

## ***Taking Rapid Photovoice online: Critical Reflections on the Project “Student Wellbeing in the Aftermath of Protest Violence” during Covid-19***

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### **Abstract**

In this paper we reflect on taking Photovoice online as a strategy to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our project “Student Wellbeing in the Aftermath of Protest Violence”. Photovoice is a close-up emancipatory action research methodology with multiple, intersecting social justice goals. We start by considering Photovoice in general and its use in research into the student experience. We then present our pragmatic redesign and application of the methodology as Rapid Photovoice (RPV). Unlike reports in methodology literature that recommend multiple engagements with participants over several weeks or months (e.g. Kessi & Cornell 2015; Strack, Magill & McDonagh 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997), our redesign of the method as RPV compressed the core of engagements into three one-day workshops of training, production and reflection held in the course of a single week. This was successfully employed in four university cases as documented in Luescher et al (2021).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown in 2020, we could not visit the fifth and last of our case universities in person; thus, we decided re-design RPV to try and take it online and conduct the series of Photovoice workshops with student activists using Zoom as interactive online platform. As in the other cases, the workshops were preceded and followed by further engagements; however just like the core face-to-face training, data collection and collective discussion work, this now also had to be done online. We thus piloted ‘online RPV’ as a technology-embedded research method which, along with the research collaborations in the project was conducted into the virtual space in ways (Kibona et al, *forthcoming*).

With the benefit of hindsight, we critically reflect in this paper the key problems involved in the ‘emergency redesign’ and implementation of online RPV. These reflections are based primarily on reflective notes kept by the participants in the case study, i.e. researchers and student activists. In the process of presenting these reflections, we respond to Macfarlane's think piece. We are particularly interested in exploring whether online RPV can sustain any claims to being a ‘close-up, emancipatory methodology’. What different ways offer themselves to involve our RPV participants in an online environment? Is there potential to attain the Freirean social justice goals in which this research method was originally grounded (Liebenberg 2018)? And finally: How can we go beyond researcher reflexivity and self-disclosure to include in our critical methodological reflections those of participants?

### **Keywords**

Higher education, Photovoice, Rapid photovoice, online research methods, Student experience, Student activism, Student affairs, Violence, Wellbeing, Covid-19.