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Development of a Methodology and Curriculum to Conduct Visual Research With Teens at the Institute for Community Research.

Lynn Foster Eikenberry

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DEVELOPMENT OF A METHODOLOGY AND CURRICULUM TO CONDUCT VISUAL RESEARCH WITH TEENS
AT THE INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY RESEARCH

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B.A., University of Colorado, 1984

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Public Health at the University of Connecticut 2004
Masters of Public Health Thesis

DEVELOPMENT OF A METHODOLOGY AND CURRICULUM TO CONDUCT VISUAL RESEARCH WITH TEENS AT THE INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY RESEARCH IN HARTFORD, CT.

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2004
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INTRODUCTION

Participatory Action Research (PAR), a collaborative approach to investigation that engages subjects as equal participants in the research process, has seen a revival in popularity in the past few decades. Stringer (1999) notes that this resurgence may be due to the lack of effectiveness of more traditional research models in identifying information/approaches to reducing social and health problems. The traditional models of trained professionals using scientific methods to examine community problems at the program or individual level have not resulted in effective approaches to reducing community crises such as drug abuse, crime, school violence and absenteeism. Public health researchers have turned to collaborative or democratic models in response to “an increasing awareness of the gap between the concepts and models that professionals use to understand and interpret reality, and the concepts and perspectives of different groups in the community” (Morrow, 2001). The Institute for Community Research (ICR) is an independent community research and training organization in Hartford, Connecticut, that has worked extensively with action research models, including PAR as an intervention with urban youth of diverse ethnic backgrounds. ICR is conducting a three-year demonstration and evaluation project, the Youth Action Research for Prevention (YARP) program, based on PAR model of risk prevention. As one component of this intervention, ICR conducts a seven week intensive research training program, the Summer Youth Research Institute (SYRI). In the SYRI area teens work as paid staff researchers and conduct a participatory action research project exploring social issues relevant to them. Visual research is one method of qualitative research identified in the PAR- ICR
Curriculum and Facilitator Guide employed by SYRI staff to guide teen researchers in learning about their chosen issue.

Visual Research is essentially the study of anything seen and observable, with practitioners traditionally employing cameras or videos as data collection instruments. As a methodology it has a unique potential to enhance social and scientific explorations by youth. The tangible quality of both the camera and of the visual record resonate with the developmental interests of teens, and the diversity and flexibility visual inquiry methods complement the fluid and dynamic process of democratic research. Effective use of visual research by teen researchers in the SYRI could increase the YARP intervention model’s capacity to achieve its overarching goals of enhancing cognitive development and personal growth through youths’ critical exploration of issues that affect them. In the spring of 2001, ICR staff decided to assess and modify the Photo Documentation module in the PAR curriculum in an effort to improve the contribution of this qualitative research method within SYRI. The author assisted in this initiative by conducting formative research and developing a new visual research module. The proposed curriculum module was pilot tested in the summer of 2002, and the author conducted a process assessment in the fall of 2002. The initial results were disseminated to SYRI staff and a number of the process evaluation findings were integrated into the use of the curriculum in the 2003 SYRI program. This thesis provides an overview of PAR and visual research, a descriptive account of the module’s development and evaluation and a discussion of the results.
BACKGROUND

Participatory Action Research Overview

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) model is based on the principle of ground-up participation and operates on the assumption that all stakeholders—those lives that are affected by the problem under study—should be engaged in the processes of investigation. In PAR, stakeholders participate in a course of rigorous inquiry, acquiring information (collecting data) and reflecting on that information (analyzing) to transform their understanding about the nature of the problem under investigation (theorizing). This new set of understandings is then applied to plans for resolution of the problem (action) (Stringer, 1999). These strategies of health education for social change or democratic research offer the goal of supporting people “in making their own analysis so that they themselves can decide what is good for them” (Travers, 1997). The process emphasizes a dialogue between group members about shared experiences and interpretations of collective knowledge directed towards the goals of educational empowerment. The “sociology of childhood” research suggests that this model of generating knowledge from the perspective of the researched can be extended to young people (Morrow, 2001). The PAR model holds particular promise in younger populations, in part due its theoretical underpinnings of empowerment education. A key component of educational empowerment is “recognizing and reconciling differences between parental and school notions of ‘preparation, socialization, school readiness, proper attitude and behaviors in school’; and between students’ and educators’ views of appropriate curriculum, learning styles, classroom interaction, and learning materials” (Schensul et al., n.d.). Youth who are currently in the midst of the educational system may lack the knowledge, skills,
authority or means to define their own experience, to critically assess their social environment, or to communicate their reality to others. Further Schensul et al. (n.d.) suggest that Youth-PAR is also effective as a prevention tool through education on and engagement with the promotion of healthy behaviors and critical thinking as well as action on specific barriers to making healthy choices. Prevention research has shown that social influence models of behavior are particularly salient in understanding the behavioral choices of this population. Participatory Action Research offers the opportunity to critically view and influence both social and peer norms through its use of peer leadership, interpersonal relationships and group interaction (Schensul et al., n.d.).

For the past decade, the Institute for Community Research (ICR) has been working with the Youth-PAR approach as a way of empowering young people from urban neighborhoods to deal with a variety of social issues as a risk prevention strategy. In 1996, ICR created the National Teen Action Research Center (NTARC), with the mission of “using action research as a vehicle for enhancing the capacity of youth to engage in critical thinking and social critique, to utilize research as a tool for personal, group, and community development and to work toward more equitable resource and program access for urban youth” (Schensul et al., n.d.). NTARC staff, in collaboration with participating youth and a range of interdisciplinary practitioners, developed a core curriculum and training manual for facilitators conducting Participatory Action Research with youth. The curriculum is designed to guide facilitators in fostering a youth driven process using cooperative instructional techniques, but owned by the participants themselves. The PAR curriculum is divided into six modules that guide youth through group building and identity formation, learning about and then employing a variety of
INTRODUCTION

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qualitative and quantitative research strategies in the field, analyzing data, and using this information to develop actions for change. The qualitative research methods that youth employ include in-depth and focus group interviewing, observation, photo documentation and ecological and social network mapping.

The Potential of Visual Research as a Qualitative Method in Youth-PAR

Visual research is one of the qualitative research methods employed by SYRI staff researchers. It offers a unique tool for achieving Youth-PAR’s overarching goals in prevention work with teens, including personal growth, group development and community change. In addition to its contribution as a visual method, photo documentation produces data that is not limited by low literacy or language barriers. It provides a powerful tool for giving voice to youth who are exploring an issue and looking for ways to both communicate to the larger community and to take action on an issue. Wang and Burris (1997) explain that one collaborative visual method, Photo Voice, “enables health researchers and practitioners to understand the world from the viewpoint of the people who lead lives that are different from those traditionally in control of the means of imaging the world”. Cameras and picture-making provide youth the opportunity to work with a tangible tool and produce a concrete end product, both of which resonate with this population (Bernson, 2002). The process of learning photography and image making has potential to increases teens’ overall sense of efficacy and to create an interest in this artistic form of expression. In an increasingly visually oriented society, and with a target population that is particularly fluent and highly influenced by the visual, visual research provides a means for learning critical viewing skills of the social world and media. Finally, research suggests that the use of photographs can facilitate
communication and mutual understanding among youth participants and key stakeholders including program staff and the larger community (Hanna et al., 1993).

**Visual Research—Historical and Current Perspectives**

Many of the current best practices in visual research have their theoretical foundations in empowerment education, collaborative paradigms, feminist theory, critical consciousness raising via education and photo documentary theory. These collaborative methods evolved in response to an ongoing controversy over the subjective nature of the visual record and subsequent issues of validity, reliability, and the legitimacy of the visual record as data in social science research. Simultaneously, fine art and documentary photographers pioneered collaborative methods to visually explore and record their subject’s reality from an insider perspective.

Visual Research is “the study of anything seen and observable” (Emmison and Smith, 2000). Over the past century, critiques of the discipline have ranged from celebrating the photograph as science’s answer to value-free data to discrediting it as a totally constructed, biased artifact. Visual researchers harnessed the collaborative research paradigm in an attempt to address accusations of bias and to fully exploit the potential of visual research.

At its invention in the 1800’s, the image-making technology was accorded great status for its direct reflection of nature and reality, as evidence in support of facts (Scherrer, 1992). The camera as research tool has garnered the most infamy for its use during the 19th century when anthropologists employed still-photography to record and document supposed “racial types” as part of the discipline’s goal of scientific study of all human kind. This colonial agenda was furthered post-WWII with an awareness of the
acceleration of the loss of non-western cultures through western influences—the so-called “disappearing cultures” (Ruby, 2000). During this era the camera spurred a profound paradigm shift in anthropological study, transforming the subject of study into an Object: The Other (Edwards, 1997). By the early 1900’s the “value-free-data” importance of photography began to decline. In anthropology the written word was assuming priority and the emerging emphasis was on social organization, which was thought to be less visual (Mead, 1995). Nonetheless, in 1942 the anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson turned to photography in an effort to translate aspects of culture “never successfully recorded by the scientist, although often caught by the artist” (Mead, 1995). They recorded 25,000 images, which they analyzed systematically. In this application photographs were, for the first time, considered as a part of the process of observation (Harper, 2000). Despite the proliferation of visual based fieldwork over the next thirty years, the objectivity of photographs or any visual image continued to be debated in ever-louder tones. The assertion that photographers could manipulate the visual record, and therefore its meaning, became the basis for what would eventually be a theory of photography that situated the visual record as a totally constructed artifact. In response, visual researchers began to explore ways to reduce bias by allowing research subjects to determine sample data and meaning. The collaborative visual research paradigm was born when, in 1972, Sol Worth and John Adair handed 16-mm video cameras to seven Navajo men and women and instructed them to film what they wanted. This allowed the Navajos to share visually their own perceptions of their worlds. The results, “Through Navajo Eyes”, revolutionized ethnographic film and emic knowledge (Collier, 1986). Documentary photographers such as Larry Clark and Jim
Goldberg were also pursuing collaborative projects. Clark was using longitudinal recording strategies with subject input and Goldberg using variations on the draw and write method. For example, Goldberg conducted a photographic study of the homeless in residential hotels in San Francisco. He showed subjects the photographs and had them write their affective responses to these photographs on the prints (Goldberg, 1999). Artist Wendy Ewald has worked with marginalized populations in the United States and around the world for thirty years, employing a range of collaborative approaches to create visual and verbal narratives (Ewald, 2001).

Today the visual record continues to wrestle with a paradoxical identity: "A photograph is at once a direct representation of reality and a result of an utterly subjective choice" (Sapir and Ball, 2002). Researchers from a broad array of disciplines use a range of methodologies and produce an equally wide scope of data, all under the rubric of visual research. Marcus Banks, a visual sociologist and anthropologist, has created a useful taxonomy, based on data type: 1) Visual records collected by the investigator; 2) Visual documents produced by those under study (original data or pre-existing materials); and, 3) Visual records produced collaboratively by researcher and study subject(s) (Banks, 2000). Across applications, visual researchers employ protocols designed to address subjectivity and reduce bias in data. These tactics include both scientific methodological practices and more reflexive processes that embrace the subjectivity and constructed essence of images and their potential to create knowledge and meaning.

Figure 1. is a table that outlines the discipline's major theoretical positions, and the associated methodological applications.
FIGURE 1. Theoretical Positions In Visual Research

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<th>Theoretical Assumptions</th>
<th>Considerations in Applications And Bias</th>
<th>Collection Methods</th>
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<td>Realists</td>
<td>“It must be recognized that the photographic image is ‘true’ in the sense that it holds a visual trace of the reality at which the camera was pointed. The image’s credibility is based on commonsense reasoning and evidence rather than debates on the essence of the photograph” (Harper, 1998).</td>
<td>Camera is a neutral technology akin to word processor. Focus is on scientific measures of reliability, validity and representativeness. Researchers mediate against bias due to manipulation of photos and sampling.</td>
<td>Photographic survey, cultural inventory, photographing of social phenomenon; photo elicitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Modernists</td>
<td>“Photographs can be used as primary data in anthropological documents—not as replications of reality itself but as representations that require critical reading and interpretation: validity affirmed through triangulation of photograph as artifact, viewers interpretation and understanding of photographers intent”(Scherer, 2000).</td>
<td>Researcher must reveal all circumstances surrounding photograph taking so that the viewer may view it with all knowledge of potential bias. The photographer’s relationship to data becomes part of the data set.</td>
<td>Collaborative methods: photo novella, Photo Voice, Photo elicitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/Science Fusionists</td>
<td>The space between art and science is critical to understanding issues. “Stop being shamans of objectivity” (Ruby, 2000). This practice perpetuates the cultural power of science over other ways of knowledge and knowing.</td>
<td>“Telling realist tales through allegorical, metaphorical impressionistic means” (Edwards, 1997). The visual does not have to be translated into the verbal for analysis. Unequivocal subjectivity mediates against bias in interpretation.</td>
<td>Expressionist visual inquiry via inductive processes: postcards, photo montage, repositionings, still lives.</td>
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The post-modern visual researchers, in particular, have married the visual research and collaborative research paradigms effectively. As mentioned earlier, Wang and Burris (1997) have developed and pilot tested a collaborative visual research methodology, Photo Voice. The researchers first employed Photo Voice as a component of a Ford Foundation supported Women’s Reproductive Health and Development Program among village women in two districts of the Yunnan Province (Wang and Burris, 1996). The researchers gave intensive photographic training to sixty-two rural women in small villages. The women recorded their lives as part of a needs assessment, and presented findings to policy makers and displayed their work at the political capital of the province (Wang, et. al, 1996). Hanna and Jacobs (1993) conducted a small pilot
study to explore the meaning of health among teens diagnosed with cancer, and to test the use of photography as a method of data collection that facilitates communication between adult researchers and adolescent participants. Participants used Polaroid cameras to photograph situations of health. The photographs were then used in semi-structured interviews. Their findings suggest that photography increased the communication between researcher and participants. These researchers conducted a similar pilot study with diabetic teens (Hanna et al., 1993). Researchers have produced videotapes in which mothers with HIV recorded messages to be viewed by their children after the mother’s deaths. The mothers worked with the videographers to best represent what they felt was appropriate to their children. This allowed researchers to understand the mother’s self representation, the mother’s attitudes about caring for and protecting their children, how the impending death influenced their mothering and how the stigmatization from AIDS can be transferred from them to their children. The mothers had the opportunity to communicate to their children and to create a lasting recording of themselves for their children (Pink, 2000). Visual methods were employed as one tool of data collection in a PAR study designed to measure social capital and to explore the relationship between social capital and children’s levels of well being and health in two towns north of London (Morrow, 2001). Students in this study were asked to volunteer to take photographs of places that are important to them and then to describe why they are important. In a similarly collaborative needs assessment study, school children were given cameras to visually document and then record their feelings about a variety of locations in their school as data for a school evaluation (Schratz and Steiner-Loffler, 2000). Teens have made video narratives about aspects of their community for The Mirror Project, an
educational outreach program of the Boston Photo Collaborative (The Mirror Project, 2003). A diverse collection of prevention, literacy, arts and community development programs have harnessed variations of the photo novella strategy including The Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, The Photography and Literacy Project, Raleigh, N.C. and the Houston Center for Photography in Houston, Texas. Indigenous media projects, based collaborative research paradigms, such as the Chiapas Media Project in Chiapas and Guerrero Mexico, place technology into the hands of indigenous people so that they can represent themselves. (Chiapas Media Project, 2002). At ICR, youth created a film entitled, “No Way Out” and it continues to explore the potential and place of visual research within collaborative, participatory research models.
A CASE STUDY: FORMATIVE RESEARCH TO DEVELOP A VISUAL RESEARCH MODULE IN THE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH CURRICULUM FOR THE SUMMER YOUTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE, HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

The Summer Youth Research Institute: An Overview

The Summer Youth Research Institute (SYRI) is one intervention component of the Youth Action Research for Prevention (YARP) study. YARP is a three-year research and demonstration project designed to conduct a formal external evaluation of a science based substance abuse prevention model. SYRI is an intensive seven-week action research-training program in which youth develop their own community based action research for a prevention project. The program operates for four hours daily during the seven weeks. The research process is managed by SYRI staff and peer educators using the PAR core curriculum, developed by NTARC. SYRI staff train the youth in research methods, including visual research, and help them to conduct a group research project into the social issue of their choice.

Target Population

YARP is designed to serve African-American, Caribbean-American, Puerto Rican and other Latino adolescents in the 9th and 10th grades that are currently attending the three public high schools and two technical high schools in the city of Hartford. ICR and YARP target at-risk youth, and, according to the Associate Director for Training, it is anticipated that the youth would generally be borderline performers in school, and all would be low-income as determined by their income eligibility for the summer youth
employment program. Approximately thirty-five teens participate in the Summer Youth Research Institute each summer. They self-select to interview at SYRI for a staff position, and are then selected by SYRI staff. During the SYRI 2002, 34 youth participated: 55% were female, 45% were male. In the summer 2002 program, the mean age of participants was 15 years. Youth identified themselves as 39% African American, 48% Hispanic/Latino, 9% Mixed and 5% Other.

Organizational Structure

The staff of the Summer Youth Research Institute is made up of five key groups:

1) A management team consisting of Executive Director, Associate Director for training, Youth Action Research Institute (YARI) Coordinator;
2) Four Prevention Research Educators;
3) Three summer interns;
4) Six senior youth researchers; and,
5) The 34 youth researchers. Evaluation staff is on hand as well and includes an observer, evaluation director and a research analyst.

The ICR Prevention Research Educators act as facilitators of the SYRI curriculum and research process and are the lynchpins of the program. These facilitators come from diverse work backgrounds including public health, sociology, anthropology, education, counseling, community organizing, women’s studies and fine arts. At the start of the seven weeks, the teen researchers are organized into two “houses” with each house overseen by two full-time facilitators, an intern and a peer leader. The facilitators are responsible for house leadership, curriculum coordination and research implementation. Each facilitator is responsible for coordination and leadership of one major step in the seven-week program. For instance, a facilitator may be assigned responsibility for coordinating and running the research station activities, another for the group identity and
formation activities. Staff also operate in capacity of models of behavioral and research norms, and as mentors and counselors to youth throughout the program.

**Photo Documentation in the SYRI PAR Curriculum**

As mentioned earlier, the PAR curriculum includes the following modules: 1) Building Relationships; 2) Introducing Participatory Action Research; 3) Developing an Action Research Strategy; 4) Collecting Data; 5) Analyzing Data; and, 6) Using Data for change. Module Four instructs youth in the basics of the five data collecting methodologies, including Photo Documentation. The original Photo Documentation Method in the PAR curriculum had three major data collection goals: 1) To gather data (photographs of material objects); 2) To describe the context or environment around something (photographs of environments, homes); and, 3) To tell a story or convey a message (photographs of activities, events). The module is divided into four sections: introduction, practice, implementation and analysis. Activities in each section are designed to achieve the following learning objectives: to improve the ability to look at images critically, to increase knowledge of political perspectives, to increase knowledge of media manipulation and bias, and to increase understanding of visual representation in film including bias and manipulation. In addition, teens learn basic technical aspects of photography, videography, and digital manipulation of visual images. According to SYRI staff the photo documentation method had been used with mixed results. While in some years the method had lead to interesting insights as well as visual documents suitable for further use, other years the method had produced data that had been merely illustrative or evidentiary, and consequently difficult to analyze. Teens had difficulty triangulating their findings with those of other methods. Staff members indicated that
they have had little or no training or academic experience with photo documentation and that this lack of knowledge had been a barrier to the successful implementation of the method. During the SYRI program, time for instruction and implementation is compressed, and teens have not historically had the opportunity to practice photography skills prior to field data collection. Photo documentation is a mandatory research method during the SYRI, but staff suggested that there are issues that do not seem to lend themselves to exploration using this method. Feedback from stakeholders indicated that photo documentation had not been a major focus of curriculum development efforts. The general consensus was that photo documentation was a somewhat idiosyncratic and offbeat form of research that staff believed to have unique value, but a value that had yet to be harnessed.

In the spring of 2002, the SYRI staff decided to review this module in the PAR curriculum and to modify it in order to improve its contribution to the Summer Youth Research Institute. To this end, the author conducted formative research that included a literature review and survey of current best practices in the field of visual research, an assessment of the current photo documentary module, participation in SYRI curriculum planning sessions, and in person interviews with key SYRI stakeholders. Out of this research the author created a curriculum module, methodological protocol and Methods Toolbox for the PAR Curriculum (See Appendix B and C). These components were then pilot tested during SYRI in the summer of 2002. The author conducted a process assessment of the pilot test in the fall of 2002. The initial findings were disseminated to the staff of SYRI, which made modifications to the curriculum and implemented it again in 2003.
Goals of the Visual Research Curriculum and Methodology

The name of the research method was changed to Visual Research to more accurately reflect the broad umbrella of strategies within the discipline. The goals of the new curriculum are: 1) To increase participants’ knowledge of visual research and the key principles supporting sound visual research; 2) To increase participants’ level of self-efficacy in the technical aspects of photography or video-making; 3) To improve participants’ critical viewing skills and media literacy; and, 4) To instill in teens an appreciation of the making of visual images as a tool for scientific inquiry, self-expression, social exploration, and the creation of art (See Appendix C for specific learning objectives in the curriculum).

The goals of the methodological protocol and Methods Toolbox are threefold: 1) To provide a strategic blueprint to ensure that visual is supported/validated by a well-documented, systematic approach whether the research method is based on traditional scientific processes or the more reflexive methods of post modern visual research; 2) To ensure that the data collected using visual research is not merely illustrative or evidentiary, but is data that can be analyzed to add new meaning to a research topic; and, 3) To provide a number of data collection options to facilitators so that they can most effectively match their data requirements with a visual data collection methodology.
PROCESS EVALUATION

Goals of the Evaluation

The overarching goal in this evaluation was formative in nature: to gain an understanding of the myriad forces that influenced how the curriculum and methodology were utilized by the facilitator. This model of evaluation is of particular importance when assessing both a new curriculum and one designed to train the trainer. An understanding of why the program happened the way it did will garner important lessons that can be applied to a modification of the curriculum contents to make the visual research module more useful to Youth-PAR facilitators. This evaluation had six goals: 1) To measure the extent of use of the new visual research methodology by the facilitator; 2) To measure the extent of use of the new curriculum by the facilitator; 3) To assess whether the goals of the proposed methodology were achieved; 4) To identify the variables that influenced the implementation of the proposed methodology and curriculum; 5) To assess the satisfaction levels of the facilitator and participant-learners; and, 6) To assess changes in teen’s attitudes, knowledge and self-efficacy with visual research methods and photography.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation combined a qualitative research design with a brief pre-post-test survey. Table 2. Outlines the evaluation goals and standards, where applicable.
Table 2. Process Evaluation Goals and Standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Goal</th>
<th>Standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To measure the extent of use of new visual research methodology by the facilitator.</td>
<td>Five out of eight steps in methodology are followed for each data collection activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To measure the extent of use of curriculum by the facilitator.</td>
<td>Fifty percent of the curriculum activities are employed; five core concepts are introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assess whether goals of methodology were achieved</td>
<td>Two out of the four goals achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To identify variables that influenced the implementation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assess satisfaction levels of the facilitator and the participant learners</td>
<td>A positive response to at least fifty percent of the activities in the curriculum and methodology. Stated intent to continue to pursue visual research with future projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assess changes in teen’s attitudes, knowledge and self-efficacy with visual research methods and photography</td>
<td>N/A Survey used to create a baseline description of participants and descriptive account of changes in attitudes and self-efficacy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample

The convenience sample consisted of six teen researchers who self-selected to participate in the visual research methods group during the SYRI of 2002. A total of eight teens participated; two were excluded from the sample because they did not complete either the pre or post-test. The sample included five females and one male, all fourteen and fifteen years old. The two teens that were excluded from the sample were both males. Of the six participants, five had used a camera before and four had experience with a video camera. Only two of the researchers owned a camera and two owned a video camera. Four out of six responded that they were “very comfortable” using a camera and four considered themselves “very confident” of taking a “good picture”. Two others were “somewhat comfortable” about using a camera and “somewhat confident” about taking a “good picture”. In addition, four were “very comfortable” asking strangers to be subjects of a picture, with one “somewhat comfortable” and one “a little uncomfortable”. Five of the teens were “very interested” in learning about photography and videotaping. Four out
of six “strongly agreed” that photographs and/or videos have “the power to prompt people to think differently, see something in a new way, or take action on something.” The other two “somewhat agreed” with this statement.

Measures

The evaluation utilized the following measures:

1) A Pre-post survey to gather baseline characteristics and monitor general attitudinal changes regarding visual work.

2) Development and analysis of a written chronological account of the actions and decisions of the visual research methods group. The researcher created this account based on two in-depth interviews with the visual research facilitator, and two interviews with the program head. The facilitator reviewed the account for congruence. The researcher then compared the actual process of actions with the proposed sequencing in the methodology.

3) A review and analysis of visual data and written documentation produced by the facilitator, the visual research methods group and the in-house evaluator. This data was collected at the end of the program and included any written documentation, including curriculum worksheets or self-created worksheets, as well as field notes and shooting guides. In addition, the data included photographs from the visual survey, the two magazines used in the analysis of pre-existing materials, the visual research group survey instrument and video as well as the final survey instrument of the SYRI. This data also included the in-house evaluator’s observation notes of two randomly selected sessions.
This data was analyzed for content, methodological integrity, and potential as analyzable data.

4) Semi-structured interviews with the following key participants and stakeholders: YARI Prevention Research Educator and designated staff facilitator of the Summer 2002 SYRI visual research methods group, the Associate Director of Training for ICR and SYRI, and two participants/learners in the SYRI visual research methods group. These interviews took place one month post-program and again three months post-program. The participants/learners were interviewed once, three months post program.

Results

Methodology the process evaluation indicated that the actions of the visual research group diverged significantly from those promoted by the proposed methodology and curriculum. Table 3. presents the chronological actions of the visual research methods group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Activity/Action</th>
<th>Key Decisions/Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to Visual Research: key concepts and tools</td>
<td>What’s Happening activity; Methods Matrix; Review Shooting Guides; Discuss Informed Consent</td>
<td>Target group: 14-18 yr. Group decided not use people in photos due to informed consent issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Define sample; Choose collection strategy; Photo skills review; Data collection</td>
<td>Brainstorming of types dominant media; Group discussion to determine sample; Verbal review of camera skills; Data Collection</td>
<td>Media chosen as dominant influence in community: posters, flyers, mass communications. Visual Survey as collection tool; Albany and Park streets in Hartford as collection sites; Any visual manifestation of sexuality and drug use as sample. Barriers: Technical problems with cameras. Consent issues. Choices of sample data inconsistent. Only Park Street sample site used. No time for second sample site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Select second data collection strategy; Data analysis from visual survey</td>
<td>Group discussion on new strategy; Group analysis using categorization and discussion</td>
<td>Cameras not a viable tool for surveys. Analysis of survey data compromised due to lack of field notes; context, photo quality. Group will conduct research on pre-existing visual materials: Three Self selected time-slots on MTV and the current Vibe and The Source magazines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Analysis of data from pre-existing materials; Determine next steps</td>
<td>Group analysis using discussion; Brainstorming on hypothesis; Group discussion on collection methods</td>
<td>Preliminary hypothesis: teen’s exposure to mass media material causes teens to mimic or tolerate the behavior; it’s “okay”. Group determined that visual data not enough: audio data must be included. Decided to conduct video-elicitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Develop video for elicitation</td>
<td>Group collaboration on video script; Skit rehearsal and recording</td>
<td>Major themes include substance use and teens’ reactions to peer use; teens’ reaction to peer’s sex-oriented talk; gender relations and role of peers. Shot outdoors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Develop tool for video elicitation; Survey</td>
<td>Group review and development of survey</td>
<td>Group chose survey as elicitation tool to assess teens’ attitudes, beliefs and values around substance use, decision making around sex and attitudes towards sexuality via clothing; and peer pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pilot test of survey; Selection of analysis tool</td>
<td>Conducted Pilot test; edited survey according to findings</td>
<td>Pilot test indicated that teens’ video unusable due to quality issues. Teens chose to use MTV video from earlier inquiry for elicitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Data collection; Data input for analysis</td>
<td>Data collection at Boys and Girls Trinity Club; data input for SPSS</td>
<td>Convenience sample of 42 teens. Total was n=50.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Data analysis and triangulation</td>
<td>Data analysis; preparation of conclusions for triangulation; Triangulation with other groups</td>
<td>Research model modified post-exploratory research. Three dominant influences remain; domain of emotions changed into a mediating factor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Whole Group begins quantitative research; Complete any follow up qualitative inquiry</td>
<td>Four members conducted visual research inquiry including sampling, collection, analysis, conclusions</td>
<td>Chose to study pre existing materials; sample defined as all ads in two teen magazines. Collected data systematically. Developed template for quantitative analysis. Developed criteria for qualitative analysis. Conducted analysis. Conclusions: 80% of total magazine pages are ads. And “Sex Sells”.</td>
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</table>

Table 3. shows that the visual research methodology was utilized in a sufficient manner in one out of the four data collection efforts. The methods group performed three
out of the eight steps of the methodology in the initial visual survey. The group performed four out of eight steps for the initial study of pre-existing documents and the video elicitation project. They then performed five out of eight steps for the second study of pre-existing documents. The group, however, employed the critical steps of the protocol inconsistently. For instance, the group developed a sampling strategy for the second analysis of pre-existing documents but not the first. In the initial study, they did not develop a complete sampling strategy nor did they perform a complete analysis of the data.

The teen researchers performed a number of the methodological steps, unaware that they were part of the new research protocol. For instance, an analysis of documentation and interviews suggests that the first two visual research activities served as the formal step of pre-shooting research for the video elicitation project. In conducting the data collection activities of visual survey and analysis of pre-existing media materials, youth gained a sharper sense of the dominant influences and how this information could be applied to strategies for gaining more knowledge about the dominant influences’ association with teen sex. The goals of the final video and survey project incorporated the knowledge gained from the visual survey and initial analysis of pre-existing media. Generally, the gap between the proposed methodology and the groups’ actions caused a lack of a systematic approach in the task of data collection and analysis, the group’s decisions around data collection strategies, the number of data collection activities implemented, the conclusions of the group, and finally, the quality of the data collected.

Secondly, the methodology did not achieve its overriding goal of guiding the facilitator and researchers through a process that would produce data that went beyond
the evidentiary. This outcome was most pronounced in the initial visual survey. In this inquiry the data was illustrative in nature. The study of pre-existing documents also produced data that was evidentiary in nature. The video elicitation/survey project produced quantitative data.

A third goal was not met: that the research be conducted in a systematic way and supported with written documentation. The facilitator acknowledged that the group worked in a more free form way up until the final inquiry of pre-existing materials. Teen researchers supplied very little written documentation in the first three of their inquiries, either in the form of shooting guides or field notes. Almost all of the rationale and decision making of the group was gleaned from interviews with the facilitator. The final inquiry, however, was conducted systematically and supported by several written worksheets.

The methodology successfully provided the facilitator with a toolbox of data collection strategies. The tool box enabled him to address the initial research model nimbly as well as to respond creatively to the various “curve balls” during the qualitative research process by selecting alternative data collection strategies in an effort to bolster the group’s conclusions regarding the independent domain.

Curriculum Based on the process evaluation standards, the curriculum was not employed sufficiently during the summer program to assess its impact; as a consequence the results of the pre-post survey, developed concurrently with the curriculum, offer little insight into whether the curriculum achieved its stated objectives. The facilitator used one out of the possible nine activities in the curriculum. The one activity employed was appropriately modified to fit parameters of topic and time constraints. The facilitator
utilized three of ten hand-outs and worksheets included in the curriculum, the Methods Matrix, the Task Matrix and the Shooting Guide Template. The facilitator developed one non-curriculum worksheet. The Shooting Guide worksheet was modified to reflect the goals of the study topic: A question was added requiring that researchers state how the subject of their photograph related to dominant influences of teen sex.

These results notwithstanding, the facilitator relied on the module as a framework for instruction, in particular the basic definition of visual research as expanded significantly from photo documentation. The facilitator incorporated key concepts of the curriculum, including the definition of visual research, data collection methods, and analysis tactics. The curriculum activity that the facilitator utilized was a derivation of the What’s Happening activity.

The conclusions of the visual research methods group added new knowledge to the teen’s understanding of the topic of risky teen sex. The hypothesis drawn from the initial study of pre-existing materials, that the media makes risky sexual and substance abuse related behaviors seem normative by framing them as activities that “every one is doing” is a well established concept in behavioral theory. These teens were most likely unaware of this concept prior to their research. The research conclusion on the second study of pre-existing materials boiled down to the age-old adage “Sex Sells.” While this may smack of the cliché, the process of coming to this conclusion through research serves to empower or bolster the teens’ sense of self through a process of external confirmation of individual internal models. This is an important component to the summer program, according to the associate director.
Following the program, there was no change in comfort levels with cameras, and a slight decrease in self-efficacy with regards to taking a “good picture” and in approaching strangers. Stated interest level in learning about photography and video went down with five youth stating that they were “somewhat interested” and one “very interested.” Finally, the belief that photographs have power also decreased among participants, with two “strongly agreeing” and three “somewhat agreeing” and one “agreeing a little”. Participants increased knowledge slightly with regards to key concepts, correctly identifying five out of a possible twenty-four right answers.

*Satisfaction with the Curriculum*  The facilitator reported a moderate to high level of satisfaction with over fifty percent of the curriculum. The facilitator felt that the information in the methodology was valuable and the curriculum provided a solid framework for teaching. Several pieces of the curriculum were particularly helpful including the time line for the activities, which allowed the facilitator to see how each step would unfold in the context of the allotted time. Other SYRI stakeholders also expressed a moderate to high level of satisfaction with the content of the curriculum. The areas of dissatisfaction were the absence of the author in the implementation phase, and decisions around technology.

*Discussion*

Why did the program unfold the way it did? Numerous factors played an integral part in shaping the facilitator’s use of the curriculum. Three of the most significant factors are presented in the research model that follows. The author has already developed modifications to address some of the issues, and these are discussed. For the
rest of the issues, the author provides examples of potential solutions to the independent variables influencing facilitation.

**FIGURE 1.** Research Model of Implementation

In the pilot test, the teens' dubious attitudes about the capacity of the visual to stand on its own as a data collection method were shaped most profoundly by their experience with the initial visual survey. The author uses this inquiry to illustrate the dynamics of the implementation model: it was from this experience that teens acquired their perceptions of visual research and these perceptions informed their data collection choices from then on. In the visual survey study the data revealed little. The teens assumed that the cause of failure lay in the method rather than the implementation of the method. In assisting teens in the visual survey, the facilitator encountered three major obstacles to employing the curriculum fully: time constraints, a lack of operationalized
sampling strategies, and tensions between the ethical mandates of visual research and the democratic research process.

**Time Constraints**

The SYRI program is an intensive, short-term program. The necessity of compressing a large quantity of theoretical information, fieldwork skills training and implementation into a short time frame is difficult at best. Just prior to the summer 2002 program, SYRI staff decided to rework the research process, which reduced by half the time devoted to the qualitative data collection. In determining the amount of information included in the module, the author took into account that relatively few facilitators would have experience in this form of research, and therefore they would benefit from a substantive base of information and theory. Implicit in this decision was the understanding that facilitator’s would expect to select curriculum pieces according to specific program needs. The result of including the substantive information was a curriculum module designed that appears dense and insensitive to time constraints, rather than one that offers choices to facilitators.

In the pilot test, time constraints informed the facilitator’s decisions. This was particularly apparent in the decision not to conduct a practice activity in the field. The Practice section includes an in-depth activity, “What You See Is Identity” (see curriculum Appendix C for details) which uses Identity as a construct for teens to explore using three visual research strategies. The activity has teens go through the process of sampling, data collection and analysis based on a pre-set question regarding clothing and person as a way of expressing identity. It is followed up by a comparative study using pre-existing materials. The proposed methodology also mandates a practice session, but in the
location in which researchers will be collecting data. The practice session serves a number of practical purposes, such as alerting facilitators to potential locational, technological, sampling or ethical issues that may pose difficulties in the data collection strategy.

During the visual survey, teens encountered problems in numerous areas: technological issues with the cameras, determination of appropriate sample data, time constraints and issues around informed consent. These problems predisposed the data to be evidentiary in nature and unusable for analysis or triangulation. This experience not only tempered the enthusiasm of the researchers to use photography as a means of data collection, but also may have contributed to the teen’s perceptions that visual (data) was not enough and audio was necessary, according to the facilitator. A practice session in this location might have alerted the facilitator to most of the issues that arose.

One way to address the practical issue of time constraints is to simplify the methodology and to provide a tool to help facilitators prioritize activities and plan time management. For instance, a formal time-line for the facilitator has been added which allows the facilitator to see the process of visual research step by step in its entirety, and thus allows him/her to determine time necessary for each step. In addition, while the module offers a number of activities in each section, it must be made clear to facilitators that these activities are designed to provide choices for facilitators based on the needs of the group and on time considerations. Because a practice session is so vital to the success of visual research, this step should be stressed in the introduction to practice and in the facilitator worksheet describing the methodology. A note to facilitators in the
introduction of the practice section could offer the alternative of going to the chosen location for pre-shooting practice instead of the more time-consuming Identity Activity.

**Sampling**

The most significant independent variable affecting the visual survey outcome, was the visual research groups’ choice of sampling strategy. The sampling strategies of all of the inquiries (with the exception of the final inquiry) failed to produce analyzable, valid data because the context within which the sampling strategy functions—the proposed methodology—was not fully implemented. The visual methods group did not adhere to the methodology because it was not effectively embedded in the curriculum. The integration of methodology and curriculum could have been accomplished in one of two ways: either as an integral component in the curriculum, or through facilitator training. Because neither occurred, the facilitator did not have the knowledge, skills or tools to operationalize sampling in the context of visual research. The result was an ad hoc line of inquiry, informed by the teens’ instincts. For example, when the teens first decided to look at the media as an independent variable, they bypassed the methodological steps of framing the research question and instead focused on the population under study: teens. When the requirements of informed consent prohibited this data set, they chose to look at visual manifestations in their community. The teen researchers narrowed community down to two well-known streets, but it was at this point that sampling broke down. The group defined their sample as any sexual or substance abuse message on public display in two streets in Hartford. At this point the teens did not utilize any form of programmed sampling in their decisions about what to photograph.
Rather they defined their sample narrowly—visual media containing sexual images or messages—rather than recording all forms of data (all visual media) in one setting. This predetermination of the content of their data set them up to collect evidence. Essentially the researchers went into the field with a conclusion in mind and with a bias toward one particular independent variable. Barring any further directives, the teens’ natural inclination to photograph evidence won out: according to the facilitator, one of the teens saw a liquor bottle and a poster that was sexual in nature and photographed each. The other teens witnessed this and, deciding that these must be the kind of visual symptoms they were looking for, followed suit. This set them on a narrowly focused course of documenting evidence of substance use and sexually oriented messages. Their data was biased. There was no contextual information, either visual or written. These photos were very similar to data collected in last summer’s photo documentation research, which also proved difficult to analyze.

In interviews, the facilitator confirmed that the missing link for him was a way to put sampling into concrete steps. He felt there was a lack of connection between the research topic and the process of determining how, when and what to collect for research on the topic. The facilitator explained that he needed a tangible road map to use so that he could work from general topic and narrow down to a specific category of visual elements for study—a systematic focusing defining that is essentially creating a sampling strategy. The concept of sampling was relegated to a short activity embedded in the Shooting Guides Activity. Absent was a road map to facilitate the intellectual process that takes researchers from a topic, through the framing of a question in visual terms, to
determining what type of data should be collected and what would be the best way to obtain a valid sample of that data.

In order to address this issue, two facilitator worksheets have been added to the curriculum. One facilitator worksheet is entitled a Method for Visual Research. This worksheet outlines the steps in the methodology for visual research. Facilitators with little or no experience in research or in visual research can use this guide to get the overall picture of what will be happening. In this way the methodology is embedded into the curriculum. A second facilitator worksheet, Sample Roadmap has also been added. This worksheet is designed to operationalize sampling in visual research. It helps the researcher to think through the process of going from a research topic, to developing a visual research question that can be answered by collecting visual data and then to determining what method of visual research will be most affective in collecting this type of data. In addition, two new activities have been added to the Introduction section. The Sampling Made Simple activity introduces more thoroughly the concept of sampling and the other, Media Messages uses a short study of pre-existing materials to demonstrate different types of sampling strategies to youth (See Appendix C).

The Ethics of Visual Data and the Democratic Process

Visual research produces a permanent, concrete record. As such it requires particular ethical scrutiny. When visual researchers go out to collect data, it is imperative that they obtain informed consent from any individual who may appear in their photographs, whether taken in a public or a private domain. This requirement can not only stymie youth and facilitators during the collaborative process of determining the best data, but it can also impede the creativity and spontaneity of the fieldwork itself. Add to
this a population that is not particularly comfortable approaching strangers and is often
the focus of negative perceptions by strangers, and facilitators may find the mandates of
informed consent formidable.

Further, the democratic nature of PAR renders the facilitator role an ambiguous
and potentially difficult one. The developmental characteristics of teens, the fact of hot
summer days and employment that can seem an awful lot like school complicates the
facilitator’s role. During the pilot test the facilitator encountered the difficult task of
balancing his/her role as catalyst versus authority figure when the ethical issues of visual
data came to bear on the group decision making process. The teens categorically decided
not to photograph other teens for a visual survey because the informed consent process
was too onerous. Photographs without people (with the exception of a survey of built
structures or material environments such as a cultural inventory) provide much less
interesting and qualitatively rich data. There is no question that informed consent is a
critical concern in any research and that the requirements in visual research present a
significant barrier, given the tight time frame of the program. During the pilot test the
facilitator honored the teen’s decision and looked for ways to work around the recording
of people. The group chose visual survey, studies of pre-existing documents and a
choreographed video/survey elicitation project. The methods group had a difficult time
forming vigorous conclusions from these inquiries. The conclusions did not appear to be
taken into account in the final quantitative survey, and the conclusions of the visual
research methods group remained marginalized during the final presentation.

Going forward, it may not be in the best interest of the research project or of the
teen participants to shy away from getting informed consent. One recommendation is to
include a brief discussion about the challenges of informed consent and some possible solutions in the sampling section. This would alert facilitators to the possibility that the group may opt out of photographing people and would provide a choice of actions for the facilitator to take. For instance, if the group is adamant about not pursuing studies that require informed consent, there are a number of methodological options that include people, but not necessarily strangers, in the sample. Researchers could utilize a convenience sample of teens in SYRI or a snowball sample in which they gather data by asking friends and friends of friends to be in the sample. It is a common practice in visual research to offer subjects the option of photo manipulation to maintain anonymity (for instance placing a black bar over the eyes). Youth can also choose a photo novella methodology and visually document their own lives and people in their lives with whom they are comfortable and from whom they can get informed consent. Teens might also be able to use photos without persons in elicitation with teens around their attitudes and feelings about the visual symptoms in their community.

Finally, the facilitator may need to exert directional authority over the group if the type of data necessary can only be accomplished by using informed consent with strangers. To assist the facilitator in this task, the author recommends that the module provide skill-based instruction that will decrease the participants’ resistance to using informed consent by increasing the teen’s comfort level with this process. For example, the module can provide a script of what to say to a stranger or teen that you would like to photograph and an opportunity to role-play would familiarize them with process and increase their self-efficacy with the process. Teens could rehearse this script, or even have it written out for them to present: “Hi, my name is----------. I am a teen researcher
at the Institute for Community Research here in Hartford. We are conducting a visual research project and I am photographing this area as part of our study. Our photographs are used only for our own research purposes and they may be included in our final presentation of our research findings to parents and the research community. I would like to include you as part of the photograph of this area. Would you mind signing a release form that says you understand who I am and why I am taking this picture?” Another role playing activity might provide a number of scenarios wherein the potential photographic subjects decline, resist or even get mad. By working through these potential situations in role-play, teens gain important negotiating skills and comfort with the process of fieldwork. Working in pairs may also add a level of comfort to fieldwork. Teen researchers should wear official identification tags and the facilitator and teens should develop a fieldwork plan that assures teen researchers that he/she will be immediately available when researchers are approaching strangers.

A final recommendation, to mitigate against all three of the factors discussed here, is the inclusion of an introductory page with simple guidelines, or tips, for using the module on visual research. It should explain that the module is designed to provide more than enough information so that facilitators can use it as a foundation, but may pick and choose from activities within it. It should also explain the purpose of the three format components to the curriculum: the curriculum itself, the facilitator worksheets and teen worksheets. Some other tips might include: 1) Pick and choose from the activities based on group interest and time considerations; 2) Always include a practice session; 3) Always test the equipment prior to the program start; 4) Choose one methodology and
stick with it; and, 5) Do not shy away from informed consent if the best type of data
involves people.

Integration of Process Evaluation Findings into SYRI 2003

The preliminary process assessment was disseminated to the SYRI staff in early
2003. The facilitator of the 2002 SYRI visual methods was again assigned to lead the
2003 visual methods group. Over the winter the facilitator applied for a grant, through
the Connecticut Commission of the Arts, to do an arts-based research method. Some of
the grant monies were used to buy four 35mm cameras for youth staff. During the
summer 2003 program, the youth chose to investigate the issue of Teen Dropouts. The
visual research methods group committed extra time outside of the program to get
training in photography, attending four two-hour training sessions. The facilitator
instructed the teens in how to use the cameras’ manual features as well as the standard
automatic technique. The visual research methods group was given the option to perform
two visual inquiries, but, in contrast to the previous summer, the group decided to focus
their efforts and time on only one. The group again conducted a visual survey, and
according to the facilitator, a number of the initial evaluation recommendations were
used. The group employed a more strategic and comprehensive sampling plan to collect
data at four sites: three high schools and one downtown area. The teens recorded visual
images which attempted to capture the full context of the place (full, mid-range and
close-up shots), and thus lessen framing bias. The teens were then able to analyze the
content of each location as well as perform a comparative analysis of the locations. The
facilitator and methods group members are currently in the process of staging an
exhibition of the visual survey photographs at the Capitol Community College. The
exhibit is one component of action taken by youths based on their summer research. The program will feature an opening reception and a community gathering that will utilize a power point presentation of the photographs to be used as a tool to facilitate reflection by the community on the issue of Teen Dropouts.

**Study Limitations**

The qualitative methods employed are subject to bias in a number of ways. The use of in-person interviews can affect the level of candidness of the interviewees and other stakeholders with regards to the curriculum and methodology, particularly when the author of the program under evaluation is conducting the interview. The facilitator may also be inhibited from speaking openly as he is commenting about part of his job and criticism of the method may be viewed as criticism of the larger institutional dynamics.

There is ample opportunity for recall bias in given the time lapse between program and evaluation interviews. The first of two interviews with the facilitator occurred approximately one month after the end of the summer program. The second interview took place three months out. Interviews with other stakeholders and participants took place four months post-program, although ongoing informal dialogue occurred at two months as well. This time lapse not only affects accurate recall of events but may also have a mellowing effect on attitudes and feelings about the remembered event.

The use of a small, convenience sample means that the results are not generalizable to other teens. The teens that self-selected into this group may be different then teens who chose other methods in a number of ways. They may have been more comfortable and knowledgeable about photography, which may have influenced their outcomes. Firstly, they may have been able to grasp the technological aspects easily and
felt more comfortable with the cameras than non-camera users. As such this group was more likely to be bored with technologically simple point and shoot cameras. Secondly, their interest in photography may have set them up for greater disappointment with the research experience and limited creativity inherent in visual survey. These teens may have selected visual research due to a dislike of verbal, written forms of communication. This bias would influence their interest and ability to pursue the required written components of the method.

The pre-post test survey, even as reflection of general attitudes should be viewed with an eye to certain biases. Written tests often produce biased results as they are seen as “tests” to participants and do not engender positive feelings. The timing of the post-test may have also had an affect. On the last day of any program, youth are most likely excited and easily distracted. On the post test teens may not be as inclined to make a good impression, as may be the case on the first day on the job—this may have affected responses.

CONCLUSION

The pilot test that occurred in the summer of 2002 was quite different from the one the author had anticipated for the proposed curriculum and methodology; the evaluation revealed that the facilitator was unable to employ the methodology and curriculum sufficiently to measure their impact. The results affirm the critical importance of formative research, particularly pilot testing, in developing curriculum. The facilitator experienced issues with sampling choices, unsystematic application of methodology, technology, time constraints, and the complexity and nature of visual research and
democratic research. Adequate facilitator training was not in place to address these obstacles.

Although the curriculum’s impact could not be quantified, the process yielded valuable insights into the complex dynamics of Participatory Action Research with teens. In PAR, the teens are given a voice in making decisions about what to study and how to go about studying it. The facilitator, as the conduit for the curriculum and gatekeeper of the process, is critical in shaping this course. The unique experience and skills of the facilitator and the unpredictable choices inherent in democratic research hold the potential to add depth, specificity and relevance to a particular curriculum, allowing it to meet, more precisely, the needs and goals of the participants and of the organization. The evaluation of the pilot test demonstrated that it is these same variables that have the power to move the implementation of the program too far away from its original design, preventing it from meeting important goals and objectives.

Given the large number of strategies under the rubric of visual research, a visual research curriculum must provide a solid base of knowledge, an operational blueprint, and the methodological tools needed to sculpt a concise and valuable visual inquiry and to strike a balance between promoting creative variability and guarding against too much. In addition, youth-PAR programs must provide the facilitator with the authority to direct the groups’ decision making, if deemed necessary.

As demonstrated by the SYRI 2003 outcomes, the ongoing assessment and modification of the visual research module in the Institute for Community Research’s PAR curriculum will continue to increase the method’s potential to produce data that will
stand alone from the other qualitatively derived data and to contribute unique insights, meaning and material for triangulation, communication and action.

The experience of the 2003 visual methods group, one in which this balance of PAR-dynamics and method variability was addressed, highlights some of the principal means by which visual research can enhance the goals of a youth-oriented participatory action research project. These include the motivation and increased competence that results from the unique concreteness and creativity of camerawork, the promotion of youth’s active participation in decision making around visually capturing an issue, and the creation of data that can serve not only to illuminate truths but also to act as a powerful voice for youth taking action on an issue.
Notes


Appendix A

Description of Activities of the Visual Research Methods Group,

Summer Youth Research Institute, 2002
IMPLEMENTATION-OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The SYRI program took place over seven weeks during the summer of 2002. Thirty-three youths participated in the program. These youths were divided into two “Houses”, or homerooms, and then divided further into four research methods groups during the Data Collection and Analysis module.

Staffing, roles and responsibilities for the summer program, including methods group facilitator, were assigned approximately four weeks prior to the beginning of the program. Teams of two staff members headed two out of the four data collection methods. One staff member supervised the other two groups with second full time staff designated as a helper. Victor Pacheco was the staff person responsible for implementation of Visual Research Methods, with help from Yedalis Ruiz. Yedaliz, as YARI Coordinator and management team member, had a range of management responsibilities; ultimately she was unable to participate due to work constraints. Victor worked as a sole staff facilitator.

The SYRI teen researchers’ first exposure to visual research came during the Research Stations Activity. During this activity, groups of teen researchers rotated through four stations to learn about the various methods of qualitative research that they might be utilizing. Designated staff facilitators developed instructional materials and activities based on a common scenario: a city proposal to instigate an 8:00 p.m. curfew
for Hartford teens in order to curb alleged nefarious activities. The curfew scenario was new: by consensus the staff had decided to revamp this portion of the module in an effort to improve youth’s understanding of the research methods. As a consequence, the scenario was not available to researchers until the day before the Research Stations activity. Knowing that there would be little if any preparation time, the facilitator went out into the community and photographed a number of Hartford locations, focusing on those he knew to be teen hangouts. He explained that he wanted to ensure that he had real examples of visual data to work with in introducing visual research, even if he didn’t know what question the data could illuminate. He then designed an activity around the photographs as they could be applied to solving the research scenario. The facilitator directed a thirty-minute introduction to visual research to five groups of teens. During each session he began by introducing visual research via definition. He then divided youth into two groups and had each group practice a task in visual inquiry. One group had the job of analyzing photographs for patterns, a common analysis technique in visual surveys; the other group created focus group questions based on the photographs to be used in a photo elicitation study. The groups came together to share their information and review the basics of visual research.

After this initial exposure, the teens, in a whole group activity, determined the summer’s research topic. This dependent variable domain, or issue to be researched, was Risky Teen Sex. The youth deconstructed this issue and created the following preliminary model.
According to the facilitator, some of the key assumptions that informed the groups’ research strategy included the belief that teens do not have enough information about teen sex. Further, teens do not get sufficient or correct information from peers, school or family. The teen researchers felt that they knew the consequences but that their peers didn’t pay attention to this information. “Teen researchers were clear on what they knew about and what they wanted—they had a goal of awareness—to get other teens to realize the consequences” (Pacheco, Oct. 2002.).

At this point the whole group broke into methods groups to begin exploratory research on the preliminary research model. Teens’ were able to request a specific method, but were not guaranteed placement. The visual research group was comprised of five females and two males, aged 14-15. A third male joined the group later for a total of eight researchers. They came to the group with various levels of experience in photography and video. Most reported a high level of self-efficacy with photography and communication with strangers.

Chronological Account
The visual research was implemented over the course of twelve days. Following is a day by day account of the group’s activities and decisions. The author has taken the liberty to frame many of the activities and decisions made by the group in the vocabulary of visual and qualitative research. Most of these decisions, however, were not labeled as such by the facilitator. For example, the group did not define their “sample” for the visual survey, but rather chose a location to photograph.

**July 17** The facilitator used the methods matrix and definitions to introduce visual research to participants. He used a derivation of the *What's Happening?* Activity to illustrate some of the key concepts. For this activity he photographed a police car parked behind a low-income housing development. The police car was parked there because the officer was conducting traffic around some road construction in front of the building, but he did not divulge this information to teens. He took a variety of shots demonstrating key principals around visual research: framing, bias, point of view and lighting. He passed out copies of the pictures and asked teens to categorize the pictures based on which concept the photos were illustrating.

Next the group reviewed the shooting guides and discussed how to use them. The facilitator followed with a lengthy discussion on informed consent. He noted that the teens were able to grasp this concept quite easily and the teens quickly realized that the requirements for fulfilling the ethical considerations of informed consent presented formidable barriers in the real world. The group had established a target group of teens 14-18. This age would require that any parent of any teen who might be a subject of a photograph give informed consent. The group determined that these requirements would not allow any spontaneity and would become too onerous. The group discussed other
objects or places to photograph that would allow them to avoid informed consent. The facilitator noted that this represented the first of several major “curve balls” to the process as he had envisioned it to work. The focus of the inquiry shifted from people to places or objects.

**July 18** The visual research group decided that the area of media as a dominant influence on behaviors around Risky Teen Sex would benefit from visual research. They brainstormed about visual manifestations of dominant influences in their community and came up with media, video, flyers and any mass communications visible in community such as liquor advertisements or posters in windows. They decided to conduct a visual survey of these influences. Their sample was defined as any visual communications that had to do with sexual behavior and/or substance abuse, both negative and positive, located on two different thoroughfares in Hartford: Park Street and Albany Avenue. Their rational was that these streets represented two different cultural hubs, but were similar in their urban character. The group planned to compare the visual data from these two streets. The group did not document the shooting or sampling strategy using the shooting guide template in the curriculum. The facilitator modified the shooting guide template, adding film exposure information so that it could be used for taking field notes. He also added a space for researchers to provide a rational for why they took a particular shot.

At this point the members were given 12 exposure, disposable, point and shoot cameras. They did not practice the technical skills of photography with these cameras. Practice was limited to a review of photos and a discussion on cropping, framing and bias. The group, accompanied by the facilitator and another full time staff member, traveled first to Park Street to collect data. Here the group encountered a number of
barriers, according to the facilitator. Several shopkeepers were uncomfortable with the
teen's photographing, or were not given appropriate opportunity for consent. He
recounted that initially, the teens were unsure of what to photograph. One member
photographed an empty liquor bottle near a sexually explicit advertisement. This cued
other researchers and then they too began to look for similar subject matter to record.
The facilitator noted that some participants had to grapple with the reality of asking
permission before photographing. The ratio of two facilitators to eight teens in an outdoor
setting made guiding and directing a difficult task, noted the facilitator.

A second “curve ball” arose when the teens encountered difficulty framing their
subject matter in either close up or full view due to the distortion inherent in the
disposable cameras’ viewfinders. Eventually it became virtually impossible to shoot
close-ups or to determine exactly what was being captured in the frame. This was a
source of frustration to the teens and tempered their enthusiasm for returning to the field
with this type of technology again. Eventually Victor would decide that these cameras
were unusable as a data collecting instruments for further visual surveying.

Time constraints did not permit travel to Albany Avenue. The group headed back
to ICR. While these photos were being developed, the group debriefed. Teens realized
that an important source of visual influence came in the form of party-promoting flyers
on telephone poles near liquor stores and schools.

**July 22** With the knowledge that the cameras were no longer a viable option for
visual surveying, the facilitator decided that the group would need to shift strategies. The
group discussed the media and other dominant influences, focusing on other possibilities
for collecting data. They decided to conduct an inquiry into pre-existing visual materials:
videos and magazines. For this inquiry three teens were given blank tapes. Their sample was defined as the shows and the commercials shown during the shows that are popular with teens, as determined by the researchers. Two youth videotaped after 8 p.m. One chose the after-school time slot. They chose to videotape an MTV show called “Undressed” and several music videos. The magazines in the sample included the September issue of *Vibe* and the August issue of *The Source*. The group did not fill out a shooting guide or sampling strategy. The three researchers did not have written documentation or field notes with their videos.

The group then began the analysis of the data from the visual survey. As mentioned earlier only Park Street was photographed so a comparative analysis was no longer possible. The group categorized photos into substance use messages and sexually oriented messages. According to the facilitator, the group had a difficult time categorizing photos, as the teens had not recorded information about the shots consistently. For instance, close ups and long views of the same subject matter were not identified, so that the teens were unable to match up photos to use for data analysis. This made it difficult to add context to the photos, as they would forget what photo was taken where. A large proportion of the photos were close ups of empty alcohol bottles or close ups of magazines in store racks. The group discussed links: how are youth influenced by these visual images and text messages? The group discussed the drawbacks and advantages of their data collection experience. They discussed how to collect information without the use of people as the main focus of the photograph.

**July 23** The group analyzed the content of the video of TV programming and the selected magazines. Discussion revolved around what messages the shows contained in
them with regards to sex and substance abuse. The group then had to come up with a hypothesis about how and why dominant media influences affect teen choices around sex and substance use. Their hypothesis was that if a teen is exposed to the visual messages, for instance watches the videos, he/she is more likely to mimic what is on the TV because he/she will think it is “okay”. They “tolerated” the behavior because they saw it on a mass venue and therefore the message they came away with is that everybody, or at least a lot of people are doing it. The group then discussed generally what visual method is most efficient for data collection. They felt that visual data was incomplete and that audio was necessary to give a more complete picture. The group decided to conduct a video elicitation. Their strategy was to create a video and elicit information from teens about the video using a survey tool.

**July 25** The group developed a script for a video based on the information they had already gleaned from previous visual research. The major themes that teens decided to explore through this elicitation were: 1) Substance use and how teens react to teens using substances; 2) How teens respond to talk of sex while in a group, 3) Teen’s reactions to each other in gender relationships; 4) The role that peers play.

The group rehearsed the skit and traveled to Goodwin Park to shoot the video. The facilitator ran the video machine. The group shot two scenes. The facilitator edited the tapes based on the teens’ input.

**July 26** The group reviewed the video and assessed its appropriateness for elicitation. They created a survey based on the video. The survey contained 31 questions. These included yes/no, likert scale and open ended questions that were designed to elicit information about teens’ attitudes, beliefs and values around substance use, decision
making around sex, attitudes about sexuality as expressed in clothing styles and the role of peer pressure in decisions around sexuality and substance abuse.

**July 29** The group pilot tested the survey with a sample of eight other SYRI teens. This initial pilot test indicated that the video shot in Goodwin Park was too difficult to understand due to poor audio quality. The group decided to use the video of pre-existing materials recorded from MTV for the elicitation. The group found that most of their survey questions could be used with this video, and added they specific questions pertaining to the video content as well. The group chose the SPSS system for data entry and analysis.

**July 30** The group collected data from a convenience sample of 42 teens from the Boys and Girls Trinity Club. Total of surveys in sample was n=50. The teens entered the data and were then introduced to data analysis. They began analysis of their data.

**July 31** The group continued data analysis and began to prepare the data for triangulation with other methods. The four methods groups triangulated their data. The visual research group presented to the larger group.

**August 1** In a whole group process, the research model was modified to reflect new knowledge based on the data from the exploratory research. The final research model retained three of the four dominant influences: media, peers and substance abuse and the domain of emotions became a mediating factor in the model.

At this point the visual methods group divided into two groups: four teens went to work on the quantitative survey and four decided to revisit visual research and take a more systematic approach to one more visual inquiry. They once again chose to look at pre-existing visual materials. The teens defined their sample as every advertisement in
two popular teen focused magazines. The group collected data and performed two types of analysis. The first was a quantitative analysis determining the number and descriptive statistics of ads in the magazines. The teens created a template for this analysis and documented it. Teens found that 80% of the content was advertising. They then performed a content analysis of the ads based on criteria for assessing the messages. The criteria enabled them to categorize visual and verbal messages based on the consequences of the behavior that was being promoted by the ad. The study’s conclusion was summed up with a familiar refrain—“Sex Sells.” According to staff, the findings of this inquiry resonated with teens. While they had taken it for granted that there was a lot of advertising around sex and substance use in the media, the quantitative analysis showed just how pervasive it is—much more than the teens had imagined.

The final quantitative research survey, developed to test the final research model included a section on media. The questions in the survey focused on media consumption patterns. There was one question that attempted to gauge what types of audio messages teens most attended to. No survey questions attempted to confirm the “Everybody’s doing it so it must be okay” social norm hypothesis. During the final presentation the visual research methods group emphasized that they used video elicitation because it was easy for people without cameras to use. They noted that their analysis of the survey confirmed that friends and family often influence teen’s decisions around sex and substance abuse.
Appendix B

Proposed Methodology with Post-Evaluation Revisions and Additions
Proposed Visual Research Methodology

The following is an in depth outline of the preliminary methodology. Each step includes a brief explanation siting both pertinent theoretical and applied considerations. The researcher may use the same methodological framework for utilizing video as a data collection tool.

1. **Framing the research question in visual terms**  The first step involves assessing the independent and/or dependent domains of the research model and determining what visual symptoms of each might be reflected or manifested in the visual world. This understanding of how the issue plays out, or manifests itself visually, or can be investigated by studying the visual world, will inform the type of data, the data collecting strategy and the sampling strategy.

2. **Conduct Pre-Shooting Research**  The more a researcher knows about a subject, the greater the probability that the researcher will select appropriate, reliable visual data of regularly occurring events, rather than single anomalous events, to photograph (Becker, 1974). In addition, in depth knowledge of the environment of phenomena allows the researcher to rely on his/her instinct in sampling. It is critical, however, to make a distinction between pre-knowledge of a subject and preconceptions about the subject when entering the field. Increased knowledge about an issue allows the researcher to pick the locations, categories of phenomenon, communities, visual elements that may prove to be most illuminative.

3. **Develop a Shooting Guide**  The shooting guide is a written document outlining a systematic, rational approach of data collection. The sampling strategy is the most critical
piece of this exercise: it is contained within the guide and will answer the following questions: Who, what, where, when, and how the photographing will take place. Practitioners have developed a number of sampling techniques, including the following:

1. Snowball sampling: When a domain is a private one, researchers may ask subjects to refer subjects on a friend basis.

2. Random Sampling: Researchers can attempt to achieve a random sampling by using a city map to randomly select streets, or a phone book to randomly select storefronts.

3. Sorenson and Jablonko (1995) have developed a three pronged sampling strategy for research filming, which can also be applied to still photography. Their strategy uses a triad of opportunistic sampling, programmed sampling and semi-randomized sampling techniques. The goal of this three-pronged approach is to improve the productive value and representativeness of the data and; a using the following sampling techniques in combination will achieve this goal. Opportunistic sampling relies on seizing opportunities. When something interesting happens, pick up the camera and shoot. 

Programmed sampling, involves working from a set shooting plan based on a construct of probability, such as “every fifth street (for a community survey)”, “every wall of the house” (for an interior cultural inventory). Time sampling or shadow sampling would fall under this category. Here the photographer chooses to photograph a particular locale at set time intervals, such as every hour, or to follow one person through a day and photograph at intervals or critical moments. The Digressive or semi-randomized search the researcher turns away from the obvious significant events to the periphery, to focus on the mundane, the shadows of significant events. This may mean the places in between important locales and situations where our research interests lie. That locations in
between important sites that may uncover data beyond our assumptions. Another form of collaborative sampling is participant led sampling, in which researchers ask subject’s who/what/where to photograph.

When using video sampling issues extend to how long the camera is to run, if it will run continuously, if researchers will record with sound, whether the camera will move or remain stationary, what focal length will be used and if it will be changed.

4. Practice Photography Skills According to SYRI facilitators and teachers of other photography based programs (Bernson, 2002), a critical component to success is the opportunity to practice the technical aspects of photography or video and the process of collecting visual data in the field, prior to formal data collection. This will involve instructions in basic camera technique, instruction in the four major creative choices that will influence the look of any image, and a discussion of the importance of field notes. Visual researchers note that only minimal technical skill is required to achieve usable data results. (Collier, 1986) The successful use of collaborative and indigenous film projects confirms that technique is not paramount to good data. Once the technical aspects of photography and video having been taught, the teen researchers practice the process of determining what data to collect based on an issue, developing a shooting guide and going out into the field to test their competency and their equipment.

5. Data Collection Teen researchers, armed with shooting guides and field note templates, enter the field to collect data. Collier’s rule of thumb regarding film is usually to allow for 1-2 roles per researcher. This number will obviously depend on the goals of the sampling strategy as well as factors such as cost.
Facilitators develop film into contact sheets for researchers to look at, and then Collier suggests blowing up 6-8 photos per sheet for analysis. In working with teen researchers, facilitators at SYRI have found that using all 4x6 photographs works well for group analysis. In addition, using a larger sample for analysis allows for more opportunity to find patterns.

**6. Analysis** The unique value of a photograph is its ability to allow a wide range of people to respond to the exact same reality, therefore group analysis is most profitable. The process of analysis follows four steps: 1. Initial free form viewing of data. Researchers view the data as a whole using intuitions and writing down all the questions that the data bring to mind, starting from, “Is this what were expected?” and “What types of analysis can be done with these photographs?” The dialogue will allow for the fluidity of photography to come to the fore. One of the keys to the successful use of this type of data is the ability of researchers to modify strategies as necessary. If the photographic content does not contain any data on its own, it is still usable. Researchers must find a way to use the photographs to obtain further data. 2. Inventory: This is a process wherein researchers develop relevant categories based on the research model and independent variables and then conduct an inventory of relevant categories present in the data. 3. Structured analysis: Researchers conduct an analysis based on their set criteria. A sample of analysis processes follows. 4. Conclusions: Researchers draw conclusions from their structured analysis.

**7. Triangulation with Other Methods.**
Revised Methodology

1. **Framing the Question in Visual Terms**

Researchers follow the same process of translating their independent domain into a visual research question. Embedded in this step is pre shooting research, the extent of which will be the brainstorming of key knowledge and attitudes of the researchers as they develop their research question. Because the researchers are exploring an issue that affects them and their community, their insider knowledge is the foundational knowledge upon which to build. The distinction between pre shooting knowledge of a subject and pre shooting preconceptions regarding a subject, discussed earlier, remains critical.

2. **Develop a Sampling Strategy and Shooting Guide**

   Acknowledging the critical role that a sampling plan plays in the ability to collect valid and usable data, the development of a sampling strategy will take on the same level of importance as the Shooting Guide.

3. **Practice camera technique and scout locations/ dry run**

   The ability of researchers to practice their data collecting techniques is a critical component. The practice run can take place on the location of the inquiry but can follow the Identity exercise.

4. **Data Collection and film development**

5. **Analysis**

6. **Triangulation with other methods**
Appendix C

Proposed Visual Research Curriculum

And Modifications and Additional Worksheets
Uses: Photographs/videotapes can capture things that are missed in direct observation and interviewing. Photographs/videotapes can capture behaviors and processes that are hard to analyze with direct observation. Can be used to elicit more in depth information from partners. Can be used by people to explore affective domains.

Examples of Use: You want to compare the outer look of places around school where there is evidence of drug and cigarette use with areas that are not used for these activities to see if there are environmental or material-structural patterns that may be affecting usage patterns. You want to show these pictures to kids to elicit their knowledge of, attitudes, and beliefs about the two different locations. You give cameras to kids to photograph areas that they feel are “drug free” and areas that they think are “drug use.”

Advantages: Captures visual information that can be analyzed at length. Photographs are an aid to memory, a way to analyze patterns, a way to elicit more information from others. Photographs add context to other data. Photographs can capture components of culture which require a more abstract expression and have the power to elicit strong emotions, to arouse curiosity, or to empower users.

Limitations: Photographs are not facts, they capture one perspective. Photographs can be easily manipulated and it is difficult to guard against bias. Visual research requires a great deal of time to do with scientific rigor. To be useful as data, researchers must know what pictures to take and when and where to take them. It is hard to turn the visual into the verbal for analysis. Some people don’t like to be photographed, and many issues can not be explored with cameras, as they are too dangerous.

*This test appears in a separate module in the PAR Handbook*
Activity 1: ON LOCATION: MOVIE THEATRES

Facilitation:

- Introduce the method of visual research as a method that employs cameras and videotapes. These are used to collect visual representations as data for analysis; as tools to collect data using other methods such as interviews, focus groups, or personal essays or as tools by persons affected by an issue to represent their experience of the issue.

- A visual inventory or visual survey is just one strategy of visual research. Here researchers use cameras or videotape to record the material reality of a location for in depth study. This method can be used alone but works best combined with other methods, as it adds contextual dimension to other data. Photographs allow researchers to study at length a location or subject and to uncover, analyze and compare visual elements that may not be noticed in direct observation.

- Show the photographs of the potential theatre sites and ask the following questions: They reflect the goals of the movie theatre developers and are questions that would help the developers gather information that would assist them in determining the best location for the theatre.
  --What do you see?
  --Is this sight visually appealing?
  --When you look at this sight, what comes to mind?
  --Do you think that a teenager and an older adult would have the same feeling about each location? How could we find out?
  --Are there any visual signs or symbols that convey a more inviting feeling or give the location status?
  --Do you think these locations would look different at night? “Would that be important to find out?
  --Do these sites have anything in common visually?
  --How would these sites compare to photographs of successful movie theatres?

- A very important concept in visual research is bias. Bias occurs when there is an error in the way we do our research, or collect our data, that produces photographs that do not accurately reflect reality. Photos that are biased would not be showing the true reality of a locale and the conclusions that the developers would draw from the photos would therefore be wrong. Have youth pick out the photos that they think might be biased. Ask them why. The following questions help youth understand what bias is and ways to guard against it.
  --Do we know the time of day the photographs were taken?
  --Do we know which views of the site we are seeing, and are we seeing the same views of all the sites?
  --Are the photos taken on the same day, same time, and same weather?
  --What is the photographer’s level of familiarity with any of the sites and/or the developer? Does he live near any of them? Does he have a preference for the site of a movie theatre?
  --Would it help us if we could look at notes the photographer took when he shot his photos?
Activity 1: TO CURFEW?

Learning objective: Youth will gain a rudimentary understanding of what visual research is and the strategies of visual research that can be employed to collect information on an issue.

Materials: Photographs of local teen hangouts are useful to demonstrate key methods and concepts.

Facilitation: Review scenario below: Then reiterate: The basic question we ask is “What do we need to know? What kind of information do we need to find out if we want to decide whether a curfew is a good idea, or if there are better alternatives? When we answer this, we can determine what kind of visual data—photographs or videos of people, places, processes, events, objects—will we need to collect in order to study them for patterns of meaning or to use them to elicit information from people affected by the curfew. We then determine which method will give us that type of data. To avoid Talk and Chalk dynamic, try and get youth to fill in some of the blanks before giving them all the information.

There have been numerous complaints concerning youth getting into trouble throughout Hartford. The City council has determined that an 8:00 p.m. curfew is necessary for all youth under 17. Your mission is to determine the necessity of the curfew as well as explore different alternatives.

Guide youth through the following examples in which the five major visual research strategies could be used to collect meaningful data that may help answer our questions about curfews:

1. Visual Survey: We could conduct a visual survey of the location of a number of the disturbances. We could compare and contrast what we see in the photographs—outward appearance of structures, streets, people, and lighting and overall “feel” of the location. We could look for patterns that might help explain why these places are more prone to be scenes of teen mischief. We could also do a time sampling of these locations: for example, we photograph them at 3 p.m.; 6 p.m.; 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. to study differences that may add information to the necessity of a 8:00 curfew.

2. Visual Elicitation: We could take the photos from the above exercise and use them in focus groups among teens and also among other groups of people who may be involved in the issue, such as neighborhood shop owners and residents. In this case we would be using photographs to elicit factual information about the processes and/or activities of the area as well as the attitudes, beliefs and values of those affected by the issue.

3. Collaborative Visual Research We could work with Hartford teens to explore their reality in order to learn more about why they are on the streets at night; their attitudes
about what goes on; and what they would like to do as an alternative. Three ways to obtain data from those affected by the issue:

A. We could collaborate with teens to photograph the places, objects, processes, people that they think impact their choices about what they do at night. Together we would analyze their photos and create meaning.

B. We could teach teens to use cameras and then to document their lives: from day into night; on at-home evenings and those spent outside. They would then write about these photographs so we could get more information about their reality, attitudes, values and beliefs.

C. We could have teens use cameras as tools in a visual exploration of abstract themes. For example, what it means to feel safe/unsafe at night; what it means to be told that it is the law that they stay inside after 8:00 p.m.; what a perfect place to spend the evening would look like or feel like.
Activity 2: WORD-UP

Learning Objective: Youth will gain an understanding of the connection between the visual and the verbal and how visual research connects to a research topic. Youth will gain an understanding of symbols and metaphors.

Facilitation: Facilitator explains that a word association is an exercise in which one person says a word, and the other person says the first word that pops into his/her head. For instance, bird/fly or city/crowded. In this version of the game teens work in teams, with one team member saying word and the other describing not the first word, but the first visual image that comes into his/her head. The brain is a camera. The picture must be something concrete but it can represent either the actual material object or it may have a symbolic meaning.

Curfew

Teenager

Night in the city

Having fun

Hanging with your friends

Hartford

Taking a risk

Danger

Home at night

The ideal hangout spot
What is Visual Research?

Visual Research is one method that can be used to gather information about a subject. There are many different ways to use visual research, and we are still experimenting with new methods. Because it is a method-in-the-making, researchers can pick and choose from a range of ideas and build a shooting strategy based on their unique needs. There are two general types of visual information, or data—still pictures (photographs) and moving pictures (film or videotape.) A photograph captures a moment in time and a precise record of the material reality of a photographic subject. Videotape also records material reality but is most useful to record a process, behavior or event over time. Both photographs and videotapes can add important context to the data one is collecting about an issue.

**Benefits** By photographing or videotaping events, places, people, behaviors, processes, or objects we can add background and perspective to our research data and enrich our understanding of the issue. Photographs and videotapes allow us to study something at length and in depth, finding things we can’t always observe during direct observation (humans are not great observers; our eyes get tired; locales may be new and unfamiliar to us; events happen simultaneously). Photographs and videotapes have the power to elicit strong emotions from viewers and they allow a number of people to view the same slice of reality, so that researchers can collect the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about the same thing from many different people. By showing photographs and videotape to youth and/or adults we can help them speak about their world, both inside (values, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes) and outside (schools, communities, homes) and we can learn about how and why they feel an issue affects them. By collaborating with youth and/or adults to take photographs and videotapes depicting their worlds, either inside and/or outside, we can create new knowledge together that will help both of us to understand an issue more fully. By using the camera or video recorder to explore one’s own life, both inside and outside, via factual documentation or through artistic self-expression, one can learn about oneself and use this knowledge to understand an issue. Visual research can be used in all of the above ways to explore parts of our culture and communities that can’t be described by words; things that are best described by ambiguous and artistic expression.
**Drawbacks** It is important to understand that photographs are not facts or evidence of something. The reality in a photograph is just one perspective—that of the photographer. The camera can be thought of as a machine similar to a computer: one that records and communicates. Like a computer, it is only as good as the person using it. The reality in a photograph or video can be changed or manipulated during and after the photograph or videotape is taken. Researchers must be very diligent to ensure that their photographs, or data, remain valid and reliable—meaning they are accurate. To do this researchers must be systematic in their approach and keep in mind all the ways in which they might influence the final product—this is referred to as bias. Some methods require the photographer to manipulate or stage the photo/video in order to present his/her own unique reality. In this case, the fact that this is an intentionally subjective reality must be stated up front. Finally, a photo by itself is not data. A photo must be put to use—either studied for what it reveals, or employed as a tool to get further data about an issue in the form of words. All of this takes time.

There are four main methodological approaches to visual research:

1. **Taking photographs of a subject to study different parts of the subject in detail and at length.** For instance, you might take photographs of the exteriors of the four high schools in Hartford to compare and contrast key visual signs that you think might affect how students feel about their schools, e.g., age and condition of building, graffiti, the condition of the landscaping and the "feel" of the surroundings. Or you may videotape the front steps of a high school at different times of the day to study the behaviors of the students to see if there are patterns of social interaction that may mean something to your issue.

2. **Taking photographs or videotape to use as a tool for collecting further data from research partners.** Photographs used in this way are generally used in interviews, or other elicitation methods. You may photograph or videotape the same scenes from above, and then show them to students and teachers in focus groups, interviews to get their perceptions, values, feelings and attitudes about the school.

3. **Collaborating with those people affected by an issue to collect visual data**

Using this method, researchers either team up with students and teachers to photograph things in the school that they decide together
are important, or researchers teach students and teachers to operate the camera and have them take the photographs of what they think are important elements in the school. In another tactic, researchers, as students of the school, take the photos. All three of these tactics would be followed up with a form of essay or elicitation method to collect further explanations.

4. **Studying pre-existing visual representations to learn about an issue.** This can mean studying advertisements, portrayals of a group of people in the media, billboards, graffiti, bumper stickers, or fashion styles to learn more about an issue. For instance, researchers may study the level of and content of junk-food advertisements found within a one-mile radius of a high school. To do this, they can use the first method, photographing something to study it in depth.
Unit 4: VISUAL RESEARCH

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this unit is to introduce young people to a methodology for conducting visual research and to the various data collection strategies employed by researchers. While photographs and videotape capture the material reality of a moment in time, they are not facts. They represent the perspective of the photographer and as data, they can be easily manipulated. Biased data can produce wrong conclusions about an issue. Photographs and videotape without enough contextual information (from written field notes or comprehensive visual coverage) cannot be analyzed properly. Without analysis, photographs remain illustrations and do not contribute new knowledge to the research issue. The methodology is designed to provide a road map for researchers conducting visual research and ensures that the research is supported and validated by a rational, systematic, and well-documented approach. Regardless of the subjective or exploratory nature of the chosen data collection strategy, researchers can and should adhere to the core tenets of traditional scientific inquiry. The Methods Tool Box, presented in the form of a matrix, contains the most widely recognized best practices in visual research and provides researchers a wide range of tools for recording, production and analysis of visual data. Researchers will be able to choose the best fit based on their data needs. By studying existing photographs as well as by creating their own still and video images for study, youth learn how to: 1) Produce a higher ratio of technically usable images; 2) Employ a systematic, rigorous approach to any data collection strategy; 3) Produce photographic images that contribute meaning and information to the research model; 4) Understand how to study these images and draw knowledge from them. In addition, they will learn to view images around them with a critical eye and appreciate the ethical issues inherent in capturing a photographic subject on film.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction: The main concern of visual researchers is the production of unbiased data. Images become biased through any manipulation of the photographic record, by the researcher, which is not revealed to the viewer. Images can be manipulated in many ways: via lighting, point of view (the angle the photo is taken), focus (fuzzy or sharp images), framing (what is shown and what is left out of an image), and film development techniques. These manipulations will affect the “look” of the image and subsequently its interpretation. Manipulation with these techniques is appropriate if the image is being used as an artistic expression of an individual’s subjective reality. We guard against bias by supplying viewers with the full context, or whole story behind an image. We do this either with words, taken from field notes, or by showing a comprehensive view of the subject of our image—meaning we do not make any decisions about what to leave in or out, we photograph the subject in total.
Activity 1: WHAT’S HAPPENING?

Learning Objective: Youth will understand the ways that a photograph can be manipulated to change its meaning. Youth will gain an appreciation for the importance of providing visual context (in the photos) and verbal context (in the field notes). Youth will understand that manipulation of photographs is acceptable for reflexive or expressionistic purposes, but that this intent must be stated up front. Youth will gain an understanding of the ethical considerations in visual research.

Materials:
- Series of photographs (explained below)
- Pens/Pencils
- Scrap paper/stiff cardboard paper cut into long rectangles for captions
- Small prizes

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation: This activity uses a series of photos taken by the facilitator in a staged photo shoot. Example photo shoot description: Two teenagers interacting together. Their body language, facial expressions and gestures should be somewhat ambiguous. Only the facilitator should be able to tell the true story of what is going on. For example, one youth might be paying back another for a Coke. The scene should be shot outside and in a number of ways, to illustrate a number of different concepts in field photography. Back lit, front lit; shot with front lighting, different P.O.V. Shot with youth looking at camera (posed, reactive); shot with them in natural interaction. Framed to give a close-up of hands, just faces, just bodies but no background context. A shot of the full context should also be included.

Researchers should have 6 to 10 numbered blow-ups to present to the group. They can be shown one by one, starting with the close-ups, moving to the full body shots at extreme angles and ending up with the straight on shots. Youth work in teams of two and with their paper and pencils, they should write a caption describing what they think is going on in each photograph, who these people are, where they are, what they are doing and why. Each team places the caption under each photograph. At the end the facilitator announces the accurate description, and the closest, or winning team gets a prize.

Follow the exercise with a discussion using the following questions:

1. How did your perceptions/understandings about the subjects differ as the photos moved from close up to full body to full context shots? Why is it important to show the full context of a picture?
2. Did the way these teens were lit up or the point of view of the photograph affect your perceptions and/or of what they were doing or who they were? Did this affect your conclusions about them?
3. Did you believe the photograph where the youth were posed represented a true reality? How does posing subjects affect the truth of the photograph? Do people act
differently when they know they are being photographed? How could this affect your conclusions?

4. What messages do you think were being conveyed with the different photographs?

5. Are any of these images biased? How so? How can biased photos affect your conclusions about an issue?

6. Could a researcher use these photos (use dramatic, extreme ones) for research purposes? How?

7. What could we do with these photographs to get more data? (elicitation, montage)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH METHOD</th>
<th>USES/ PURPOSE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>DRAWBACKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Photographic/ Video Survey
Variations: Cultural Inventory Social interaction Collaborative cultural inventory | Researchers visually record all material details of public/private domains/behavior or social processes for in depth study | A visual survey of blocks around a school to analyze for material signs of variables affecting study issue. Visual record of teens’ bedrooms. Visual record of schoolyard action. | Adds context to mapping. Aids memory in written observation. In depth study of patterns related to issue. External appearance of place gives lots of information about inhabitants. | Must use rigorous sampling practices to get reliable data. Duplication of mapping. Photos are illustrative if not analyzed. Some places, people difficult or dangerous to photograph. |
| Photo/Video Elicitation | Researchers use photographs/videos to elicit information about an issue in interviews or focus groups. | Researchers use photos of school in focus groups to elicit knowledge, attitudes, beliefs about school. Researchers create a video to use in focus groups with other youth. | Visuals aid memory, provoke a deeper emotion and information, mediate anxiety of interviewees. Youth respond particularly well to the visual. | Researchers must know what to photograph to get good information. Time consuming. Must guard against directing interviewees to a pre set meaning about photos. |
| Collaborative photo/ videotape | Researchers team up with partners to determine what photos/video would help them learn about an issue. Decide meanings together. | Researchers work with HIV positive teens to create video-postcards for family and friends. Both view postcards to determine meanings. | Helps researchers to study partner’s important locales, things, people, domains. Empower partners. | Must find willing collaborators. Collaboration is challenging. Must follow up with elicitation. Time consuming. |
| PhotoNovella/video novella | Researchers give cameras/video cameras to partners to record their reality. | Researchers give HIV + teens cameras to document their daily reality. Follow up with essay by partners for meaning. | Allows observers to “see through another’s eyes” Democratic research; Shares power, choices and decisions. | Must find committed partners. Must have time to elicit info from photos/video. Technically difficult for partners. |
| Subjective Photographic Expression | Researchers have partners use camera/video to produce a visual metaphor; artistic expression, visual story or scene based on affective domains. Follow with elicitation. | Exploring the idea of “risk”, partners use videos to create scenes of risky behaviors. Partners use camera to photographe metaphors, symbols of risk to help them explain beliefs, attitudes. | Art has potential to illuminate knowledge in more powerful, visceral way. Some things can not be verbalized. End products provide powerful illustrations for presentation of data. | Can be difficult to analyze; turn visual into verbal More challenging to triangulate with other data. Researchers must be willing to reveal things about themselves. |
| Study of Pre – Existing Visual Materials | Researchers study materials produced by partners under study, or visual materials targeted to study partners for patterns, cultural themes | Study of change in body type representation of teen age females over the past three decades. | Allows researchers to analyze cultural themes and messages, visual media as indicators. Improves media literacy. Accessible data sources. Less expensive and time consuming. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis possible. | Difficult to achieve powerful sample. Changes focus from partners to external arena. |
Activity 2: THE WHOLE STORY

Learning Objective: Youth will understand the concept of context and its importance in visual research. Youth will understand the two strategies for obtaining contextual information: verbal and visual. Verbal context is supplied from field notes and their appropriate inclusion in presentation of data. Visual context is certain when the researcher photographs the whole scene of any shot before going in for close ups. Youth will have an understanding of the importance of framing in research.

Materials: Paper airplane or any object to be tossed in a class.

Facilitation: Take three volunteers from the group. Give them the following scenario; One is a teacher, the other two are students: A and B. Have youth name them if they like. They are sitting in a classroom. Student A is throwing paper airplane at student B. Student B ignores it for a while, but finally can’t take it and decides to do something back. He/she turns around and throws a paper airplane at Student A. The teacher turns around and says, “I saw that, no throwing things, student B, go to the principal!”

Second scenario option: Sibling A is kicking sibling B under table. Sibling B can’t take it and kicks back. Mom comes in, sees it and sends sibling B to room.

Follow up scene with following questions:

- Did the teacher draw the right conclusion about what was happening?
- Why or why not?
- If this scene appeared in a movie, what would have been edited out? If this scene was a photograph, what would have been left out of the frame?
- If we wanted to capture what really happened, what would we have to film/photograph?
- What would be the ethical thing for student A to do?
- When a researcher photographs just a part of a scene, and then doesn’t include the whole picture by verbal description or visual depiction, is he/she supplying an accurate picture?
- Reflection: Can you think of other instances in your life when you felt like someone didn’t get the whole picture before passing judgement, or drawing a conclusion about you?

Conclude with a discussion context in visual research, and the importance of getting the whole picture. This can be followed by an introduction to field notes and shooting guides activity.
Activity 3: ETHICS

Introduction: Ethics are the working moral principals, values and guidelines that direct individuals to interact with their environment, institutions and each other in a certain manner.

In Visual Research:
- The researcher has a great deal of control over how a photograph/video will look and therefore how people may interpret it.
- The data from visual research is a permanent visual record of people, places, things that could be used for a wide range of purposes after the research is complete.
- No matter how much information the researcher gives to explain a photograph, most people (non-academic viewers) will treat visual images as “evidence” or “fact”.

(Pink, 2000)

In view of this, researchers have an ethical obligation to:
1. Resist making moral judgements during fieldwork that would influence the way they image the subjects in their photographs or video. For instance, if a researcher believes that all urban teenagers are up to “no good” he/she might unconsciously photograph them doing only suspect things, leaving out their basketball games or scenes of them reading in the park. He/she may choose to use back lighting, or framing that cuts out anything from the photo that doesn’t fit with his/her opinion. These photos would not give true sample of the life and social processes of urban teens.
2. The researcher has an ethical obligation to reveal the full context surrounding the making of the images, including his/her intent, so that the image may be viewed with full knowledge of all potential bias. The above researcher would have to state that these photographs represented only his perceptions of urban teens, which are based on certain assumptions, so that viewers would know they were not fact, but just one person’s opinion, about a group of people.
3. Follow the standard that photographs of a public domain can be shown to anyone in the public domain; photos taken in a private domain should only be viewed by those people in the photos.

Learning Objective: Youth will gain an understanding of the ethical considerations inherent in creating a permanent visual image of someone or something.

Facilitation: This worksheet can be as a supplement to any of the activities as appropriate.
CHECKLIST OF ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

☐ Do the people shown in your photographs/video fully understand what it means for them to participate in the study and have they consented to do so? Participants (anyone who will be in your photographs/video) need to understand that there will be a permanent visual representation of them/ and they need to know about any plans to display, exhibit or publish these representations. They need to be given the opportunity to take out any photos they do not want on public display or to choose anonymity (which can be achieved using photo manipulation). They also have a right to stop filming or photographing at any time—researchers and participants can determine a “time-out” hand signal ahead of time.

☐ Have the participants or anyone inhabiting a public domain to be photographed/videotaped agreed to allow you to photograph them for data collection purposes? See Release form.

☐ Have you made sure that participants will not be harmed in any way by being included in this research? Harm can mean many things, including stress and anxiety. Photographs can be very powerful and they have the ability to elicit strong emotional responses-- to shock, to disturb or offend participants. Publishing images can cause participants harm as well, either through stress, damaging of reputation or by affecting family or community relationships.

☐ Have you thought about what you can give back to your participants for giving you their images to help you with your research project? A copy of the photographs, the power to help determine what is photographed and power to help determine the meaning of the photographs are all ways of giving back.

☐ Have you made it clear to your subjects that you (ICR) will have sole ownership of the images once the research is completed?
Activity 4: SHOOTING GUIDES

**Introduction:** Researchers need to ensure, to the best of their ability, that the information they collect is valid (it accurately represents what researchers saw); and it is representative (the small subset of visual data they collect can be understood to stand for the whole of the category under study). In order to achieve these goals youth must approach all visual research in a systematic way. A shooting guide can aid youth in thinking through the Who, What, Where, Why, When and How of their photographic fieldwork. It is a “script” that youth follow that explains how and why the research was conducted. The researcher’s field notes are equally important. They allow the researcher to remember important contextual details of each shot. This context provides the critical tool to mediate against bias. It allows viewers of data to take into consideration what was going on around the photo taking and not rely merely on what is in the photo.

**Learning Objective:** Youth will understand the importance of approaching all visual research in a systematic way. Youth will know how to develop their own shooting guides based on their data collection goals. Youth will become familiar with field notes and how to use the field notes worksheet.

**Preparation:** Have shooting guides available for all participants.

**Facilitation:** Youth can use the following worksheet to define their sample. They should fill out the shooting guide based on the domain and the research strategy to be employed.
What Do We Photograph or Videotape? Worksheet

WHAT: What are the visual manifestations surrounding the issue? (Brainstorm anything that is seen and observable that might be related to the issue)

****If there is not a clearly defined visual symptom, is there an important concept or intangible variable (attitude, belief, value) that we can explore by visually documenting reality or by using the camera as a tool for a subjective exploration of the concept?

WHERE: Where does the independent domain exist or in what locales does the issue take place? (Could we photograph these locales to look for patterns that may influence issue?)

WHEN: Is there a time of day that the issue is present? (Do we need to photograph during the school day, after work, after dark, or capture a particular place every hour to study this issue?)

WHO: Does the issue affect a certain group of people? Do we need to photograph them in certain situations, have them help us to determine what to photograph, or give them the camera to document their reality in order to learn about this issue? Are we these people? Can we document our reality as a representative sampling of those affected by the issue?

HOW: Do we use cameras or videotape in order to gather the best data from which to understand our issue:
**SHOOTING GUIDE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject: (brief description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal or intent of photographic/video shoot</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Sampling Strategy**

- **Programmed Sampling:** A specific outline of what visual elements you want to record to study: What is your plan to determine exactly what you will be recording in the field: “Every storefront” Every other building, front, sides, back”
- **Intuitive Sampling:** Go with your gut and photograph what you think is important.
Activity 1: WHAT YOU SEE IS IDENTITY

**Learning Objective:** Youth will understand how to take a construct that they are familiar with (identity) and use visual research to gain more knowledge about it. Youth will improve practical field research skills by practicing what they have learned about technical aspects of photography. Youth will gain an understanding of the four main methods of visual research and of how to apply the tools needed to work in a systematic way to collect data in the field. Youth will improve media literacy skills.

**Materials:**
- Magazines
- Shooting Guides handouts
- Poster boards
- Glue
- Cameras/film
- Field notes sheets
- Model release forms

**Introduction:** Visual research is really the study of the seen and the observable. For instance, one source of visual data about society and people is body and clothing. This includes hairstyle, make up, tattoos, body piercings, clothing and fashion. Sociological research suggests that people work to give off meanings and impressions via their external presentation. These impressions smooth the progress of everyday social interactions as they “give off visual clues to others as to who one is and what one is doing” (Emmison, Smith, 2000). Researchers have studied clothing and body manipulations as indicators of social status, religious conformity, conformity with mainstream social norms, deviance to mainstream social norms, and personal identity.

**Facilitation:** Ask youth to report back all that they remember about the photography and videotaping strategies they learned in the previous session. Elaborate and fill in gaps as necessary. Review the basic issues around identity formation that were discussed in previous sessions. Introduce the concepts of deviance and conformity. Explain that clothing and the body can dramatize conformity or deviance on a continuum, from formal business clothing to dressing like a punk. In between we find shirt with no tie, aggressive rap and heavy metal T-shirts, Malcolm X baseball caps, baggy trousers, and skate pants, to name a few examples. Explain that the goal of this visual research activity will be to see if there are patterns of identity expression in the clothing and body among residents in a downtown urban area. The population under study may be modified depending on the needs, availability, and practical considerations (e.g. to teens participating in a particular community program, or teens in urban Hartford public spaces). Explain the four types of research that they will be doing: visual survey, visual elicitation, collaborative/photo novella, and expressive photo, referring to the “Tasks” handout. Since each method requires a different level of interaction with strangers, it is helpful to let youth decide
which method they would be most comfortable attempting. Obviously the more outgoing will be better suited to stopping strangers or other teenagers and asking for information. Divide the group up into four teams. Review; prepare the three main verbal or written tools of fieldwork:

1. Shooting Guides
2. Model Release Forms. A rule of thumb is that if photography takes place in a public domain and the subjects are not identifiable, and/or are not the focus of the photo, no release form is necessary. Often when people are stopped on the street to be photographed they will pose in some way. In this case posing is not a problem. The object of this visual data is not to record non-reactive social behavior but to obtain a visual record of outward appearance of body and clothing. The visual survey team may want to record age, gender, and self-selected ethnicity for further opportunity to see patterns.
3. Field notes.

Teams go to predetermined location and shoot. Each team member should have the opportunity to shoot one whole role of film. It may work well to have the other member fill out the field notes as necessary.

**Part Two**

**Materials:**
- Developed pictures
- Pens/Paper
- Mounting materials

**Time:** Forty-five minutes

**Preparation:** Before the session you should get any print film developed.

**Facilitation:** Pass out the pictures to each team and let them look at them and discuss them informally for a few minutes. Explain to them that their goal is to use their researcher's instinct, looking for patterns in the pictures. Then ask the youth to perform following tasks:

Group 1: Survey or inventory: Youth mount photos in order either sequentially or temporally, view them and look for any patterns or information they think they contain.

Group 2: Youth write focus group questions that they might ask a group of teenagers about the photographs.

Group 3. Youth display photos and important quotes from participants. Look for patterns in verbal responses.

Group 4: Youth display the photos or manipulate them in a manner that best expresses their attitudes, beliefs about the subject. Youth write a brief paragraph explaining beliefs, attitudes.

Bring the group together and have each group present their data to the other groups. Follow with a discussion using the following questions:

1. What technical aspects of photography were difficult to deal with? How did they affect the quality of the photos? (Review the key points to making a good photo)
2. How would you compare the kind of information we got from each method? Does one method seem more able to provide usable information on our research subject?

3. What was difficult about using each method of visual research that you were assigned to? What was easy? Did you enjoy the method you were given?

If youth chose to collect demographic data, use the following questions to further explore identity:
4. Is there a pattern that links socio-demographic characteristics with deviant identities?
5. What conclusions are you able to draw?
6. What demographics tend to be conformist?
7. Is there any difference in the way or degree to which different demographics visually signal their sense of identity?
8. From these photos would you conclude that some demographic groups use clothing and body to express or communicate their identity?
9. What proportion of people dress in a way that expresses their identity? Were there any surprises?
10. Are there any patterns to the body language of the photographic subjects that tell us anything in regards to their comfort level with being recorded, or their comfort level with their appearance?
11. What kind of social forces might lead these patterns to arise?
12. Do we live in a city of “neo-tribes” or is conformity still the dominant pattern?
13. Did you have any preconceptions about your subject before you went out to photograph? Do you think they affected what you chose to photograph? Were you surprised by any of your data?
13. Did you reveal these preconceptions and intent in your presentation to the group?
   Would knowing who you are and what you think about the subject help people to view your photos more realistically?
14. Would it be ethical to use these photos in a display at the capitol building talking about drug use in Hartford? Why or Why not?
15. What would you do differently next time?

**Part Three**

**Materials:**
- Photographs from previous exercise
- Magazines, newspapers
- Pen and papers

**Time:** 20 minutes
**Preparation:** Have on hand a number of pre-existing sources of images that would be similar to the population youth chose to photograph. Newspapers, magazines, commercials are good sources.

1. Have the group collect existing photographs of the same people/place, things represented in commercial media.
2. Lay out both collections of images: youth’s own and the media images.
3. Now using easel’s and markers compare the images and conclusions about the target group from commercial work and the conclusions that they arrived at from their own visual research. See Images Questions for discussion guidelines.
Manipulation of Images
Handout

1. What do you see in the commercial photographs?

2. What things stand out to you? What's the same as your photos; what's different from your photos?

3. How would you describe the version of the subject that each type of data offers (e.g., glamorous, mundane, gendered, formal, informal)?

4. How would you rate the objectivity of each method, or how much was each method able to show a true record of what really goes on (e.g.) what got into the photos and what didn't:

5. If the two types of images look different, can you guess why they look so different?

6. Are any of the images biased? How?
### TASK MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Visual Survey</strong></th>
<th><strong>Fieldwork task:</strong> Researchers go into field and ask individuals if they would mind being photographed for a research project on visual identity. They can collect more demographic information as desired from participants.</th>
<th><strong>Analysis task:</strong> Researchers mount photographs and study them for patterns. Compare visual with verbal data for further pattern making.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Photo Elicitation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fieldwork task:</strong> Researchers go into field to photograph individuals. These photographs will be used to elicit information from other teens about identity.</td>
<td><strong>Analysis task:</strong> Researchers will develop focus group or interview questions based on photographs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative photo/photo novella</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fieldwork task:</strong> Researchers will ask individuals if they would be willing to participate in a research project. Researchers can ask participants what piece of their own clothing or body they feel most closely represents their personal sense of identity.</td>
<td><strong>Analysis task:</strong> Researchers must pair photographs with key quotes or information from participants and look for meanings. (Would be done with participants but not possible.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressive photo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fieldwork task:</strong> Researchers go into field to photograph people, places, things that they feel symbolize their own sense of identity.</td>
<td><strong>Analysis task:</strong> Researchers use photos in a visual representation that expresses their identity. They should prepare a short essay explaining their choices and meanings.</td>
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SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION

Activity 1: METHOD MADNESS

Learning objective: Participants will develop a conceptual framework to assist them in choosing the method of visual research that will produce the most meaningful data about their chosen issue.

Materials:

- Methods Matrix Handout
- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Scrap Paper
- Pens/Pencils

Preparation: It is helpful if facilitators have thought out what types of visual data would contribute to the development of a research model based on the already decided upon issue or dependent domain. While the process must be youth-driven, it is a difficult conceptual process to navigate and youth may need direction.

Facilitation:
Review the matrix so that youth have an overview of the methods they may choose from. Additional examples will be helpful in conveying the wide range of applications. It is important that youth understand that each method can be modified, experimented with to create a custom-method for their project.

Next, work through the dependent domain, discussing what information researchers would like to collect that would help to clarify independent domains and causal relationships.

Next have them rate the methods based on the following questions:

Method Selection Criteria
1. Does this method have the potential to produce important information and insights into the independent domains and our research question?
2. Can we be confident that this method has the potential to produce photographs or videos that can be analyzed to produce meaningful information, not just act as illustrations or evidence?
3. Does this method interest and/or excite us? Do the possible ways to gain data from this method spark something in us?
4. Do we have enough time to complete this method properly (implementation, analysis, write-up for triangulation)?
5. Is there an opportunity to work with other methods collaboratively? Would this improve the quality of our data? For instance, can we team up with the elicitation group to produce photographs and use for elicitation?
SECTION 4: ANALYSIS

Activity 1: WHAT DO I SEE?

Introduction: Visual Research can produce many different types of data. Visual surveys, inventories, and social process photography will produce photographs, or videotape data. Photo elicitation, photo novella, impressionistic photo inquiry will produce written essays, interviews or focus groups notes. When photographs or video are used to elicit other types of data, the appropriate types of analysis should be used (see In depth interview analysis, focus group analysis, identifying themes, analysis of semi-structured interviews, content analysis). Most photographic analysis is a search for patterns and the definition of their meaning and importance. In the field we must decide what is to be recorded with the camera and record it. In analysis we must discover what those records may tell us. To do this we use a systematic analysis that involves four steps: Open observation; inventory; structured or focused analysis and conclusions. Our conclusions are not facts. We are taking risks to make assertions that we can then test with quantitative methods. Don’t be afraid to be creative in making the leap from visual image to verbal conclusions!

Learning Objective: Youth will learn how to use a step by step method of analysis of photos with the goal of finding patterns in their visual data and developing verbal conclusions that can be used to create a research model.

Materials: Photographs/Videotape
- Flip charts
- Markers
- Flip chart papers
- Handouts

Preparation: You should be familiar enough with the photos/videos to help the group make connections in patterns and conclusions from this information. Have a flip chart prepared with sample headings of patterns categories: behaviors, actions, material content, spatial arrangement. These are standard categories; youth should create other categories as appropriate.

Facilitation: Follow a systematic approach using the worksheet, youth should spread out all pictures and mount them in correct relationship to one another, based either on time sequence or spatial sequence. They should then spend at least thirty minutes viewing them as a whole, using their instincts to note anything that they think may be important. Next the group should take an inventory, using the flip chart pieces up on the walls to categorize items in the photographs. After this, the group should begin a focused analysis, either using questions that they have developed to direct the shooting, or ones they come up with that will give them answers that will help their model development. They should systematically answer the questions using elements in the visual data. After this youth may need to take a break and then return to form conclusions about what they have seen in the photos and what the data and their impressions of the data mean. They should put their conclusions in writing.
“What do I see? How do I know?”
Handout

1. What are my first impressions of all of the data? What stands out?
   What do I see? Brainstorm with your gut:

2. Inventory: Get to know everything in your photos by making categories
   and listing all items in each. (Do this on one big sheet)

3. Focused analysis: What can I do with what I see in my photos to tell me
   more?
   --Can I build a three-D model of them to find patterns?
   --Can I count numbers of each category? Can I measure distances between
      items?
   --Can I compare one locale or subject to another and find things the
      same/different?
   --Can I look for patterns?

4. Conclusion: What do I know? What in the visual data gives me this
   impression?
Post-Evaluation Worksheet Additions
A Method for Visual Research
FACILITATOR WORKSHEET for Activity 1

1. Framing a visual research question.
The research model can be thought of as a hunch. The researcher's job is to put that hunch into a question that will guide the researchers to choose the best data collection strategy to explore that hunch visually. It is the task of the researcher to decide what question(s) about the relationship between the independent domain and the dependent domain could be answered by studying some component of the visual world.

2. Choosing the best type of Data, Collection Strategy and Technology
A component of the visual world, or the response of those affected by the issue to the visual world is the data that the researchers want to collect. Researchers must decide which data collecting strategy will best capture this component of the visual world. This visual world is either recorded for in depth study, for elicitation, or for exploration of affective domains. Pre existing documents depicting this visual world can also be studied.

3. Shooting Guides and Sampling Strategy
Researchers must develop a written explanation of just how they are going to collect their data and how they are going to make sure that it is unbiased and representative. This is the shooting guide and sampling strategy: it is an explanation of the Who, What, Where, When, How and Why of the data that you plan to collect for the visual inquiry. The shooting guide and sampling strategy allows researchers to think through their rational for doing what they are doing.

4. Practice in the Field
Researchers need the opportunity to test their equipment, become comfortable with photographing or filming in the field, and familiarize themselves with their location. Practice allows researchers to flag any issues that would present barriers to collecting a valid, representative sample of data. It is critical!!

5. Data Collection and Production
Researchers, armed with shooting guide and field notes, when appropriate, go into field to collect data. The photographs/film can be developed and if the strategy calls for it, as in the case of photo elicitation, photo novella, collaborative photo or expressive photo further data can be produced.

6. Analysis
Analysis is not a stage, but a practice that can occur throughout the process. Ongoing analysis allows researchers to modify their strategy any time their data appears to be biased, invalid or evidentiary. Analysis in its simplest terms is looking for patterns. It then essentially involves translating the visual patterns into verbal.
**Time-line for Facilitators**

**Introduction of basic theory and concepts**

Frame the visual research question based on preliminary model/select a data type and method/complete a shooting guide with sampling strategy

Workshop on basic camera technique/practice run

Review of photographs/Apply lessons learned to sampling strategy if necessary

Field Data Collection

Development of film

Viewing of Data/brainstorming session/select method of analysis

Analysis

Triangulation
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Activity 2: SAMPLING MADE SIMPLE

Introduction: Proper sampling is another way that a researcher can guard against bias. A sample is a smaller collection of data taken from all of the possible data available. Because it would be impossible to photograph everything involved in an independent domain, visual researchers must narrow their focus to a small set of photographic subjects. In other words, they can only take so many pictures and the information in these pictures has to stand for the whole. When a sample is representative, it means that a researcher is confident that what he/she has photographed occurs consistently and often enough to stand for the whole of the subject.

- Focusing on a single object or subject (in photography this may mean taking only close up shots) will produce data that is unusable. The object’s relationship to the larger context is what we study for patterns. In a visual survey or inventory, the decision of what data we will collect is rarely arbitrary because choosing data this way would result in a sample that was biased towards the researchers views or preconceptions of what’s important. A sampling strategy is contained in a Shooting Guide, which is the written explanation of what researchers are going to photograph and why. The process of developing a shooting guide and sampling strategy begins once we have chosen the data collection method we are going to use.

The following is a list of common sampling techniques:

- In visual survey or inventory, **programmed sampling** is when the researcher has a set plan such as every fifth street, or “every store front on Park Avenue.” This is also a good strategy for a study of pre existing documents. For example, “Every advertisement in the two most popular teen magazines for the month of September.”

- In a collaborative or photo novella project, the goal is to have partners visually record their own reality, or their attitude about reality. In this case, **instinctual sampling** (when the researcher follows his own instinct, or viewpoint and decides what’s important to record) is appropriate. Even with these, a shooting guide explaining the use of this approach and why it is being used is important.

- Other samples include a **convenience sample**, which is a sample of data that you select because it is the most convenient to do so, based on considerations like time and money.

- Finally, if time and money permit, the most fruitful sampling plan combines both a programmed sampling plan and intuitive sampling. This allows for not only planned analysis, but also the opportunity for discovery outside of the unexpected.
Activity 3: MEDIA MESSAGES

Learning Objectives: Teens will understand how to conduct a study of pre-existing materials. Teens will gain an understanding of sampling strategies. Teens will improve their media literacy skills.

Materials: Ten or so magazines of all kinds, including five teen oriented magazines
Scissors, glue
Copies of the shooting guide
Cutouts of technique and explanation on following page

Facilitator Preparation: This exercise uses a study of pre-existing materials to demonstrate the four main sampling strategies. The facilitator should have 10-12 magazines including a number that are marketed to teens. They can be displayed for teens to look at.

Facilitation: Introduce this exercise as a study of pre-existing documents, or a study of visual materials that were created either by or for the people affected by an issue. Their task is to explore ways that an independent variable, the media, influences teen’s attitudes or ideas about clothing. Begin by spreading out all of the magazines. The facilitator can lead teens through the process of funneling down, as depicted below, making sure that at each step they clearly answer the question WHY? It helps to document their process on a flip chart, as it will get them into the habit of written documentation.

After the sample is determined, the group can break into pairs to do their research on a magazine. Each team has a different task:

Team One: Tags all ads in magazine.
Team Two: Tags ads based on a pre-determined strategy, for example, every third ad.
Team Three: Tags randomly chosen number of randomly chosen ads (flip pages and put finger in to stop). Do this a set amount of times.
Team Four: This team tags and removes ads that the they themselves feel have message about clothing that they believe are important or meaningful.

As a whole group, teens can go around to each sample and decide together what kind of information can be taken from each sample. For instance, the first sample, a quantitative analysis can be done and a content analysis of messages about clothing compared to ads about other things.

Example of a funneling down process:

All Media → Magazines → Teen oriented magazines → A teen magazines available on the newsstands this month → All Ads in five teen magazines → Just ads with references to clothing → Just Ads that teens feel convey a message to them personally about clothing.
1. Independent Domain:

2. Dependent Domain:

3. What is our hunch about the relationship between these two domains: (as reflected in our preliminary research model)

4. What question could we ask that would help us get more information about this hunch as it plays out visually in our own community?

5. What kind of visual data might help us answer this question? Answer the following questions:
   - Could we collect data by visually recording the structures, places, people, objects, phenomenon involved in this independent domain directly and then study them to look for patterns?
     *If the answer is yes → a visual survey or inventory may be appropriate.*
   - Could we record the above subjects in photographs or videotape, or could we create our own choreographed representation (a skit), and then use any one of these visual recordings as a tool to gain information about the feelings, attitudes, beliefs of those affected by the issue?
     *If so → a photo or video elicitation study may be appropriate.*
   - Could we collect meaningful information about the independent variable by working with other partners affected by the issue to record what they think is important, and then deciding together what their visual documents mean?
     *If so → then a collaborative photo or videotape project may be appropriate.*
   - Could we give those affected by the issue cameras to document their own realities and determine their own meaning?
If so → then a photo novella study may be appropriate.

- Since the issue affects us, could we explore, through the tool of cameras or videotape, our own attitudes, beliefs and realities around the issue being studied? Could we document our reality and write about it, or could we use artist expression to communicate our attitudes and believes about the issue? Could we create a choreographed piece to videotape that would express our attitudes or feelings about the independent domain?

If so → then expressive photo or video study may be appropriate.

- Are there visual documents that already exist that reveal the independent domain and so would be worthwhile to analyze for important information?

If so, then a study of pre existing documents may be appropriate.

6. Use the Methods Matrix and choose the data collection strategy that most closely matches your research needs!

7. Now that we know what kind of data we want and how we are going to collect it, we need to decide exactly where, how much, when we are going to collect this data. This is our Sampling Strategy. Use the Shooting Guide to plot a strategy for going into the field and collecting data. Below are some useful applications of sampling strategies.

Visual Survey/Inventory → We could use Programmed Sampling, Intuitive sampling

Photo/Video Elicitation → Programmed Sampling, convenience sampling of participants, random sampling of participants

Photo Novella or Collaborative Photo Project → Intuitive sampling/ convenience sample of partners

Reflexive Photo → Convenience sample of participants in methods group/ Intuitive Sampling
SECTION 2: PRACTICE

Activity 1: PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

Materials: Cameras to be used in data collection
          Video equipment to be used in data collection

Time:  20 minutes

Preparation: Facilitator should test all equipment prior to beginning of program. All equipment should have film as needed for practice. How equipment will be used/shared etc. should be worked out in advance.

Facilitation: Allow youth to handle all equipment and become comfortable with technology. Review the basics of photography using either the following handouts or any basic photography materials that facilitator feels are appropriate.
Lighting: The lighting of a photograph means how light or dark your image is, and in what direction the light that illuminates your photographic subject is coming from.

- It is best to have the light source (where the light is coming from) in front of your subject and shining on your subject. If the light source is behind your subject, your subject will be dark. If you can not change the position, use a flash to fill in the front of your subject.
- Use natural lighting whenever possible—it may be important to accurately represent the quality of the lighting of a setting.

Focus: Focus is how sharp or blurry your picture is. Good focus can be achieved by finding a spot on your photo subject and making sure that the picture in the viewfinder is as crisp as possible while keeping your eye on that one spot.

Framing: Framing is the process of deciding what will be in the photograph and what will be left out. We do this when we widen or narrow the picture that we see through the lens. The whole is the scientific view. By only recording pieces of a location, place, event, person, we are leaving out data about what we are studying. It would be like leaving out numbers in a complete data set. Standard practice dictates that a panoramic or whole view picture accompanies all close-ups of any photo subject. When cropping (cutting off the photo subject) it is best to pick a natural place. Try holding the camera vertically and horizontally before deciding how to frame your shot.

Point of View: The point of view is the place from which you see or photograph the subject. This viewpoint can show the subject from an unusual angle or a straight on position. The P.O.V. will influence the look of the subject and it will convey meaning onto the image via spatial relationships.

Film: Fuji film is better for people of Asian and African American descent. The faster speeds of film are better to catch movement and take in more light in darker places. An ASA of 400 is a good standard choice for outdoor shooting.
Six Simple Tips for Taking a Good Picture:

1. Take your time, hold your camera steady and squeeze the shutter release slowly.

2. Hold the camera firmly against your face, have your feet planted firmly on the ground, and keep your elbows in to help keep balance.

3. Always crop your picture in a place that seems “natural”: notice what you have left out of the photograph as much as what you have kept in.

4. Don’t be afraid to get close up to your subject. Try different angles and use both vertical and horizontal shots.

5. Check how your subject is lit: back lighting, direct lighting (overhead) will affect how the subject looks.

6. Do not pose your subject. Try and capture your subject in a natural moment—not reacting to the presence of a camera.