairs were being addressed: “when they cleaned the apartment, they took the numbers off the stove.” This person spoke at length about her frustrations with the physical

shortcomings of the common areas and her own unit. Specifically, issues of insufficient preparation of her apartment for occupation seemed to be of central concern to this participant.

Many participants detailed physically uncomfortable aspects of their housing, including small apartments, dusty and ageing buildings, and their poor aesthetic appeal. An important frustration for a few participants was the ongoing bed bug and cockroach infestations in their buildings: “I have all my things in plastic containers just to keep them clean and safe...because there’s problems with bedbugs sometimes.”

Participants expressed frustration over incidents when they did not have control over the shared and personal spaces in their housing, particularly regarding maintenance issues within personal space.

Restrictions and limitations. Statements focusing on restrictions and limitations imposed by the housing agency included regulations that decreased participants’ freedom, such as not allowing feet to be placed on furniture, inflexible computer room hours, strict chores and curfew rules. One participant said: “...my house with all the chores and all the rules. Sometimes you feel like it’s a little boot-campish, to be honest.” Another participant described feeling powerless in the face of rigid housing regulations: “sometimes I wonder if the situation, like doesn’t, like being given notice of termination of tenancy could just be the final straw type of thing that, at which point a person decides well, you know, it can’t get much worse than that, so why carry on?”

A few participants shared their frustration with their agencies’ limited resources, including restricted capacity of support programs and high demand for desired housing sites: “in order to

get in that building because I was on a waiting list, to speed it up I would have had to live at the one down on [street name], which was the bad building.”

Conflicts with other tenants. Other participants spoke about fellow tenants impinging on their comfort and privacy, including sharing living space with individuals addicted to drugs, violent neighbours, and poor treatment by other tenants. One person, in particular, experienced much difficulty with other tenants spreading rumours about her: “...it’s about the trouble I had at the other building. It’s people starting a rumour or talking about other peoples and no privacy.”

Participating in housing. Twelve participants indicated feeling responsible for their housing agency. Participants described being involved with their housing to varying degrees. Participants who talked about being less involved in their housing showed photos of attending events within their housing and using programs and services provided. One participant spoke about attending a magic show that was hosted by his housing agency, and another participant used the internet and computers provided to contact his daughter.

Participants who talked about being more actively involved in their housing tended to advocate for changes to be made and these needs to be met. One participant stated: “we got a grant to make improvements and this is one of the improvements”, and another said: “I even brought it up because every Tuesday is a mandatory house meeting where everybody kind of brings their issues....” Other active participants spoke of becoming a tenant representative or volunteering for a service provided by their housing. In particular, one participant volunteered to maintain his agency’s gardens, and another joined her agency’s security patrol: “I just walk the halls to make sure everything is quiet and there’s no trouble. I post posters up. If anyone is having trouble medically or anything, I’ll get in touch with the appropriate providers.” Other

participants described their roles in their housing as: “I’m the Vice President of the Tenant’s Association” and “I’m going as the ambassador again, me and another girl.”

My Community

The final category, entitled *my community*, includes participants’ experiences living in their communities. Participants described various aspects of their communities, labeled *describing community*, and described ways in which they are involved in their communities, called *community involvement*. Participants also described community assets, *my community’s assets*, and community challenges, *community challenges*. Finally, statements indicating suggestions for improving community challenges are highlighted under *suggestions for community improvement*. In the context of this research, it is important to note that each participant defined community in a different way, spanning from neighbours in the agency’s housing to broader descriptions of society.

Describing community. Fourteen participants described their community. In general, participants described the people living in their community and the physical characteristics of their community. Participants generally spoke about the people in their community in a positive way, and statements centered on descriptions of neighbours and acquaintances. One participant described her neighbours in her building: “and everybody has the most incredible story. They’ve got incredible survival...remarkable, fascinating stories and it’s a miracle that I’m here, they’re here, and everybody’s here.”

Comments about the physical layout of communities included descriptions of buildings, streets, churches, shelters, libraries, green space, and the location of particular programs of interest. In general, participants described their community using neutral statements and pointed

out physical aspects of their community throughout the interview. One participant expressed disappointment that the city had painted over graffiti in a particular area of his community that he liked.

Community involvement. Nine participants spoke about having a sense of membership in their community, and indicated how they have become involved in their community. In general, comments focused on either receiving services in the community or volunteering in their community. Approximately half of these participants spoke about receiving support services within their community, including: methadone clinics, churches, soup kitchens, community centres, counseling services, and legal clinics. One person described the support she has received from her church: “[name of church] has been a big part of my life and actually they really helped me out at a lot tough times... so I’ve got a big appreciation for them and too I believe I have a higher power considering for things I’ve been through.”

Four of these participants described volunteering in their community, and two participants both received support services and volunteered in their community in some capacity. Participants spoke of volunteering at hospitals, churches and community security groups. One participant reported offering homeless individuals a meal when she was able.

Community assets. Nine participants discussed positive aspects of their communities. This category includes statements indicating participants’ awareness of the benefits provided by their communities, but excludes statements describing participants’ personal interaction with these benefits, as captured previously. A few participants described community support programs that they are aware of but have not used. For example, one participant described a soup kitchen in his neighbourhood: “they feed 250 to 300 people, these volunteers, lunch every day.”

Other participants described welcoming gathering places in their community where family and friends can meet:

I just think it's nice to see because it attracts, it brings family whether it's daddy and his kids just because it's visitation day. And they come here and they play. They have a little lunch, their toys, and they play all around in that area. They climb on it. It's just so cute.

Several participants described the importance of housing that was centrally located . In particular, housing located close to the main bus routes, as well as the Rideau Centre and the library, were described as beneficial to participants. One participant spoke about him and his neighbours enjoying the central location of his housing: "it's actually quite nice entertaining in the summer time, when you're sitting out back here and they have the bands, like they have their vehicles parked here, so you get to talk to them, sometimes you party with them." Notably, two younger participants expressed that they and their peers enjoyed the location of their housing because they were able to meet in spaces that suited their similar interests, such as shopping centres and pubs.

Aesthetically pleasing spaces in the community were cited as important community assets. In particular, a clean community with much artwork and green space was reflected as desirable. Finally, several participants depicted their community as safe. Specifically, the absence of crime and living in a quiet neighbourhood were particularly important for some participants. One participant spoke of fire safety for her housing: "the fire hydrant, this is right outside our door so if there's ever a fire we got it."

Community challenges. Nine participants spoke about difficulties that they observe or encounter in their communities. Participants spoke about being negatively identified in their community. When participants spoke about being negatively identified, they did so using personal experiences, as well as more general observations about stigma in the community. One participant discussed the stigma she experienced from those who know about her past: “people tend to think that I’m just trying to get money or food so I can get drugs...and that’s how they make me feel. They belittle me because I’m real open about being a recovering addict.” Another participant spoke about the stigma he experienced as a result of living in supportive housing, and the wider community’s attitude on this issue: “but, unfortunately, society, and so I’ve found out personally on a few occasions, there is a huge, huge, stigma attached to people who live in social housing. It’s to the point now where I’m actually embarrassed to even mention that I’m living in social housing.” For participants who spoke about feeling identified and judged for living in supportive housing, they expressed their housing as very important to them, but also as constraining because of this stigma.

Participants described seeing people living on the streets in their communities. One participant was particularly distressed by the increasing prevalence of homelessness in her community: “because there are so many homeless people now...it’s just awful...in comparison to ten years ago. It was never like that.” Another participant stated: “...some of these people are really sick and need extra support in order to get livin’ okay.” Finally, the same participant described her experience with homelessness in her community as “a woman dying in front of my face.”

Participants also identified lack of safety as a particularly important issue in their communities. Participants described theft, violence, drug use, and physical and sexual assault as primary problems in their communities. One participant described being physically and sexually assaulted in her neighbourhood. Another participant shared his experience with individuals using drugs in the community, and the impact on the safety of his housing:

...you can see why the cops have to deal with too, because I mean I used to look out the window and I could see all the crack heads running around and the cops know they're into no good, but when you stop them to check them they have nothing. And the reason is because they would go to the bushes, leave the crack in there or whatever...

Finally, one participant spoke about observing poverty in his community, specifically concerning the lack of financial support received by fellow tenants: "well, they should get their whole check...it's to supplement their Old Age Securities." Another participant spoke about his own struggles with, and his observation of other's difficulty with, the housing regulations surrounding eviction: "...I guess whether complying with regulations or spending time trying to dispute the notice, they you just...it leaves you for a while with almost, without a place to live."

Suggestions for community improvement. Four participants described ways to improve their communities. Two people spoke about changing the perspectives of community members with the ultimate goal of lessening stigma. One participant focused primarily on changing people's attitudes about drug addicts, and the other focused on changing stigma around serious mental illness. The second participant indicated his desire to personally help individuals who struggle with mental illness by sharing his own struggles and recovery:

...There are people that have been or have gone through stuff similar...and I find it rewarding to listen and to try and help them. You know, because I want them to feel better and create their strength and help them realize how special they are and not to focus on just today but tomorrow and the following day...

Interestingly, both of these people stated that the primary way to create change is through discourse with younger generations, namely, university students. One participant brought the interviewer a list of his own ideas to improve Canada as a country, and asked that the interviewer photocopy the document to read. He stated that he had given other university students copies as well.

The other two participants spoke about improving supportive housing specifically, thereby benefiting the communities of tenants living within this housing. One participant shared her desire for increased funding in order to house people who are homeless, or who are at risk of becoming homeless: "I really think if they had more places like [name of housing agency], which is needed because it is supportive housing, it's supporting people with disabilities and chronically ill people. If they had more places like this, it would help society." The participant spoke about improving the state of existing supportive housing, including finding a solution for pigeon infestations and increasing the accessibility of housing for people with physical limitations.

Discussion

This approach to photovoice was successful in eliciting a rather comprehensive view of housing, from an understanding of the individual and his or her personal journey to:

relationships, housing and supports, and community. The approach was also effective for eliciting a complex view that highlights both positive and less positive aspects of people's experiences, such as their personal struggles and the ways in which they worked to overcome these struggles. The more facilitator-driven and less participatory photovoice approach produced in-depth information about participants as individuals, including their personal experiences living in supportive housing.

Participant Experiences of Living in Supportive Housing

This comprehensive and complex view of participants' supportive housing experiences is consistent with findings in the research. Other reviews of the literature have pointed to research identifying the importance of the physical housing characteristics, professional support, and community integration as critical elements of housing (e.g., Nelson, Aubry, & Hutchison, 2009; Nelson, Aubry, & Lafrance, 2007; Parkinson, Nelson, & Horgan, 1999; Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007). Others have pointed to the important personal and relational aspects of housing (e.g., Dunn, 2000). What perhaps distinguish the findings from this study are their breadth and highly personalized nature. In terms of breadth, the photovoice method appeared to be well suited for identifying a broad range of experiences and issues in the lives of participants.

Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, and Peddle (2007) characterized much of the research literature on supportive and supported housing as being concerned with therapeutic rather than citizenship outcomes. Whereas therapeutic outcomes are concerned with effects of various dimensions of housing on mental health and wellbeing, citizenship outcomes are concerned with the extent to which tenants have housing and support that are accountable to them, and permit access to resources and control over their housing. Notably, participants did not talk about fun/leisure or

productivity/work to a significant degree. In fact, information that emerged from this project included descriptions of recovery, frustration, overcoming hardships, giving and receiving, and connection. According to Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, and Peddle (2007), this picture of participants' experiences with supportive housing relates more to therapeutic than citizenship outcomes. The emergence of therapeutic themes in the HousingPlus project may simply mean that these experiences are central to participants' lives. Alternatively, participants may have expected that a researcher from the University would value this information. It is also possible that participants may view supportive housing in the frame of the therapeutic services offered within these agencies.

The primary anchor for the meaning and significance of the themes that emerged from this study were their interest to the participants themselves. Thus, a characteristic of this research approach is its highly personal nature. Because it was the participants who decided what to photograph and who then provided their own accounts of the meaning of the photographs, the method is particularly well suited to capturing issues of concern to their own unique perspectives. As a qualitative research method, photovoice served to generate useful data on participants' experiences living in supportive housing.

Limitations and Areas for Further Inquiry

The limitations of Study 1 set the stage for further understanding and inquiry. Most importantly, whether findings from the HousingPlus project are attributable to the photovoice method in general or to the specific way in which this project was conducted is a relevant and intriguing question. In Study 1, very personal information was learned about the lives of participants that was often unrelated to their housing experience. This information can be

categorized as therapeutic aspects of housing (Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007) as participants shared themes of mental health, personal challenges, and recovery. Perhaps several aspects of this more researcher-driven and less participatory project may explain the reasons for the therapeutic and self-expressive nature of much of the data from this study, often seemingly unrelated to the theme of the project.

It is likely the case that personal and expressive photographs elicit more of an emotional reaction from individuals, creating opportunity for a deeper discussion of personally relevant and meaningful information. However, frequently participants would describe neutral aspects of less personal photographs, but then moved quickly into more self-expressive discussion about aspects of their lives that were not necessarily captured in photos and were often unrelated to experiences of housing.

In these instances, perhaps the opportunity to speak about oneself to an attentive listener initiated this shift in discussion. It is also possible that characteristics of the interviewer affected what participants chose to share during the interviews. For example, the interviewer's gender, training in clinical psychology or general interview style may have facilitated the generation of expressive data. In addition, the personally relevant and intimate nature of the theme of this project may have led participants to disclose personal information. Similarly, perhaps the instruction "show us what housing means to you" set an expectation for participants to share intimate information related to their housing, and therefore, their personal lives. In addition, the side-by-side examination of photographs, and therefore the reduced attention placed on the individual, may have enhanced participant comfort during the interview and elicited more in-depth data. Other aspects of the HousingPlus project may have led to the increased self-

expressive data, including the photography training facilitated by graduate students from the DVA at the University of Ottawa. The influence of this training perhaps set an artistic or expressive precedent that many participants thought they must follow.

Finally, the camera itself may have influenced the types of photographs taken and the information shared during interviews. Cameras are typically used for personal ends, yet photovoice requires participants to use them for documentation, communication, and/or artistic purposes. Therefore, the control provided to the participants through the most significant data collection instrument appeared to be critical in enabling the author to quickly learn about a broad range of topics. Rather than being limited by the expressed theme of the project, the cameras appeared to facilitate an almost limitless opportunity for participants to capture their personal concerns. One of the strengths of the photovoice method, then, would appear to lie in more discovery-oriented research. The photography-based method appears well suited to quickly gaining a relatively broad understanding of the issues in people's lives. It is possible that the camera facilitated the photo-taking process for participants who were more confident and directed in their approach to photography, whereas the camera may have been somewhat overwhelming for participants who were less confident and directed in their approach to photography. The short two-week photo-taking session provided to participants may have also significantly impacted the type of information generated through photographs. If participants had more opportunity to develop their ideas and themes over a longer photo-taking period they may have produced very different information. The ways in which participants approached photography, facilitating the expression of the previously presented material, will be examined in the next section, including a more in-depth discussion of the limitations of the method choices

behind the HousingPlus project.

Conclusions

This approach to photovoice elicited a fairly comprehensive view of housing, including an understanding of personal experiences, relationships, housing difficulties and supports, and finally broader community experiences. The breadth and highly personalized nature of information generated from this approach to photovoice distinguish these findings from others in the supportive housing literature. This method appears to be well suited for identifying a broad range of experiences and issues in the lives of participants, including lived experiences of supportive housing.

Chapter 3: Study 2

The HousingPlus Project: Participant and Project Contributor Experiences of Photovoice

Abstract

Objectives: In this study, a more in-depth understanding of the HousingPlus project was sought by examining the perspectives and experiences of all those involved with the project. Study 2 focused on understanding participant and project contributor views on this form of participatory-action research. *Method:* The HousingPlus project was conducted with 15 tenants living in supportive housing. The project was designed and facilitated by the author with a multidisciplinary team of project contributors. In total, 15 participants and 10 project contributors comprised the sample for Study 2. Participants spoke about their experiences of participating within this project during photo-elicited interviews. In addition, interviews were held with project contributors to learn about their experiences facilitating this project. *Findings:* Three distinct styles of photography emerged across participants, and people maintained these styles throughout their participation: *planned*, *discovery-oriented*, and *task-oriented approaches to photography*. Project contributors shared the value of supporting participants in their participation but differed most significantly in their perceptions of the photos. Contributors tended to focus on either the *external* or *internal narratives* of photos. *Conclusions:* Individuals who used a *task-oriented approach* seemed to experience the most frustration and stress and would benefit from more guidance from project contributors. Participants using a *planned approach* may also benefit from activities oriented towards working in groups and discussing their photos regularly. Conversely, participants who use a *discovery-oriented approach* may thrive in projects that favour individual expression over the formation of a common group voice. The question remains about whether photos as part of a photovoice project should be considered social objects, with a focus on the *external narrative*, aesthetic products, with a focus on the *internal narrative*, or both.

Overview of Study 2: The HousingPlus Project

In this study, a more in-depth understanding of the photovoice process was sought by examining the perspectives and experiences of those involved in various ways with the HousingPlus project. Study 2 examined participant and project contributor views on the project. In keeping with a reflexive stance, the inclusion of these varied perspectives offered critical reflection on how people's approach to participation influenced how they interacted with the project, and how this shaped the project itself. Specifically, a more comprehensive understanding of how participants and contributors viewed and experienced key components of the HousingPlus project was explored to determine how this method might be tailored to better meet the needs of these stakeholders. The specific questions guiding this study are:

- 1) What are the experiences of participants and project contributors involved in an investigator initiated and driven photovoice project?
 - a. How do participants experience key components of the photovoice method?
 - b. How do contributors experience key components of the photovoice method?
 - c. How do participants depict their housing experiences using photography?

Participants

The aforementioned participants and project contributors involved in the HousingPlus project comprised the participants in this study. In total, 15 participants and 10 project contributors (i.e., three research assistants, three student curators, two graduate students in Visual Arts, two professors from the Visual Arts Department) participated in the interviews for this study.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using the previously described recruitment method for Study 1 as the same participant interviews were used to inform Study 2. In addition, the author approached every project contributor to secure his or her consent for participation in an individual interview (see Appendix G for the recruitment letter for project contributors and Appendix H for the consent form for project contributors). Of the group of 12 curatorial students who were involved with the project, the three students who had the most contact with the project, and acted as liaisons between the larger student group and the other project stakeholders, were approached to partake in the interview process. To ensure informed consent was obtained, the author reviewed the confidential and voluntary nature of the interview and ensured that each participant and project contributor provided his or her signed informed consent to participate in the interview.

Methods

Study 2 is based on the HousingPlus project. The same interview data, which was collected at the end of the HousingPlus project, was used to inform the research questions that guided Study 2. However, Study 2 also included data from interviews conducted with the project contributors who worked centrally to facilitate the HousingPlus Project during the summer of 2010.

Data Collection

Interviews with participants. The participant sample for Study 2 consisted of the same 15 tenants who were described and interviewed in the previous section. Study 2 includes information from these interviews about how participants experienced their participation.

Interviews with project contributors. The author used a semi-structured qualitative interview format to interview 10 HousingPlus project contributors (see Appendix I for the interview protocol). Although the topics to be addressed were selected prior to the interviews, the wording of questions, and the order of discussion, remained flexible throughout each interview. In this way, each contributor had the opportunity to speak about issues that they found particularly relevant, and the interviewer had the liberty to explore rich themes as they emerged spontaneously through the interview process. Each interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

Theme-validation with participants. As the same participant interviews from Study 1 were used to inform the focus of Study 2, the theme-validation meeting with participants was held following the HousingPlus exhibit and was afore described in Study 1.

Theme-validation with project contributors. Upon completion of the analysis of the contributor interviews, each of the 10 contributors was contacted via email and provided a summary of themes that emerged through analysis. During this communication, contributors had the opportunity to further discuss their experiences with the project, including the photography exhibit, as well as their reactions to the themes generated from an analysis of data from their interviews.

Data Analysis

The exact same approach to analysis was followed in Study 2 as was previously outlined in Study 1.

Findings I: Participant Experiences of the HousingPlus Project

The findings are divided into three sections: 1) *Approaches to Photography*, 2) *Differences in Motivation, Goals, and Outcomes from Participating*, and 3) *Common Project Experiences*. Throughout presentation of findings, categories and subcategories are described, and example quotes are provided.

Approaches to Photography

During the interviews, participants spoke about how they decided what to photograph. The analysis of their comments suggested three general approaches to taking photos: a *planned approach*, a *discovery-oriented approach*, and a more *task-oriented approach*.

The planned approach. Six participants described taking a planned, deliberate approach to taking photos. They took pictures that were based on an idea or concept that they had formulated in advance. Participants who used this approach depicted themes in their images relating to countering stigma or emphasizing relationships and “humanity” in their housing. For example, one person spoke about conveying positive messages in her photographs: “I could have took a lot of pictures of street people but I tried to keep it more on the positive side...I wouldn’t take the ugliness no more. I said I need some good pictures”. Another participant took photographs to depict negative experiences she had in her housing, and planned specific props and staging for her images: “...I know it’s not a real picture but, to me, it’s about the trouble I had at the other building. It’s people starting a rumour ... and no privacy.” Two participants described planning their photographs to “tell a story” about important personal experiences, including moving to independent housing.

The discovery-oriented approach. Five participants were more spontaneous in their

approach: “I kind of went to that approach thinking that if I took spontaneous pictures I will find the one that I like the most as opposed to over-thinking it”. Several of these participants said they took photographs when they saw a scene or object that was “striking” to them. One person thought this approach would lead to “better pictures” and another described taking photographs that “spoke” to her: “so I would snap a picture and then find a meaning for it”. As photographs were reviewed during the interview, several of these participants referred to photos as an “accident” or “mistake”, resulting from experimenting with the camera. Two people gave their cameras to friends because it was more “fun” for them to appear in some of their own photos. Three participants also chose to include other forms of expression, including poetry and sketches. Participants who included poetry seemed to use their writing as a means to complement their photographs.

The task-oriented approach. Four participants were more task-oriented in their approach. This group interpreted the project theme literally and took photos of physical features of their housing. Their comments suggested that taking photos was more of an obligation to the facilitators. One person took photos of the private and shared space in their housing, believing this to be the facilitators’ expectation of the photographs: “I just picked that picture because that’s what it’s supposed to be about.” Another spoke of being unsure about which photographs to take, and a third took photos of his living room because he reported being unable to leave his home because of anxiety.

Differences in Motivation, Goals, and Outcomes from Participating

The analysis also suggested that participants with different approaches to photography had different experiences of the project.

Planned approach to photography

Motivation to participate. Several participants who used a planned photography approach described clear motivations for participating in the project. These included seeking a new experience, wanting to share their perspectives, and because they enjoyed photography. One participant stated: “and when I got invited to do this, I mean, I’ve always enjoyed photography. I love photography. And yes, photography is an art form. I thought, wow, I’d love to...I was into it more for me than probably for the cause”. Two participants spoke of finding the university affiliation appealing, and for one participant, this was the sole reason he cited joining the project. This participant spoke of feeling more “comfortable” with joining because of the “professionalism” he believed the university affiliation would provide.

Goals for the project. The members of this group were more likely to identify particular goals they held for the project. In particular, they were clear on the particular messages they wanted their photos to convey such as their hope to address stigma and general perceptions about supportive housing:

I don’t know that we can do anything other than maybe make people think about it.

Through giving people an insight, through the photos, I’m hoping that’s what we will do.

It’s to get them to think about it. Maybe the next time they sit and maybe subconsciously think of something, maybe one of these photos will pop into mind...

Other planned photographers hoped to improve aspects of their housing by bringing increased funding: “...somebody might see this, take an interest in it and then they could coordinate with [housing agency]. I think then maybe some sponsors or somethin’ might help out”. Another person spoke of wanting to change the attitude of staff and managers at his housing agency: “I’d

like to see [the housing agency] embrace the drug addict...just show love”.

Some who used had a planned approach had the exhibit audience in mind when they took their photos. These participants considered how best to express their photographic messages to the audience, which were often in keeping with their hopes for the project: “I believe there’s a great message using humour to make people understand...I wanted to add a little humour, to add a little levity to it. But enough of a message that people will stop and think”. These participants were pleased with the exhibit opening and impressed by the number of community members in attendance.

Impact of participation. Almost all participants who used a planned approach to photography also made statements about how the project affected them personally. These participants spoke of gaining a new perspective on their housing as a result of their participation:

I thought that there would be quite a few negative things that would be portrayed during the shoot and, no, there was not...it made me look just this much closer at everything and it was amazing how it changed my perspective and helped me gain an appreciation of, like, wow, there’s the back gate around our building for security.

The person who made many comments within this subcategory described her membership with the tenant board in her building. This participant spoke of having great appreciation for her housing and credited her “perspective-shift” to her participation in the project. Another suggested that he would like to continue taking photos of his daily life. Three of these participants ended the interview by asking whether they could be involved with a similar project in the future:

Thank you...this should keep going and I keep telling everybody, like, we all should do

this because it does change you. If you're a person with pride and dignity and you take pride in what you're doing you'll learn.

Discovery-Oriented and Task-Oriented Approaches to Photography

Unclear project expectations. Participants who used either a discovery-oriented or task-oriented approach to photography were more likely to be unsure of their own expectations for the project. One said: "I didn't know whether I should go too far away from the house that I'm living in and just take pictures of random things." Some participants were unclear about the overall goal of the project: "I don't think I got...what the project was all about" and others were confused about whether to include other people in their photographs, given a discussion regarding obtaining consent from people before taking their photo: "I just didn't know for sure if you wanted people in it or it's up to us." Two people spoke of their concerns that other participants who lived in their housing might take the same photographs: "having a partner in the project, I didn't want us to both have the same pictures of the same houses, so that was a little conflicting."

Half of the participants whose comments were included in this subcategory believed all of their photographs were required to mean something about their housing: "Several places I wanted to take a picture of, but I thought those would be just personal pictures that I would like for myself. I didn't feel like they had to do with the housing aspect of the project." Another participant shared this concern: "I just felt like it wasn't significant, a little bit. It was just like an ordinary home." Unlike individuals who used a planned approach to photography, those who used a discovery or task-oriented approach tended to have less of a sense of ownership over their photos and the project.

Missed photo opportunities. Participants who used either of these approaches spoke of missing particular photos. Some people who were discovery-oriented said they did not have their camera with them when an opportunity occurred: “Sometimes I was out without the camera and I’d see something and I’d say ‘oh I wish I had my camera with me’”. Other participants were unable to take certain photographs because of practical barriers: “I didn’t get as many friends’ places pictures as I had hoped because some people were busy during the week”. Two participants mentioned having difficulty taking the photo they wanted because of focusing or framing problems: “I mean I should have taken a picture more towards the center but it was hard to focus and concentrate on what I was taking at the same time” and “well it would have been nice if I was able to get the whole frame but I didn’t manage to get it”. Although one person wanted to take photos of his neighbourhood, he was unable to do so for fear that he would be perceived as suspicious. He instead chose to take photos of his building while remaining unseen: “I wanted to go around the building when there was no one around and take angle shots, like looking up a stairwell or something”.

Common Project Experiences

Despite these differences in approaches to photography, the participants also identified a number of experiences of the project they had in common.

Expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the photos. Overall, more statements were made about participants’ satisfaction with their photographs than comments about dissatisfaction with their photographs. All participants spoke of feeling satisfied with one or more photo(s). One participant said: “I’ve got some amazing shots in there” and another said: “I thought that [photograph] was just nice”. A few people expressed their satisfaction with capturing the photograph they planned: “I got what I was thinking” and “I got what I wanted”.

Other participants made statements about their satisfaction with specific aspects of their photographs, such as the colour, lighting, and subjects. Finally a minority of participants made comments about feeling satisfied with how their photograph(s) depicted their intended meaning: “I like that one...just the expressions and you wonder what’s that about, what they’re trying to do, what’s supposed to be happening”.

There were some participants who disclosed very personal and difficult experiences during the interview. These individuals also tended to express satisfaction with the photographs that referred to these difficult situations in some way. For example, a participant who disclosed being a survivor of childhood abuse described what she liked about one of her photographs: “just that she looks like she’s really sad and I’m like an authority figure... like I’m running the place... keeping people in order.” Overall, approximately half of the participants seemed to know which photographs they liked the best, described feeling satisfied, and easily selected their exhibit photograph(s). Participants who had more difficulty knowing which photographs to select and seemed less satisfied overall with their photographs tended to use the task-oriented approach to photography.

Thirteen participants made comments indicating their dissatisfaction with one or more of their photographs. Most of these participants spoke of dissatisfaction with a minority of their photographs without giving specific reasons for their dissatisfaction. Other comments concerned the participants’ dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of intended meaning conveyed through their photographs: “[this photo] doesn’t have the impact so we’re going to say no”. Other people spoke of being unhappy with particular aspects of their photographs, including lighting, angle, subject matter, and the visual clarity of the photograph: “Well, I don’t think they’re good pictures...see, the ashtray. It’s too close, it’s too big.” Finally, several people said they wished

they had taken more photographs during the project: “I should have taken more photos. I guess I could have gone in there and taken a picture of the computers.”

Obtaining consent. A majority of participants shared their concerns about obtaining the consent of people they wanted to photograph. Half of participants chose not to include other people in their photographs, stating this was because they were uncomfortable approaching strangers and/or because they were unclear with the rules for obtaining consent. Two participants chose not to include groups of people in their photos to avoid having to obtain consent from each person: “Now the cafeteria was way, way too busy for me to even take a picture.”

Participants who took photographs of other people most often photographed friends or housing agency staff members. Participants who included people they did not know in their photographs had mixed experiences. One person stated: “people were so happy to be involved and, surprisingly, to be photographed”. Another person who did not obtain the consent of people he photographed stated that several of his subjects were unhappy: “some people were angry, just they didn’t want to be photographed. I don’t think I got any of those forms.” A few people referred to the consent process as limiting both the number and types of photographs they took: “So I could have had like probably a great big thick thing and tons of pictures, but I wasn’t into, hey, you’ve got to explain it all, sign it”. The participants who did not obtain consent before taking photos of other people tended to use a discovery-oriented approach to photography. They described the consent process as cumbersome and interfering with the spontaneity with which they preferred to take their photos.

Time limited photo-shoot. The majority of participants also mentioned needing more than two weeks with the camera. Participants spoke about needing more time to improve their

photographs (e.g., “I wish I’d had a little more time to work on it because I think I could have gotten it better”) or to capture more aspects of their housing experience (e.g., “...it didn’t give me a chance to get different things happening in the building and a couple things got postponed”).

Findings II: Contributor Experiences of the HousingPlus Project

This section describes findings from interviews with 10 contributors to the HousingPlus project, including: two artist mentors, two visual arts professors, three student curators, and three members of the research team. The following questions directed the inquiry into how contributors experience the photovoice method: 1) how do project contributors from different disciplines understand the HousingPlus project’s nature, processes, and intended outcomes?, and 2) how do these understandings influence how contributors perceive and fulfill their roles?

The findings from interviews with these project contributors are divided into the following sections: 1) *Common Contributor Value: Privileging Participant Experience*, 2) *Putting this Value into Action*, 3) *Divergent Perspectives on the Photographs*, and 4) *Strengthening the HousingPlus Project*. Throughout this section, categories and subcategories will be described and example quotes are provided.

Common Contributor Value: Privileging Participant Experience

Across all roles, the interviewees underscored *privileging participant experience* as the most important value of photovoice. All project contributors commented on the primary importance of participant experience in photovoice projects and identified participants as the primary project stakeholders. Student curators, artist mentors, and members of the research team tended to make the most comments in this subcategory and spoke about participants as the

“centre” of the project, in support of whom all project aspects are focused. One student curator said, “The thing that shines through in the photos, that shines through in the participants, it shines through in your experience with it. It’s really about their experience with it.” Artist mentors agreed it was important that participants had as much control over the photovoice process as possible, particularly in contrast to the lack of control they assumed participants experienced in their lives:

I don’t know, but I think these people in general are not in control. People tell them what to do, where to stay, how to behave, maybe, or what should they do in order to be part of society...like I didn’t want to tell them do like that or do like that. It’s a small detail, but I think it was very important.

Regardless of project responsibilities and professional background, all contributors perceived participants as the most central and valued stakeholders of the HousingPlus project. In most cases, contributors appeared to maintain this focus while providing their unique contributions to the project.

Putting this Value into Action

Although all project contributors identified participant experience as the central value of this project, this was translated into action in varying ways. Comments made by contributors about how they viewed their roles are captured within this category and findings highlight both *common* and *divergent ways of supporting participants*.

Common ways of supporting participants. All contributor roles engaged in helping participants to express themselves, called *facilitating self-expression*. All contributors also spoke about *facilitating dialogue* as a way of honouring this value.

Facilitating self-expression. Save for visual arts professors, interviewees across all roles spoke of photovoice as a platform for people to share lived experiences. Interviewees spoke of photography as a medium for communicating these experiences. Said one mentor:

I think it's a fairly simple premise, in a way. Just providing participants with a medium in which to communicate their lives, their homes, their community, what's important to them, and doing it through something as ubiquitous as photography. How simple and good.

Members of the research team also made statements about the value that photovoice places on giving voice to participants, "This is about them getting a chance to say and show and feel important about their existence, about their life, about their experiences." A second researcher said: "The philosophy in our project was to value anything the participants had to say and to not come in with a judgment or an angle that we were trying to support."

Artist mentors and student curators spoke about how self-expression in any form, and particularly through participation in photovoice, can benefit people's lives in the long term:

This is a venue for, it doesn't fix anybody, it doesn't fix their situation, it doesn't fix their heads. But I think there's an element that works for any of us if we are creative, if we're given...the tools to be creative and the opportunities. I think that affects other areas of our life.

Finally, mentors made comments about the importance of using visual methods to give voice to people who may have difficulty with verbal expression, something to which one mentor related personally:

I noticed this as an immigrant coming here, like let's say when you're in a conversation,

because sometimes your oral qualities are not that good, like sometimes you try to say something and people don't stop their conversation to listen to you. So I think these people, they had the opportunity, like through the language of visuals, like someone to stop and see what they wanted to say.

Facilitating dialogue. Student curators and members of the research team identified dialogue as an important photovoice value. Students in the research team described this photovoice project as “starting the dialogue between people who live in social housing and the larger community.” These roles tended to see this project as a catalyst for initiating dialogue between consumers of supportive housing and policy makers within the community. One person said:

As a community, from a governmental perspective or just a moral perspective, we need to start talking more so that people who are involved and less to the people who are managing. And this is really a good start to doing that.

Divergent ways of supporting participants. Contributor roles also had distinct ways in which they supported participants. Artist mentors and members of the research team described their role as primarily *supporting participants* with their participation. In contrast, visual arts professors and student curators described their roles as *supporting self-expression* by preparing participants' photos for the exhibition.

Artist mentors and the research team

Supporting participants. Artist mentors and members of the research team were introduced to participants at the same time and had the most frequent and constant contact with participants. Researchers and mentors began their contact with participants by providing more tangible

support and project direction.

Members from these roles worked closely with participants and spoke of wanting to help individuals feel as comfortable as possible throughout their project experience. These contributors provided both tangible and relational support. One research team member described the tangible support provided by researchers:

Giving them somewhere to display their artwork, giving them the cameras so they can do it and helping them to write their paragraph, things like that, so giving them that sort of very practical step-by-step support that they needed to be able to do the project.

Members of the research team also perceived their role as providing support in the form of “a friendly face, comfort, hopefully acceptance.” They agreed that getting to know the participants personally was very rewarding. A research team member stated, “Knowing the participants by name and being able to relate to them somehow, kind of developing almost a friendship with them on a professional level to be able to give them support and encouragement that way on top of the actual facilitating the project.”

Occupants of these roles talked about the importance of helping participants to feel as comfortable as possible to support their self-expression. One researcher described the project as “a big project developing trust.” Another commented on the necessity of creating trusting relationships between all project stakeholders, particularly so respect for participant experience remains a priority. This person said that the most important project component was that participants receive the message that what they have to say is important, a particularly impactful message within an academic setting:

I think probably validation was the biggest thing; showing them that you know, we the

members of university community be who have political or social or academic influence, care about what they have to say. We value it. And just to reaffirm that maybe you have not had the same life I had, your life hasn't been as easy, you're living in supportive housing but that doesn't mean that what you have to say about it is any less valid than my educated academic journal article might say.

Visual arts professors and curatorial students

Supporting self-expression. Visual arts professors and curatorial students saw their roles as preparing the product of this photovoice project, the photos, for display. This included defining and contextualizing the photographs to be displayed for a community audience. One visual arts professor spoke of the importance of contextualizing photos for an exhibit audience:

Curatorial practice is about trying to form an appropriate way of engaging with these things so that you're forewarned going in. You know, in a way, how to look, because there is no universal way of approaching these things.

Visual arts professors described their roles as mainly providing support and guidance to the student curators. For one professor, this meant connecting the artist mentors with the research team, as well as coaching the artist mentors about what to communicate to participants about visual representation during the workshops. The second professor was responsible for directing the student curators in their curatorial role as they prepared for the exhibit: "So I was primarily responsible for situating the final images in a public context and creating an exhibition out of it." One researcher summarized the role of the visual art professors and curatorial students: "The visual arts' side had more expectations in terms of the artistic quality of the photos, the artistic quality of the exhibit."

Divergent Perspectives on the Photographs

In line with differing methods of supporting participants, both groups of project contributors also saw the participants' photographs differently. The artist mentors and research team perceived the *photos as social objects* and valued them in the context of the participants and their stories. In contrast, the visual arts professors and student curators related to the *photos as aesthetic objects* to be appreciated on their own terms.

Artist mentors and the research team

Photos as social objects. Artist mentors and members of the research team tended to define photos based on the messages they portrayed, and made few remarks about their expectations or impressions of the images themselves. The occupants of these roles made statements about what they considered the most important aspect of the photos: the *intentionality* of the photos and the *experience of creating art*.

Intentionality. Both artist mentors spoke about their focus on participants' self-expression and their ability to say whatever they wanted using images. The mentors spoke of purposefully not focusing on the "product" but rather on the personal and authentic messages participants portrayed through their photos. One mentor explained:

I was convinced, it doesn't matter what was going to happen. I was sure that they would do a good [job]. Because I think this is like one of the important parts, expression, to be sincere to yourself. Not to say something you think you are supposed to say. So they came with a kind of sincerity, so I was convinced it was going to be great.

Members of the research team also spoke about their perception of the messages that were conveyed by the photos. In particular, researchers perceived participants as using their photos as

a way of “looking for recognition as moving past that stigma of living in supported housing and recognition that they’re people too and this is one way to show that.” This person perceived participants as contributing to a greater community dialogue by communicating particular messages about their lives through their photos. She stated that although they would likely not personally experience any changes to their lives as a result of this project, they shared their experiences anyway:

People were really willing to share, that people gave their time and their energy and they personally probably will never be helped by this project in a policy sort of sense. Their apartment isn’t going to change because of their participation in this but they’re just giving something to that community and to that issue and that’s really valuable.

Two student curators also spoke about the importance of the messages and themes portrayed in the photos as being the priority over the image quality. One person stated, “For me it wasn’t so much about the photos, although some of them were very inspiring, and all of them actually were very insightful. It was more about the intentionality from the artist.” She went on to say state that she found participants’ photos to be “beautiful” not for aesthetic reasons but because of: “The story. The person behind it.” The third student also talked about the importance of the intentionality of the photos, such that they conveyed very personal aspects that allowed the audience to see the participants as people:

So, each and every one of those photos for me was literally a window and that’s why it’s so inspiring to be able to see each of them. Even the ones that were out of focus or were maybe not as compositionally cognizant as some of the other ones were still very much powerful pieces of art because of what they did convey and their intentionality.

This group of contributors viewed photos as a medium for communication rather than as an end in and of themselves.

Experience of creating art. One artist mentor highlighted the importance of the creative experience, stating this was far more important than the quality of the photographs produced. He said:

I thought they [the photos] were wonderful. But I think more importantly to me was seeing their reaction, the participants' reaction to their work. I think that was actually in a way more important than what was produced. It was just that whole process and that experience of art and art making.

This contributor believed that participants would benefit not only by expressing their thoughts and feelings, but also from hanging their photos in their homes long after the project ended: "So they take that work home, they place it in their home, and then they can revisit that experience. It's like a healing. I think art is healing, right? So there's that aspect that's really powerful in a long-term way."

Visual art professors were uncertain about labelling participants as "artists." One person spoke of realizing that, regardless of the label, participants remained central to the project. It was their experience, and the expression of such, that was of greater value than the identity of the photos.

Visual art photographers and student curators

Photos as aesthetic objects. Visual art professors and student curators tended to discuss photos in terms of their aesthetic quality or impact. Visual arts professors and student curators made comments about expecting photographs to be a "critique" or "exposé" in some form. One

visual arts professor said that a previous photovoice exhibition she had attended likely influenced her expectations for the photos:

I had seen photovoice shows before...I wonder whether when I very first began the project that I would see more critique, that I would see people being critical of their surroundings, the people who are supporting them. It would be more kind of an expose in a way.

The second professor described his hope that the photos would be documentary in nature, “I thought they were going to be like, you know, these really cool documentary high-res, you know, world press photo.”

A student curator talked about her expectations of the photos, stating that she expected “something mediocre” from participants because of her initial perception of participants:

Because when you don't deal with these people you just read about them in the newspapers and just they're viewed as dirty people, the outcasts of society. You would want to try to get rid of them. So you don't associate beauty with them.

The photographs produced by participants were unexpected in several ways by this group of contributors. One visual arts professor described her impressions of the photographs as being a mix of personal, artistic, and commentaries on daily life:

I thought they were very mixed...I'd say something like a third of them were, to me on a personal level, interesting and meaningful. As ... a person who loves art, there were a handful of images that I thought were really special. And then there were others that were perhaps more like commentaries...there was something about them that I could find interesting but didn't necessarily grab me, which maybe weakened the others as a result.

The second professor spoke about his impressions of the photos as being very personalized and emotionally salient, “We got a lot where, you know, there were people who obviously very emotionally attached to what they were portraying and, but I think the context and the way the exhibition was shown also accounted for that.” He said the photos were “obviously amateur” but that they exceeded his expectations. He remarked on his reaction to one of the photos in particular:

I think they were quite courageous actually in sort of just being what they were. I think about that leaf on the ground that was covered in bird poop or whatever, you know, and I think I don’t know what the participant did, but you can kind of predict the kinds of thinking that goes on in that. What kinds of sort of injected meaning might be intended there, and, all the clichés that go along with that, but on the other hand at a certain point it ceased being a cliché and was actually something very interesting.

Visual arts professors and student curators made comments about not understanding the meaning of the photographs, resulting from a lack of communication between project contributors with different roles. Professors and students joined the project after it had begun, which resulted in a lack of familiarity with the content of the workshops and with the participants as people. One visual arts professor stated, “It was hard stepping in halfway through. That's what I realized. I think I underestimated that.” She spoke of this lack of clarity about the identity of the photos, and therefore the direction of the exhibit, as anxiety provoking:

The identity of the objects, it wasn’t clear, it’s never clear in photovoice projects as to how you want to contextualize and interpret the images. So are they journalism? Is it perhaps something even more personal, biographical? Are they art objects? And of course that

determined everything in terms of how one wants to create a narrative out of an exhibition and where the show would be.

In addition, this professor said that allowing participants to choose the photos they wanted to be displayed was unusual for exhibit curation. She explained that curators and artists typically work together to select and contextualize the work to be exhibited. She noted that the lack of communication with participants made it difficult to fulfill the typical curation role:

I know that that issue came up a lot. It's not about the event. It's not about the show. It's about respecting the participants. My feeling was well that's exactly what we're trying to do. And the reason why we need to have clarity on this is for that very reason, because multiple translations happen within the meaning of the image, from the means of production to the printing to the framing to situating it in a museum space collectively.

As a result of the unclear meaning of the photographs, student curators spoke of being uncertain about how much influence they had over the selection and preparation of photos for the exhibit. She reported that several members of her curatorial team struggled with having a less active role in the creation of the photos. They questioned whether it was “okay for us to tamper with these photos” and, conversely, whether it was “okay to present these photos with alterations that they may not have understood, when blown up, would make the photo look visually in such and such a way.”

Student curators also made remarks about having difficulty defining photographs as the result of having little initial contact with participants. One stated that it was “very hard understanding these photos without understanding the participant.”

In response to this dilemma, student curators talked about how they navigated this

challenge to fulfill their role. To familiarize themselves with participants as people, students arranged a meeting with participants in preparation for the exhibit. The purpose of this meeting was to allow student curators and participants the opportunity to collaborate on the vision and direction of the exhibit. One student noted how important this meeting was for participants to provide their input prior to the exhibit:

I wanted to make sure that they had some exposure so it wasn't this horrifying highly intimidating experience, or a situation where they hated the way their work looked, was hung, was framed. And all of it very public.

Student curators talked about how helpful this meeting was with regards to contextualizing the photographs. They spoke of overcoming this barrier by collaborating with participants during this exhibition preparation meeting:

The participants dictated how it turned out and we didn't end up doing a lot. For instance, we really wanted to display the picture of a bird in the sky. That one was just great. It felt so amazing, but the participant didn't want to so in respecting what the participant wanted, which I think ultimately was the right thing to do, even though from an artistic point of view we would have really liked to see that. Maybe it's not about having the most visually pleasing or the best photos of the bird.

Strengthening the HousingPlus Project

This final category captures comments made by project contributors about how this project could be strengthened. Specifically, contributors spoke of project improvement occurring through *enhancing communication* within and between all stakeholders. Contributors also made suggestions related to increasing contact with participants through one-on-one mentoring, called

mentoring participants.

Enhancing communication. Most contributors made suggestions about enhancing communication between stakeholders. Student curators suggested that communicating with participants earlier in the project might have strengthened their role:

So I think right from the start it would have been great to have a meeting with everybody so that we would know and maybe like one or two participants. Because now we were just left in the dark sometimes and working with pictures that we didn't even know who the photographer is.

Another student agreed that building an earlier relationship with participants would have enhanced their ability to contextualize the photos. However, she expressed that the number of contributors from the DVA, including the two artist mentors and 11 student curators, was likely a barrier to enhancing communication with participants. She suggested creating a smaller group of contributors in future projects:

Maybe in the future the project could have one curator or two curators instead of a whole class. It would be a nice experience to have the people who are curating the show or conceptualizing the art or trying to understand the art, in direct communication with the participants.

Similarly, a third student spoke of improving the project by maintaining contact with participants in an informal and comfortable way, "It would have been really cool to have developed that relationship with them where you're meeting over coffee."

Members of the research team similarly spoke of how the project might have been

strengthened by enhancing communication between project stakeholders. Specifically, they stated that increasing communication might have avoided some of the communication challenges experienced:

I think just having really good links between them [SP and DVA] between the two having that communication really early on, making sure both know exactly what's going on, they're on the same page going into the project can help reduce some of the conflict between the stakeholders.

Mentoring participants. Artist mentors and visual arts professors made statements about strengthening participant project experience by adding a mentorship component. One artist mentor stated that he enjoyed his contact with participants in a group setting but wondered whether people would have had a more in-depth experience if they were each paired with a mentor:

I think it would have given the whole project more of a connection on multiple levels. So for the participants to have this experience of making art, making photography, but also connecting with other artists, other mentors.

This person described how mentors might also benefit from closer and on-going relationships with participants:

And they're going to teach me another way of seeing. When you talk to true artists and they take the same pictures it's going to be two completely different perspectives and two different images will come out. So for me to understand a different way of seeing is a bonus for me as well, as an artist.

Both visual arts professors similarly suggested that photography experts acting in a one-to-one mentorship capacity could help participants with technical aspects of photography and the scope and direction of photos in order to improve photographs for showing. As the mentors were primarily from a performance art and sculpting background, one professor suggested it would be more helpful in future projects to have a practicing photographer overseeing the photography aspect:

I think it would help to have a professor, a practicing photographer, who's kind of the expert overseeing...I was curious to know what it would mean to have an actual photographer work with these people...I feel like that was a bit of a missing link there in terms of the direction of and the scope and possibilities of what those images could be.

This professor also suggested that mentors could be paired with participants to go on photo-shoots together: "One of the things that I thought would be really great is to actually pair up participants with a student. It would be a great teaching opportunity there." Although this professor's suggestion was meant to be in service of both supporting participant voice and adding a learning component, this individual had more of a focus on the aesthetic value of the photos than participants' experience creating them.

Finally, both artist mentors spoke of wanting to know how participants were doing after the completion of the project, and more specifically, what impact the project may have had on their lives. One mentor stated:

So how their lives changed after that, or they didn't change all. I think this is just a small part...an incident that happened in their lives, but I'm very curious how that had a meaning for them.

This person suggested that future projects might continue in stages so that the project does not end suddenly. He also suggested that future projects might include the opportunity to follow up with participants after the project comes to a close.

Discussion

Participation within a photovoice project is a unique experience for many people involved. It is a context in which the act of photography, and the surrounding project structure, can potentially take on new meanings and have new consequences. Though for some these challenges may be invigorating and spur creativity, for others they may be stressful and suppress participation. The photovoice literature has not yet examined how participants approach their participation, including the central act of taking pictures. The people involved in photovoice, whether participants or contributors, bring their own perspectives and assumptions to the project. Their interactions with the project, and each other, become the project and its outcomes. Each photovoice project is likely a unique mix of interactions of people who approach their participation differently. This leads to different project experiences and likely different project findings. The findings from this study provide some understanding about how participants produce their photos and how they experience their participation under the circumstances of a photovoice project that provided less opportunity for participation. To broaden and compliment this line of inquiry, the experiences and perspectives of project contributors were also sought. This section addresses how this contributor-driven photovoice design influenced how participants approached and experienced their participation, and how project contributors experienced their roles within the method.

Participant Experiences of the HousingPlus Project

Participants who used a planned approach to photography tended to join the project because they had a message to communicate and hoped for change. They were already fairly experienced with using cameras and approached photography with confidence. They arrived with expectations for the project, maintained a predetermined focus, and kept the audience in mind while taking their photos. Participants who used this approach appeared more socially oriented in their participation: their ultimate motivation was to impact others. They demonstrated a sense of ownership over the project, including their photos and the messages they chose to portray. These participants tended to be more invested in the project, expressed satisfaction with their photos and participation, and consequently reported being positively affected by their participation.

Conversely, participants who used a discovery-oriented approach to photography were inclined to be more spontaneous when taking photos. They appeared to arrive with fewer expectations for the project, were focused on self-expression, and tended not to consider the exhibit audience when deciding which photographs to take. Many of these participants were comfortable with cameras and expressed their enjoyment of using photography and, in some cases, used other forms of artistic representation, including writing and sketching, to express themselves.

Participants who used a task-oriented approach to photography viewed their participation as a contract with researchers and expressed feeling less comfortable with photography, often having little or no previous experience with cameras. These participants were generally quite concerned with the facilitators' expectations of their photos. Participants using this approach photographed concrete aspects of their housing and did not consider the exhibit audience, or any form of abstract expression, when they took their photos. Participants in both of these groups

were also more likely to express dissatisfaction with some of their photos, in some cases stating that they did not capture with photos the ideas they wanted to express.

Participant feedback about particular project aspects spanned the three photographic approaches. These comments further highlighted the unusual demands and expectations placed on participants in a photovoice study, which some participants found constraining. Participant feedback suggests that two weeks is insufficient for some to capture both the quality and quantity of photographs they desired. Having to obtain consent of people who they photographed was also described as constraining. Taken together with the expressions of dissatisfaction with some of their photos, and their inability at times to photograph what they wanted to capture, these comments suggest that there is a need for a learning process for how to go about taking photos in a photovoice project. Although some were clear in their objectives and confident in their skills, others were unsure of their vision and their abilities. In short, the unusual context for photography may require more training and support than was provided for in the one workshop in this study. For some participants this project may have underestimated the difficulty of the task with which they were charged.

It is unclear to what extent the action-oriented, public showing of the photographs affected some of these participants. Participants' expressed their hope that the public showing would communicate to and possibly change the minds of viewers from the public. The planned photographers embraced this challenge. For other participants, this aspect was not explicitly broached, though it may have influenced their estimations of the quality of their photographs. In everyday photography, the quality of photographs may be judged on the extent to which objects, events or people are captured by the photos, or their aesthetic value. In the context of photovoice, participants may invoke a new set of criteria for assessing quality or may be unsure of what the

qualities of good photos are. It may be that these unspoken or unknown criteria inhibited the actions of some of the participants.

The challenges that were experienced by some participants may also be reflected in some of the compromises in the participatory aspect of this project. As this project was derived from a larger collaborative study, the theme for the project was established before participants decided to participate. It could be that had participants been involved in establishing and discussing the theme more, some of their uncertainty could have been minimized and even their approaches to photography altered. In addition, participants may have benefited from meeting regularly as a group to discuss photos taken over several photo-shoots to reflect upon the photos they wanted to take, to capture a variety of housing activities that fall over several weeks, and to allow for unforeseen life circumstances. As it was common for participants to be satisfied with some photos and dissatisfied with others, a longer photo-shoot period would allow people the chance to view and discuss their photographs and discover what types of images they want to capture, thus increasing participant satisfaction. This may have been particularly helpful for people who appeared less comfortable with photography and took less ownership of the project throughout.

Project Contributor Experiences of the HousingPlus Project

Several important themes emerged from interviews with project contributors. The HousingPlus project was a multidisciplinary approach to photovoice. As such, diverse project contributor experiences and perceptions were captured as part of the evaluation of this project.

More similarities between contributor roles than differences emerged from the data. All contributors maintained a sense of respect for participants throughout the project, regardless of their specific roles. Interviewees spoke of making efforts to ensure that participants' experiences

were privileged, such that they were supported in saying whatever they wanted using photography and that they were provided with a safe and comfortable project experience. In general, almost all contributors saw themselves as playing supportive roles to allow for self-expression on the part of participants. The ways in which they provided support differed, but this intention spanned across the contributor roles.

Project contributors differed most significantly in their perceptions of the photos, and whether these objects constitute data, social products, or aesthetic products. The artist mentors and research team, contributors who worked closely with participants, saw the photos as social objects. They were invested in the photographer's intentionality and context of each image, or the *external narratives* of the photos (Banks, 2007). As such, this group of contributors emphasized the importance of the messages conveyed through the photos as well as participants having an opportunity to create art. Artist mentors and research team members were unconcerned with the quality of the images or their aesthetic value beyond ensuring that the photos were satisfactory to the participants and that they captured the meanings participants intended. In contrast, the visual arts professors and student curators viewed the photos as aesthetic objects and focused largely on the *internal narratives* of the photos, such as the quality and content of the images (Banks, 2007). In the context of this project, these contributors were less active in preparing the photos for exhibit than they would have been in a more typical curatorial role. They therefore had more difficulty determining the meaning of the photos, particularly as they had less contact with participants until the end stages of the project.

Photovoice photos are clearly unfixated and can be seen from multiple vantage points, such that viewers from these different vantage points want different things from the photos and may therefore put more emphasis on the external or internal narratives. Whether photovoice photos

can satisfy these different perspectives likely depends on the application of the method and the stakeholders involved. In the HousingPlus project there was significant tension between how different stakeholders viewed the photographs as a result of the heterogeneous nature of the stakeholder group. The more heterogeneous the stakeholder groups the more tension that likely exists about the nature of the photos. Given the underlying assumptions of empowerment and agency within photovoice, participants' perspectives of their own photographs, their external narratives, remain the priority. However, to the extent that the content of an image supports this process, the internal narratives of photovoice photos must also be considered. The divergent ways that HousingPlus contributors viewed the photos provided an optimal tension between valuing internal and external photo narratives, thus ensuring that both aspects of these photovoice photos remained important.

The varying perspectives on the photos themselves were likely due to the disciplinary backgrounds of contributors, and their typical roles within these traditions. For example, as is consistent with a background in psychology, the research team was more apt to focus on what participants said about their photos and place less importance on the visual aspects of each photo. In contrast, the curatorial students were more primed to value photos based on their aesthetic qualities because of their typical role with focusing on how to display visual material for an audience to view. Relatedly, perhaps contributors' understanding of what their role was supposed to be also influenced how they viewed and interacted with the photos. Another explanation for the varying definitions of the photos is perhaps related to the degree of contact contributors had with participants. The researchers and visual artists, a group who worked closely with participants, knew more about participants as people and the stories informing the photos. The curatorial team and visual arts professors had very little contact with the participants until the

final exhibit preparations. Perhaps this group focused more on the photos as visual products because they were more distant from the participants as people.

Strengthening the HousingPlus Project: Limitations and Future Directions

Through interviewing project participants and contributors, several important suggestions were made about how this project, and future projects, might be strengthened. Through these dialogues, it became clear that the HousingPlus project was a rich learning experience for all parties involved. Participants were observed to have benefited from their participation in this project and, likewise, contributors and exhibit audience members were also positively affected.

Participants and contributors all agreed on the project elements that limited the scope of participation. First, all stakeholders recommended longer photo-taking periods to ensure more opportunity for capturing photos that were satisfying to participants and conveyed the desired messages. Similarly, all stakeholders talked about the importance of having regular group meetings with participants to talk about each other's experiences taking photos and to build a sense of cohesion as a group. This was especially true for participants who used a task-oriented approach to participation and who were less confident in their photography and what they wanted to say using this medium. Participants who used a planned approach to photography may also benefit from working in groups that have more than one photography session and who discuss their photos as they go along. Finally, both participants and contributors recommended a more comprehensive and longer workshop for future projects so that participants could become more comfortable with using the camera.

The most commonly cited challenge by project contributors was the lack of communication about differing contributor roles and expectations, as well as a lack of regular

contact with participants. Enhancing communication both between and within contributor roles earlier in the project would have likely circumvented these issues. Some interviewees suggested forming a smaller group of contributors who could work more closely together, thus ensuring participants remain central to the project without being overwhelmed by various contributor roles. Other project contributors suggested that closer mentoring of participants would facilitate ongoing and bidirectional learning as well as enhance the self-expression of participants. One-to-one mentoring may be particularly important in a less participatory photovoice project for participants who use a more task or discovery-oriented approach and exhibit more anxiety about their participation, particularly in relation to photography.

Finally, among project contributors, tensions emerged about their differing expectations of the photos. Although to some extent there are inevitable disciplinary differences that could likely not have been avoided, there are important considerations for strengthening future projects. Given the complex nature of the products of photovoice, future projects would do well to examine the varying ways in which multiple stakeholders view photos, and whether external or internal narratives are prioritized. Importantly, the act of taking photos, how audience members view photovoice photos, their impressions of the accompanying narratives, and their understanding of the exhibit itself are areas left to be examined.

Conclusions

The HousingPlus project was an example of a rich multi-stakeholder project with much breadth of participation. Participants and contributors experienced this project as a rich learning experience that was received well by the exhibit audience and contributed to the community's understanding of lived experiences of supportive housing. Findings suggest that individuals who

used a task-oriented approach seemed to experience the most difficulty with participation. These participants may do better in a group that develops its own project goals and processes over time. Participants using a planned approach to photography may also benefit from activities oriented towards working in groups that have more than one photography session and who discuss their photos as they go along. Conversely, participants who use a discovery-oriented approach may thrive in projects that favour individual expression over the formation of a common group voice.

The HousingPlus project became a group project about the individual, lacking group cohesion and focus but facilitating individual self-expression. In more group-oriented photovoice projects it is possible that a uniform approach to participation may develop over time as group cohesion builds and common goals are developed. Future examinations of the photovoice process could verify whether the three photographic approaches are unique to this application of photovoice or common across projects and populations.

Chapter 4: Study 3

The Home Project: Participant and Facilitator Experiences of Photovoice

Abstract

Objectives: The Home project provided a point of comparison for findings from Study 1 and 2. This project was similar to the HousingPlus project but also distinct in important ways. The objectives of Study 3 were to understand how a more group-based and participatory application of photovoice impacts: 1) participants' use of photography to communicate their conceptions of home, and 2) participant and facilitator experience with photovoice. *Methods:* Seven tenants living in a supportive housing agency in Ottawa comprised the participants for the Home project. The project was designed and facilitated by staff at this housing agency, one peer supporter, and the author who acted in a volunteer capacity. Following the completion of this project, interviews with participants and facilitators were conducted to understand their experiences of photovoice, and more specifically, whether observable patterns of participation from the HousingPlus project were also present in the Home project. *Findings:* The Home project produced less information about personal experiences and focused on shared experiences of overcoming adversity. Although the three distinct styles of participation observed in Study 2 were also observed in Study 3, most participants developed a *planned approach to photography* over time. The Home project offered an opportunity for participants to engage in community development and a co-created group narrative was produced. Participants who used a task-oriented or planned approach to photography tended to benefit the most from this project design. Facilitators in the Home project prioritized supporting participants with their participation and viewed the photos as social objects, valued for their *external narratives*. *Conclusions:* The Home projects offered a platform for people with lived experiences to voice their perspectives and experiences. It is apparent that the choice of methodological focus depends on the intended outcome of the project.

Overview of Study 3: The Home Project

A second photovoice project, initiated by an Ottawa supportive housing agency, was incorporated into the current research to form the basis for Study 3. The Home project served as an important point of comparison for the HousingPlus project. As argued in Study 2, any photovoice project is a product of both the method choices and interactions among participants and contributors with unique backgrounds. Those involved in a photovoice project, therefore, interact with the project methods and technology and each other to produce a project. The Home project, which provided the basis for Study 3, offered an opportunity to further understand this relationship by examining a similar project with important differences. In comparison to the HousingPlus project, the Home project was more participatory, longer in duration, and included a more homogeneous group of participants and facilitators. Comparing these projects and their methodologies provided greater opportunity to understand how method choices influence what is learned about supportive housing, approaches to photography, and participant and facilitator experiences of photovoice. As in Study 2, interviews in Study 3 were conducted with participants and facilitators to learn about experiences of supportive housing and photovoice. The specific questions guiding Study 3 are:

- 1) What are the experiences of participants and facilitators in a more participatory photovoice project?
 - a. How do participants experience key components of the photovoice method?
 - b. How do participants use photography in a participatory project to communicate their conceptions of home?
- 2) How do participants living in supportive housing and participating in different applications of photovoice report on their photographs and the method?

Facilitators

The Home project was based on a partnership between the Ottawa branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and an Ottawa supportive housing agency. Case managers from this agency were responsible for the recruitment of participants. CMHA provided monetary support, cameras, and guidance with initiating and facilitating the photovoice process. In particular, one community mental health consultant at CMHA worked closely with staff from the agency in the early stages of project development. Two staff members from the housing agency managed this project directly, with the help of a project facilitator/peer supporter hired by CMHA and the agency to work closely with participants. Finally, students from the Department of Visual Arts (DVA) at the University of Ottawa were involved in curating the final exhibit, as they were for the HousingPlus project. The author worked with participants and facilitators as a volunteer throughout the majority of the study, with the explicit understanding that she would interview participants and facilitators interested in talking about their experiences of photovoice nearing the end of the project. In this volunteer capacity, the author joined most of the weekly meetings over the 12-week course of the project and supported participants with narrative writing and using Photoshop as well as helped to facilitate group discussions about photos.

Participants

Seven participants joined the Home project that included three men and four women. All participants resided in Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), Ottawa's largest social housing provider consisting of 40 landlords providing housing options. The goal of OCH is to provide affordable and safe housing for low and moderate-income households. Those who participated in the project were identified by the Supports to Social Housing Program (SSHP) as at-risk of losing their housing as a result of a variety of difficulties, including addiction, and mental health

concerns. Participant demographic information was not released to the author for confidentiality reasons, however all but one participant spoke during the interviews of living alone in their housing. Three project facilitators also consented to be interviewed by the author to share their experiences facilitating the project.

Procedure

Recruitment and information meetings. The SSHS was responsible for recruiting potential participants for this project. The SSHS is funded by the City of Ottawa and is facilitated through case management services across several community agencies. Case managers from SSHS approached tenants under their care to inform them about the project.

On May 17, 2011 an information meeting was held with interested clients within OCH. Six individuals attended the information meeting and were provided information by the lead facilitators of the Home project about the purpose of photovoice as a general method, the power of an image, and the identified goals of the photovoice method. Participants were asked to share their goals for participation and were introduced to the SHOWeD method. At this meeting, participants were also provided with disposable cameras with pre-paid development so that they could have their photos developed to bring to the next session. The pre-paid disposable cameras served as a means for interested participants to practice photography before the project began. The participants who decided to join the project were then provided with digital cameras to use throughout the duration of the project.

On May 31, 2011 a second information session was held with interested participants in order to review topics such as consent, safety, and ethics. Participants were provided with paperwork detailing this information and what to expect during their participation. During this discussion, a role-play was conducted to help participants become more comfortable with asking

permission to take photographs of other people. The author attended this meeting to inform participants about the interviews to be held following completion of the Home project. The author described the purpose of the interview to all participants and emphasized the voluntary and informal nature of the interviews. Each participant was given an interview description document and an interview consent form to take home and read at his or her own convenience as the project unfolded (see Appendix J for the interview description and Appendix K for the interview consent form). Following the completion of the project, the author interviewed all interested participants who partook in the Home project.

Photography workshops, photo-taking period, and photo-finishing. Seven interested participants committed to the project after attending one or both of the information sessions. The structure and direction of the Home project remained intentionally open as the facilitators gave participants control over decisions, such as the specific topics of discussion, the types of photographs taken, and any project outcomes were decided by participants as the project unfolded. The facilitators were trained in photovoice by CMHA, an organization that has conducted previous photovoice projects. Project facilitators expressed their hope that the project would have a broad recovery-based goal, such that participants would be given the opportunity to learn new skills, namely photography, rather than be encouraged toward a dedicated project outcome. The participants were led in a discussion about their goals and hopes for the project and the group decided that their first photo-mission would be: *Have fun and learn to use the camera*. The photo-missions developed through ongoing dialogue between facilitators and participants and are further outlined below.

The Home project was structured around weekly group meetings with workshop components, ongoing discussion about photos taken between each meeting, and sharing and

discussing photos as the project progressed. Special guest presenters joined these meetings periodically to impart particular knowledge and skills to participants.

Overview of weekly group meetings. Between June 7 and August 9, 2011 approximately 12 meetings were held with participants to discuss the theme of the photos they wished to take over the course of the project, called *photo missions*. Meetings were also held provide the participants support and time to edit their photos using Photoshop, write accompanying narratives, and plan each week's photo mission. During the early meetings, the expert photographer/peer supporter presented to group members on photography and using the digital cameras. Cameras were distributed to each of the seven participants and participants were reintroduced to the SHOWeD formula and were encouraged to practice taking photos as a group outside. Several photo missions were decided upon over the course of the project, including: 2) *Take pictures of things that are interesting, and fun in my community that make me feel at home*, 3) *Things that make me feel at home in my own skin*, and 4) *Barriers that prevent me from feeling at home*. During most meetings participants shared their photos within small groups and chose one or two to discuss as a larger group. Discussions regarding the intent of each photo and the link to the theme of home were facilitated using the SHOWeD formula as a framework. Also during this timeframe, several presenters attended the meetings to talk about various topics, including creative writing and using Photoshop. Toward the end of the project, participants viewed their selected photos for the exhibit and discussed the themes that were emerging and any themes they felt were missing to date. From these elements, participants chose their own self-directed photo-missions for the week. During this week there was also a discussion about the outcome of the project. Participants were asked to work in small groups to discuss with whom they would like to share this project. Final group meetings focused on reviewing the selected

exhibit photos and narratives using a PowerPoint format. Participants worked in teams to brainstorm potential themes that they noticed emerging from the project and shared these observations with the larger group. Following each meeting with participants, facilitators met for a period of 45 minutes to one hour to discuss any concerns that arose, emerging themes, and how to best support participants during the next meeting.

Exhibition preparation. Beginning in September 2011, a team of fourth-year undergraduate students from the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Ottawa collaborated with the participants and facilitators of the Home project to prepare an exhibition. These students were responsible for planning, promoting, and curating the photovoice exhibit. In October 2011 a meeting was held with participants and curator students to discuss the goals and expectations for the exhibit. During this meeting, several sites were considered for the show and Tabaret Hall at the University of Ottawa was identified as the best location. A second meeting was held with the participants and student curators in November 2011 to finalize the photo selection and collaborate on final exhibit decisions.

Exhibition: ‘Passages’. The participants chose to create a compilation of their photographs in both a book form and in a final exhibition. From December 9 to 11, 2011 a photovoice exhibition was held at the University of Ottawa’s Tabaret Hall, exhibiting participants’ chosen photographs and narratives. Participants were asked to invite whomever they wished to this exhibit, including friends and family. The executive directors of housing agencies and the accompanying staff members were invited, as well as policy makers in the supportive housing field in Ottawa, faculty members and colleagues from University of Ottawa, staff members from the CMHA and members of the University of Ottawa community. This

photography exhibit provided an opportunity for participants to speak about their experiences of home through their pieces, and to have their voices heard by the community of Ottawa.

Data-Collection

Interviews with participants. In September 2011, following the completion of the Home project, the author conducted photo-elicited interviews with six interested participants. One participant declined to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted in a space provided by the participating supportive housing agency and lasted on average 1.5 hours. At the start of each interview the author reviewed the confidential and voluntary nature of the interview and ensured that each participant provided his or her signed informed consent to participate in the interview. Participants received a \$10 honorarium for participating in this interview.

Interviews with facilitators. The three facilitators of the Home project also agreed to be interviewed as part of the data collection phase of this project. At the start of each interview the author reviewed the confidential and voluntary nature of the interview and ensured that each facilitator provided her signed informed consent to participate in the interview. As the focus of this study was predominantly on participants' experiences with photovoice, the student curators were not invited to participate in the interview process.

Description of interview protocol. The photo-elicited interview protocol used during interviews with participants from the HousingPlus project was also used to interview participants from the Home project. Participants were asked to bring digital copies of their project photographs on their USB key to the interview. In this way, photographs served to enhance the interview process, both in terms of the previously described benefits of using a photo-elicited interview and to maintain interview consistency between the photovoice projects. Based on

findings from Study 1 and Study 2, however, several additional questions were added to both the participant and facilitator interview protocols to allow for deeper examination of participant and facilitator experiences with the photovoice process so that findings could be compared between the photovoice projects.

Although the topics to be addressed were selected prior to the interviews, and based on findings from the HousingPlus project as well as Wang and colleagues' SHOWeD formula (2004), the exact wording of questions and the order of discussion remained open (see Appendix L for the participant interview protocol and Appendix M for the facilitator interview protocol). For example, participants were asked about their experience with the various aspects of photovoice, including the workshops, using the camera, and what could be improved or changed about the project. Facilitators were asked about how they viewed their roles in the project, their perspectives of the photographs, and the exhibit. In this way, each participant and facilitator had the opportunity to speak about issues that they found relevant throughout the project, and the primary author had the liberty to explore themes as they emerged through the interview process. Interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription.

Field notes. The author and one project facilitator maintained descriptive and analytic field notes throughout the duration of the project. These notes were reviewed and incorporated into the data analysis process as several important themes emerged that were also reflected in the notes.

Theme-validation and wrap up meeting. On February 2, 2012, the author met with the Home project facilitators and one manager within the supportive housing program to provide an overview of themes that emerged from analysis of the participant and facilitator interviews.

On April 17, 2012, six participants met with the author and two project facilitators to discuss their experiences in the project, including the photography exhibit, as well as their reactions to the themes generated from an analysis of data from the interviews. At this meeting, themes were presented to the participants via a PowerPoint presentation. Each theme that emerged from the data was summarized and discussed, including participants' experiences with various aspects of photovoice such as: the workshops, using the camera, and their general impressions of the project. In addition, participants were asked about their experiences of the exhibit. At this time, participants had the opportunity to speak about their differing perceptions in regards to their experiences with this photovoice project. As with the interviews, the discussion format remained open, but several key topics were generated previous to the theme-validation meeting for the purpose of verification, feedback, and the generation of further discussion.

Data Analysis

As previously reviewed, an inductive approach provided the analytic framework for Study 3.

Inductive analysis. Qualitative data for Study 3 were generated from transcribed audio-recordings of photo-elicited interviews with participants and facilitators. That is, the analysis focused on what participants said about: 1) their photographs and 2) their experiences with photovoice. During interviews with facilitators, the analysis focused on what facilitators said about their roles in photovoice. The author began this analysis by closely reading through the interview data. This read-through initiated the process of 'open coding' during which the author coded the data line-by-line (Charmaz, 2006). To facilitate this process, the author asked the following questions: 1) what is going on? 2) what are people doing? and 3) what do these actions/statements take for granted? (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout the process of coding, the

author kept a journal of analytic memos in which emerging themes and ideas about the possible relationships between codes were recorded (Charmaz, 2006). The interaction between coding and memoing helps to ensure that the analysis remains close to participants' experiences. Several pieces of reflexive information were therefore documented as part of the memoing process: 1) summaries and descriptions of portions of data, 2) key quotes, 3) reflections on the relationship between codes, and 4) reflections on how the codes were related (Charmaz, 2006). This reflexive process, in turn, reciprocally informed the development of codes. Broadly, the important elements of the coding process included: 1) assigning words to segments of text, 2) sorting coded text in new ways, 3) condensing data into analyzable segments, and 4) generating analytic concepts (Charmaz, 2006). QDA Miner, computer software designed specifically for qualitative research, was used to facilitate the coding and analysis of the data. The specific coding process that the author used throughout the analysis of interview data from Study 3 follows below.

Coding interview data. The author initially examined two interviews thoroughly, identifying statements related to participants' housing experiences. These statements were provisionally coded. These codes were then grouped into categories that were assigned a title and a description. These provisional categories were then shared with other members of the research team who provided feedback on the categories, titles, and descriptions. Categories were refined and modifications were made in order to ensure that they reflected the data. These categories were then used to code a second subset of the interviews. This second iteration resulted in the addition of some categories and the refinement of others. This process continued until all transcripts had been analyzed. The author regularly reviewed the coding scheme with Dr. Sylvestre, who challenged the codes and relationships therein until all of the data had been accounted for. As the analysis progressed, fewer changes were made to the coding scheme.

The theme-validation meeting data consisted of audio-recordings and detailed hand written notes. The recordings and notes were reviewed to identify statements about the themes presented to the participants and facilitators. Statements identified were those that either supported, or did not support, the proposed themes as well as statements that elaborated on the participants' own experiences with the particular theme. These statements were reviewed and then summarized for inclusion in this dissertation. Other sources of data used in this analysis included field notes and on-going analytic memos and reflections.

Findings I: What Participants Said Their Photos Meant to Them

This section describes findings from interviews with six of the seven participants from the Home project. One participant declined to be interviewed. As this project was based on the theme of *home*, participants first spoke to this topic. However, during the interviews they also spoke about other issues that were reflected in their photos. Consequently, another theme that was identified from the data was related to experiencing and overcoming personal difficulties. Interview findings are divided into the following categories: 1) *Meaning of 'Home'*, 2) *Experiencing Adversity*, and 3) *Overcoming Adversity*.

Meaning of Home

All participants commented on what home meant to them. Most commonly, participants said that they feel at home with people to whom they felt close. They talked about feeling at home with their family members, close friends, partners, case managers, and pets. One participant said:

I took pictures of the kids. I took pictures of the grandkids. I took pictures of birthday parties. That's home. That's family. Home. When I think of home, it's family. It has to be.

Without family, what do you have?

Two participants also described the challenges they experienced in these relationships. One participant noted that her family is the most important but also the most stressful part of her life and a second participant disclosed her “difficult” decision to allow her child’s father to have a relationship with their child.

Two people described home as a feeling of “freedom.” One person said, “What it meant for me was a place of safety, a place of freedom, a place where I can be myself, a place that will give me a voice.” Another participant described feeling at home in places where they felt included: “The fact that you are not alone and home doesn’t really mean someone from your race or your culture or your society or whatever. Home is inclusive; it includes everyone. Everyone can be there for each other.” For these participants, their concepts of home, then, were unrestricted by place or space and defined more by the people and supports around them.

Experiencing Adversity

All participants talked about a variety of personal life challenges they have experienced, and depicted these difficulties in some of their photographs. Based on these photos, people spoke about their difficult housing situations, called *housing challenges* and their experiences of being stigmatized or labeled, as *experiencing stigma*.

Housing challenges. Several participants remarked on difficulties they experienced with their supportive housing. In general, they talked about ill repair and conflicts with other tenants. They spoke about losing power, elevators breaking down, and bed bug and cockroach infestations. One person said that bed bugs in her building have prevented her from visiting with neighbours:

I don't want people coming in my home. I'm afraid they're going to bring it into my home. To go out in my hallway is very difficult for me. Bed bugs - I don't like them. Cockroaches - I don't like them. I've seen them walking up by the elevator doors in the middle of the day.

All participants who spoke about experiencing challenges with other tenants made comments about feeling unsafe, particularly in the presence of substance use. One person said:

My neighbour, who unfortunately is either drunk or unfortunately cracked out, bringing all these people into her home, throwing them into my door. I mean I've got holes in my wall like this I've had to show housing.

Another participant described feeling safe in her home but also like "a prisoner" at times. For this person, the drug trafficking in her neighbourhood made it difficult for her to leave her house and remain safe. She said:

I see it as unfortunately a prisoner in my home at the moment because of the narcotics that are in my building, because of the users and the dealers. You really can't step out of your home because it's not safe. You've got women being choked in our own hallways, outside our doors.

Participants' challenges with their housing were related to feeling unsafe in some way, either because of aspects of disrepair affected physical health or because conflict with other tenants resulted in threat to physical and/or emotional wellbeing.

Experiencing stigma. Participants discussed their experiences of stigma as a result of experiences of homelessness, living in supportive housing, and/or as a result of experiencing

mental illness. Participants took photos to challenge stigma or to instil hope among others who may feel stigmatized. One person said:

So a lot of people just think of them as alcoholics and drug addicts, don't work and if they actually took the time to walk through a shelter, they'd find that it's most of the cases otherwise a lot of them have jobs and a lot of them just can't afford to live, have a roof over their head.

Another participant talked about experiencing stigma as a result of mental health issues. She wrote several words depicting who she is as a person (i.e., “mother”; “sister”; “friend”; “survivor”) on her body with a black marker:

It took a lot to actually do that. That was the one of my back and my front because I literally had to expose myself for this certain photo. But I wanted to touch base and kind of explain what mental illness was, to show that it affects everybody, not just one person, not just one gender, not just one walk of life, that it involves the person next door to you. It could be your mom. It could be your kid.

All participants who made statements about stigma within this subcategory also spoke about their intention to change audience members' perceptions and assumptions about “who we are.”

Overcoming Adversity

All participants spoke about what has helped them to cope with or overcome significant adversity. Some participants spoke about how their *self-advocacy* has helped them to manage significant stressors. Others spoke about the importance of *engaging in creative activities*, and *spending time in nature*, when experiencing difficulties.

Self-advocacy. Most participants commented about how their ability to advocate for themselves has helped them to manage adversity. One person attributed his “good attitude” to helping him to advocate for the job he wanted as a younger man. Another participant said she “learned that I do have guts” during a particularly challenging situation when she had to advocate for her needs.

These participants also spoke about their advocacy in their communities. One person took it upon himself to collect garbage in his neighbourhood, another spoke of running for the tenant presidency position within his housing, and a third commented on her advocacy role within her community, “Well I had to go and talk on behalf of Acorn at City Hall when we faced the Board of Director himself ... for Housing. And I stood up and I gave it to him. I have a powerhouse voice.”

Participants who talked about using self-advocacy during stressful times in their lives also tended to talk about advocating for other people. These were the same participants who spoke about their hope to challenge stigma related to housing and mental illness through their exhibit photos.

Being creative. Most participants who joined this project regularly engaged in creative activities for enjoyment and to relieve stress. Participants spoke about the importance of writing, singing, dancing, and photography. One person described how photography brought him enjoyment in challenging times. Another participant stated that creating sculptures from wood was important to her mental health:

The first time I sold some at an art show I was on cloud nine. I couldn't even describe it. I kept saying this is so much better than drugs. And then people say that's really good,

wow. It makes you feel really good.

Spending time in nature. Some participants made statements about the importance of having access to green space to relieve stress when facing adversity.

And I was able just to sit there and have some time to think, take the pictures and go, you know, this is my tranquil spot. This is where I can meditate. This is where I can close my eyes and just let the water soothe me from a hard day or a stress day. It makes me feel good. I can smile. I get a calming feeling. It's oh I'm relaxed now. I'm not feeling the stress.

For one person, this meant proximity to water, and for another, this meant noticing flowers on his walk around his neighbourhood. Finally, a participant talked about bringing elements of nature to her home. She painted a mural of a tree on her bedroom wall and spent time focusing on this mural each day as a way to relax.

Findings II: Participant Experiences of the Home Project

These findings describe the experiences of participants in the Home project. They consist of the following categories: 1) *Joining the Project*, 2) *Approaches to Photography*, 3) *Group Influences on Photography*, 4) *Planning the Exhibition*, 5) *Benefiting from Participation*, 6) *Experiencing Project Challenges*, and 7) *Suggesting Project Improvements*.

Joining the Project

All participants spoke about their reasons for joining the project. Participants named the following reasons for choosing to participate: *enjoying photography*, wanting the opportunity to voice opinions and perspectives, called *sending a message*, and wanting to have a new

experience, called *trying something new*.

Enjoying photography. A third of participants joined the Home project because they were interested in learning more about photography and improving their photography skills. One person spoke of being enticed by the opportunity to borrow a camera for several weeks and another said that he hoped to work on his photography skills so he could earn some money for his church by selling photographs after his participation.

Sending a message. A third of participants chose to participate because they had “something to say.” These people were being drawn to the topic of “home and homelessness” and wanted to comment on these issues. One person was inspired to participate because she had attended a previous photovoice exhibit:

They started to make like message photos and when I saw some of the photos, you can see like with the storyline behind it, I was like that’s what I want. Like if I had the opportunity, I want messages out there and art is the best way I think to get messages across.

Trying something new. The final third of participants said they joined the project because they wanted to have a new experience. They wanted to “discover” something new and “do something different that I haven’t done.” These participants spoke about joining this project without any expectations and maintained an “open mind” about the process:

I didn’t expect anything actually coming in. I came in with an open mind... wanted to get involved actually for the first time in a long time. I wanted to be involved in something. And I didn’t go in thinking oh I know this or I know that, oh I can do this. I listened.

Approaches to Photography

During the interviews, participants spoke about how they decided which photographs to take. The analysis of their comments suggested three approaches to taking photos, all of which were also identified with the HousingPlus project: *the planned approach*, *the discovery-oriented approach*, and *the task-oriented approach*. In the Home study, however, participants also discussed how their approach to photography changed over time, as described in the next category.

The planned approach. As in the HousingPlus project, some participants in the Home project also used a planned approach to photography. Two participants described using a planned, deliberate approach to take photos from the beginning of the project through to the end and said they based their photos on an idea or concept they had formulated in advance. They talked about intending to create photos to challenge stigma around issues of homelessness and mental illness. One participant planned to create a photo to challenge prejudice regarding homelessness:

So I asked my friend and I kind of blurred out the background so you couldn't tell where it was and I didn't want him facing me so you wouldn't be able to identify it. That the fact that he has regular clothes on that every person, like there's nothing distinctive about him being homeless. And the only thing that people would resemble him being homeless is as him sleeping on a bench or him supposedly sleeping on a bench.

The discovery-oriented approach. Three participants were initially more spontaneous in their approach to photography. They spoke about bringing their cameras with them throughout their days and taking pictures of things that “caught my eye” or of “something I liked.”

Participants who used this approach said they “have an open mind with photography” and that they took photos when they were at “the right place at the right time.”

The task-oriented approach. One person initially used a more task-oriented approach to photography. He interpreted the project theme literally and took photos of physical features of his housing. This person spoke of feeling “a little confused” and unsure of “where to start” with taking photos. Notably, although this person spoke about using this approach to photography initially, he also talked about becoming more planned over time as broader group themes emerged.

Group Influences on Photography

All participants spoke about their experience participating as a group, including how the group influenced their approach to taking photos. Comments were made about *developing group cohesiveness*. Participants reflected on how they were inspired by each other’s photos, called *inspiring each other*, and how they participated in *forming a common message*. Finally, participants described how the changing group dynamic impacted their approach to photography, called *developing a planned approach to photography*.

Developing group cohesiveness. Several participants said they felt initially unsure about other group members. Some described themselves as usually having “a hard time making friends” and of being “uncomfortable” in groups. One person observed that the group relied more heavily on facilitators to structure and direct each meeting at the start of the project, but noted that the dynamic changed over time as participants got to know each other and became more comfortable:

Most people were getting a feel for each other. I don’t think they knew where they could

or how they could express themselves with what they saw and their opinions, and I think once they realized that it was a safe environment to do so, I think a lot of people started opening up.

As participants became more comfortable with the group they spoke of realizing that they shared similar experiences of being stigmatized on the basis of mental health issues, housing, and/or sexual orientation. One person commented on how her relationship with other members helped her to share her experiences as well as to become more self-reflexive:

It was a good relationship we all had there, and this is more like an open relationship. We're talking about what they're going through, and it was good. The group helped me look inside. It helped me to speak out, to be a voice and to have a voice, which is a good thing.

Findings in this subcategory highlight the importance of safety and support within a group setting, such that participants were able to relate to each other and feel increasingly comfortable with the group, despite some initial reservations. Interestingly, this sense of relatedness helped people to become more self-reflexive in their participation.

Inspiring each other. Most participants made comments about feeling inspired by the photographs that others took. One person spoke of “looking forward to see what certain people brought in.” Others said that they found themselves “building on each other’s creativity” and widening their perspectives as a result of seeing other photos. One participant described her reaction to a photo that she experienced as quite inspiring:

And even in someone’s own portrait where they had words written all over them, I thought that was an amazing photo. That was courageous and not something I would have thought

of and I thought she took what I did and just branched out...and it was neat to see.

Notably, one participant was commonly identified as producing the most inspiring photos and was perceived by other group members as an informal group leader. This person also shared her experience with this role. She said she felt pressured to speak for the group at times and described her decision to remain fairly neutral in her opinions so as not to speak on behalf of the other group members. She said:

I don't want the leader role. I think each of us has a really good part in the group. Like our pictures are all commonly themed...that if it was just mine always, it would just take away from the whole project. Like that's where I think the richness comes from is the whole group, not just mine, not just somebody else's, it's the collective.

This participant noted that if she spoke for the group, as she felt the other members pulled for her to do, that the project would have become "my photo based project" and it would have taken away "everyone's voice." She wanted the group to draw inspiration from each other's photographs and, in doing so, to maintain common group messages, rather than being swayed by the voice of any one person.

Developing a common message. Participants said they began the project with very personal and individual definitions of home and related messages that they wanted to convey. Participants spoke of allowing each other to share their unique opinions from the beginning, "We kind of just allowed each person's opinions and perspectives to be their own. So it was welcomed, regardless if it fit our own."

As the project progressed and group members began to feel more comfortable with each other, there was also a change in the photo messages. Messages became less personal as larger

group themes emerged. One person noticed that this project “became a big group instead of the individual work.” Another participant commented on group themes she noticed emerging:

I mean it all plays around home but I think the biggest theme that I heard was very political. A lot of people had really strong feelings with what their society or government’s role should be at home. And so the lack of it and how everybody in the group kind of had their issues or their backgrounds that stem from, you know, affordable housing or social supports and that government should be playing a role. So I think that’s the biggest theme, change and help.

Over time, participants relied less on the facilitators to determine the photo-mission for the week and instead decided on weekly themes as a group. These themes appeared to emerge from a greater sense of safety, trust, and relatedness among group members. Importantly, people talked about how reassuring it was to relate to each other based on similar lived experiences. Notably, the group facilitators initially encouraged mutual respect and recognition of everyone’s messages and as they increasingly took a less directive role. Consequently, participants’ had the opportunity to name shared commonalities as related to their lives.

Developing a planned approach to photography. The five participants spoke about how their approach to photography changed over time, particularly as the group became more cohesive and as the group began to choose weekly themes. Said one participant:

I became more focused on the theme and trying to look for, as I said, the best picture possible and then I started to move on from trying to find the best picture possible, just find any picture that could go along with the theme.

Another participant stated that the weekly discussions as a group, and subsequent

agreement on each week's theme, "changed the way I looked at photography." She described how her approach to taking photos changed from discovery-oriented to more planned: "Rather than just taking photos of everything I chose what I wanted to choose for that day. And my photos got better and better."

As more group members became more planned in their approach, participants stated that their photos became less personal and more about the theme identified by the group: "So [in the beginning] it kind of was easy for me to identify more with myself, actually, than the photo. But it became more about the group; so people chose not to take photos that were too personal."

As the group became increasingly cohesive they began to take more ownership of the project and, as such, developed a more directive and planned approach to taking photos that communicated predetermined group messages. Each individual's style of taking photos, therefore, became increasingly strategic to contribute to these identified group themes. One person talked about how she observed these group themes taking shape over time, "There was a couple of them at the beginning that were by the facilitators and then I think they tried once to have a week where we just brought our own theme to the table and that was like complete chaos." She stated that, from that week forward, the facilitators "took a step back" and participants became "more empowered" to discuss and shape the themes, resulting in a more planned approach to photography on a group-level.

Planning the Exhibition

All participants spoke about their expectations for the exhibit, which had not yet occurred at the time of the interviews. Participants identified who they hoped would be *attending the exhibit*, as well as about the desired impact of the exhibit on audience members (i.e., *hoping for*

impact).

Attending the exhibit. In general, participants spoke of wanting their photos to not only be seen by people they knew but also by people in positions of power who have decision-making power within their community. Participants looked forward to showing their photos and narratives to people they care about, including their friends and family, support workers, and for one participant, his reverend and members of his church. Participants also named members of parliament, provincial politicians, and city counsellors as people who they would like to attend.

People named future venues to hold their exhibit if the opportunity arose, including city hall, schools, and hospitals “because that’s where a lot of people with mental illnesses are.” One person thought that public libraries would be an optimal place to host any upcoming exhibits “because people can be reached, people can see. Because everybody goes together, anybody can go there.”

Hoping for impact. Participants talked about their intention for the exhibit as being twofold: 1) to prompt critical thinking and 2) to offer a message of hope. Several participants talked about their hope that their photos would generate dialogue and critical thought. One person said:

The photos are the highlight and it’s such a complex thing that there’s a lot of emotion and thoughts and opinions on it that I think that should be the highlights. It should be bringing up ... It’s almost like with philosophy...bring it up for debates. Bring it up and put it in the spotlight instead of making like a big show of it, like make it real.

Participants stated that they wanted to challenge audience members to evaluate their perspectives and any existing prejudices. In particular, people stated that they wanted to “open

some closed-minded people's eyes" around experiences of mental illness, sexual orientation, homelessness, and poverty. Overwhelmingly, participants said that they want to "break free" of experiences of stigma, "Like I put in the narrative, I hope they look and say oh I just talked to a gay woman but she seemed nice. I hope that makes them change a little bit."

Participants who wanted to send a message of "hope" to the audience spoke about wanting people to feel as if they are not alone, particularly regarding issues of homeless, poverty, or mental health challenges. One participant said that she wanted the audience to think: "I'm either going through this or I know somebody who's going through this. This really fits my situation or somebody else's situation, and it moves people around to connect with others."

Benefiting From Participation

All participants spoke of how they benefitted from participating in this project. In general, they made comments about benefiting from the opportunity to be creative and the chance for self-expression.

Being creative. Most made statements about having the opportunity to either discover their ability to be creative or the chance to "get back" their creativity. Said one person: "Something inside of me, I guess there's a ... it's an artistic side that I didn't know was there." Another person stated that his longstanding substance dependence had stifled his ability to be creative. Through his recovery process, and within the context of this project, he was able to "get back to [being creative] again, you know, being human again."

Another person recently discovered that she is good at whittling as well as photography. She said she was proud of her artistic work and was hoping to "show other people the way in how I see the world. I think if people did that more and walked in each other's shoes more we'd

be kinder to each other.” Finally, one person spoke of reconnecting with her creative writing: “It started to bring back because I really love words and love power behind words. So that kind of brought that creativity back.”

Self-expression. In general, participants talked about benefiting from the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Whether through visual or written acts of creativity, people were able to put words to important experiences and needs and envision personal goals and hopes for the future. Most participants also spoke about enjoying the opportunity to express themselves through their photographs and narratives. People said that this project became a “way of letting myself out” and that it “felt freeing to be able to express myself any which way I was.” Participants spoke about benefiting from opportunity to acknowledge their struggles and current challenges, particularly through narrative writing, “The thing is, for me, when you pour out more by the narrative, you kind of key into what you’re going through and it kind of heals you. It’s a healing process, because you’re able to say it on paper, if not verbally.”

Similarly, other participants talked about the opportunity for self-expression as helping them to keep particular goals in mind and to honour these goals. For one person, this supported him in focusing on his sobriety, “It made me want to work more for my sobriety. It made me want to work harder to get where I want to go.”

Experiencing Project Challenges

Most participants talked about challenging elements of the project. For some, these challenges were practical. A minority of participants found it difficult to approach people they wanted to photograph. Other participants’ efforts to take photos were hampered by mobility issues. For others, the challenges were more personal reflecting difficulties in being self-

reflective: “I’m still in the process of learning more about who I am... Yeah and how would I describe that and take pictures of who I am, so that was difficult.”

The group-based nature of this project created particular challenges for participants. Most expressed disappointment with how others reacted to their photos: “When [group member] made the comment ‘Oh porn’, I felt so bad. Right there, I felt like. It made me feel bad. It took so much to take that picture.” Another excluded an image because it did not fit the overall group themes.

Photovoice Project Improvements

Most participants spoke of the ways in which this project could be improved for future participants. The most common suggestions were *needing more time*, and *wanting a second project*.

Needing more time. The majority of participants stated that a longer timeline would have allowed them to take all the photos they wanted to capture. Others said that the beginning of the project was quite “relaxed” and then “the last few weeks kind of felt intense. Like make choices, make decisions.” Another person spoke about the personal benefit she would have experienced from an extension on the project timeline, “That would also have helped for me the healing process of where I’m going, because that gives you more narratives to write, that gives you more emptying of yourself to put on paper.”

Wanting a second project. Similarly, other participants spoke about wanting a second photovoice project as a follow-up to the Home project: “And I want another one to come. I do. I’d really love to do another one.” One participant made several suggestions for possible themes that could be addressed in a second project. She said, “It doesn’t have to be home for the next

one. It could be community. It could be family. It could be business. It could be your city. It could be a different kind of project.”

Findings III: Facilitator Experiences of the Home Project

These findings describe the experiences of facilitators in the Home project. Three project facilitators volunteered for the interview to share their experiences facilitating this project. Data generated from these interviews are captured in the following categories: 1) *Deciding on the Project Theme*, 2) *Facilitating the Group*, 3) *Evolving Group Processes*, and 4) *Defining the Photographs*.

Deciding on the Project Theme

All facilitators spoke about how the project focus developed. They spoke about the initial collaboration between the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and a supportive housing agency. Within this partnership, facilitators decided on the logistics of running this project, including the setting, the length, and the format of the weekly photovoice sessions. As part of developing the project focus, facilitators also decided on the theme of home because “of the population that we were dealing with, we knew that that was a big part of the struggle that they were engaged in on a daily basis.” CMHA, who provided part of the funding, also likely influenced the development of this theme.

Two of the three facilitators talked about their initial concern that some participants may get “stuck” with this theme as a result of having negative experiences related to homelessness and/or supportive housing. One facilitator explained her concern:

I was a little bit worried that it was going to end up being...because sometimes when you

mention advocacy with a population who has struggled, who's based a lot of stigma, you might end up getting a little bit of a bitch-fest...

Both facilitators who voiced this concern talked about realizing that this was not the case, "It was really refreshing to see the shape that the project took."

Facilitating the Group

All facilitators talked about their role in facilitating the group and how they balanced providing participants direction and guidance with allowing the group to dictate the project focus. They spoke of approaching the project openly and working to allow participants as much choice as possible. One facilitator said:

Well I think going into it one of the things that really helped was that we didn't have a clear picture of what necessarily we wanted. That home was something that we picked because we thought in some way it would resonate with everybody...but in terms of any further discussion of what that might mean was completely participant directed.

Facilitators described their efforts to strengthen the voice of the group as a whole as well as ensuring that individuals had a voice. One facilitator described her role as: "Trying to facilitate rather than leading the group. Facilitating them in the discussion and where they want to go and what's important to them. But protecting the voices of each of the individuals within."

All facilitators talked about how they maintained a cohesive dynamic amongst the facilitator group in order to best support the participants. They spoke of meeting after each photovoice group in order to debrief the meeting, talk about any concerns that emerged, and plan some questions for the next week to help participants strengthen their emerging photo-themes.

Evolving Group Processes

Emerging project themes. All facilitators made comments about the emerging project themes they observed over the course of the project. Initially, facilitators talked about viewing participants' photos of physical aspects of their housing, "Actually in the first session, we did get a lot of pictures of people's apartments." However, as the project unfolded facilitators observed participants beginning to share their personal experiences with the group more openly, "It tended more to be a sharing or a storytelling of each participant being able to give that little piece of themselves and open up to the group." Facilitators noticed that, over time, participants shared increasingly personal information that became part of the larger group narrative. Interestingly, one facilitator noticed that most of the photos that were included in the exhibit were taken near the end of the project and stated she believed this was because participants began making explicit decisions as a group about which photos they wanted to deliver their group message. One facilitator talked about the themes that emerged in preparation for the exhibit:

It seems to be now that the project is more about life experiences and the journey that people go through and the ups and downs and the possibility and the hope of being able to overcome challenges that people have been presented with. And that feeling comfortable doesn't necessarily mean four walls, which I think was good because we kind of almost broke down this stereotypical view of what housing and home is.

Increasing group cohesion. All facilitators made comments about observing an increasing cohesion among group members over time. Facilitators said that at the start of the project there were some participants who were more outspoken and others who appeared to have less to say. However, as group members became more comfortable with each other this dynamic shifted:

For some people they got increasingly vocal with wanting to share from start to end of the project. The comfort level was slowly built and other participants...like [name of participant] for instance, maybe came in with a slightly stronger voice. But then as she built relationships and gave more interest in what other people were saying and she gained relationship with people, her listening and wanting to know what other people had done or what other people had thought.

Facilitators talked about being more directive and didactic during the initial photovoice sessions and making efforts to invite the group to increasingly guide the process and direction of the project as the project progressed. Two facilitators noticed a shift in the group dynamic when the cameras were handed out, “So as soon as people had the cameras in their hands, then they had a little bit more power, a little bit more say in the shape that the group was going.” Facilitators also spoke about witnessing participants express their individual experiences during the first half of the group. They noted that by session eight or nine participants began focusing more on what they wanted the audience to take from their photos and narratives as a collective. As a result, some photos were removed from the final collection and others were added to strengthen the group message. Finally, another facilitator talked about the importance of allowing time for group cohesion to grow:

I think there’s so much more growth when participants come together and they see their photographs instantly and they comment on each other’s photographs and they get to experience what they perceive in their photographs and they get feedback from other people right away. We actually got six good weeks of doing that, which generally isn’t what happens in a photovoice project.

Defining the Photographs

Finally, facilitators talked about their impressions of the photos produced throughout the Home project. All facilitators described photos in terms of the stories and people behind them, or their external narratives, rather than their artistic value or the content overtly displayed in the images. One facilitator said:

I see them more as a social documentary feel because I see them as a collection of...I see it as a way of telling a story through narrative and through photograph. There's definitely an artistic element to them but as I see them more, when I think of them as a body of work, I think of them more in a social documentary fashion than I do purely as art.

Another facilitator talked about the role of the written narratives in enhancing the meaning of the images. She stated that she was initially worried about the quality of the photos because she did not "understand what they meant" but through reading the narratives and hearing participants talk about the photos she came to understand their meanings:

It brings real depth to the process. The image is what draws the audience, or anyone, to the artist or to the subject as a whole, but it's often the narrative that brings you to the soul of the matter. It's really amazed me to just define their experience in such beautiful ways...so the picture tells you part of the story and the narrative just takes it to another level.

Facilitators spoke about some images as more artistic than others, however all facilitators said that the messages behind each photo were the most important aspects of self-expression. They commented that some images and narratives were especially striking, "[Name of participant]'s chain is an amazing picture, it's photographically amazing and then to add the whole message that goes with it is just more empowering." Finally, one facilitator said that the

photos took on new meanings for her as she began to know the participants more as people over the course of the project, “I actually feel the pictures now more than I just see them. I can feel them inside. I have an, not an emotional connection to it but an understanding.”

Discussion

The Home project provided an opportunity to further understand the impact of method choice on what is learned about supportive housing, approaches to photography, as well as participant and facilitator experience with the method. In comparison to the HousingPlus project, the Home project was more participatory, longer in duration, and included a more homogeneous group of participants and facilitators.

The meanings that participants attached to their photographs in the Home project were largely focused on personal experiences of managing and overcoming difficulties as well as challenging stigma. Participants talked about being stigmatized as a result of experiencing homelessness, living in supportive housing, and/or dealing with mental health challenges. As the theme of this project was *home*, participants approached this project by first taking photos that reflected their notions of this concept. However, as facilitators became less instructive and participants became more dominant in determining the project direction, the photo themes also evolved.

As the project unfolded, photo themes were determined each week by discussions among the group members. In this way, the Home project generated rich information about the group’s common concerns, including the themes they wished to communicate to the audience. The project themes broadened and transformed into stories of experiencing and overcoming struggle as participants increasingly directed the project. Although there was a common group focus,

participants still attached some highly personalized meanings. These personalized meanings became absorbed and edited by the group as common group themes formed, leading to pictures focused on community, social relations, and collective efforts. Notably, less was learned about people's experiences of supportive housing as participants' focus remained on shared experiences of overcoming adversity, wellness, and recovery.

HousingPlus and Home Projects: Comparing What Participants Said

The findings from the HousingPlus and Home projects had some overlap, but also some notable differences (see Table 2 for a comparison of project themes). For example, the HousingPlus project generated more specific and varied data on supportive housing and participants' experiences as tenants. Participants in the HousingPlus project spoke about the importance of the physical housing characteristics, professional support, and community integration as critical elements of housing, all of which have previously been identified in the literature (e.g., Nelson, Aubry, & Hutchison, 2009; Parkinson, Nelson, & Horgan, 1999; Sylvestre et al., 2007). These participants also discussed their important personal relationships and relational aspects of housing that served to enhance their housing experience that was also identified by Dunn (2002). The HousingPlus project generated more information of a highly personalized nature that reflected therapeutic themes (Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007).

The Home project began with the similar theme of home but generated less data about individuals' day-to-day experiences living in supportive housing. The messages conveyed by participants using their photos were, overall, less about the initial project theme and more about shared experiences of overcoming adversity. As a whole, the Home project generated less information about individual experiences as more focused and articulated group themes

emerged; themes that informed the audience about experiences of marginalization. Although these themes were less individualized than those in the HousingPlus project, the common group messages were also therapeutic in nature and less focused on aspects of citizenship within supportive housing (Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007).

Photovoice is clearly flexible in its application. In contrasting these two projects it is apparent that photovoice can be applied in different ways depending on intended project outcomes and the needs of participants. The HousingPlus project produced information about individuals as people and their personal day-to-day experiences living in supportive housing. In this less participatory application of the photovoice method, there was a clear project focus provided by facilitators and less emphasis placed on developing a group dynamic. As a result, the project and photos informed the audience about varied and specific aspects of individuals' experiences. It is possible that participants sought to provide broad descriptions of their housing not only because of the lack of direction and group dialogue facilitation, but also because the project was sponsored by supportive housing providers and university researchers. As a result, participants may have photographed aspects of their housing that they thought might interest the sponsors and the audience. Participants in this project maintained a more outward focus on the needs of others and therefore may have provided information they thought others desired.

The Home project, in contrast, offered an opportunity for participants to engage in a more participatory, group-based project. Group members were encouraged to build relationships with each other and, as a result, participants' photo messages became about overarching group themes. Although these themes were also highly personal, they were part of a cohesive group narrative and less about individual experiences. Given the group-building component of this application of photovoice, participants had a 12-week period in which to co-create a collective

narrative, resulting in cohesive and overarching photo and project themes. In the Home project, it is possible that the stronger group cohesion created a more inward focus on the shared interests and experiences of the group and a focus on communicating these issues.

There were also some areas of overlap across both projects about people's experiences as tenants in supportive housing. Each project generated information about participants' interactions with their housing, their agency, and other tenants. However, the HousingPlus project provided information in greater detail and, in contrast, the Home project generated less in-depth information about participants' lives in supportive housing. Participants in both projects talked about experiencing personal adversity in a variety of forms. The Home project provided more information about how participants coped with and managed these issues to a greater degree than did the HousingPlus project. Finally, themes about experiencing and challenging stigma also arose from both projects, however in the HousingPlus project participants talked about specifically challenging stigma related to supportive housing. In the Home project, notions of challenging stigma were broader and related to issues of mental illness, substance use, and histories of homelessness, as well as supportive housing. Schneider, Chamberlain, and Hodgetts (2010) assert that individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have no voice within the dominant media discourse. As such, individuals who are not domiciled are unable to inform the public narrative about their lives, which, in turn, reinforces stigma, marginalization, and exclusion (Schneider, Chamberlain, & Hodgetts, 2010). Klodawsky, Farrell, and Aubry (2002) assert that media coverage significantly influences policy and decision-making. Therefore, including the perspectives of individuals with lived experiences of stigma surrounding homelessness, mental illness, and substance use, for example, is necessary to affect positive change and, in this case, to combat stigma. Both the HousingPlus and Home photovoice projects

appeared to offer a platform for people with lived experiences to voice their perspectives, definitions, and ideas for solutions.

The Home project provided an opportunity to compare participant experiences across two different approaches to photovoice. This comparison can inform understanding of how participants take photos and their experiences of participation overall. Given the centrality of photos in this type of project, this understanding can inform the work of people facilitating this type of project to ensure their likelihood of success.

HousingPlus and Home Projects: Comparing How Participants Experienced Photovoice

Noteworthy differences were identified across the experiences of participants in the Home and HousingPlus projects (see Table 2 for a comparison of participant experiences across projects). Although there were some similarities in participants' experiences, the design and facilitation of each project appeared to have produced important differences. The HousingPlus project was a larger endeavour with a more heterogeneous group of participants and project contributors. This project was more purpose-focused and resulted in more varied narratives and participant experiences. The Home project, in contrast, was more group-based and participatory in nature. It involved a smaller and more homogenous group of participants and facilitators and generated a more unified narrative as well as more common participant experiences.

The three distinct approaches to photography that were identified in the HousingPlus project were also identified in participants' accounts of their early experiences participating in the Home project. Some participants in the HousingPlus project experienced anxiety about their participation. They had photographic styles characterized as discovery-oriented or task-focused. These participants appeared to have the least sense of ownership of the project, were sometimes

confused about the goals of the project, and were most concerned about their ability to take pictures and about how these pictures might be evaluated by others (Bendell & Sylvestre, under review). Others were planned and deliberate in their approaches, with clear ideas about what they wanted to photograph and what they wanted the photos to depict and say. These participants were the most confident with their participation throughout the project.

Although these approaches were evident in the Home project to some extent, all except one discovery and task-oriented photographer changed their approaches to become more planned and deliberate as the project unfolded. Those who used a discovery or task-oriented approach, who were also more anxious about their participation initially, become more confident as relationships strengthened between group members and they shared personal experiences and photos. The group context brought focus to the group, reduced uncertainty and anxiety and appeared to support a planned approach to photography for participants who many not initially have had their own ideas of what to photograph.

This group process appears to have been facilitated by the emergence of a group leader. At the start of the project, facilitators provided more instruction to group members about their expectations for the structure of the project. They noticed that participants were less involved at this stage and sought more direction from the facilitators. As a result, facilitators made the decision to provide less instruction and direction over time. As the facilitators became less directive the participants looked to one of their own for direction. This person was perceived as a better and more creative photographer. People spoke of appreciating how strategic she was in her approach to taking pictures, including the important messages she captured using her photos. Interestingly, this person recognized that others saw her this way. She chose to take a step back from this informal leadership role and offered more neutral comments instead so as not to sway

the group in any direction.

There were also some drawbacks to the group-based approach. The emergence of a group theme meant that the photos valued by some were excluded. Also, some participants felt hurt by the comments of others about their photos. Finally, as in the HousingPlus project, participants wanted more time and more opportunities to take photos. It appears that photovoice projects create an opportunity for self-expression and connection with other people that some may be disappointed to lose when the project is over.

HousingPlus and Home Projects: Comparing How Facilitators Experienced Photovoice

This section discusses findings from interviews with the three facilitators of the Home project, including one peer facilitator and two case managers working within the participating supportive housing agency. In many respects, the facilitators of the Home project shared experiences similar to those of the various contributors to the HousingPlus project, despite the significant differences in project applications.

The most apparent similarity was the central importance of participant experiences to most facilitators across both projects. HousingPlus contributors had different ways of acting on this priority depending on their background and roles in the project. The artist mentors and research team members prioritized participant experiences by facilitating dialogue, self-expression, and a focus on the external narratives of the photos as well as providing instrumental and emotional support to participants. The visual arts professors and student curators, in contrast, supported participants' expression of their experiences by defining and contextualizing photographs for the exhibit and focusing on the internal photo narratives. They worked to highlight and strengthen participants' photo messages by writing a curatorial statement, determining the order for photos

to be displayed in the exhibit, and preparing the media statements and posters designed to prime the audience for viewing these photos.

Comparatively, the Home facilitators also valued participant experience and supported participation in much the same way as the research team and artist mentors in the HousingPlus project. The Home facilitators spoke of working to create safety and comfort between group members and facilitating increased participant ownership of the group process and outcome over time. For example, although these facilitators decided upon the theme of home initially, they were conscious to allow this theme to unfold as directed by participants. Facilitators in this project also maintained a convergent definition of photos as self-expressive. They viewed photos as documenting social issues. Like the artist mentors and research team in the HousingPlus project they valued the external narratives of the photos, concerning themselves with the stories and contexts of each photo over the artistic quality or content therein. Consistent with the group-based design of the Home project, facilitators talked about working to enhance the participatory nature of the project. Facilitators said they were very aware of facilitating discussion without attempting to guide the direction of the project towards any particular focus or outcome. Although facilitators inevitably influence the process and outcome of any photovoice project, it is noteworthy that the Home project facilitators remained reflexive and strategically less directive throughout the project so as to provide an opportunity for project to be increasingly participant led.

The most significant differences between facilitators' descriptions of the two projects were the level of group cohesion and unified themes observed in the Home project as well as the size difference between the groups. In part, this was quite influenced by the weekly meetings that allowed participants to share their photos, messages, and experiences. This was a more

participatory approach to exploring lived experiences and people had the opportunity to co-create a strong and reflected upon narrative by the end of the project. However, facilitators in the Home project also contributed to the cohesion of the group by maintaining their own strong relationships as a facilitator team. Facilitators were more homogenous in this project as a result of both professional backgrounds and roles within the project. Facilitators also made sure to debrief after weekly meetings and discuss any concerns or issues related to meeting participants' needs and privileging their experiences within this project.

As a result of the opportunity to meet as a group regularly over the course of this project, both facilitators and participants had the time and opportunity to increase group cohesion. In this way, a co-created group narrative was produced because participants had the opportunity to consistently show and discuss their photos, receiving both the support and feedback of the group. The Home project was an arguably more participatory approach to photovoice.

Implications for Designing Photovoice Projects

In contrasting these two projects it is apparent that the choice of methodological focus depends on the intended outcome of the project. From the HousingPlus project, more was learned about individuals as people and their personal experiences living in supportive housing. People maintained their photographic styles throughout the project, with some appearing just as anxious about their participation at the end of the project. This finding suggests that when less emphasis is placed on developing a group dynamic and participants have less control over the course of a project, the photos produced inform the audience about the individuals' experiences. The Home project, in contrast, offered an opportunity for participants to engage in group development and more choice and control over the course of the project. Group members were encouraged to build relationships with each other and, as a result, participants' photo messages

became about overarching group themes. Although personal, these themes were less about one person's experiences and more about the groups' shared experiences and intended messages therein. Photovoice is an opportunity for participants to individually and collectively represent their experiences and communicate them to diverse audiences. The approach has the value of placing increased power and control in participants' hands, and building into the method a means of reaching audiences with their images and messages. By providing opportunity for decision-making and control over what is shared, the approach increases the likelihood that the findings from the project are grounded in the interests and experiences of the participants. At the same time, the approach may also be demanding on participants who may be uncomfortable with photography or having their photos viewed by others.

Table 1.

A Comparison of Project Themes: What Participants Said Using Photography

The HousingPlus Photovoice Project		The Home Photovoice Project	
Categories and Subcategories	Content	Categories and Subcategories	Content
Showing Where I Live <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing • The support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical components of housing • Support services provided by housing • Excludes staff members 	The Meaning of Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important relationships • A feeling of freedom
Living in My Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people in my housing • My frustrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with other tenants, staff members, and other important 	Experiencing Adversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult housing experiences: ill repair and/or conflict

<p>with my housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in my housing 	<p>people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative experiences housing (i.e., maintenance and upkeep, restrictions and limitations, and conflicts with other tenants) • Sense of responsibility for one's housing • Participation in housing agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing stigma 	<p>with other tenants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing stigma because of experiences of homelessness and/or mental illness
<p>Showing Who I Am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My personal struggles • My values and preferences • My goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past and present personal challenges • Coping • Values, preferences, faith, and worldview • Personal goals • Hopes for the future 	<p>Overcoming Adversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-advocacy • Engaging in creative activities • Spending time in nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to advocate for oneself • Importance of engaging in creative activities • Access to green space
<p>My Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing my community • My involvement in my community • My community's assets • My community's challenges • My suggestions for improving my community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptions of community and community members • Active participation in community • Support services received from community • Descriptions of community assets • Challenges encountered/observed in community • Suggestions for 		

	how to address community challenges		
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Table 2.

A Comparison of Project Themes: Participant Experiences of Photovoice

The HousingPlus Photovoice Project		The Home Photovoice Project	
Categories and Subcategories	Content	Categories and Subcategories	Content
<p>Differences in Motivation, Goals and Outcomes from Participating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned approach to photography: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Motivation to participate ◦ Goals for the project ◦ Impact of participation • Discovery and task-oriented approach to photography: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear project expectation • Missed photo opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear motivation for participating • More likely to identify project goals • Personal impacts of participation • Less sure about project and photo expectation • Missed photo opportunities 	<p>Joining the Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoying photography • Sending a message • Trying something new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for joining the project: photography, having something to say, and a new experience
<p>Approaches to Photography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned, deliberate approach to taking photos 	<p>Individual Approaches to Photography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned, deliberate approach to taking photos

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery-oriented approach • Task-oriented approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous approach to taking photos • Literal interpretation of project theme; photos of physical features of housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned approach • Discovery-oriented approach • Task-oriented approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous approach to taking photos • Literal interpretation of project theme; photos of physical features of housing
<p>Common Project Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the photos • Obtaining consent • Time limited photo-shoot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for satisfaction with photos • Reasons for dissatisfaction with photos • Concerns about obtaining the consent of photo subjects • Requiring more time with the cameras 	<p>Group Influences on Photography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing group dynamic • Inspiring each other • Forming a common message • Developing a planned approach to photography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience as a group • Importance of relationships with other group members • Inspired by each other's photos • How group messages were formed • How changing group dynamic changed individual approaches to photography
		<p>Planning the Exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending the exhibit • Hoping for impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desired audience members for exhibit • Desired impact of exhibit on audience members
		<p>Benefiting from Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefiting from being creative and

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being creative • Self-expression 	self-expressing
		<p>Experiencing Project Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging project components
		<p>Suggesting Project Changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needing more time • Wanting a second project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways in which project could be improved

Chapter 5: General Discussion

General Discussion

Photovoice is an exciting approach to generating knowledge about the lived experiences of members of marginalized communities. Asking people to depict their experiences in photographs, and then to talk about these images and present them to community members, provides a flexible opportunity for participants to express themselves, arguably offering them a greater measure of control over the focus and course of the research process. Photovoice was designed to provide access to richer and deeper understandings of phenomena with the hope of effecting positive changes for community members (Sylvestre, Bendell, & Bassi, in progress).

As a transdisciplinary method photovoice has received much attention in the literature, with researchers highlighting outcomes such as participants' increased self-esteem and sense of empowerment (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004), and the generation of rich data (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, & Radley, 2007; Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000). However, many of the reflections on the photovoice method are those of researchers and project facilitators and do not include those of participants (e.g., Chonody, Ferman, Amitrani-Welsh, & Martin, 2013; Lewinson, Robinson-Dooley, & Grant, 2012; Teti, Murray, LaShaune, & Binson, 2012). Including the voices of all stakeholders on the photovoice method is paramount to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the method.

Photovoice is flexible and applicable to a variety of research and social issues. Although most photovoice initiatives involve the common components outlined by Wang and colleague (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997; Wang, Kun Yi, Wen Tao, & Carovano, 1998), the majority of studies in the literature alter this method to fit the needs of participants, researchers, and project goals (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). Maintaining a high degree of participation throughout the photovoice process is ideal and in line with participatory action research (PAR)

values, but it is less frequently achieved in practice (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). There is a paucity of literature addressing the process and outcome implications of photovoice projects that differ in their degrees of participation. In particular, how varying degrees of participation impact experiences of participation and project findings were a foci of this research. As research on supportive housing does not adequately reflect the perspectives and values of the tenants themselves (Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007), the HousingPlus and Home projects were used as opportunities to include the perspectives of the consumers of this type of program while examining their experiences of photovoice. A reflexive stance was maintained throughout this research to consider the relationships among participants, contributors, facilitators, and the projects themselves and to understand how methodological choices impact participation and knowledge generation.

The HousingPlus project engaged people living in supportive housing to document their experiences and perspectives on their housing. Participants were invited to participate in the project with a theme and much of the process already established. At key points throughout the project, the research team sought to discuss and collaborate with the participants as much as possible (Bendell & Sylvestre, under review). According to Viswanathan and colleagues' (2004) ten elements of participation, this project is considered less participatory in application as participants had only limited opportunity to contribute to data collection over a two-week period, and maintained a moderate influence over the interpretation and dissemination of the findings in the exhibit. The HousingPlus project provided an opportunity to examine the following guiding research questions informing Study 1 and Study 2 respectively:

- 1) What can be learned about supportive housing from an investigator initiated and driven application of photovoice?;

2) What are the experiences of participants and project contributors involved in an investigator initiated and driven application of photovoice?

The Home project was a collaboration between the Ottawa chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and an Ottawa supportive housing agency and provided a second case example that informed this dissertation. According to Viswanathan and colleagues' (2004) criteria, the Home project was more participant-driven and, therefore, more participatory in nature. In this project, participants influenced the selection of the research question, collected data over a duration of 12 weeks, participated in an ongoing dialogue about interpretation of the findings, and strongly directed the dissemination of the findings in exhibit and book formats. This project provided an opportunity to examine the following research questions underlying Study 3:

3) What can be learned about supportive housing from a more participatory application of photovoice?;

4) What are the experiences of participants and facilitators in a more participatory photovoice project?

This general discussion includes a brief summary of key findings and a review of the impact of these findings. Limitations and areas for further inquiry follow implications of the current research. Concluding statements complete this section.

Summary of Key Findings: A Comparison of Approaches

The Influence of photovoice application on themes. In contrasting the HousingPlus and Home projects it is apparent that photovoice is very flexible in application. Depending on intended project outcomes and the needs of the project stakeholders it can be applied in different

ways, with varying degrees of participation. From the less participatory and more investigator-driven application of photovoice in the HousingPlus project, much was learned about individuals as people and their personal experiences living in supportive housing. The HousingPlus participants used their photos to express specific and highly personal aspects of their lives in supportive housing. However, they also departed from this theme to show and talk about a broad range of experiences, including their personal struggles, relationships with important people, values, preferences, and goals. A cohesive group theme was not present in this project, but comprehensive information about participants as individuals was generated. These findings reflect therapeutic outcomes previously identified in the housing literature (Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007).

There are several methodological components of the HousingPlus project that may have influenced the generation of these themes. Although this project was investigator initiated and driven, there was less guidance provided to participants surrounding the photo-taking period. Participants also had no opportunity for group dialogue regarding their photos and emerging themes. As a result of this lack of direction and/or feedback, participants may have photographed aspects of their housing that they thought would be of interest to sponsors and the audience. It is possible that participants sought to provide descriptions of their housing not only because of the lack of facilitated group dialogue, but also because the project was sponsored by supportive housing providers and university community members. Alternatively, as the goal of this project was left open, participants may have tried to capture a wide variety of photos and accompanying discussions during their interviews to ensure that they addressed what they thought was expected of them as participants. This photovoice application appeared to facilitate a more outward focus

on the needs of others. Participants therefore may have provided information related to personal aspects of their housing and lives.

The Home project began with the similar theme of home but produced less information about daily experiences living in supportive housing. Overall, the messages conveyed by participants using their photos were less about the initial project theme and more about shared experiences of overcoming adversity. The Home project generated less information about individual experiences and, instead, articulated group themes that informed the audience about experiences of marginalization. Personal experiences became absorbed and edited by the group as the common focus took shape, leading to pictures focused on community, social relations, and collective efforts, which also reflected therapeutic outcomes of housing (Sylvestre, Nelson, Sabloff, & Peddle, 2007). Notably, less was learned about people's experiences of the meaning of home as participants' focus remained on shared experiences of overcoming adversity, wellness, and recovery.

Methodological components within this project likely also influenced the findings. Participants in the Home project were encouraged to build relationships with each other and, as a result, participants' photo messages became about overarching group themes. Given the group-building component of this application of photovoice, participants had a 12-week period in which to co-create a collective narrative, resulting in cohesive and overarching photo and project themes. In the Home project, it is possible that the stronger group cohesion created a more inward focus on the shared interests and experiences of the group and a focus on communicating these issues.

An important overlapping theme overlap from both projects was the highly personal information shared through photography and the interviews. The use of photography, narrative

writing, and interview discussions seemed to have facilitated reflection and expression of lived experiences, despite differences in the duration of the photo-taking period and opportunity for group discussion. The photography appeared to provide the first opportunity within the structure of these projects for participants to reflect upon and share information about their lives. The narrative writing accompanying the photographs further distilled and formed these reflections. Finally, through the photo-elicited interview process, participants provided highly personal and detailed information that they had reflected upon using visual imagery, written narrative, and discussions with the author. Both the HousingPlus and Home projects appeared to offer platforms for people with lived experiences of supportive housing to voice their personal perspectives, definitions, and ideas for solutions to an outside audience. However, in contrasting these approaches it appears that a more structured project with less opportunity for group dialogue produced a more comprehensive view of individual experiences of housing whereas a more group-oriented project produced a more focused and unified view of lived experiences.

Participant experiences of photovoice. The findings from this dissertation provide some understanding about how participants produce their photos and how they experience their participation under the unique circumstances of a photovoice project. Participation within a photovoice project can be both rewarding and challenging. The conditions of a given project may be invigorating and spur creativity for some and cause others anxiety and inhibit their participation. Although there were some similarities in participants' experiences across the HousingPlus and Home projects, the design and facilitation of each project appeared to produce notable differences.

The three distinct approaches to photography that were identified in the HousingPlus project were also identified in the Home project. In the HousingPlus project, some participants

experienced anxiety about their participation. They had photographic styles characterized as discovery-oriented or task-focused. These participants appeared to have the least sense of ownership of the project, were sometimes confused about the goals of the project, and were most concerned about their ability to take pictures and about how these pictures might be evaluated by others (Bendell & Sylvestre, under review). Other participants in this project were planned and deliberate in their approaches, with clear ideas about what they wanted to photograph and what they wanted the photos to depict and say. These participants were the most confident with their participation throughout the project.

Although these approaches were evident at the outset of the Home project, participants who initially used a discovery or task-oriented style of photography changed their approaches to become more planned and deliberate as the project unfolded. Those who used a discovery or task-oriented approach, who were also more anxious about their participation initially, become more confident over time as the group established common themes and goals for the project. As relationships strengthened between group members and they shared personal experiences and photos, participants shaped the group themes and goals. The group context appeared to bring focus to the group, reduced uncertainty and anxiety, and appeared to support a planned approach to photography for participants who may not initially have had their own ideas of what to photograph.

These findings suggest that participants may adopt styles of photography in response to their understanding of what is expected of them, either by the project contributors/facilitators or other group members. The styles of photography that participants employed resulted in different knowledge about a phenomenon. More specifically, across both projects the task-based and discovery-oriented approaches seemed to produce more detailed and specific information about

personal and individual experiences. In contrast, the planned approach generated information about shared experiences and produced cohesive messages for a wider audience. The way photovoice was applied in the HousingPlus resulted in more discovery-oriented and task-based approaches to photography, and therefore the production of information about individual experiences. The application of photovoice in the Home project facilitated the development of a uniform planned approach to photography, and therefore information and a shared group experience was produced.

The influence of photovoice application on participation. Both rewarding and negative experiences of participation were noted in each approach to photovoice, suggesting that the degree of participation within a project must be selected based on both the goals for the project and the needs of the participants. For example, the challenges that were experienced by some participants in the HousingPlus project may be reflected in some of the compromises in the participatory aspect of this approach to photovoice. As this project was derived from a larger collaborative study, the theme for the project was established before participants decided to participate. Perhaps if participants had been involved in establishing and discussing the theme more and provided with greater opportunity to discuss their experiences and themes as a group, some of their uncertainty could have been minimized and even their approaches to photography altered. These participants would have likely benefited from meeting regularly as a group to discuss photos taken over several photo-shoots to reflect upon the photos they wanted to take, to capture a variety of housing activities that fall over several weeks, and to allow for unforeseen life circumstances. However, there were also some drawbacks to the group-based approach of the Home project. The emergence of a group theme meant that the photos valued by some were

excluded because the group did not value them. Similarly, some participants felt hurt by the comments of others about their photos.

Across both projects, findings suggest that individuals who used a task-oriented approach would benefit from more guidance from project facilitators and other group members. These participants may do better in a group that develops its own project goals and processes over time. Participants using a planned approach to photography may also benefit from activities oriented towards working in groups that have more than one photography sessions and who discuss their photos as they go along. Conversely, participants who use a discovery-oriented approach may thrive in projects that favour individual expression over the formation of a common group voice.

Project contributor and facilitator experiences of photovoice. The HousingPlus project was a heterogeneous approach to photovoice whereas the Home project was more homogeneous. As such, diverse project contributor and facilitator experiences and perceptions were captured as part of the evaluation of this project. These findings suggest that it is not only participants who come to photovoice projects with particular expectations. Project contributors and facilitators can also come to these projects with different expectations informed by their own prior experiences and professional backgrounds. These expectations are further informed by the nature of the contact they have with project participants.

Across the various contributor roles in the HousingPlus project, more similarities emerged than differences. All contributors maintained a sense of respect for participants throughout the project, regardless of their specific roles. In general, all contributors saw themselves as playing supportive roles to allow for self-expression on the part of participants. The ways in which they provided support, however, differed.

Project contributors differed most significantly in their perceptions of the photos and what they were supporting - the photographer or the production of good quality photos. The artist mentors and research team, contributors who worked closely with participants, saw the photos principally as social products and therefore maintained a focus on the external narratives, the messages within the photos. These contributors also emphasized the importance of participants having an opportunity to create art. They were more concerned with personally supporting participants through the process of taking and producing photos. They were interested in the participants having a positive experience with the project and being proud of their photos. These contributors were less concerned with the quality of the images or their aesthetic value. In contrast, the visual arts professors and student curators were more likely to view the photos as aesthetic objects and focused largely on the quality of the images, or the internal narratives. For them, the focus of the project was the production and display of photos that would have some inherent value and able to communicate on their own to an audience.

The varying perspectives of the photos were likely due to the disciplinary backgrounds of contributors, the degree of contact contributors had with participants, and the perceived expectations for contributor roles within the project. The researchers and visual artists, a group who worked closely with participants, knew more about participants as people and the stories informing the photos. The curatorial team and visual arts professors had very little contact with the participants until the final exhibit preparations and focused more on the photos as visual products because they were more distant from the participants as people.

In comparison, the Home facilitators also prioritized supporting participants with participation in much the same way as the research team and artist mentors in the HousingPlus project. The Home facilitators spoke of working to create safety and comfort between group

members and facilitating increased participant ownership of the group process and outcome over time. For example, although these facilitators decided upon the theme of home initially, they were conscious to allow this theme to unfold as directed by participants. Consistent with the group-based design of the Home project, facilitators talked about working to enhance the participatory nature of the project. Facilitators said they were aware of facilitating discussion without attempting to guide the direction of the project towards any particular focus or outcome.

The most significant difference between contributor and facilitator descriptions of their experiences across the two projects is the level of group cohesion and unified themes observed in the Home project. In part, the weekly meetings that allowed participants to share their photos, messages, and experiences influenced this. This was a highly participatory approach to exploring lived experiences and people had the opportunity to co-create a strong and reflective narrative by the end of the project. However, facilitators in the Home project also contributed to the cohesion of the group by maintaining their own strong relationships as a facilitator team. Facilitators were more homogenous in this project as a result of both professional backgrounds and project roles and made sure to discuss any concerns or issues related to meeting participants' needs and privileging their experiences within this project. As a result of the group-based design of this project both the facilitators and participants had the time and opportunity to increase group cohesion and, in turn, a co-created group narrative was produced.

Considerations for Designing Photovoice Projects

Providing cameras to participants is an effective way of facilitating collaboration between researchers and participants in the service of meaning making (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2004). However, varying opportunities for participation have important consequences. In Catanali and Minkler's (2010) review of the photovoice literature, they note that projects with

lower levels of participation tended to limit the role of participants to photographic data collection and photo-elicited interviews. In these projects, participants tended to have minimal interaction with researchers and had minimal to no dialogue with each other. According to this review, projects with higher levels of participation, which constitute the minority of those in the literature, tended to develop from longer-term relationships within communities. These projects had more opportunity for regular interaction between researchers and participants, and participants with each other. They also placed more focus on an action component (Catanali & Minkler, 2010). Although providing opportunity for greater participation is in keeping with the values of participatory action research (PAR), this is not always achievable for a variety of reasons, including fit with project resources, intention and direction of the project, and participant need. It is important to reflexively consider the potential trade-offs when designing an application of photovoice with more or less participation. Through this research, a case is made for deliberately designing photovoice projects that provide the most optimal goodness-of-fit between stakeholders and the phenomena of interest.

Opportunities for participation. According to the findings of this research, participants who are keen to express their personal experiences and who have a more exploratory style of photography likely benefit the most from participation within projects that are more investigator driven. Participants who approach their participation with confidence, express excitement and/or comfort with photography, and join the project with things to say are likely best suited to projects that offer less opportunity for participation beyond a circumscribed photo-taking period. This approach to photovoice is also most optimal for investigators who are interested in learning in-depth information about individual experiences with a given phenomenon.

However, a less participatory approach to photovoice offers little opportunity for participants to change their participation, including evolving their approach to photography and their comfort or confidence in their participation. These projects are not helpful for individuals who are less sure of taking photos, who are less clear about what they want to say, and who are consistently more anxious and unsure of their participation. This is a particularly important consideration when designing a photovoice project for members of a marginalized community. Investigators must ensure that enough direction and opportunity for group discussion is built into a photovoice method, particularly for individuals who experience anxiety about their participation, to ensure the safety and comfort of participants is prioritized. This may also include a need for longer or more frequent photography workshops to help participants feel comfortable with taking photos so that they have the choice say what they want using photography.

Therefore, projects that provide participants with considerable decision-making power over the focus and direction of the project may benefit people who were more anxious about photography and unsure of what to say. More group-based applications of photovoice afford participants the opportunity to gain direction and support from a strengthening group dynamic. In more participatory, group-based projects, group members are encouraged to build relationships with each other and, as a result, participants' photo messages become about overarching group themes. As such, these approaches to photovoice are most optimal for investigators who are interested in people's shared experiences of a particular phenomenon and less interested in generating knowledge about in-depth individual experiences.

However, the risk of this application of photovoice is the potential pressure to conform to the group and the themes it chooses to focus on. Some members may feel invalidated and

experience pressure to coincide their photos to the group themes. If a more group-based application of photovoice is conducted, it is especially important for facilitators to remain aware of the group dynamic and facilitate an optimal balance of individual expression within the larger dialogue so that all voices are heard.

Contextualizing the photographs. The photos produced through the HousingPlus and Home projects were viewed from different perspectives and defined differently depending on the viewer. Some stakeholders view photos as data, others as social products, and others as aesthetic objects. The planned photographers saw photos as social objects, and therefore as tools of communication and social change. The task focused photographers viewed photos as products of an implicit contract with researchers, and discovery-oriented photographers viewed photos as both aesthetic and social objects, detailing aspects of their lived experiences in artistic and expressive ways. What remains unclear is how audience members perceive and define photovoice photos.

Importantly, each viewer may have very different relationships to the photos and may attach very different meanings and messages to them. Contextualizing the photos and, in doing so, priming the audience members to view them in a certain way may be particularly important in highlighting participants' voices. For example, if photos are contextualized as art pieces in a museum, they may be viewed differently than if they are contextualized as part of social research. To facilitate this communication, participants themselves must be part of the viewing process so that audience members can know how to view their photos and, ultimately, their experiences and perspectives.

Modifying the HousingPlus and Home projects to address limitations. In accordance with a reflexive stance, important method modifications are presented in this section to address the limitations of the HousingPlus and Home projects. The flexibility of photovoice is clearly an asset but it also calls for investigator awareness, reflexivity, and a project design that is based on the best possible fit between stakeholder needs and the project focus. Applying photovoice to any social issue or marginalized community must be performed in a highly collaborative manner to ensure a goodness of fit between the method and all parties involved, most importantly the participants. Whether an approach is to be more or less participatory in application must be decided by weighing the potential benefits and risks against the needs of participants and the overall intention of the project

The HousingPlus project would be most enhanced by a less circumscribed photo-taking timeframe, more group meetings to facilitate group dialogue and feedback, and a mentorship component to support participants who were less familiar and/or comfortable with photography. These method elements would have been especially beneficial for participants who used a task-oriented approach to participation, as they had a less rewarding experience in this project. However, it would be important for facilitators to ensure that individual voices are not absorbed entirely into the larger narrative.

The Home project was a very strong example of a participatory approach to photovoice. Most elements of this method appeared well suited to the needs of the participants and the greater project focus. However, creating more recognition of individual voices would be a valuable compliment to this approach. This would have benefited the participants who felt somewhat invalidated and/or edited by the larger group narrative. This important addition would ensure a balance of all voices involved and that individuals with a more exploratory style of

photography would continue to have the freedom to take the photos that fit their style without feeling pressure to conform to the group.

From this research it is apparent that photovoice is not necessarily rewarding and can be quite an uncertain experience for participants, many of whom have lived experiences of marginalization. More or less opportunity for participation has broad consequences and is differentially suited. To create a better opportunity for rewarding experiences of participation it seems that a cohesive group atmosphere that is built on repeated interactions and discussions, a sense of safety with other group members and the facilitators, and an action component over which participants have considerable power and choice must all be present. Ultimately, this research underscores the reality that there is not a correct approach to initiating and delivering a photovoice project. This may be very good news for some investigators and rather anxiety provoking for others. Whatever the content of a project, and the context from which it was born, an overarching approach to investigation that is well grounded in reflexivity and values of PAR arguably serves the needs of all stakeholders involved. Maintaining flexibility throughout the delivery of a project, and changing the process to better meet the unique needs of participants as indicated, sets the stage for a successful photovoice project.

Limitations and Future Directions

Overall, the quality of the photovoice literature varies greatly and there are few explicit descriptions about methods used to evaluate photovoice projects (Catanali & Minkler, 2010). Similarly, there is little discussion in the literature about how to report and evaluate level of participation throughout these projects, and the potential impact on participants and other stakeholders. Although this research was an attempt to address these gaps, there are several

important limitations inherent in this dissertation. These limitations can be used to inform future evaluations of the photovoice method.

Neither the HousingPlus nor the Home projects followed up with participants following the completion of each project. It is uncertain what impact ending participation had on participants. For example, whether they continued to receive benefit from their participation or experienced any negative consequences of ending participation is unknown. In the literature there is also little follow-up research on community or neighbourhood level effects to determine the longer-term impact of photovoice on communities more broadly, including whether any changes were made on these levels (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). The long-term impacts of photovoice on participants, stakeholders, and communities are important areas of future research to enhance and strengthen the photovoice literature and are also gaps in the current dissertation.

Across the two photovoice projects, the inductive analysis that drew on grounded theory (GT) provided an important opportunity to remain close to the experiences of participants and facilitator/contributors. However, it is possible that this approach also limited the understanding of the impact of broader contextual factors. In hindsight, an ethnographic approach to analysis would have given attention to the ways in which the findings may be connected to larger social and political issues that may have impacted results (Buroway, 1992). According to Buroway (1992), GT has the potential to ignore or take social structures for granted. In the context of a photovoice project, particularly one that is affiliated with a university, dimensions of power are important to consider (Buroway, 1992). The use of the Extended Case Method (ECM) as an alternative approach to analysis would have likely provided a greater understanding of social and power-based issues in which photovoice is embedded. Buroway (1992) discussed the importance of ECM in generating knowledge about society as a whole. Across both photovoice projects that

comprise this dissertation, themes of overcoming the confines of stigma related to mental and physical health as well as living in poverty was apparent.

Similarly, Wang and Burris (1997) identified power imbalances as a potential challenge within photovoice. It is probable that power relationships within the Home and HousingPlus projects were present despite efforts to minimize them. For example, the control of project resources was ultimately in the hands of the project contributors and facilitators of both projects and may have served to reinforce existing power inequalities between the researchers and participants. As is likely the case in most photovoice projects, this relationship, in turn, may have influenced what participants felt they could, or should, say using photography and how they experienced the projects in general. Although totally removing power differences is likely unrealistic in the case of most photovoice projects, it is an important influencing factor on the process and necessitates further research on the impact of researcher-participant relationships on the outcomes and experiences of photovoice.

Another important difficulty inherent in the photovoice method and with this dissertation, specifically, is the assumption that photography is a familiar activity that provides an alternative means for self-expression for people who may not be as comfortable with verbal expression. Harrison (2003) has noted that photography is informed by everyday norms and conventions. Taking photographs for a photovoice project, however, is not a familiar context for taking photos. Klitzing (2004) stated that photography might be challenging for some participants wishing to represent more abstract concepts or who may be unfamiliar with photography in general. Within this research, most participants appeared eager to communicate aspects of their lives using photography. However, some participants expressed feeling anxious about this task and, in the case of the HousingPlus project, most continued to experience this uncertainty until

the end of the project. To address this concern in future projects it is important to highlight the importance of helping participants feel as comfortable as possible with the investigators and with each other. Providing frequent opportunities to meet and talk together is an optimal way of enhancing participant comfort and, in turn, may facilitate greater participation. In addition, photography might not be a comfortable activity for some participants or they may lack the skills to use a camera comfortably. In these cases, having the opportunity to take photos with a friend or an artist mentor may serve to increase both comfort and skill components of photography.

Other methodological concerns include the notion that, while certain information is revealed through the photovoice process, other equally pertinent information may also be concealed, as is the case with most research methods. However, in keeping with recommendations by Hodgetts, Chamberlain, and Radley (2007), the focus of the HousingPlus and Home projects was on the lived experiences of participants that were narrated into the photos during informal interactions, the exhibition, and the individual interviews. Equally important, however, may have been the information existing just outside of the photographic frame. Although participants' discussions about their photos may have ensured a more comprehensive discussion of their lived experiences, including what exists outside of the frame, information may have remained concealed as a result of focusing on content within the images.

Given the powerful and often revealing nature of images, and therefore the potential for misuse of these images, it is particularly important to consider issues of privacy and confidentiality when conducting a photovoice study. To uphold participant safety and the respect of participant privacy, this dissertation followed the recommendations of Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) for best practice. These authors insist that the safety of participants must be given greater priority than the naturalness and spontaneity of photographs. Across both projects,

participants were provided with consent forms and reviewed these forms at the onset of the projects. Similarly, providing written material to participants and community members, detailing the various aspects of a project, further facilitated informed consent. Although these ethical considerations are extremely important, they also may have squelched participant's spontaneity and freedom of expression. Several participants spoke of having to be more deliberate in their photography as a result of needing to use consent forms before taking other people's photos. This, in turn, may have edited their voice and reduced the level of spontaneity with which they could capture aspects of their lives. In addition, the use of consent forms and slowing down the photographic process may have, in turn, produced more planned photography styles in some people. Understanding the impacts of maintaining confidentiality and engaging in an ethical practice of photography are important areas of the photovoice method for future research.

Finally, as this inquiry is wholly qualitative and based on two case examples, the findings are not generalizable to other applications of photovoice with different project resources, levels of participation, and stakeholders. Within the context of these projects, the data generated and experiences of participation were highly related to methodological design as well as the influence of the project contributors and facilitators. For example, the characteristics of the interviewer, and other project stakeholders, likely affected what participants chose to share through their photos and during the interviews. For example, the interviewer's female gender, training in clinical psychology or general interview style may have facilitated the generation of expressive data. In addition, the personally relevant and intimate nature of the themes of these projects may have led participants to disclose personal information. Alternatively, perhaps the project focus on housing may have set an expectation for participants to share intimate information related to their housing, and therefore, their personal lives. In addition, the side-by-

side examination of photographs, and therefore the reduced attention placed on the individual, may have enhanced participant comfort during the interview and elicited more in-depth data. Projects that employ different applications of this methodology may generate similar or unique findings. Future photovoice projects must examine the influence of application, including diverse opportunities for participation, on information produced about a particular phenomenon and stakeholder experiences with the method overall.

Conclusions

Photovoice is a unique opportunity for participants to represent their experiences individually and collectively and to communicate them to diverse audiences. Photovoice has the potential to place increased power and control in the hands of participants to reach audiences with their images and messages. This method also increases the likelihood that project findings are grounded in the interests and experiences of participants. At the same time, care must be taken when initiating and designing photovoice projects to ensure the best fit possible with the needs of diverse partnerships, research or intervention interests, and community contexts. Although there is no benchmark as such for making these decisions, it is clear that participants differentially benefit from more or less opportunities for participation. Photovoice may be demanding on participants who are less comfortable with photography or having their photos viewed by others. Findings suggest that individuals who used a task-oriented approach seemed to experience the most difficulty with participation within an investigator initiated and driven project. These participants may do better in a more participatory project with opportunity for the participant group to develop its own project goals and processes over time. Participants using a planned approach to photography may also benefit from activities oriented towards working in

groups over several meetings with regular discussion of their photos and accompanying themes. Conversely, participants who use a discovery-oriented approach may thrive in projects with less opportunity for participation that favour individual expression over the formation of a common group voice. Photovoice appears to be well suited to identifying a broad range of experiences and issues in the lives of members of marginalized communities, including lived experiences of individuals living in supportive housing. However, the flexibility of the photovoice method and opportunities for participation therein broaden the applicability of this approach and call for increased understanding of the consequences of application on knowledge generation and experiences of participation.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer for HousingPlus Project Participants



 **HousingPlus**.ca
PHOTOVOICE PROJECT



What do you value about life in your housing?

What needs to be changed?

You are invited to take part in an exciting HousingPlus Photovoice project with Dr. John Sylvestre and his research team at the University of Ottawa. We want to hear something important: the voice of the people who live in this housing.

We Would Like to Hear your Voice!

You will each have an opportunity to learn about photography at a workshop and then take home a digital camera to use for 2 weeks. You will have the chance to submit photographs that you take and to explain the meaning of each photo. You can choose photographs that you wish to display at a photography exhibit, where politicians, councilors, community groups, and the media will see your photographs and hear your voice. Equipment and training will be provided and there is no fee to participate.

You are invited to a Photography Information Session

Please contact us for information on how to get involved.

Please don't start taking photographs just yet! If you would like to know more, please join us for the Information Session on October 8th, 2009!

You are experts on your housing and your voices should be heard!

Appendix B

HousingPlus Project Description for Participants



PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Project Description

Researchers from the University of Ottawa are working with the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network to better understand tenant's experiences of supportive housing in Ottawa.

You are invited to participate in this project to share your experiences and expertise with housing services.

Description of the Project

The goal of this project is to study what tenants of supportive housing like or dislike about their housing. The study will involve having tenants of supportive housing take photographs of different aspects of their housing and their communities.

Who is Involved?

This project involves a team of researchers from the University of Ottawa. This project will also involve tenants from supportive housing agencies in Ottawa who will offer their experiences of supportive housing through photographs and by talking about these experiences.

Your Participation in this Project

As a participant in this project, you play an important role. You will be asked to attend 3 meetings. These meetings will last from 1 hour to 3 hours and will be held at the University of Ottawa or at another suitable location in the City of Ottawa, such as at a participating supportive housing agency. At a first meeting you will learn about this project in more detail. At a second meeting, you will participate in a photography workshop and will take digital cameras home to begin taking pictures of your housing experience. At a third meeting you will discuss important photographs of your choosing with other participants. You will also be asked to attend a photography exhibit, at which a photograph of your choosing will be exhibited. You will not be identified in any written report or exhibition of the results of this project, unless you specifically request to be identified as the author of your photograph or voice recording. The meetings and small group discussion will be led by members of the research team. Researchers will audio-record the meetings. The team will use the information they collect to better understand your housing experiences.

You will receive an honorarium of \$15 for each meeting attended.

Risks from Participating in this Study

There are no major risks associated with your participation. Some people may feel uncomfortable participating in these discussions. However, the researchers will do their best to make sure all participants feel comfortable and can contribute their ideas.

Benefits from Participating in this Study

Your participation in this project will help supportive housing providers in Ottawa to better understand your housing experiences, which will contribute towards bettering these services.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In this work, we cannot guarantee anonymity because you will be taking photographs in your contributions to these discussions will be kept confidential. No comments made by participants during the discussions will be personally attributed to them in any report associated with this project. In addition, all participants are requested to maintain confidentiality regarding the statements made by other participants. You should not, however, that absolute confidentiality cannot be assured. Please also note that all photographs taken must be submitted to the researchers at the University of Ottawa, as ownership of these photographs belongs to the University of Ottawa.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participating in this project is voluntary. You can end your participation at any time. This means that you do not have to attend any meeting you do not want to attend. If you choose not to participate, the services you currently receive will not be affected.

Appendix C

HousingPlus Project Consent Form for Participants



PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in the HousingPlus Photovoice Project, a project being conducted by nine Ottawa supportive housing agencies, and researchers at the University of Ottawa. The goal of the project is to give tenants of supportive housing agencies in Ottawa the opportunity to share their experiences with their housing. In this study, you will use photography to give your perspective on your housing.

If you choose to participate we will ask you to photograph everyday life in your housing. Participants will be given a period of two weeks to do this task.

Participation in this project will be a unique learning experience where you will have the opportunity to express your experience of supportive housing in a creative way.

Project Summary:

If you choose to participate in this project you will be asked to attend approximately three meetings. These meetings will last from one hour to three housing and will be held at the University of Ottawa or at another suitable location in the City of Ottawa, such as at a participating supportive housing agency. At a first meeting you will learn about this project in more detail. At a second meeting, you will participate in a photography workshop and will take digital cameras home to begin taking pictures of your housing experience. At a third meeting, you will discuss important photographs of your choosing with other participants. You will also be asked to attend a photography exhibit, at which a photograph of your choosing will be exhibited.

The meetings and small group discussions will be led by a member of the research team. Researchers will audio-record the meetings. The team will use the information they collect to better understand your housing experiences.

You will receive an honorarium of \$15 for each meeting attended.

Participant Safety:

1. You will receive an identification card when the signed consent form is returned. You must carry your identification card during your photo-shoot.
2. The following rules apply when photographing other people:
 - a. Rules for photographs about positive experiences: If people are depicted in your photograph, they must be approached before the photograph is taken. Please show your identification card, explain the project to each person, ask their permission to be photographed, ask them to sign a release form and given them a business card with the contact information of the researchers at the University of Ottawa should they need any further information on the project. Please also explain that they may be contacted to verify the release form.
 - b. Rules for photographs about negative experiences: For your own safety, these photographs cannot depict people. Please express your concerns about your housing experience in the focus group setting.

Uses of Photographs and Paragraphs:

The photographs will be analyzed by Dr. Sylvestre and his research team in order to identify important themes and to synthesize this data. Please also note that all photographs taken must be submitted to the researchers at the University of Ottawa, as ownership of these photographs belongs to the University of Ottawa.

Participant Confidentiality:

Participation in this project is voluntary. Any private information or details given for this study will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this project. You will not be identified in any written report or exhibition of the results of this project, unless you specifically request to be identified as the author of your photograph or voice recording.

If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. You are free to ask for any information which identifies you to be withdrawn from the study.

I have been provided with two copies of the project description explaining the project, one for me to keep and one for the researchers at the University of Ottawa.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation in the research project will provide me with the opportunity to express how my housing situation is meaningful to me, what I value, and what I am concerned about.

I understand that the project will involve:

- Taking part in an information meeting, a workshop, an interview, a small group discussion, and a photography exhibit
- Taking photographs over a two week period of life in my housing
- Follow project ground-rules for my own safety, which will be covered in detail during the workshops
- Discuss photographs of my choosing, that best capture my experience of my housing, during an interview and small group discussion

I understand that the information provided will be kept confidential, will only be used for the purposes of this project, and I will not be identified in any written assignment or presentation of the results of this project unless I specifically request that my authorship of a photograph be recognized. I understand that I am free to withdraw from further participation at any time, without explanation or penalty.

I freely consent to participate in the project

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

You may contact the research ethics board at the University of Ottawa.

Appendix D

HousingPlus Project Photo-Release Form



PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Photograph Release Form

The HousingPlus Photovoice Project examines the housing experiences, both positive and negative, of tenants of supportive housing in Ottawa. Participants are using digital cameras to capture images related to their housing experiences.

I understand that the photographer has taken my (our) picture because he/she thinks that it shows something positive about housing. I give my permission for the project leaders at the University of Ottawa to use this photograph for any other reproduction of the photograph in whatever way is appropriate. The University of Ottawa will own these pictures and may use my picture or other reproduction without mention of my name.

These pictures will only be used for research and educational purposes. My (our) pictures will not be used in endorsement of product advertising. I am aware that, in the future, I will not be able to ask the University of Ottawa to remove my picture and/or reproduction from displays or from any editorial or educational document that has already been developed and/or distributed. However, I will be able to ask that my appearance, likeness, photograph, or other reproduction, not be used in any future documents that have not been developed and/or distributed.

As long as my name is not connected with my picture I agree not to make any claims or demands to the photographer or to the University of Ottawa with regard to the use of my image. I agree that I will also not institute any proceedings against the photographer or the University of Ottawa, and that the photographer and the University are not liable for any damages caused by my appearance.

Dated: _____

Signed: _____

Name (please print): _____

Address: _____

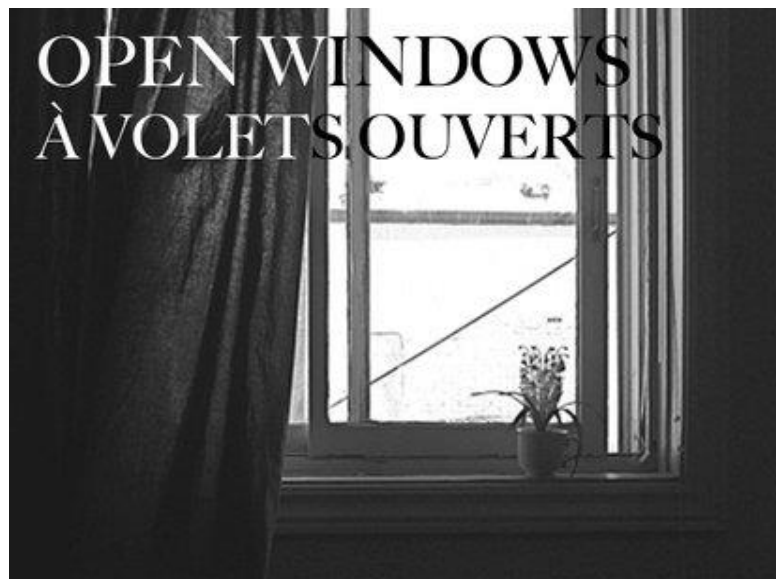
If you have any questions or require any further information about the project, or if you would like to have your photograph withdrawn, please contact the researchers.

You may also contact the research ethics board at the University of Ottawa. The protocol officer for ethics in research can be reached at the following address:

By signing this photo release form, you understand and agree to the above information. You will be asked to sign two copies; one will be kept by the research team and the other will be yours to keep.

Appendix E

HousingPlus Project Photography Exhibit E-Invite



OPEN WINDOWS À VOILETS OUVERTS

Bytown Museum

April 22-25 Avril, 2010

VERNISSAGE

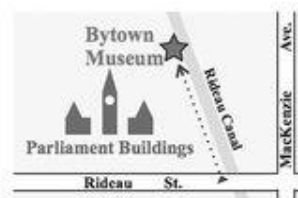
Thursday, April 22, 6-8 pm
jeudi, le 22 avril, 18-20 h

Open Windows À volets ouverts

The photographic works of residents of supportive housing express the emotional and physical experiences of their community, opening windows of understanding.

L'œuvre photographique d'individus résidant en logements avec service de soutien agit comme des volets ouverts sur la possibilité de comprendre leurs expériences physiques et émotionnelles au sein de leur communauté.

Museum Hours/Heures d'ouverture
Tue-Sun 11am-4pm/Mar-Dim 11h-16h



Bytown Museum
1 Canal Lane,
Ottawa, Ontario
613.234.4570
www.bytownmuseum.com



Appendix F

HousingPlus Project Participant Interview Protocol

Participant Interview Protocol

Demographic Information: Age, Gender, Length of Stay in Current Residence

Photography Process Questions:

1. How have things been going?
2. How did you find taking photographs for the two weeks?
 - What were some difficulties that you had while photographing your housing experience?
 - What did you find most enjoyable about this experience?
 - What did you find the least enjoyable about this experience?
3. Did you journal?
 - If not, why were you unable to journal?
 - If yes, how was this experience for you?

Project Participation Questions:

4. How did you find the workshop?
 - What did you enjoy about the workshop?
 - What could be improved about the workshop?
5. How do you feel about working as a group at times throughout this project?

Selecting Specific Photograph(s):

6. Out of all of your photographs, are there some that you like more than others?
 - What is it about these photographs that you like?
7. Which photograph(s) would you like others to see?
 - Why would you like others to see this/these photograph(s)?

Specific Photos:

8. Why did you choose to take this photograph?
9. SHOWeD Formula:
 - What did you see while you were taking this/these photograph(s)?

- What is happening in this photograph?
- How does this relate to your life?
- Why does this problem or strength exist do you think?
- What can be done about this issue?
- What needs to happen in order for this issue to be solved?

10. What would you like others to know about this situation?

11. What circumstances created this situation?

- Why does this happen?

12. Who has the power to do something about this situation?

13. Were there some things that you wanted to capture in this photograph but couldn't?

- Why couldn't you capture this?

Photo Exhibit:

14. What are your expectations for the photography exhibit?

15. Where do you see it being held?

- Who would you like to attend the exhibit?

Appendix G

Recruitment Letter for HousingPlus Project Contributors



PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Recruitment Letter for Project Contributors

Researchers from the University of Ottawa are working with the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network to better understand tenant's experiences of supportive housing in the Ottawa.

As a key facilitator in this project, you are invited to participate in an interview to share your experiences in this project to date.

Description of the Project

The goal of this project has been to study what tenants of supportive housing like or dislike about their housing. The study has involved having tenants of supportive housing take photographs of different aspects of their housing and their communities. We are also interested in documenting the perspectives of the facilitators in this project to better understand the photovoice process. We are inviting you to share your experiences in your role as a key facilitator in this project.

Who is Involved?

This project involves a team of researchers and photographers from the University of Ottawa. This project also involves tenants from supportive housing agencies in Ottawa who have offered their experiences of supportive housing through photographs and by talking about these experiences in an interview.

Your Participation in this Project

As a participant in this project, you play an important role. You will be asked to participate in a one-hour interview so you can share your unique experiences of your role in the photovoice project.

Risks from Participating in this Study

There are no major risks associated with your participation. Some people may feel uncomfortable participating in this discussion. However, the interview is an opportunity to share

your personal experiences of the project in a format, and with an interviewer, that will offer acceptance of, and respect for, your contributions.

Benefits from Participating in this Study

Your participation in this project will help the researchers at the University of Ottawa to better understand the photovoice process, as your unique experiences with the project are of utmost value in this process.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In this work, your anonymity will be respected as what you say in the interview will not be linked with any identifying information. You should note, however, that absolute confidentiality cannot be assured as there are a select number of key facilitators in this project.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this interview is voluntary. You can end your participation in the interview at any time, without compromising in any way your role as an important facilitator in this research.

Appendix H

Consent Form for HousingPlus Project Contributors



PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Consent Form for Project Contributors

Project Contacts

If you have any questions or require further information about the project than is provided below, please contact the researchers.

Researchers from the University of Ottawa are working with the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network to better understand tenant's experiences of supportive housing in the Ottawa.

As a key facilitator in this project, you are invited to participate in an interview to share your experiences in this project to date.

Description of the Project

The goal of this project has been to study what tenants of supportive housing like or dislike about their housing. The study has involved having tenants of supportive housing take photographs of different aspects of their housing and their communities. We are also interested in documenting the perspectives of the facilitators in this project to better understand the photovoice process. We are inviting you to share your experiences in your role as a key facilitator in this project.

Who is Involved?

This project involves a team of researchers and photographers from the University of Ottawa. This project also involves tenants from supportive housing agencies in Ottawa who have offered their experiences of supportive housing through photographs and by talking about these experiences in an interview.

Your Participation in this Project

As a participant in this project, you play an important role. You will be asked to participate in a one-hour interview so you can share your unique experiences of your role in the photovoice project.

Risks from Participating in this Study

There are no major risks associated with your participation. Some people may feel uncomfortable participating in this discussion. However, the interview is an opportunity to share your personal experiences of the project in a format, and with an interviewer, that will offer acceptance of, and respect for, your contributions.

Benefits from Participating in this Study

Your participation in this project will help the researchers at the University of Ottawa to better understand the photovoice process, as your unique experiences with the project are of utmost value in this process.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In this work, your anonymity will be respected as what you say in the interview will not be linked with any identifying information. You should note, however, that absolute confidentiality cannot be assured as there are a select number of key facilitators in this project.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this interview is voluntary. You can end your participation in the interview at any time, without compromising in any way your role as an important facilitator in this research.

I have been provided with two copies of the consent form explaining the project, one for me to keep and one for the researchers at the University of Ottawa.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation in the interview will provide me with the opportunity to express my unique experiences in this project.

I understand my participation will involve a one-hour audio-recorded interview, during which I will have the opportunity to share my unique experiences in my role as _____ with this project.

I understand that the information provided will be kept confidential, will only be used for the purposes of this project and I will not be identified in any written assignment or presentation of the results of this project. I understand that I am free to withdraw from participating in the interview at any time, without explanation or penalty.

You may contact the research ethics board at the University of Ottawa.

I freely consent to participate in the project:

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix I

HousingPlus Project Contributor Interview Protocol

Project Contributor Interview Protocol

1. What has been your role in the photovoice project?
 - In what ways have you contributed to the project?
2. Considering your role in this project, how similar or different has your participation in this project been to your in other projects?
 - Has your role been changed at all through this project?
4. In your experience with this project, what has been your understanding of:
 - a. The role of the participants?
 - b. The role of the research team?
 - c. The visual arts professor's roles?
 - d. The photography graduate student's roles?
 - e. The role of the project coordinator?
 - f. The role of the curator students?
 - As you think about each of these participants in the study, were there any ways in which their roles were unexpected?
5. What did you think of the photographs?
 - Did you have any expectations for the photographs?
 - Did the photographs differ from your expectations?
6. What was your experience of the photography exhibit?
 - Did you have any expectations for the exhibit?
 - Did the exhibit differ from your expectations?
7. At the exhibit, was there anything that you learned regarding the artist's experiences?
8. As you reflect back on the whole project, was there anything that surprised you?
 - Why did this surprise you?
9. As you reflect back on the whole project, was there anything you found challenging about this project?

- Why did you find this challenging?
10. In your experience, what has been the most important component(s) of this project?
11. If you could change one element of this project, what would it be? Why?
12. If you were to provide a short description of photovoice to a colleague, what would you tell them?
- What would you tell them are the main goals?

Appendix J

Interview Description for Home Project Participants



The Home Photovoice Project

Interview Description

Researchers from the University of Ottawa are working with the Home Photovoice Project to better understand people's experiences participating in a photovoice project.

You are invited to participate in an informal interview to share your experiences and expertise with photovoice.

Description of the Research

The goal of this research is to study how people involved in a photovoice project experience the different aspects of the project. The study will involve one individual interview with a student researcher so that you can discuss your experience with taking photographs in the context of a photovoice project. You may also be asked to bring the photographs you took during the project to talk about the photographs that mean the most to you.

Who is Involved?

This research involves a research student working through the University of Ottawa. This interview will also involve participants from the Home Photovoice Project who will offer their experiences with photovoice by showing some photographs and by talking about these experiences during an informal interview.

Your Participation in this Research

As a participant in this research, you play an important role. You will be asked to attend 1 individual interview. This interview will last for approximately 1 to 2 hours and will be held at the University of Ottawa or at another suitable location in the City of Ottawa, such as at a participating housing agency. At this interview you will be asked to bring the important photographs that you took during your participation in the Home Photovoice Project to show and discuss with the interviewer. You will also be asked to talk about your experiences with different aspects of this photovoice project. You will not be identified in any written report of the results of this research, unless you specifically request to be identified in your interview.

The interview will be held with a student researcher. The informal interview will be audio-recorded to best capture the important things you say during the interview. The researcher will use this information to better understand your experience with photovoice.

You will receive an honorarium of \$10 for participating in this interview and coffee and beverages will be provided.

Risks from Participating in this Study

There are no major risks associated with your participation in the interview. Some people may feel uncomfortable discussing their experiences with photovoice. However, the researcher will do her best to make sure all participants feel comfortable and can contribute their ideas.

Benefits from Participating in this Study

Your participation in this interview will help researchers to better understand the photovoice process, which will contribute towards strengthening projects like this.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed when you partake in this interview. No comments you make will be personally attributed to you in any report associated with this research, nor will any information be shared with the Home Photovoice Project.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participating in this interview is voluntary. You can end the interview at any time. This also means that you do not have to attend the interview if you do not wish to attend. If you choose not to participate in the interview, the services you currently receive and your participation in the Home Photovoice Project will not be affected in any way.

Appendix K

Interview Consent Form for Home Project Participants



The Home Photovoice Project

Interview Consent Form

Project Contacts

If you have any questions or require further information about the interview please contact the researchers.

You are invited to participate in an informal interview to share your experiences and expertise with photovoice. The goal of this research to study how people involved in a photovoice project experience the different aspects of the project

If you choose to participate in the interview, you will be asked to talk about your experiences with the project, as well as show and discuss some photographs of your choosing. The interview will last for approximately 1 to 2 hours and will be completely voluntary. Participation in this interview will give you the opportunity to express your experience with photovoice.

Project Summary:

As a participant in this research, you play an important role. You will be asked to attend 1 individual interview. This interview will last for approximately 1 to 2 hours and will be held at the University of Ottawa or at another suitable location in the City of Ottawa, such as at a participating housing agency. At this interview you will be asked to bring the important photographs that you took during your participation in the Home Photovoice Project to show and discuss with the interviewer. You will also be asked to talk about your experiences with different aspects of this photovoice project. You will not be identified in any written report of the results of this research, unless you specifically request to be identified in your interview.

The interview will be held with a student researcher. The informal interview will be audio-recorded to best capture the important things you say during the interview. The researcher will use this information to better understand your experience with photovoice.

You will receive an honorarium of \$10 for participating in this interview and coffee and beverages will be provided.

Use of Photographs:

During the interview, some of your photographs may be shown to the interviewer to better help you to discuss your experiences with the Home Photovoice Project. It is your choice to select the photographs you'd like to show to the interviewer and discuss together. Please note that the photographs will be used for the purpose of discussion during the interview.

Participant Confidentiality:

Participation in this interview is voluntary. Any private information or details given during the interview will be kept confidential. You will not be identified in any written report resulting from this research.

If you choose to participate in the interview, you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences.

I have been provided with one copy of the interview description.

I have been provided with two copies of the consent form, one for me to keep and one for the researchers at the University of Ottawa.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation in the interview will provide me with the opportunity to express how I have experienced this photovoice project.

I understand that the interview will involve:

- Meeting with a research student for an informal interview lasting approximately 1 to 2 hours
- Bringing the digital copies of my photographs and discussing the photos of my choosing during the interview
- Discussing my experience with different parts of this photovoice project

I understand that the information provided will be kept confidential, will only be used for the purposes of this research, and I will not be identified in any written assignment or presentation of the results of this research. I understand that I am free to withdraw from further participation at any time, without explanation or penalty.

I freely consent to participate in this interview:

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

You may contact the research ethics board at the University of Ottawa.

Appendix L

The Home Project Participant Interview Protocol

Participant Interview Protocol

Demographic Information: Age, Gender, Length of Stay in Current Residence

Photography Process Questions:

1. How have things been going?
2. How did you find taking photographs?
 - What were some difficulties that you had while photographing your housing experience?
 - What did you find most enjoyable about this experience?
 - What did you find the least enjoyable about this experience?
3. How did you find using the camera?
 - What was good about it?
 - What made it difficult to use?
4. Did you have any ideas about the kinds of photographs you wanted to take at the start of the project?
5. Is there anything anyone said or did that influenced what you decided to photograph (i.e., facilitators or other participants)?
 - Did this influence how you decided to use your camera?
6. How did you find using the camera?
 - What was good about it?
 - What made it difficult to use?

Project Participation Questions:

7. How did you find the workshop/training sessions?
 - What did you enjoy about the workshop/training sessions?
 - What could be improved about the workshop/training sessions?
 - Did the workshop/training session influence your participation? How?

8. Looking back on the whole project, was there anything that surprised you about this project?
 - Why did this surprise you?
9. As you reflect back on the project, was there anything that you found challenging about it?
 - Why did you find this challenging?

Selecting Specific Photograph(s):

10. Out of all of your photos, are there some that you like or are more important to you than others?
 - What is it about these photographs that you like? Why are they more important to you?
11. Which photo(s) would you like others to see?
 - Why would you like others to see this/these photograph(s)?

Specific Photos:

12. What did you see while you were taking this/these photographs?
13. Why did you choose to take this photograph?
14. How does this photograph relate to your housing
15. SHOWeD Formula:
 - What did you see while you were taking this/these photographs(s)?
 - What is happening in this photograph?
 - How does this relate to your life?
 - Why does this problem or strength exist do you think?
 - What can be done about this issue?
 - What needs to happen in order for this issue to be solved?
16. What would you like others to know about this situation?
17. What circumstances created this situation?
 - Why does this happen?

18. Who has the power to do something about this situation?

19. Were there some things that you wanted to capture in this photograph, but couldn't?

- Why couldn't you capture this?

Photo Exhibit:

20. What was the exhibit like?

21. How did you find having your photograph(s) displayed in this way?

22. What were your hopes or expectations for the exhibit?

- In what ways did the exhibit meet your expectations?
- In what ways did it not meet your expectations?

23. Did you have any expectations for the photographs?

- Did the photographs differ from your expectations?

24. Did you learn anything about people's experiences at the exhibit?

Follow-Up:

25. Different people have different perspectives on a project like this. If you were to quickly describe what this project was about, what would you say?

26. What was it like to show me your photographs and discuss them with me today?

Appendix M

The Home Project Facilitator Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for Project Facilitators:

Evolution of Project:

1. Imagine that I don't know-how did the project come about?
 - Where did you see this project going at the beginning?
 - What were the hopes or expectations of: Salus, CMHA, your co-facilitators, and the participants
2. Within the photovoice project, what role did you play?
 - In what ways did you contribute to the project?
 - Has your role changed at all through this project?
3. Who else played an important role?
 - What did they contribute/bring that was important? Why important?
4. Looking back on the project, were there any roles that were missing?
 - How did you get around this?
5. As you think about everyone's roles in the study (facilitators and participants), were there any ways in which their roles were:
 - Surprising or unexpected?
 - Useful?
 - Illuminating?
6. Did the project change over time? How?
 - How did the themes developed? How did they change over time?
 - What would you say the focus of the project was? How did this change over time?
 - What was the group dynamic like at the start of the project? How did this change over time? What contributed to this change?
 - How did the changing group dynamic influence the project? What aspects did it influence?
7. Thinking back to the beginning when the project began, did the project unfold as planned? How did it match your expectations? (And the expectations of others mentioned?)

Relationships:

8. What relationships were important in this project?

- Why?
- How did they impact the project?
- Did they change over time? How/what allowed them to change?

9. Did you know any of the participants before the project began?

- To what extent do you think it mattered that participants were familiar with:
 - Salus
 - CMHA
 - The facilitators
 - Other participants
 - Me

Specific Project Elements:

10. If we think about your experience with facilitating the project, what elements did you find the most important or helpful?

- How important were they to the project?
- What did they do for the project?
- What do you think they did for the participants?
- How successful were these elements in serving the project?

11. Which aspects were hindering or more challenging? Why?

12. What do you think of the photographs?

- Did you have any expectations for the photographs?
- Did the photographs differ from your expectations? How

13. What are your hopes for the photography exhibit?

- Do you have any expectations for the exhibit?

14. As you reflect back on the whole project:

- Was there anything that surprised you? Why?
- Anything you found challenging? Why? How did you overcome this?

15. How would you describe photovoice to someone who is not familiar with it?