Chapter Overview

In the United States (US), health and social service providers are concerned with the mental health disparities apparent among adolescents. The growing Latino population in the US, has increased awareness and attention toward the mental health of Latina adolescents. In this research, attention was given to using principles of community-based participatory research to promote success. Similarly, although grounded in theoretical understanding of behavioral interventions, the investigators explored non-traditional intervention strategies. Thus, a community-based photovoice intervention was developed for Latina mothers and their adolescent daughters.

The goal was to develop and pilot an arts-based intervention designed to improve levels of mother-daughter communication and connectedness. Secondary goals were to provide opportunity for the mothers and daughters to complete a photovoice project, document their combined perspectives in words and pictures, and present their findings to a community audience of friends, family, community leaders, and policymakers. The photovoice project topic, selected by a group of mother-daughter dyads, focused on preserving their culture. In this chapter we describe the nature of the problem we addressed, the development and implementation of the photovoice intervention, and our successes/lessons learned. Our experience using a photovoice-based intervention demonstrates how broadly the arts can be used to intervene on and advocate for the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Why design an intervention with Latino mothers and adolescent daughters?

Latino adolescents in the United States (US) are a fast growing proportion of the US population and in young adulthood/adolescence they will extensively affect the well-
being of the overall US population (Guzman, 2001; U.S. Census, 2008). As with many health problems, disparities are evident in the rates of mental health problems, with Latino adolescents showing some of the highest rates, and disparities, compared to their peers (Ozer, Park, Brindis, & Irwin, 2003; Rew, Thomas, Horner, Resnick, & Beuhring, 2001). Latino adolescent females (Latinas) have high rates of suicide attempts compared to their adolescent peers, male or female (Eaton et al., 2008; Zayas, Lester, Cabassa, & Fortuna, 2005). A high proportion of Latina adolescents report experiencing depressive symptoms, which are critical risk factors for mental health problems including suicide (Céspedes & Huey Jr., 2008; Garcia, Skay, Sieving, Naughton, & Bearinger, 2008; Mikolajczyk, Bredehorst, Khelaifat, Maier, & Maxwell, 2007).

Why Latino adolescents, females in particular, are reporting disproportionately high rates of mental health problems is not easily described. Complex factors are involved, which makes identifying solutions or possible points of intervention quite challenging. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Pantin, Schwartz, Sullivan, Coatsworth, & Szapoznik, 2003) is a useful framework for realizing these complex factors. At the center of multiple concentric circles, the individual (Latina adolescent) has intra-personal factors (e.g. genetics, personality, beliefs) that may offer protection, or present risk, related to development of a mental health problem. The next circle, representing microsystem-level influences, includes family, school, peers, and for some, employment or religious institutions. Within the family a Latino adolescent might find protection in the cultural values that emphasize family priorities, togetherness, and community connection. On the other hand, the family may experience stressors related
to acculturation differences, language preferences, substance use behaviors, or separation due to immigration (Garcia & Lindgren, 2009). At the macrosystem-level, potential stressors arise when societal values do not align with those of yourself, your family, or your culture.

**Why is a relationship with mothers protective for adolescent females?**

Parent/child conflict is highest in adolescence (Branje, 2008; Laursen & Collins, 1994). Parents are generally committed to the success and well-being of their adolescent children and parental bonding is known to be positively associated with adolescent well-being (Bucx & van Wel, 2008). For many adolescents, this developmental period is generally smooth; however, there are youth who struggle through the transitions, and can experience significant conflict with parents as part of the struggles. It has been consistently reported that most interpersonal conflict teens have is with their mothers, and that girls tend to have more interpersonal conflict than boys (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Laursen, 1995). High levels of conflict are problematic because they are associated with harmful adolescent behaviors such as depression, anger and substance use (Pasch et al., 2006).

Latina adolescents may be more vulnerable to conflict and tension with their mothers than other adolescent girls. Traditional Latino cultural values around family, women, and communication may conflict with the values Latina adolescents encounter among peers and in mainstream U.S. culture. For example, the emphasis in Latino culture on family (Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Mendoza, & Killen, 2004; Pabon, 1998) minimizes individuality although establishing self-identity is a normative adolescent developmental task (Steinburg, 1996). Generally the literature demonstrates familism to
be protective for Latino adolescents, especially females, against high-risk behaviors including substance use and delinquency (Allen et al., 2008; Dakof, 2000; Martyn-Nemeth, Penckofer, Gulanick, Velsor-Friedrich, & Bryant, 2009; Parsai, Voisine, Marsiglia, Kulis, & Nieri, 2009; Romero et al., 2004; Unger, Ritt-Olson, Teran, Huang, Hoffman, & Palmer, 2002); however, in the context of mental health familism poses potential for risk as well as protection (Goldston et al., 2008). In addition, Latino culture may value particular traits in women, including being nurturing, quiet, and shy (Parsai et al., 2009; Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005) and may stand in contrast to the traits or behaviors valued or modeled by non-Latino peers, including open communication about difficult topics (McKee & Karasz, 2006).

In addition, there are less documented yet important factors contributing risk for Latina adolescents with respect to mental health problems. For example, among immigrant Latina adolescents (over half the foreign-born in the U.S. are Latino; Bergman, 2003), susceptibility can occur when they experience separation from a parent for extended periods of time (Schapiro, 2002). For most adolescents who are ‘left’ to live with grandparents or other family for sometimes years, being reunited with their parents creates conflicting emotions that are rarely adequately addressed or resolved (e.g. abandonment, anger, fear, or uncertainty). Parents may feel their adolescent children should be grateful for the opportunity of a better life and could unintentionally overlook the emotional effects and needs of their adolescents.

For many Latina adolescents, the processes of acculturation may vary from their parents, presenting risks that contribute to experiencing acculturative stress and conflict, and subsequent emotional distress (Eitle, Wahl, & Aranda, 2009; Schofield,
Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008; Smokowski, Buchanan, & Bacallao, 2009; Smokowski, David-Ferdon, & Stroupe, 2009).

**Why does an intervention addressing the mother-daughter relationship make sense?**

Leading Latino and adolescent researchers agree that successful behavioral interventions have common characteristics, including being school-based, family-centric, and promoting protective factors while reducing risk factors (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002; Dishion & Kavanagh, 2003; Pantin et al., 2003; Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993; Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). One of these critical protective factors is a feeling of mutuality by an adolescent toward her mother. Mutuality is an indicator of the emotional bond between the adolescent-mother and in essence, the extent to which the adolescent can understand why her mother parents in certain ways (Turner, Kaplan, & Badger, 2006; Zayas, 2009). With higher levels of mutuality for adolescent girls toward their mothers comes greater connectedness and subsequently, for the adolescent, lower risk behaviors, including lower rates of attempting suicide (Zayas, 2009). We know that a close, trusting relationship with parents contributes to the healthy development of adolescents (Baer & Schmitz, 2007) and that a less tense relationship can facilitate reaching mutual goals, which can diminish interpersonal conflict between parents and adolescents (Marshall, Young, & Tilton-Weaver, 2008). A healthy adolescent-parent relationship can protect against harmful adolescent behaviors including sexual risk-taking and substance use (Borawski, Levers-Landis, Lovegreen, & Trapl, 2003; Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham, 2007; Mogro-Wilson, 2008; Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009).
Therefore, we embarked on a collaborative process (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003) to develop an intervention that would build on known successes, address the problems we have identified, and positively influence the mother-daughter relationship.

**What was the study goal?**

The study goal was to develop and pilot test a photovoice intervention designed to improve communication and connectedness within Latino mother-daughter dyads. We aimed to provide a venue in which the mothers and daughters could spend time together with other mothers and daughters in a non-threatening and safe environment. We observed that the appeal of the project for the mothers and daughters was twofold: the opportunity to learn about and undertake a photovoice project, and the chance to improve their communication with each other without “therapy”.

**Why was a community-based participatory research strategy used?**

Community-based participatory research is a collaborative engaged research process that follows core principles assuring commitment, equity, mutual benefit, capacity building, relevance, and focus (Israel et al., 2003; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). The university and community co-investigators comprised a trans-disciplinary team (nursing, social work) who have worked together since 2006. From the onset, this photovoice study was driven by the needs and desires of the community. The sincerity, trust, and commitment among the collaborators have grown over time and contribute to the likelihood of project success.

**Why was photovoice the intervention strategy?**

Photovoice, a term originated by Caroline Wang (Wang & Burris, 1997), is a process undertaken by a group of individuals who use photography to promote their
voice on an issue they care about. Informed by the work of Freire and leading feminist theorists, Wang perceived photovoice to be more than photo-documentation with solely a descriptive or informative nature. Also, photovoice was originally developed with intention to serve those who traditionally may not have had or felt they had strong voices that could be heard by common stakeholders or decision-makers (e.g. legislators). Adolescents comprise a population that rarely has a voice regarding issues that influence their health and well-being.

Generally, photovoice projects are conducted with the purpose of advancing policy changes or health promotion efforts (Schwartz, Sable, Dannerbeck, & Campbell, 2007; Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Wilson, Minkler, Dasho, Wallerstein, & Martin, 2008). A leading photovoice researcher has undertaken theoretical work to advance the ideas of photovoice beyond descriptive and policy implications to those of intervention (Strack, Lovelace, Jordan, & Holmes, under review). Strack has coined the term “photovention” to describe this idea that photovoice is more than a process with an outcome (e.g., the product) and in fact, it is an intervention influencing those who participate in powerful ways (e.g., communication skills).

Our research team knew we needed to be creative to engage both mothers and adolescents. We talked with some adolescents about working together with their mothers, without actually talking about their problems (e.g., in therapy) and noted that the girls found this idea very appealing. Girls wanted to connect more with their mothers but not in traditional ways such as counseling or classes. Informal conversations with mothers consistently showed us that they too have a strong desire to spend more time with their daughters, to get to know them better, and to know more of what was going
on in their lives. We decided to use photovoice as the core component of a group-based intervention to promote healthy mother-daughter communication and connectedness. In an intervention context, a photovoice project provides the group of mother-daughter dyads with a common goal that is not specific to their relationship. Instead, they indirectly ‘work’ on their relationship as they work side-by-side, practicing positive communication, observing the modeling of other mother-daughter dyads in the group, and mutually enjoying doing something together. Simultaneously, they complete a photovoice project with community-level health promotion implications.

**How did the study unfold?**

The research team determined that the summer out-of-school months would be ideal for recruitment and engagement of mothers and daughters. Following appropriate processes to secure Institutional Review Board approval, our team began to recruit Latina students attending a public high school in an urban Minnesota city. We felt it was important to gain the interest of adolescents before inviting their mothers to participate. Three of the eight eligible and interested Latina girls (criteria included self-identifying as Latina, 14-18 years of age, and willing to commit to an 8-week program) were unavailable to participate because they were leaving Minnesota to visit Mexico during the summer. Four mother-daughter dyads attended an informational session held at the school. It became clear early in the recruitment process that the biggest logistical issue would be the various work schedules among the mothers. At the informational session we talked about possible days of the weeks and times that would work for everyone and established a schedule of meetings over a two-month period.
At this initial meeting, those who were interested in participating signed appropriate consent/assent forms and completed baseline protocol data collection. The written survey (available in English or Spanish) inquired about demographics, emotions, coping behaviors, family connectedness and communication, and acculturation. In addition, a recorded communication task protocol was completed with each mother-daughter dyad (Sillars, Koerner, & Fitzpatrick, 2005). Each dyad was brought to a private room with a video camera. They were instructed to have a conversation about a topic they often disagree about, for approximately ten minutes. It was after this task that one dyad made a decision to not participate in the project; the mother felt that their relationship and arguing were too intense to enable them to engage in the photovoice project with the other dyads.

What did the mothers and daughters do?

Three Latina mothers and their adolescent daughters enrolled in the project. Garcia and Lindgren outlined each session using a framework documented for prior photovoice projects (Strack et al., 2004). Initial sessions were designed to explain the purpose of photovoice, build comfort with the use of cameras, facilitate participants getting to know one another, and initiate a coaching conversation about the possible focus for their project. Subsequent sessions were focused on working with the photographs the participants had taken, facilitating a process of organizing photographs and creating meaningful messages. It should be noted that the process of facilitating conversation with the mothers and daughters was based on life coaching principles: the clients know best and is fully capable of using their own knowledge to come to decisions. The facilitator, rather than giving ideas or advice, guided the participants
through listening and questioning. Generally each session lasted two and a half to three hours and followed this outline: 1) welcome and informal conversation, 2) download and organization of photographs on the computers, 3) presentation of photographs taken by each participants with explanation for what the photographs mean, 4) share a meal, 5) discussion of themes, categories, and messages, 6) strategize next steps and wrap up.

In the final sessions, more time was focused on creating the lay-out of the photographs, firming up messages to accompany the photographs, and planning the final exhibit session.

All sessions were co-facilitated by Garcia and Lindgren, with the assistance of a Graduate Assistant. Following each session, field notes were written to capture the essence of each meeting, what was accomplished, and how it appeared the mothers and daughters were responding. Some of these notes are presented below.

**Session One.** The mothers and daughters sat expectantly around a table with the facilitators sharing sandwiches and getting to know each other. The girls knew each other, but not well. The mothers had not previously met. We explained what photovoice is, where it came from, and what the overarching goals or outcomes might look like. They were curious about the process, and about photovoice.

Cameras were provided to participants and a photographer was present to explain the intricacies of use. Digital high quality yet easy to use cameras were purchased. Each individual was able to choose the color of their own camera, and each pair chose different colors so as not to mix them up. As each opened up their individual box containing camera and accessories, the feel in the air was festive. The daughters were quick to skip all instructions, and by knowledge or chance, put it all together
Latina mother-daughter photovoice intervention

The mothers were careful, cautious, and more confused about what to do; they quickly turned to their daughters for assistance. Each daughter explained to their mother (some with patience and some with exasperation) how to assemble the camera with the memory card and batteries. The facilitators circled the table filling in with explanations and assistance when needed. After all cameras were ready, one of the facilitators modeled the basics with an extra camera. Suddenly, the room was full of giggles and laughter, with more questions and answers as the group of individuals practiced taking photos, deleting photos, using the different photo categories. Individual and pairs were suddenly taking each other’s picture, smiling for the camera. The daughters demanded to view the photo and then decided whether or not their mother could keep or delete that particular photo.

When they left the group that day, each was instructed to practice taking photos, getting to know their camera, and referring to the instruction manual when needed. The ethics of photography, including when and how to take photos of others, was carefully covered. They were instructed to take photos of what was important to them and to their community (without the facilitators or the group discussion or defining what ‘their community’ actually was). In this way, the group was guided toward what they would subsequently identify as the topic focus of their project.

**Session Two.** This session was a delightfully shy show and tell. We had access to four Macintosh computers where we uploaded each person’s photographs they wanted to share with the group (each selected 10-15 photos). Then, we had a narrative ‘slide show’ where each person was able to talk about the pictures she took, why she took them and what they reminded her of. One of the mothers had written down all her
notes and photo descriptions in a notebook. This was the first mother to do so and seemed to set an example for the other mothers to take more time to explain their photos to each other. Each individual had sole rights to choose which photos were to be shown to the others.

We decided to split the group into two groups (mothers, daughters) for the initial conversation about possible themes to support the mothers’ preference for talking in Spanish and the daughters’ preference to use English. We also were curious as to the similarities or differences that each group would present in topic/theme ideas. Each group spent time talking about the topic, as well as related topics it informs and when the group re-joined the topics each proposed were similar and consistent.

The mothers discussed preserving the Latina culture and how hard it is living in Minnesota. One mother described how she still required the girls to have a ‘chaperone’ even when they went to the store for groceries, and the subsequent struggle to give in to her daughter’s pressure to “please just let me go to the store by myself”. To this mother, the preserving of culture, specifically a cultural expectation that girls have a chaperone, was a challenge in the U.S.. Another mother remarked that she gave up that struggle and regretted it because her daughter got involved with some people she didn’t approve of and was subsequently exposed to drugs and alcohol. This mother stated that when she tried to ‘pull back’ into previous expectations, it was too late. And she felt she’s all but lost her daughter but she was pleased that her daughter agreed to come to this group with her. The third mother stated that she’s been in the U.S. a long time, and long ago gave up some of the traditions. However, she has not given up the importance of family, religion and culture. When the moms were joined by the girls the conversation
continued to focus on the importance of preserving the Latino culture while living here in Minnesota. Although their perspectives were different, the girls also focused on the importance of preserving their culture, even when at times the culture seemed to constrain some of their desired behaviors or actions. This was a pivotal bonding moment for the mothers, and an equally important bonding moment among the daughters. The open conversation paved the way for rich and honest conversations throughout the rest of the sessions. By the end of the session, the group had decided on the following overarching topic/theme: “Preserving Latino Culture and Tradition.”

**Session Three.** The goal of this session was to finalize and clarify the theme that the photos would depict, and the rational for the importance of that theme to the group. Participants shared the photographs they had taken the previous week and began to expound their discussions of the categories within the theme. Some of the photographs portrayed religious symbols such as churches, religious figures, and traditional shrines dedicated to the virgin Guadalupe. Other photographs were taken of foods such as fruit, bread, vegetables, and sweet bread. The mothers and daughters consistently explained that theses items are all significant in the Mexican culture.

It was noted that most of the photos portrayed positive aspects of the theme. The facilitators led a discussion to explore additional photo ideas that would support their theme. Participants were asked to come up with examples of concerns or problems which may exist in their community that do not support the preservation of their culture. They shared the following examples: eating at a fast food restaurant instead of eating fresh vegetables or fruits, driving to the store instead of walking, and environmental pollution.
Sesions Four through Seven. Session four was the only session that did not have perfect attendance; one dyad was not able to attend. It was observed in session four that photographs were increasing in quality and projected a clear understanding of the theme. The group genuinely appeared to be pleased to see each other.

Throughout the discussions that ensued many categories surfaced, and the following are those they included in the final project: Latina Community; Religion; Family; Environment/Pollution; Nature; Food and Culture. Participants agreed to focus future photography efforts on examples that would fit within the selected categories.

[Insert Photo 1]

In each of these sessions, the mothers and daughters returned with new photographs to show and discuss with each other. Every week it was observed that the girls and mothers greeted each other more warmly and with ease. The group worked well together, downloading photos and then sharing a meal. The group talked about the type of layout they wanted to use to exhibit their photos and agreed to do a collage format that would include all themes on one layout. The mothers and daughters were quick to complement each other on photos they had taken. As the photo sorting happened in preparation for the final exhibit, the group was hesitant to eliminate someone else’s photos from the exhibit, even if there were duplicates. When this happened they (as a whole) were very respectful about which to choose or eliminate and generally left the choice to the photographer. They were also cognizant of making sure the exhibit reflected photos from each photographer.

In these last two sessions, there was increased group work and interactions. The mothers and daughters individually wrote messages for each theme. The messages
were read aloud by each individual and then as a group, parts of messages were used to create a final message. It was a difficult task for the group to narrow down their message on each theme to just one or two phrases.

Discussions during the shared meal time and informal picture-sorting time included a wide variety of informal topics: sharing family support community resources for Latino families, activities during the school and weekends, dating, chaperoning, drinking and drugs, boyfriends, and acculturation. Often mothers talked about these topics with daughters listening and occasionally offering their perspectives. These conversations were organic and appeared to be mutually beneficial to the mothers and daughters. These dialogues continued even after the sessions ended, with conversations continuing in the parking lot. There was no group facilitation required by the researchers, since the conversation was led and guided by the mothers and daughters. Periodically, one of the researchers would pose a question to clarify or deepen the discussion, and then the group would respond.

**How was the photovoice project presented to the community?**

The group of mothers and daughters decided that their title of the project would be: “Our Voice through Pictures: ‘Mother and Daughter.’” They described the project in a flier that announced their final session and invited the public,

“Preserving culture and tradition: A group of mothers and daughters created a presentation of photographs to show the importance of maintaining the Latino culture here in Minnesota. The project focused around the following themes: Religion, Culture, Latino Community, Nature, Animals, Food and Environment.”
The mothers and daughters were responsible for organizing the logistics of the final exhibit. During session seven, they determined the length of time for the exhibit and the strategies for inviting guests (e.g., flier, face-to-face invitation). They eagerly engaged in a discussion about what type of food would be offered to guests. Moms were quick to plan the menu, each one selecting what their family would contribute and make (e.g., rice and beans, juice, and salsa). Grant funding allowed for purchasing items the moms did not prefer to prepare (e.g., chicken, guacamole, chips, and chocolate-dipped strawberries). The mom of the research assistant was from Cuba and although she was not involved in the project she offered to make flan, a traditional custard-like dessert. The study participants felt honored that another mom would contribute her time and energy for their event. Despite the sudden death of a family member, and despite our efforts to release her from the obligation, this mother prepared beautiful flan, and arranged to have it delivered the night of the presentation.

In addition to planning the refreshments, the mothers and daughters talked about what they would wear and how they would present their project. By the end of the dialogue, each mother-daughter dyad agreed to wear a color of the Mexican flag (i.e. red, green, and white). The research team was impressed and amazed. We wondered what the likelihood was that at the onset of this project any one of these daughters would have agreed to don an outfit purposely matching their mother. One pair even went shopping together to buy matching tops. As we have informally shared this observation with colleagues and others who work with teens, they are universally surprised and concur that this ‘evidence’ speaks to the impact of the photovoice intervention on the mother-daughter relationship.
A few hours before the actual final presentation, the mother/daughter dyads arrived in matching outfits with homemade food. They were dressed up and had obviously taken time and care with clothing and make up. One dyad brought rice and beans (white rice with some ‘green’ mixed in as well as ‘red’ rice). The second dyad provided homemade salsa, made with red tomatoes, green jalapeños and white onions. The third dyad provided three kinds of traditional Mexican beverages (red, green and white). They each brought family and friends with them, and everyone worked together in setting up for the meal and exhibit.

The exhibit began by sharing a meal with family, friends and community members. Then, Garcia provided a brief introduction about the project and introduced the mothers and daughters. Proud family members watched their mothers and daughters speak up about their photovoice project and the theme: “Preserving our Latino culture and tradition.” They took turns explaining each of the categories while guests were able to observe many of the pictures they had taken, which were displayed as two large collage posters. An on-going slideshow of their selected photos was displayed on a wall near the posters.

The mothers and daughters took turns describing each category. The research team only assisted the process by providing note cards and making suggestions specific to the process, not the content. Examples of the phrases and photos representing the categories are presented below.

Religion. Religion is something very important for our community. It is a foundation of family values and principles of every family and has great impact on the beliefs and actions of every person.
Culture. The culture is a set of concepts that differentiate our community from others. For example: clothing, food, folklore, art, values, language, music, tradition and centers of support.

Community. The community is the means in which we develop into being human. It has great impact on our behavior, and the physical, emotional, and spiritual state.

[Insert Photo 5 Approximately Here]

Nature. Nature is the environment in which we grow up; that which presents us with beautiful countryside, images of animals and plants and is the movement that teaches us that there is still life on our planet. Take care of it!

Animals. Animals are an essential part of this world. They are a gift of life and it is worth it to take care of them.

Family. The family is the nucleus or base of every society that forms love, respect and our values. We need to conserve this good family foundation and maintain our values, customs and traditions.

[Insert Photo 8 Approximately Here]

Food. Food is important to us, Hispanics, a part of the tradition. The Hispanic food always has the colors of Mexico that we will always take with us no matter where we are.

Environment/Pollution. Pollution is what affects the environment like the cars, airplanes, etc. Human beings are inhabitants of this planet and we have to be conscientious and take actions to preserve it. For example, using bicycles or walking will not contaminate this planet which is ours and in which we live. Otherwise our future generations will not be able to live and enjoy this planet.
It was obvious to all observers that the mothers and daughters jointly owned what they had created and were proud to share it with their guests. Over fifty people attended the exhibit, representing family members, politicians, friends, and community leaders. A question was posed at the end of the presentation from a member of the audience: “Do you feel your relationship with your mother/daughter has improved as a result of being in this project?” The immediate nodding of every mother and daughter affirmed that they believed their relationships were stronger. One mother shared, “I came to know my daughter better. She took beautiful pictures and I realized she has this sensitivity. I didn’t know she was so sensitive, and I learned something new about her through the photos she took.” The mother/daughter dyad that joined the project with what seemed to be the most contentious relationship also described how their relationship had improved.

The group also had unintended positive support for the mothers involved. At the debriefing session the day after the presentation, one mother began crying when she shared with the others how important this group had been for her. It was an opportunity to spend time with her daughter and to receive support as a woman from other women in the community. She said that she often felt very isolated with no one to talk with or to share her concerns, and this group had been very supportive for her. She hoped (and the other mothers and daughters quickly agreed) that this group would gather again, so this would not be the last time they would see each other. They also exchanged names and phone numbers with each other, so they could continue to communicate with each other.
Successes and Lessons Learned

Our photovoice project yielded many promising results and offered useful considerations for future projects. We observed numerous benefits to the participants including:

1) role modeling and support from other group members (mother-to-mother sharing experiences and resources,

2) daughter-to-daughter connecting and role modeling for each other,

3) mothers and daughters receiving information and support from other dyads by witnessing their interactions,

4) those who traditionally may not have a voice that is heard are able to express themselves in photos, and words (a very shy mother became much more engaged and inclined to speak up over the course of the intervention),

5) the power of a creative process that enables sharing your opinion, thoughts, ideas in a safe and supportive group environment,

6) the power of presenting opinions formally to family members, friends, and community members who may have influence over the topic, and

7) importantly, the mothers and daughters spending time together, working on a common goal in a non-threatening environment, which ultimately strengthened their relationship and communication with each other.

Additionally, there were key practical lessons learned that may be valuable to those interested in developing or implementing a similar photovoice intervention. These include:
1) Establishing a firm date and time prior to recruitment rather than allowing group process to determine this. We were too flexible in that we tried to accommodate all schedules. Work and family responsibilities will always be a significant challenge to offering a group-based program such as this. However, the mothers in our project agreed that with advance notice and enough interest in participating, families would be able to commit and attend.

2) Research-based data collection (e.g. survey, video-recording) should be completed prior to the first official session. When using objective data collection techniques (i.e. video-recorded communication task), time needs to be scheduled for preparing and debriefing participants.

3) Facilitators/leaders need to be technologically savvy and should assist the group in selecting a final exhibit venue that is consistent with skill levels. In our experience, the creation of an electronic collage was time intensive and although the lay-out of photos was determined by the participants, the actual creation of this lay-out electronically was done by the research team.

4) With a larger group of dyads more purposeful community building activities for the group and possibly mother/daughter dyads may be needed. The nature of a small group was conducive to natural, organic community-building but with larger numbers the process will likely benefit from more intentional activities. These activities should be well planned, led and debriefed by a skilled facilitator.

5) The number and content of sessions needs to be carefully planned. Some groups will require more sessions. Also, some activities require more time (e.g. creating the invitation to the exhibit) and need to be scheduled appropriately in the curriculum.
6) During the orientation to the project it should be emphasized that other family members should not attend the sessions if it can be helped because this can take away from the mother/daughter focus.

7) As with any group-based intervention, an effective facilitator is necessary to provide guidance, appropriate levels of input, and reinforcement of successes and process. The ability of a facilitator to connect with participants so as to ensure a trusting environment is imperative for photovoice projects which may often address difficult topics or issues. Also, an effective facilitator will know when to step in and when to allow the group process to progress without assistance.

**Application of Photovoice in Practice**

There is little doubt that the strengthening of a mother-daughter relationship or bond will have a positive influence on the social and emotional well-being of the daughters (and the mothers). Photovoice appears to be a useful intervention strategy for encouraging healthy mother-daughter communication and connectedness whilst maintaining the civic engagement emphases inherent in photovoice. Anecdotal information gathered from the mother/daughter dyad who had the most contentious relationship is consistent with the goals of the project: The dyad reports feeling closer to the other, reduced stress in their relationship, improved communication, and increased amount of time spent together. Photovoice is an arts-based intervention that may be useful to professionals in multiple disciplines who are addressing parent-adolescent relational issues, or more broadly, adolescent risk and protective factors. The use of coaching questions and techniques is not necessary in photovoice, yet proved valuable. Since the information and interpretation of the photos, as well as the creation of the
themes was organically created by each individual and then the group together – the project outcome was ‘owned’ by the group and each individual.

There are numerous health and social issues that would be amenable to photovoice as an intervention technique. It is a technique that should be explored not only with mothers but also with fathers and their daughters or sons. Fathers attending our final exhibit expressed much interest in the possibility of a similar project that would provide them with the opportunity to do photovoice and foster improved connections with a son or daughter. Photovoice is a creative arts medium which has great potential as an intervention for health promotion and disease prevention. Our experience using a photovoice-based intervention with Latino mothers and daughters demonstrates how broadly the arts can be used to intervene on and advocate for the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.
References


Strack, R., Lovelace, K., Jordan, T., & Holmes, A. (under review). Framing photovoice using a social-ecological logic model as a guide.


**Online Resources**

[www.photovoice.org](http://www.photovoice.org)

[www.photovoice.com](http://www.photovoice.com)