

## HSRRC Application Proposal

### **I. Project Title & Prospectus**

*Project Title:* Images & Voices: An Arts-Based Qualitative Study Using Photovoice to Understand the Needs & Aspirations of Sex Workers in Portland, Oregon

*Prospectus:* The ways in which sex workers have been studied and represented historically, socio-politically and academically do not take into account their voices and participation in the process. Arts-based research provides the potential for collaboratively developing unique knowledge and insight about the experiences of sex workers and the meanings assigned to those experiences.

The purpose of this arts-based, photovoice research study is to illustrate the experiences of sex workers through the inclusion of their images and voices in order to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and aspirations of sex workers in Portland, Oregon. The objective is to identify their issues of importance and to provide this information in an art exhibit to inform policy makers about issues of concern to female sex workers. The method of photovoice, created by Wang & Burris (1997), entails giving cameras to individuals who will use photography to identify, represent, and enhance their community. The three main goals of photovoice are (1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through individual and small group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach influential community advocates and people who can be mobilized for change (Wang & Burris, 1997).

This research study will entail one or more 1-1½ hour long photovoice training workshop(s) (Appendix F) that will cover: (1) the photovoice process and project goals; (2) underlying issues about the use of cameras, power, and ethics; potential risks to participants and how to minimize these risks; (3) the practice of giving photographs back to community members to express appreciation, respect or camaraderie; (4) informed consent (including issues of confidentiality; participants' rights during the study; and possible risks). Every participant will attend one training workshop to ensure that they are knowledgeable of the photovoice method, risks, ethics, etc. prior to taking their photographs. After the participants attend a training workshop, they will be given a used 35mm camera and one roll of film, as well as the themes for taking their photographs. In the event that participants lose or break their camera, it will be replaced by a new one. After the photographs are taken by participants, there will be a 1½-2 hour long, audio-tape recorded individual dialogue session with each participant, centered on their photographs and the stories behind their photographs (Appendix I). An optional 1-1½ hour long, audio-tape recorded group dialogue session will be held for those participants who want to collaboratively synthesize the themes of her photographs and prepare for a community art exhibit (Appendix K). In addition, independent of the dissertation, participants will be invited to attend an art exhibit of their photographs in order to reach a broader audience, including influential community advocates.

Participant recruitment and group training will be conducted by the Principal Investigator and Crystal Tenty, a community advisor and partner in this study. Crystal Tenty is a Direct Service Specialist at the Portland Women's Crisis Line and has unique expertise and practice experience

working with sex workers in Portland, Oregon. She will offer support and advice that will enhance the credibility of this project among sex workers in Portland, Oregon who have built a good rapport with her.

## **II. Exemption Claim for Waiver of Review**

None claimed.

## **III. Subject Recruitment**

*Participants:* Those participants who will be eligible to participate in this study will meet the following criteria: (a) 18 years of age or older; (b) female; (c) currently working in the sex industry in Portland, Oregon for the past six months (examples include working on the streets, at an escort agency, as a dancer, a dominatrix, an erotic masseuse, or as a model in a private booth); (c) engaged in sex work, defined as the exchange of sex or sexual stimulation for money or other forms of payment. Ten to fifteen female sex workers will be recruited for this study. Recruitment of participants will be restricted to only females, due to the over-representation of women working in the sex industry and the use of feminist standpoint theories to inform this study. Individuals with diverse characteristics will be invited to participate in this study.

Multiple methods of recruitment will be implemented by the Principal Investigator since sex workers are a hidden, difficult to reach population.

*Approach #1:* The first recruitment strategy will involve creating a flyer that describes the research study, its purpose, and eligibility requirements (Appendix A). Any sex worker who is interested in participating in the study will be able to contact the Principal Investigator or the co-facilitator via the telephone number printed on the recruitment flyer.

Purposive sampling will be implemented with women currently identified as working in the sex industry who the Principal Investigator and the co-facilitator have already made contact with over the past year. These female sex workers identified to participate through purposive sampling will receive a recruitment flyer. Then, snowball sampling will be used to recruit other sex workers who might be interested in participating in the study. This will involve inviting known sex workers to identify others working in the sex industry who might be willing to consider participating in the study. Additional recruitment flyers will be given to known sex workers to pass out to their colleagues. Flyers will also be distributed to sex workers by the Principal Investigator through street outreach.

*Approach #2:* Another approach will involve sending out a letter to social service agencies that serve the needs of, or come into contact with, sex workers (e.g. those agencies that have needle exchange programs). These social service agencies will receive a letter describing the study (Appendix B). They will also receive copies of the research study flyers to pass out to those sex workers who express an interest in participating in the study.

Participants recruited through the study flyer will be asked to contact the Principal Investigator so that the study can be explained in detail and so that any questions by potential participants can be answered. If participants contact the co-facilitator, whose name is also on the flyer, they will be referred to the Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator will explain the study purpose

and procedures, time commitment requirements, reimbursement for participation, and any questions will be discussed (Appendix C). In addition, the basic elements of the consent form (procedures, risks and safeguards) will be highlighted (Appendix D). The potential participants will be screened over the telephone to ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria stated above.

#### **IV. Informed Consent**

After potential subjects are recruited through purposive and snowball sampling, social service agency referrals, and street outreach with study flyers, informed consent of those sex workers willing to participate will be obtained by the Principal Investigator. Preceding the initial photovoice training session, each potential participant will be asked to meet 30 minutes early (prior to the training workshop) and the Principal Investigator will go over the consent form (Appendix D), including risks, safeguards and benefits to participation. The voluntary nature of the study will be emphasized and participants will be reminded that they have the freedom to end their participation in the study at any time without penalty or consequence. The consent form will be read to participants and individual questions will be answered. Those women who assent to participate by signing the consent form will be included in the study. In addition, after the individual dialogue sessions, participants will be invited to participate in an optional group dialogue session. The voluntary nature of the group dialogue session will be highlighted, and issues of confidentiality, potential risks and benefits will also be discussed with participants prior to the group dialogue session.

#### **V. First-Person Scenario**

I was handed a study flyer by my co-worker who works in the same dance club as I do. She told me that she had heard about a research study where sex workers were given cameras and asked to take pictures of their experiences. I looked at the flyer that she gave me and the study seemed to be creative and interesting. On the flyer, I found two names and telephone numbers listed. I decided to call the first person listed on the flyer in order to find out more information about this study.

I called the telephone number and asked for the person listed on the flyer. I told the person on the other end that I had seen a flyer about the photovoice study and wanted to know more about it. The woman I spoke with on the phone introduced herself as the Principal Investigator for the study. She explained that she was a doctoral student at the university. She stated that the purpose of the study was to understand the needs and aspirations of sex workers in Portland, Oregon. The Principal Investigator further elaborated that sex workers would be given cameras to photograph what was important to them. This study seemed like something I wanted to participate in, so I let her know. She wanted to make sure that I was eligible to participate in the study, so she asked me a few questions about my age, gender, and very brief questions about my involvement in the sex industry to determine if I met the criteria. Before asking me these eligibility questions, she emphasized that I was free to not answer any questions I did not wish to answer. The Principal Investigator went through her questions and I didn't mind answering any of them. I agreed to be asked some questions over the telephone, and I answered "yes" to everything she asked. She let me know that I was eligible to participate in the study.

She said that I was a good fit for the study, so she went on to explain the study procedures, the possible risks, ways she would protect my confidentiality, and the benefits. She emphasized that

I could stop the study at any time if I wanted to without any consequence. Also, I was told that I wouldn't have to share anything I didn't want to share. She told me what the goals of the photovoice method were and stated that the study would last between two to three months.

I agreed to be in the study, and about a week later, I received a phone call from the Principal Investigator and she told me where the group photovoice training session would be held, along with the date and time of the meeting. I showed up to the training workshop about 15 minutes early so that we could go over the written consent form together and I could ask questions.

Then, I participated in a 1 ½ hour photovoice group training workshop session. I also met the co-facilitator and other participants in the study. We were asked not to say our full names, but rather, to choose a pseudonym to go by throughout the study to maintain the confidentiality of our true identities. After the two facilitators introduced themselves and the study again, we started off the session with an icebreaker activity. Then we went over a few ground rules for the training session. I received a one-page hand-out on the concept and method of photovoice, which was also described by the Principal Investigator. We had a discussion around the power, authority and accountability that one has when holding a camera. The Principal Investigator also talked to us about our responsibilities when carrying a camera and the importance of respecting the rights and privacy of others. Safety was emphasized, along with ways to minimize potential risks. As a group, we also talked about ways to approach and photograph someone in the community. We were advised to always ask permission before taking someone's photograph. We also discussed the ethic of giving photographs back to the community people as a way of expressing gratitude.

During the second half of the training workshop, we were given one 36-exposure, 35mm point-and-shoot, camera with a flash feature and one roll of black and white film. We were told that we could have this camera replaced if it was lost or damaged during the study. Then, we went over a few mechanical aspects of camera use and photographic tips. Finally, we discussed the two themes (needs and aspirations) for taking the pictures. We were given the freedom to revise these themes if they didn't suit our needs as a group. We were instructed to photograph places, objects, events, and people that are related to our everyday experience that were important to us. We set an approximate deadline for taking the photographs. Using the themes we all agreed upon, I took my photographs within a week. After I was done with my roll of film, I called the Principal Investigator and she met me for a few minutes to pick up my film for developing. We also set up a date to meet for our individual dialogue session.

A few days later, I picked a safe, private space in my community to meet with the Principal Investigator. I participated in a 2 hour long individual dialogue session where I talked about 10 of the photographs I took. With my permission, the Principal Investigator audio-tape recorded the dialogue session. After the dialogue session, I was given \$50 in cash as a thank you for my time. I also got to keep the camera and one set of pictures. The Principal Investigator mentioned that I would be invited to meet with her and review the themes she came up with in her analysis from our interview together to make sure that what I said was accurately understood and represented. I agreed to this and met with her a few weeks later to read over the themes she had found from her analysis.

A few weeks after, I decided to attend the optional group dialogue session with the other participants in the study. The Principal Investigator talked about how the optional participation in the group dialogue session was related to one of the goals of photovoice, which is to reach influential community advocates, people who can be mobilized for change, and the broader community. She emphasized that my participation was voluntary and that I could stop participating in the group dialogue at any time without consequence. With the other participants, we discussed the themes of all of the photographs and the different ways in which to display these themes. I was also given a PSU photo release form to sign for those photographs that would be included in the photography exhibit. We also discussed a plan for the community art exhibit. After the group dialogue session, I was given a \$5 Fred Meyer gift card as a thank you for my time. I was told that I would be contacted in a few weeks and invited to the art exhibit of everyone's photographs.

## **VI. Potential Risks and Safeguards**

Giving participants a camera to photograph their life experiences and issues of concern may have potential risks, such as distress, discomfort, physical harm or a loss of privacy to oneself and/or their communities. To protect the privacy of others and the community, participants will be advised to always obtain verbal consent before taking any photographs of other people. Due to the illegal nature of sex work, no photographs possibly depicting any illegal behavior will be accepted for discussion in the research project.

In addition, there may be some discomfort, embarrassment, and even distress from participating in the dialogue sessions because the stories behind the participants' photographs might be very personal. Talking about illegal activities, such as sex work, might make participants feel uncomfortable. However, participants will be reminded that they do not have to share or discuss anything they do not wish to discuss. Participants are free to stop the dialogue sessions at any time. If participants experience any stress or discomfort during their participation in this study, they will be provided with referrals to specific agencies that support women working in the sex industry. Also, participants will be informed about mandatory abuse reporting.

## **VII. Potential Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to participants other than payment and any satisfaction obtained from having the opportunity to use photography to tell their stories and to share their life experiences. All participants will be paid \$50 for their participation in the training workshop and the individual dialogue session. Those participants who choose to participate in the group dialogue session will be given a \$5 Fred Meyer gift card as a way of thanking them for their time and involvement. The study findings from the images and voices of sex workers will provide important information around understanding their needs and aspirations. Independent of this dissertation, the art exhibit component of the photovoice method has the potential for reaching influential community advocates who can become aware of the needs of sex workers through the powerful visual images of photographs.

## **VIII. Records & Distribution**

Loss of confidentiality is a risk for all participants. Prior to the start of the training workshop session, participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym to protect their identity. They will be

addressed by this pseudonym throughout the duration of the study. Additional measures taken to address confidentiality include keeping participants' name and consent form separate from their photographs and dialogue transcripts and data, to ensure that participants cannot be identified. All identifying information will be removed from the audio-tape transcripts so that participants' responses remain confidential. The transcripts, manuscripts or other documents produced for the study will not contain any personally identifying information and the audio tapes will be destroyed once they are transcribed. A PSU photo release form for photos to be shown in an exhibit will be administered while keeping all other information confidential and used only for research purposes.

The information gathered, including audio-tapes, photographs, and transcripts will be kept in a locked storage cabinet or password protected computer at the office of the Principal Investigator in the School of Social Work. The Principal Investigator will be the only person that has the key for this locked storage cabinet or password for the computer. All data and records will be kept on file for a minimum of three years after the completion of the research study.

## **IX. Appendices**

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Appendix B: Social Service Agency Recruitment Letter (describing study)

Appendix C: Telephone Recruitment and Screening Script

Appendix D: Consent Form (for participation in study)

Appendix E: Project Summary Handout

Appendix F: Training Workshop Session Curriculum

Appendix G: Tips for Using a Camera & Taking Photographs Successfully

Appendix H: Demographic Data Form to ask participants at Individual Dialogue Session

Appendix I: Individual Dialogue Session Questions Guide

Appendix J: PSU Photo Release form

Appendix K: Group Dialogue Session Questions Guide

Appendix L: Participant Contact Sheet

## References

Wang, C. & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.