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Using Photographs to Research Organizations: Evidence, Considerations, and Application in a Field Study

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Abstract

Despite calls for more visual methodologies in organizational research, the use of photographs remains sparse. Organizational research could benefit from the inclusion of photographs to track contemporary change processes in an organization and change processes over time, as well as to incorporate diverse voices within organizations, to name a few advantages. To further understanding, the authors identify researcher choices related to the use of photographs in organizational research, clarify the advantages and disadvantages of these choices, and discuss ethical and other special considerations of the use of photographs. They highlight several organizational areas of research, primarily related to the management discipline, that could benefit from the inclusion of photographs. Finally, the authors describe how they used photographs in a study of one organization and specifically how their intended research design with photographs changed over the course of the study as well as how photographs helped to develop new theoretical insights. Photographic research methods represent a viable—but underleveraged—method that should be more fully incorporated in the methodological tool kit of organizational scholars.

Keywords

qualitative research, visual methods, photo elicitation, photographic research methods

Disciplines that focus on organizations, such as management and strategy, have actively borrowed theories and methodologies from other academic disciplines (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Despite this, organizational researchers have had limited use of one methodological approach that has been salient in other social science disciplines: visual methods (Buchanan, 2001; Harper, 2002; Kunter & Bell, 2006; Meyer, 1991; Ray & Smith, 2010; Vince & Warren, 2012; Warren, 2009). Among visual methods, we focus on photographs in research because of their relative ease in production, processing, and publication (in comparison to videos) and the flexibility in sourcing from researcher, organizational participants, or archival images (in comparison to participant hand drawings).[1] The paucity of studies

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that incorporate photographic research methods in the organizational sciences is surprising given the many benefits of this technique. First, photographic research methods provide a means of data collection and analysis that can be less restrictive and, perhaps, more accurate than other methods (e.g., interviews, diaries, surveys). By collecting and analyzing data in the form of photographs, researchers can capture aspects of organizational reality without the distorting effects of other methods (e.g., recall bias) or when words alone are inadequate to capture the field experience (Bateson & Mead, 1942; Harper, 1994). Second, photographic research methods provide a means of capturing organizational phenomena in real time (e.g., tracking a process across an organization; Buchanan, 1998) or, by combining historical with contemporary photographs, provide a means to compare organizational phenomena across time (Sood & Pattison, 2006). Third, employing photographic research methods provides an avenue whereby organizational researchers can incorporate voices from a wide range of organizational members (Warren, 2009). Scholars (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2007) have noted the tendency, particularly in strategic management research, to neglect organizational members as a focus of organizational research. Photographic methods can be a means of inviting organizational members back into the research limelight by recruiting their participation in the collection and analysis of a medium that most are acquainted with and have an interest in being involved in.

The benefits mentioned above represent only a few advantages of employing photographic research methods. Moreover, a long and extensive body of knowledge concerning photographic research methods already exists in the fields of sociology and anthropology,[2] from which management and strategy scholars can draw. As such, we believe that photographic research methods represent a viable, but underleveraged, method that should be more fully incorporated in the methodological tool kit of organizational scholars, especially in the fields of management and strategy, which emphasize the organizational level of analysis.

Below, we briefly describe the evolution of photographic research methods, focusing primarily on their use in anthropology and sociology. This review is followed by detailed discussion about how photographs could be used in organizational research, specifying the choices and the corresponding costs and benefits at each stage of a research design.

Evolution of Photographic Methods in the Social Sciences

Rich histories of photographic research methods have been written across multiple disciplines (Banks, 2007; Edwards, 2001; Harper, 1994, 1998; Parker, 2009; Pink, 2006; Prosser, 1998a; Stasz, 1979). We highlight two important aspects of the development of photographic research methods pertinent to organizational research: the philosophical turn from the objective to the subjective use of photographs and the exploration of distinct levels of analysis.

The philosophical turn. Much of the early use of photographs in social scientific inquiry (i.e., sociology and anthropology) involved chronicling phenomena experienced in the field. Examples include salient social issues such as the plight of the poor (e.g., Blackmar and the rural poor in 1897 in the *American Journal of Sociology*) and difficult work environments (e.g., Bushnell's 1902 account of the Chicago stockyards). Photographs in the early articles had the implied objective of relieving reader boredom, bringing the reader closer to the field, evoking emotion, and, perhaps, calling readers to action (Banks, 2007; Stasz, 1979; Wagner, 1979). An assumption was that photographs provided a glimpse of reality, with a researcher who was invisible but powerful (e.g., to select images of participants in field settings) and an image that was subject to just one reading; this use of photographs has been described as a "realist tale" (van Maanen, 1988). Photographs found in many mainstream and contemporary management journals reflect this approach of providing illustration of a field setting (e.g., Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, scholars began to explore other uses of photographs, beyond simply documenting the environment. Collier (1967) was able to obtain useful insights by using photographs as a focal object for discussion with study participants, which he termed a *photo elicitation* approach. This approach moved beyond the use of photographs for simply recording an "objective" reality with an unobtrusive researcher role and instead acknowledged a visible researcher role and the interpretive value of photographs. A key turning point was when renowned sociologist Howard Becker (1974) urged (in the first article of *Visual Sociology*[3]) a more interpretive approach to photographs in sociology, whereby "all images are socially and technically constructed" (Harper, 1994, p. 406). According to this perspective, a photograph is not *taken* but is rather *made* by photographer decisions (i.e., what is kept in or left out) and how observers construct the meaning of an image (Harper, 2005). The use of photographic research methods in the social sciences, particularly in sociology and anthropology, and more recently in marketing, accounting, and operations, has increased since Becker called for more research utilizing photographs. Moreover, critical theory researchers have highlighted a collaborative role for research participants and the emancipatory potential of this methodological approach (Wang & Burris, 1994; Warren, 2005). Despite advancements in photographic use in other social science disciplines, organizational research from a management perspective has yet to fully embrace and realize the benefits of this methodological tool.

Levels of analysis. Most applications of photographic research methods have been focused either at the individual level or at the community and societal levels. For instance, photographic research methods in sociology (as summarized by Banks, 2007, and Harper, 2002) have been used to explore phenomena from physical traits and behavior (the "bad" and "mad"; see Banks, 2007, p. 25) and to extend theory such as social identity (Harper, 1988), family structure (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004), neighborhoods (Harper, 1998; van der Does, Edelaar, Gooskens, Liefting, & van Mierlo, 1992), and social class and organization (Steiger, 1995). These approaches have been paralleled somewhat in business- and workplace-oriented research with photographs, including studies of CEO facial features (Wong, Ormiston, & Haselhuhn, 2011), professional identification (Warren & Parker, 2009), individuals interacting in retail spaces (Burt, Johansson, & Thelander, 2007; Rosenbaum, 2005; Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008), CEO portraits and business leadership image construction (Guthey & Jackson, 2005), work spaces and mobile worker identity (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2004; Warren, 2002), family consumption (Heisley & Levy, 1991), cultural influences in advertising (Goffman, 1979), and cultural and economic development (Sood & Pattinson, 2006). These cross-disciplinary examples demonstrate the flexibility of photographic research methods as they pertain to the individual and extraorganizational levels of analysis.

Despite this flexibility, the management and strategy disciplines have yet to fully leverage these techniques with respect to the organizational level of analysis. The few studies that have approached the study of business organizations with photographic research methods have provided rich insight and novel theoretical contributions. For example, photographs in annual reports have been interpreted to examine stable corporate customer orientations over time in marketing (Dougherty & Kunda, 1990), to study leadership traits (Davison, 2010), and to examine corporate global identity construction in accounting (Preston & Young, 2000). Business organizations have been investigated with regard to organizational aesthetics (Warren, 2005, 2008) and implementation of novel manufacturing methods (Kobayashi, Fisher, & Gapp, 2008).

We identified only two studies that used photographic research methods to explore organizational processes. Petersen and Østergaard (2004) examined knowledge management in two organizations by using photographs to elicit data from organizational members. They found that photographs prompted the organizational members to become active participants in the research and provided a medium to convey complex and abstract themes to organizational members who were not accustomed to academic research. The most highly cited organizational study employing photographic research methods

is Buchanan's (2001) study of organizational change and processes (Harper, 2002; Warren, 2009). Buchanan took photographs of patient movement through a hospital; he then converted these photographs into a slide show that was presented to various groups working in the hospital. From these interactions, people from different organizational units were able to see the complexities of the process from other vantage points, which allowed for "deeper understanding of the details of the process" (Buchanan, 2001, p. 156). From rich insights provided by this research, Buchanan and Bryman (2007) argued for more use of inventive methodologies such as photographs in organizational research.

In spite of the promise of photographic research methods and the call by scholars to use them, there is limited research leveraging these tools, particularly concerning their application at the organizational level.[4] We believe that this is due, at least in part, to the variance in how these methods have been applied, the need to clarify critical decisions at each stage of the research design process, the costs and benefits associated with these decisions, and related ethical concerns. The main objectives of this article are to clarify considerations and benefits for researchers considering photographic research methods, to suggest areas of research that could benefit from the method, and to provide an example of photographic methods in a field study.

Considerations for Photographic Use in Organizational Research

Photographic research methods have been applied in multiple ways depending on the role of the photograph in the research design, the philosophical orientation of the researcher (or researchers), and role of participants. Our review of the literature demonstrates several different roles that photographs can play in a research design: to capture some aspect of reality that can be inventoried and content analyzed for quantitative analysis, to supplement other qualitative methodologies (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory case studies), or to explore subjective photographic meaning through collaboration with research participants. The application of photographs gains an additional level of complexity as the philosophical orientation of the researcher manifests during production and analysis. Researchers with philosophical orientations including critical approaches (e.g., Warren, 2002, 2008), interpretive approaches (e.g., Dougherty & Kunda, 1990), and realist approaches (e.g., Zube, 1979) have all incorporated photographs into their research; the use of photographs has provided subtle differences in the research objectives and insights gained. To clarify, some use of photographs is embedded in a field study (e.g., Heisley & Levy, 1991; Kobayashi et al., 2008; Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008); other photographic uses do not entail interaction with the field (e.g., Davison, 2010; Guthey & Jackson, 2005; Preston & Young, 2000). Finally, photo elicitation has been implemented in various ways in photographic research processes. Although photo elicitation is defined as the interpretation of photographs by research participants (Collier, 1967; Collier & Collier, 1986), this definition lacks precision insofar as the realization of the method could range from the use of a single photograph in a larger interview to participants creating and interpreting photographs as the main element of the research design.

Given the different roles, philosophies, and realizations of photographic research methods, we argue that a more fine-grained approach is necessary to provide interested researchers with guidance on how to employ these methods and their costs and benefits. We recognize that photographs can be combined with other methodological approaches such as case study research, grounded theory, and ethnography, but we concentrate this article on pertinent questions to be answered during the research process in the hopes of making photographic research methods more accessible to organizational researchers. We have broken down the photographic research process for investigation of organizations into four categories: photograph production, photo elicitation data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations.

Photograph Production in Organizations

Photographs for use in research can be produced by researcher-only, participant-only, archival-only, and hybrid photographic creation approaches (Table 1). No single right way exists to employ photographic research methods. Rather, the choice of approach will be influenced by the researcher's questions, background, and philosophical orientation. We argue that organizational researchers who are interested in questions related to longitudinal change, organizational processes, and perspectives across levels of an organization should consider including photographs to enhance other qualitative methods or to be the methodological focus of their research.

Researcher-only photograph production. By *researcher-only,* we mean that a researcher or team of researchers enters an organization and creates photographs based on the research questions. These photographs can be used to document elements in the environment, which can then be shared with other research team members or shown to organizational members in photo elicitation interviews. These photographic data are especially well suited for research on organizational processes and particularly on any process traced across an organization or set of activities (Buchanan, 2001; Heisley & Levy, 1991; Petersen & Østergaard, 2004).

With this approach, a key decision is whether to have a structured shooting script. These scripts can include instructions pertaining to what times during the day to take photographs, what activities to photograph, what places to photograph, and so on. The advantages—or pros—of the researcher-only approach include elements of control, cost, and comprehensive process views. The negative features—or cons—of the approach include researcher self-consciousness and organizational member reactions to the presence of a researcher with a camera and researcher unfamiliarity with an organizational context. The cons could be diminished by researcher experience with a camera in the field, researcher presence in the organization before any photography takes place, and an explanation by management to organizational members on the purpose of the researcher presence. This approach could be refined by the introduction of multiple researchers, the development of photographic diaries detailing production and context issues, and researcher openness to emerging aspects as organizational understanding increases.

Participant-only photographic production. This approach relies exclusively on organizational members to take photographs in a field setting. Participant photographs in a research project can provide multiple meanings and perspectives (Burt et al., 2007; Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008). A shortcoming is that research participants are usually missing from their own photographs (Felstead et al., 2004), and participants can self-represent by taking only positive shots (Becker, 1974). Costs can include procuring the photography equipment, paying for photograph processing, and substantial researcher time interacting with participants. Certainly, researchers must provide a consistent way for participants to capture images; often, this is achieved through 27-exposure disposable cameras. As well, the researcher must provide direction to guide participants' photo taking in their organization. For instance, Warren's (2008) instruction to her organizational research participants was to take photographs to "show me how it felt to work in Department X" (p. 570). Burt et al. (2007) told their research participants (in an IKEA parking lot) to photograph "anything that made an impression on them" at the store (p. 453). It appears from both accounts that participants wanted more direction and asked the researchers clarifying questions, after which a bit more guidance was provided.

Researcher time is also used to provide ethical training for participants (e.g., when photographing people or sensitive organizational settings), as advised by Mitchell (2011). Most studies using participant-only photographs never mention ethical training. For instance, Burt et al. (2007) described that several participants reported back that IKEA employees and customers did not want their photographs taken, indicating a lack of researcher training on these sensitive ethical issues.[5]

Table 1. Researcher Decisions about Photograph Production

Approach	Literature	Pros	Cons	Concerns/Suggestions
Researcher-only photo creation	Researcher (or research team) is taking photographs (referred to as auto-driving; Heisley & Levy, 1991) Examples in research about organizations or work life: Buchanan, 2001; Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2004, Studies 1 and 2; Heisley & Levy, 1991; Petersen & Østergaard 2004.	Researcher is able to completely trace an organizational process across subunits and/or an organization. Researcher is knowledgeable about the research intent and can control what shots are obtained. Photos provide a control check on researcher field notes (i.e., triangulation). This approach is possibly less costly and time consuming than participant-produced photographs.	Researcher presence may change the way the organizational members behave (Harper, 1994). Organizational members self-represent positively. Researcher may miss important organizational features or overemphasize features that are not meaningful to organizational members. Significant time is needed to obtain consent from organizational members if people are in photographs. Presence of researcher can indirectly communicate desired findings (Kobayashi, Fisher, & Gapp, 2008).	1. Will photograph taking be structured with shooting scripts? Even if a script is used, researcher should be open to opportunities that emerge. 2. Researcher should spend enough time in an organization before taking photographs to get an idea of what to photograph and to put organizational members at ease. At a minimum, management should alert organizational members about the intent of the researcher with a camera before arrival in the organization. 3. More than one team member taking photographs may provide a more comprehensive view of organizational processes and activities. 4. Researchers should keep a photograph diary to describe the context of photographs (i.e., why certain pictures were taken, what was left out of the photograph), their emotional reactions, etc.

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Table 1. (continued)

Approach	Literature	Pros	Cons	Concerns/Suggestions
Participant-only photo production	Participant takes photograph, usually with camera and direction provided by researcher. Examples: Burt, Johansson, & Thelander, 2007; Felstead et al., 2004, Studies 3 and 4; Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008.	Organizational leader usually has high interest in use of photographs so is able to get participation and commitment of other organizational members. This approach allows researcher to get undistorted organizational experience from participant's view. This approach can reduce the power relationship in research, with participant as research partner.	Researcher must consider time and expense involved in explaining nature of project, obtaining consent, training on ethics ("responsible photography"; Vince & Warren, 2012), obtaining cameras, and processing hard copies of photos (if needed). Participants may be confused by researcher guidance given to take photographs; participants may take photographs that do not pertain to research topic. Participants may take poor-quality or inappropriate photos. Researcher may experience loss of control of data collection in project.	1. Key decision is how much direction to give organizational members. Suggestion: Pilot test the statement on a few organizational participants to see if the photos they create are reflecting the research direction. 2. Organizational participants should be given an ethical overview of photography in terms of taking photos of others, public places, etc. 3. Issue of copyright: Who owns the photograph? This issue should be addressed on the front end, especially if there is the possibility of photograph reproduction in a publication. 4. Consider quid pro quo: Provide a copy of all photographs taken by each organizational member.
Archival-only photo production	Use previous images in annual reports, advertising, corporate archives, or from stock images at public archives. Examples: Dougherty & Kunda, 1990; Goffman, 1979; Preston & Young, 2000.	Less time is involved than in researcher-only or participant-only approaches. It is possible to show historical changes—capture longitudinal nature of organizational change. This approach captures social or economic concerns of noncontemporary era. The researcher is able to select good-quality photographs. This approach could reduce researcher time in the field (could also be a con).	Intent of photographer is usually unknown. Difficult to know what is not shown or excluded; the context surrounding photograph is not clear. Image could be photoshopped or cropped in a way that distorts photo or picture of organization. Copyright holder may not allow researcher to reproduce photograph for journal article.	1. The researcher needs to assess early in a project the cost to use or reproduce archival photographs. It may be difficult to estimate the cost on the front end. 2. If photographs are used to interview organizational participants, participants may negatively react to the feeling of organizational "Rorschach ink blot test" (Harper, 2002, p. 22); they may focus on trying to find the "right" answer instead of sharing their personal reactions to photographs shown.

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Table 1. (continued)

Approach	Literature	Pros	Cons	Concerns/Suggestions
Hybrid approach to photo production: two types	Use combination of above. Example: Kobayashi et al., 2008.	This approach reflects the flexibility and reality of field research and opportunities that emerge. This approach enables triangulation of photographs.	This approach may appear too opportunistic to organizations that allowed in the researcher.	Researchers should be well versed in different photograph production approaches and be prepared to tack one way or another to obtain the most valid insights to explore the research question.
	Use joint participant–researcher photo production. Example: van der Does, Edelaar, Gooskens, Liefting, & van Mierlo, 1992	This approach can lead to enhanced engagement between participant and researcher. Joint production can be used to obtain different perspectives on the same organizational setting.	Joint production can be time consuming and costly because of need for research team and the time of both researcher and participant in field together talking and taking photographs. Researcher juggling of audiotaping device and camera can be difficult and distracting.	Researcher should be prepared with audiotape if opportunity to jointly walk around organization with participant emerges during field visit.

One notable exception is Warren and her efforts to provide organizational participants with specific guidelines and a form acknowledging that they understood ''responsible photography'' (reproduced in Appendix 1 in Vince & Warren, 2012). We realize that the researcher's coverage of ethical issues with study participants might have been removed due to space considerations in academic publications. Ethics training for participant photographs is advised, although it can be time consuming for a researcher.

Archival-only photographic production. In comparison to the researcher-only or participant-only approach, selection of archival photographs usually can be processed at a lower cost and with less time by the researcher. Furthermore, a major benefit of these data is that changes over time can be traced by comparing historical photographs to current images. Significant drawbacks of archival photographs are the lack of understanding of the photo context (i.e., the photographer's intent, what was left out of the frame) and the cost to obtain or reproduce an archival image in an article (i.e., prohibitive cost or not allowed at all). Copyright and reproduction of images are important concerns that are best worked out at the beginning of a research project (see Swan, 2010).

In addition, cropping, photoshopping, and culling of less desirable photographs from corporate archives are particular concerns for archival images whose origin and photographer intent are unclear. Sometimes researchers are interested in the images selected and projected by a business organization, such as those included in annual reports (Davison, 2010; Dougherty & Kunda, 1990; Preston & Young, 2000). Also, selecting stock images to use in subsequent interviews with organizational research participants can feel like a Rorschach test, which may reduce organizational participation or increase an organizational member's anxiety about looking for the ''right'' answer as opposed to his or her interpretation of an image. Archival photographs also might be used as a complement to a photographic research project, as discussed next.

Hybrid approach to photograph production. We describe two types of hybrid approaches to photo production. One approach is the mixed use of photographs from researchers, organizational participants, and archival sources during a research project. For instance, Kobayashi et al.'s (2008) study was designed to include both researcher and participant photographs to compare their perceptions of the same issue. Some studies have also included contemporary (participant or researcher) photographs and archival photographs to make comparisons (Sood & Pattison, 2006). This hybrid approach offers the possibility of triangulation of photographic data sources, as well as the benefits and costs of the individual approaches mentioned above.

Another hybrid approach is joint researcher–participant photographic production whereby a researcher is engaged with a participant while creating the photographs. For instance, van der Does et al.'s (1992) graduate students walked through a neighborhood with residents. During these walks, residents told stories about the neighborhood and pointed out places pertinent to their experiences. The graduate students photographed these places while recording the stories. These pictures were used in a reflexive process later in the research in which particular views of the neighborhood and accompanying stories were shared with different neighbors (i.e., minority groups, old-timers, etc.). A potential difficulty associated with this approach is that managing both a camera and an audio-recording device can be tricky and awkward.

Once photographic data are gathered, they can be analyzed by the researcher alone, used in subsequent interviews with participants to develop more data, or combined with other data collected for the research. As mentioned, photo elicitation, or the use of photographs in conjunction with participant interviews, has widespread use in social science research but has been implemented in many different ways. Below, we describe several choices related to a photo elicitation approach.

Photo Elicitation Data Collection in Organizations

Photo elicitation interviews have been conducted in many ways. We examine several questions that relate to the structure of participant interviews: Which photographs will be discussed, who will be in the interview, and what is the role of the researcher? Options for photo elicitation interviews are summarized in Table 2 and discussed briefly below.

Some photo elicitation interviews are preceded by researcher photo selection before an interview. These photographs can be archival, researcher produced, participant produced, or a combination of these. Two reasons for a researcher to reduce photographs are to limit the number of photos that a participant has to review and to order photos in a sequence around which to focus an interview (Buchanan, 2001). During an interview, archival and contemporary photographs might be arrayed in a before-and-after sequence to explore change over time. The main risk to preprocessing photographs is that the researcher may miss an important organizational element that may appear mundane but could have elicited fascinating insights by the organizational member. For example, Felstead et al. (2004) remarked that they initially reviewed participants' photos and found them to be "puzzling . . . appear[ing] to depict incidental or trivial subjects" (p. 113, Study 4), Yet, once all the participant-produced photographs were laid out across a table, the interview provided critical insights pertinent to the researchers' study on organizational work life.

Many researchers instruct participants to select their photographs for discussion. This approach signals trust in the organizational member's judgment and potentially reduces the researcher–participant power distance, leading to closer rapport and more openness during the interview. This could increase participant interest and willingness to actively engage in the research. Another variant of this approach is to have participants not only select photographs but review them and even write about why they took the photos and the photos' meanings, before discussing them with the researcher. This might lead to a deeper interview discussion, but it also may reduce the number of participants willing to participate because of the time required or discomfort expressing themselves in writing.

Another important concern of a photo elicitation approach is how many participants will be interviewed at the same time—one-on-one or in a group. Potentially, a group can elicit more varied information (Petersen & Østergaard, 2004; Warren, 2009), but this approach has the risk of reducing what is heard from lower level or minority voices in an organization; selection of focus group participants from the same level in an organization is critical. One-on-one interviews can lead to rich insights as well, but this approach can suffer from participant and/or researcher fatigue. In a focus group, organizational members can play off each other's comments, a process that is missing in one-on-one interviews.

Another concern in photo elicitation is the role of the researcher. Prior research from anthropology, sociology, and the business disciplines highlights an active researcher who guides the conversation toward topics of research interest. There are examples, however, of more efficient use of researcher time, wherein photos are provided, guidelines are clarified by the researcher at the beginning, and participant comments are audio recorded. In one study (Petersen & Østergaard, 2004), researchers grouped several photographs into a theme for different focus groups to discuss. The researchers did not intervene except to give directions indicating a limited amount of time. This process continued without researcher intervention for two hours. With the data collected, we now turn to photographic analysis, which has received significantly less attention than photographic creation and photo elicitation interviews.

Analysis of Photographs in Organizations

Researchers have identified several ways to approach visual data analysis (Collier, 2001; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Parker, 2009; van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001), but Vince and Warren (2012) noted

Table 2. Researcher Decisions Related to Photo Elicitation Data Collection

Decision	Description and Literature	Pros	Cons	Concerns/Suggestions
Decision 1: Which photos will be discussed with participants?				
Researcher reviews and selects photos and/or organizes photographs into themes or chronology.	Researcher prepares for photo elicitation interview by reviewing photos, preparing questions, and seeing possible connections to research questions. This can be used with photographs from any source. Examples: Buchanan, 2001; Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2004, Studies 3 and 4; Kobayashi, Fisher, & Gapp, 2008; Petersen & Østergaard, 2004.	Researcher can create appropriate questions before interview related to selected photos. Chronology or process can be constructed before the interview (Buchanan, 2001), thereby reducing time and fatigue in interviews. Researcher can preprocess photos into themes, highlight novel photos, or create matched pairs (researcher and participant photograph comparison; Kobayashi et al., 2008).	Researcher culling may miss important photographs that are meaningful to organizational members. Theme processing may provide too much structure or narrowing toward research question or existing theory, making interview less about the lived experience of participants. Serendipity from photos that are not culled may be more limited. There may be unanticipated emotional responses by participants seeing photos for the first time.	Researchers can decide to select photos to be intentionally frame breaking (Harper, 2002; van der Does, Edelaar, Gooskens, Liefting, & van Mierlo, 1992) or vivid (Petersen & Østergaard, 2004; Warren, 2002). Mundane or routine sequence of daily activities may also provide meaningful interviews (Felstead et al., 2004, Study 4). Some have used heuristic of only 12 to 14 photographs in individual interviews (Heisley & Levy, 1991) or photographs that can be covered in less than 2 hours (Petersen & Østergaard, 2004).

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Table 2. (continued)

Decision	Description and Literature	Pros	Cons	Concerns/Suggestions
Participant decides which photographs to discuss.	Researcher allows participant to select images to discuss. Examples: Clark-Ibáñez, 2004, study with children; Warren, 2002.	This technique allows participants to self-select out some photographs (low quality, poor discretion) that they do not want to discuss. The researcher shows respect for participant decisions and privacy. During an interview, this approach may lead to an authentic reaction by a researcher who is not prepped with questions or preconceived ideas about what the images might mean (i.e., researcher preprocessing).	The researcher's time may be wasted reviewing poor-quality photographs or those with little pertinence to research. Lack of viewing before interview may require another interview with participant. Researcher is less prepared to delve deeper into some photographs that surprise him or her or establish chronology before interview. Participant could cull out some negative or provocative photographs that could be critical to the research project.	If research participant has full control over photographs, this may reduce some of the researcher–participant power distance and possibly enhance participant rapport with researcher and interest in research project. Choice given to participants fits with their ownership of the images (i.e., copyright issues). If disposable camera given, researcher reproduces photographs for discussion but does not review before interview.
Participant creates text about images before interview.	Participant reviews photos before an interview and provides a text to the researcher that describes what participant sees, feels, and synthesizes from photographs taken.	Interview is more focused, possibly leading to richer insights about the research question. This exercise enables participant to capture thoughts closer to when photographs taken (rather than waiting for photos to be processed) and to provide deeper insights than reactions during an interview.	There may be decreased participant interest in and commitment to the research project, given extra (and possibly more tedious) work. The participant may accentuate positive shots (i.e., self-representation). Participant text is not connected to research question; loss of researcher control.	Given state of technology with digital cameras and cameras in phones, participants can record memos at time the photos are taken. Researcher guidelines about photo selection and editing need to be clear.

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Table 2. (continued)

Decision	Description and Literature	Pros	Cons	Concerns/Suggestions
Decision 2: With whom will photos be discussed?				
One participant at a time	Researcher conducts one-on-one interviews with research participants with any sourced photographs. Examples: Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008; Warren, 2005.	Each person's experience, insights, emotional reactions to photos can be explored. It is possible to execute a more emancipatory research agenda. Use of photographs (instead of interview questions alone) should allay some discomfort (power distance from researcher).	This approach is extremely time consuming for participant and researcher. Interviewee fatigue leads to less meaningful dialogue.	There is a risk that participant will have forgotten some stories that a focus group's conversation might remind participant of. If researcher is interested in minority voices or voices lower in an organization, this approach may be more appropriate than focus groups.
Focus groups	Groups of organizational members are brought in to view and discuss photos. Examples: Buchanan, 2001; Harper, 2002; Petersen & Østergaard, 2004.	Group members can play off each other's comments to remember and provide depth to interview. Less time consuming for researcher and participants. Groups across an organization may begin to understand how participants from other areas see things (reflexivity). Researcher may get a more complex view of the research phenomena of interest given the diversity of opinions.	If there are large status differences among group members, some group members may not speak up, share emotional reactions, or share personal stories. Transcription of audiotape could be difficult, time consuming, and costly.	Levels of people in organization need to be comparable. The focus group process must have a clear structure. The researcher should identify the risk of what might not be said due to group dynamics. Fewer stories may be evident or told in entirety.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Decision	Description and Literature	Pros	Cons	Concerns/Suggestions
Decision 3: What is the researcher's role during photo elicitation interview?				
Researcher plays active role	Researcher guides interview and builds on what participants have said. Example: Buchanan, 2001.	This approach shows the researcher's interest in what participant is saying. Active role could lower power distance between researcher and participant. Researcher can clarify comments quickly.	Researcher signals what is important to his or her research, which might bias direction of interview.	Researcher should be open to new ways to conduct an interview—computer technology, Skype, phone—not just face-to-face.
Researcher plays inactive role	Researcher provides photographs and initial instructions but remains relatively hands-off while photos are discussed. Example: Petersen & Østergaard, 2004.	Researcher would play a neutral role, with no subtle biasing of research. This approach may be more appropriate for experienced researchers because it relies on meaningful grouping of photos.	If researcher plays silent role, key points or off-hand comments may not get explored or probed. Participants may be less engaged in the research project; it may be unclear how research participants will make sense of inactive researcher role.	These hands-off interviews might be tape recorded for further analysis.

Figure 1. Content-analyzed photo: Marena entrance
Note: The rectangles contain researcher notes and quotes from interviews with organizational members; these notes explain more about the reason for the coding.

the lack of advice related to the analysis of participant-generated images. If photo elicitation interviews are used, most researchers have tended to emphasize the text created from the interviews rather than the photographs used in the interviews (Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008); a substantial body of research on text analysis exists, which we do not cover here. Rather, our interest is in how photographs or photographs in combination with text might be approached. We follow Vince and Warren (2012) to suggest three broad approaches to photographic analysis: (a) content analysis, (b) thematic analysis, and (c) a hybrid approach.

Many researchers identify that an important first step in any photograph analysis is a cataloguing of "seen" elements (Banks, 2007, pp. 44, 45; Collier, 2001; Penn, 2000; Swan, 2010; Wagner, 1979). This forces the researcher to see details in the photographs and to consider the context in which the photograph was taken. For example, Swan (2010) described making detailed notes about "the layout of the picture, the look of the faces, the activities undertaken . . . facial expression, the light in the picture, etc." (p. 88) seen in her poster. Dougherty and Kunda (1990) undertook an inventory of photo features in annual reports from several companies over time. Items in a photograph are counted in much the same way as word frequencies are counted in textual content analysis. Vince and Warren (2012) noted that this inventory approach can be helpful because a researcher can question details in a photograph seen as unimportant to a participant. A researcher using a qualitative software program (e.g., QDA Miner, nVivo)[6] can easily identify and tag the physical elements seen in a photograph. In Figure 1, we provide an example from our research, which we will discuss later in this article, of tagging objects with software. In a positivistic use of photographs (as noted by Chaplin, 1994, p. 199), Zube (1979) used time-lapse photography to count pedestrian behavior on a

Figure 2. Thematic analysis: Marena entrance
Note: The rectangles contain researcher notes and quotes from interviews with organizational members; these notes explain more about the reason for the coding.

windy street, to conduct quantitative analysis of these counts of behavioral activity, and to provide a theoretical contribution about urban design in cities. This cataloguing of elements in a photograph provides a detailed look within images from which patterns across images can be identified.

Second, thematic analysis goes beyond counting objects in a photo to identify the "manifest and latent content" (Banks, 2007, p. 47) of a photograph. These themes may emerge from seen patterns of the images, researcher field notes, and/or discussion from photo elicitation interviews. For example, Dougherty and Kunda (1990) categorized how customers were portrayed in the annual report photos of four organizations, and they were able to identify thematic dimensions such as the technological complexity of the task shown and how the customers organized themselves. Swan (2010) described that early in her photographic analysis, she started to identify "key issues, patterns, connotations, and denotations" (p. 88) in her diversity poster image, after which she compared her inventory and identification of broader themes to other "meaning significance" and to other studies of diversity from a critical perspective. This approach to content analysis can incorporate constructs from existing theory or themes that emerge during the research project. For instance, Felstead et al. (2004) compared home offices to existing categorizations from the literature; they were able to identify home offices that fit with existing categories in addition to identifying new categories. Qualitative software can also aid in this type of photographic analysis. In Figure 2, we provide an example of thematic analysis of the same photograph used for content analysis. The themes related to core values in this firm are derived from both field notes and interviews.

Third, a hybrid approach relates to a variety of analysis activities, some of which may entail researcher identification of thematic photosets to allow comparisons among photographs, development of a photo script that includes photos and text together, and/or inclusion of research participants to collaborate on emerging findings. The research question will guide whether similarities or differences will be the focus of researcher attention. For instance, Dougherty and Kunda (1990) were interested in how customer orientations could be differentiated for firms over time, and they quantitatively compared relative customer orientation across their firms over time. Researchers also can create photosets by research themes for researcher and/or participant review. These photosets would help to identify contrasting patterns among photographs (Collier, 2001, p. 39). Other visual researchers using photographs create photo scripts (see Mitchell, 2011), which are used "to integrate the visual and the verbal in a more holistic and forceful manner" (Vince & Warren, 2012). The hybrid approach includes a variety of analysis methods with photographs that can be considered by organizational researchers. Outcomes from photograph analysis should provide insights to the initial research question and more general theoretical insights.

Ethical and Special Considerations Related to Photographic Research in Organizations

In photo research in organizations, ethical considerations are heightened given the sensitivity of images of people (Banks, 2007, p. 86) and the potential of exposing sensitive areas of business organizations. Institutional review boards (IRBs) are sensitive to issues of informed consent and participant anonymity (Harper, 2005; Warren, 2009). Professional organizations provide many guidelines, such as statements by the British Sociological Society and the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods (see Mitchell, 2011, p. 15) and other sources (Banks, 2007, pp. 85-91; Wiles, Clark, & Prosser, 2011). Numerous ethical issues are related to visual methods, too numerous to cover in one article, but we discuss four ethical and other special issues related to photographs in organizations—intrusiveness, informed consent, capture of logos and brands, and credibility.[7]

A primary consideration is the intrusiveness of the camera, which raises issues of reactivity. Specifically, Becker (1974) questioned whether the observed behavior is affected by the presence of a camera. Prosser and Schwartz (1998) suggest that this can be mitigated by researcher visibility in the research setting before photographing takes place to build trust between organizational members and the photographer. In addition, Harper (2002) suggests that the use of photographer diaries about the experience of making photographs (what he terms *contextual validity*) may mitigate some concerns about reactivity.

A second concern is informing and obtaining the consent of the individuals having their photos taken. The consent should cover use of personal images for the research and how the image will be handled for reproduction in publications. Clark-Ibáñez (2004) took a novel approach to her informed consent document by including photographs with text to make sure the parents of the student photographers were aware what they were signing. Even with an individual's consent, researchers using visual data have been advised to use their judgment in situations that may potentially cause harm (see Gold, 1989, p. 104, as cited in Harper, 1994, p. 406).

Research efforts to maintain the confidentiality of individuals should be specified, such as not disclosing the specifics of the organization or its location or by blurring of photos (Mitchell, 2011). Further, employees in organizations might worry about their views being exposed to management and losing their jobs. Photographs of public settings are less tricky but may not be as pertinent to organizational research. Most of the debate has centered on the *covert* use of public photography as unethical or requiring disclosure (Vince & Warren, 2012); however, photography of public places without specific informed consent has "not been tested" (Harper, 2005, p. 759) and is "far from clear" (Wiles et al., 2011, p. 693).

A third issue involves copyright law pertaining to logos, branding in photographs, and the reproduction of archival photographs in academic publications. Sometimes logos and brands are inadvertently picked up in taking photographs; other times, it may be inherent to the research question. The use of logos captured through the process of taking photographs may be considered fair use if there is no commercial gain, but in research in Starbucks (Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008) and IKEA (Burt et al., 2007), neither study included corporate logos in photographs reproduced in the published journal article. If archival images are being used, permission to reproduce will usually be required by journal editors (see Davison, 2010; Preston & Young, 2000). Researchers using archival images must decide whether the research is reproducing or altering an image that someone else might claim to own. In addition, compensation may need to be provided for the use of a photograph of this type. In the final publication, compensation for, ownership of, and credit pertaining to any photographs should be made explicit.

A fourth concern—credibility—pertains to both managers in organizations and to academics. Warren (2009) has argued that researchers with cameras may not appear as serious to business managers, and this may be a challenge when researchers try to obtain access to business organizations. Related to this issue, Petersen and Østergaard (2004) explained that although walking around an organization with a camera "looks silly and suspicious . . . bringing the camera with the purpose of taking photos for later interviews is an argument that management understands (and in general finds innovative)" (p. 10). The reliability and validity concerns of academics can be addressed through the confidence that a researcher was exposed to a full range of organizational activities and through the careful presentation of the photograph context (Becker, 1974; Wagner, 1979). Certainly, establishing credibility with managers and, for that matter, academic organizational researchers will increase with more use in organizations, detailed explanations of the research process, publications in respected academic outlets, and novel contributions to existing theory. Below, we outline several organizational research areas that could benefit from inclusion of photographic methods.

Application of Photographic Approaches to Selected Organizational Research Areas

Many areas of organizational research could benefit from the implementation of photographic research methods. We focus on three areas of organizational research related to the management discipline in which photographic methods could address immediate theory development needs (Edmondson & McManus, 2007): strategic consensus, organizational identity, and strategizing activities and practice.

Strategic Consensus

This area of strategy research addresses the degree to which an understanding of strategic priorities is shared across managers in an organization and whether the degree of this shared understanding is linked to performance (Kellermanns, Walker, Lechner, & Floyd, 2005). The empirical evidence about the connections among strategic consensus, implementation process, and performance is a "black box" (Kellermanns, Walker, Floyd, Lechner, & Shaw, 2010, p. 131). Much of this research to date has relied solely on survey data. Strategy consensus scholars have called for fieldwork to understand how consensus is linked to outcomes.

Given the state of this research, a photographic methodological approach may provide new insights. Researchers can use photographs to determine how organizational members in each unit understand their strategic priorities and how these priorities are manifested in processes and activities for improved performance. For instance, a sample group of top-, middle-, and lower level organizational members and managers could be instructed to take photographs to capture their unit's or

organization's strategic priorities. Photo interviews using participant photographs could provide insight into not only how priorities are understood but also how these priorities are connected to performance. Content and thematic analyses of the photographs could tease out how consistently strategic priorities are understood across organizational levels. This approach specifically includes the subjective understanding of strategic priorities by organizational members lower in a company; these employees might otherwise be intimidated or simply uninterested in sharing their ideas in a traditional interview format or via limited choices on a survey. Similar to Buchanan (2001) and van der Does et al. (1992), the researchers could share photographic results with different groups to show how strategic priorities are understood throughout an organization.

Organizational Identity

Organizational identity is often described as those organizational elements that are recognized by its members to be central, enduring, and distinct (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Empirically, a growing body of literature suggests that elements that affect an organization's identity can have significant impacts for the organization and its members (e.g., Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). However, recent reviews of the literature (Corley et al., 2006) suggest that a great deal of work is still necessary and that identity research faces some of the same hardships as other process constructs that occur at multiple hierarchical levels and are developed over time (e.g., organizational culture). With this understanding, photographic research methods could be useful in exploring organizational identity. Researcher photographs are able to capture processes across an organization, which could speak to how different teams, departments, and divisions cultivate and express organizational identity. In addition, participant photographs can capture the degree and kind of shared understanding across multiple hierarchical levels. Photographs of organizational elements and symbols in one area of an organization—and/or at different hierarchical levels—could be shown to organizational members in other areas to determine the degree of agreement. Finally, it is of great interest to researchers to gauge just how enduring elements of organizational identity are (Corley et al., 2006). Here, archival photographs could be used to capture content over time for later comparison and interpretation, in the same vein as previous studies looking at change over time (e.g., Sood & Pattinson, 2006).

Strategizing Activities and Practice

The strategizing-activities-practice (SAP) perspective has its roots in social theory and came from many strategy scholars who were unsatisfied with the view of strategy as something an organization *has* instead of something that people *do* (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). SAP is distinguished from strategy process research through its interest in the day-to-day activities of individuals. Moreover, the SAP perspective is concerned with the reintroduction of the individual as a focus of strategy research, whereby the cognitions, emotions, interpretations, behaviors, and interactions of individuals are recognized as the manifestation of strategy (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Furthermore, the SAP perspective is concerned with individuals at all hierarchical levels, not simply the top executives (Whittington, 2003). Photographs could easily capture information related to the day-to-day activities of organizational members. To facilitate this, researchers could take photographs as they moved around the organization, or organizational members could be provided with cameras and asked to take photographs throughout the day. This could easily be extended to a longitudinal design by engaging in these activities over a prescribed period of time. In addition, these photographs could be combined to examine organizational processes as envisioned above and as realized by Buchanan (2001).

These three examples build on the particular strengths of photographic research methods (i.e., capturing organizational processes, capturing perspectives at multiple hierarchical levels, capturing change over time). To further extend understanding, we provide a segment of our current research using photographic research methods. We focus on the methodological execution of the project, highlighting the intended versus realized nature of the project.

Organizational Study With Photographs: Learning Through Doing

The research project investigated how a fast-growing firm manages its strategic direction and priorities on a daily basis.[8] We framed our case study within the SAP perspective with the intent to understand how organizational members from all levels understand the company's strategic direction and priorities and, specifically, the routine sensegiving of strategic direction. Marena (www.marenagroup.com)[9] was chosen for our study; we were given generous access by the two founders/owners to their 80-person operation. This company managed a double-digit annual sales and employee growth rate during the 2005 to 2010 period, which was marked by fierce industry competition and a general economic downturn.

Before venturing into the company, we obtained IRB approval, which took longer than we had anticipated. We were required to provide a detailed description of how the photographs would be incorporated into the research project and in final publications while maintaining participant anonymity. Specifically, the IRB required that participants consent to having their pictures taken and that faces or other identifiers (e.g., tattoos) would not be clearly visible (e.g., cropped, censored with blurring) so that an individual could not be identified. As well, the IRB required written consent from the company executives that they had approved researcher involvement and photographs of their organization. Although these additional efforts were not inordinately difficult, it did add to the level of precision in the project description and the overall amount of time required to earn IRB approval.

During this case study, one researcher conducted interviews with all managers, most sales and marketing personnel, and a majority of shop floor employees. This researcher observed daily activities. Despite an understanding of the many suggestions and caveats related to photographic methods, we found that our employment of this methodological approach provided new opportunities and challenges. Below, we briefly report some of the challenges of employing photographic research, and we conclude with preliminary research findings.

Intended Research Strategy

Our intended research design was to spend time in this company getting to know the people, then to take photos (researcher-only photographs), which would be followed (several months later) by photo elicitation interviews about the strategic priorities of the company. We had scripted questions such as, "How does this [photograph] fit with the direction of this company?" and "Why is this [photograph] important to the success of the firm?" We planned to audiotape one-on-one interviews conducted while an employee was taking a break. Our intended approach was to analyze the photographs and text together in a photo script to identify common comments and themes that could be linked back to inform the SAP literature.

On an initial visit to the organization, one researcher took photos of the entire business process—from order, to shop floor (cutting, inventory parts, sewing, packaging, shipping labeling), to final packaging for shipment. The photographs were taken with a Canon Rebel camera; the camera was conspicuous and made the researcher a bit anxious on the initial visit about taking photographs around the facility. After a few days, the employees recognized (i.e., waved, smiled, chatted with) the researcher, which reduced researcher anxiety about taking photographs. After spending time in

field observation, reviewing strategy documents and human resources documents (e.g., how bonuses were paid), and discussing the strategy with the founders/owners, the researcher had a clear understanding of Marena's strategic priorities. Before the third visit to the organization, several of the researcher's photographs of daily activities and physical artifacts were selected to represent Marena's priorities, such as efficient plant operations (e.g., books on latest manufacturing thinking in the plant's bookshelf, paperless flow of materials through plant), exceptional customer service (e.g., monkey plush toy in customer service to toss around and celebrate customer service successes), and innovations (e.g., mannequins with new designs in the front of the plant).

For the third site visit, the researcher intended to use the same preselected photographs and to undertake days of photo elicitation interviews with most of the company's employees. The interviews were designed to last 15 minutes for hourly personnel and an hour or more for salaried employees and managers. The intent was to present the photographs and have organizational members discuss one-on-one with the researcher the company's strategic priorities, prompted by these photos of daily activities and processes. The intent was that the text from these interviews, coupled with the actual photographs, would inform the research question. The anticipated outcome was a contribution to the growing body of SAP literature through close investigation of the daily activities and physical artifacts of this firm.

Realized Research Strategy

The photo elicitation approach did not unfold as planned. First, there was little time to interview hourly workers away from their work. The researcher had the full support of organizational top management, and the workers were willing to be interviewed and to sign the informed consent document (i.e., no one refused). However, the pace of operations was so intense that the researcher had to catch workers while they were sewing or at lunch and others while they were at their work stations (e.g., cutting, packaging). When the photos were shown to several workers and managers, they laughed or looked perplexed; they were not able to provide any commentary on how the photographs were connected to priorities. The researcher rephrased the questions several times but soon realized that the problem was the selected photos. At this point, the use of photographs was suspended, and the researcher began traditional interviewing.

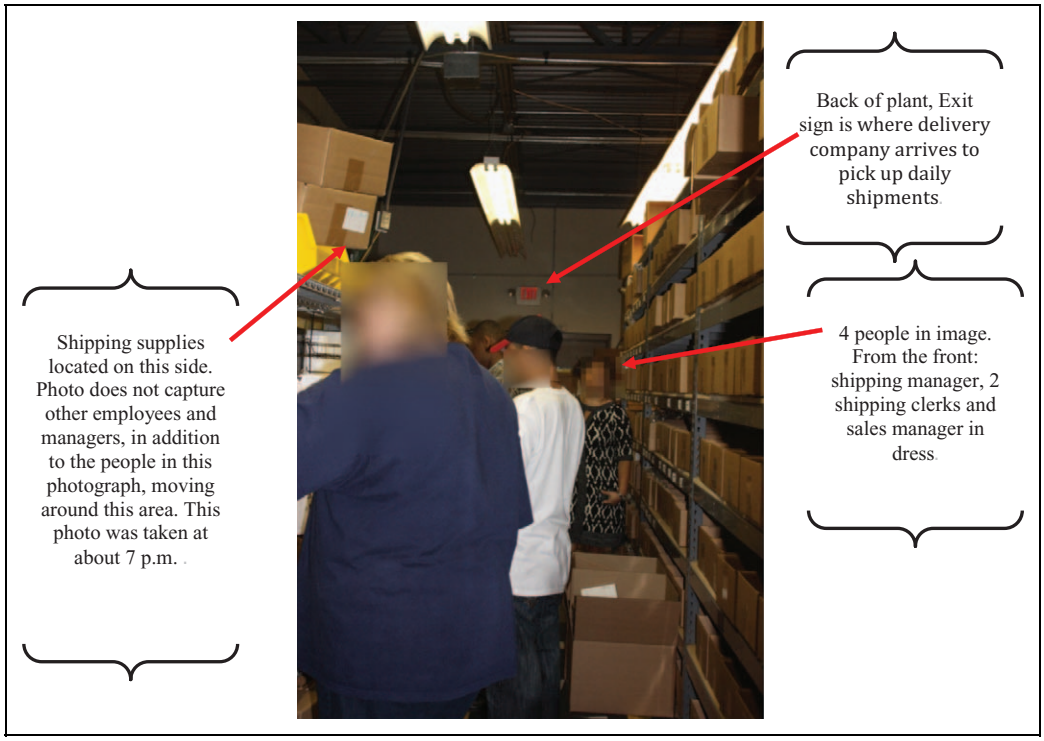
During the interviews, something unanticipated happened. The research participants suggested to the researcher organizational elements that should be photographed. For instance, two workers independently suggested that the researcher should photograph a particular machine and talk with the worker in charge of that area. The researcher sought out the machine and asked the previously reluctant operator if she could take photographs of her work. The operator opened up and described to the researcher how amazing it was to have this machine, citing several benefits. The worker showed the researcher how the molding machine worked (Figure 3) and described in detail the innovative products that they were able to produce in-house from this machine.

Another employee suggested to the researcher that she should stay until orders were picked up for shipment at 8 p.m. Domestic orders placed before 6 p.m. were to be shipped that day, which is complicated by the customized nature of each order. The researcher observed and photographed the energized process of moving garments from order to cutting through packaging and mailing in a matter of minutes, a pace she had not seen up to this point. In Figure 4, three of the four people in the photo worked in shipping; the head of sales and marketing (the person in the dress) was walking to help out. Most employees and managers stayed late to meet the daily shipping target.

These are two of many examples related to how employees understood the strategic priorities through daily routines and physical artifacts—innovation (the molding machine) and exceptional customer responsiveness (made-to-order domestic garments out the same day as ordered). The photos alone needed interpreting but provided a clear view of how employees understood the firms'

Figure 3. Photos of innovation at Marena: Bra molding machine

direction and connection to daily organizational life. The hybrid photo production approach of organizational members guiding which photos the researcher needed to take was critical to gain insight into the research question. A photo script was created from the photos and a transcript of the interviews. Our research findings provide insights into how strategic priorities can be managed on a daily basis. However, a key takeaway from this study is that the lack of turnover in employees allows the signals to be understood. In another photoset reflecting the competitive advantage of a



loyal and productive workforce, we argue that this steady workforce underpins and provides a deeper understanding of the ability to make sense of daily sensegiving of strategy direction and priorities in a high-growth environment.

From our positive experience researching with photographs at Marena, organizational researchers might consider small- and medium-sized firms for their initial photographic research projects if credibility or corporate sensitivity makes access to large companies difficult. We were able to be visible to most if not all employees before any photography took place and found little push back from any employees. In many encounters in this firm, we found that employees were somewhat flattered that we were interested in their activities. This underresearched context in organizational research—small- and medium-sized companies—may respond positively to research using photographic methods.

Conclusion

In this article, we clarify the researcher choices and considerations of utilizing photographs in organizational research. By including a glimpse of our own research in one organization, we showed that implementing the photo elicitation methodology was tricky and had special challenges (Banks, 2007). Harper (2002) stated, "Unlike many research methods, photo elicitation works (or does not) for mysterious reasons" (p. 22). Our study provides some clarity to the photo elicitation mystery: Researchers are challenged to select meaningful photographs to present to organizational members. It was only through implementation of a hybrid research production approach that meaningful photographs were made. More learning is needed about how to apply photographic approaches in organizations. We believe that photographic research holds great promise for investigating

organizational phenomena—especially tracking internal processes and change over time as well as accessing multiple levels of understanding.

A practical concern for management and organizational researchers occurs once the analysis is complete and the connection to theory is clear: Where does this research get published? The limited research on using photographs in and around organizations can be found in many outlets: disciplinary journals (e.g., *Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Management Inquiry, Journal of Management Studies*), electronic journals (*M@n@gement, ephemera*), conference papers and proceedings (e.g., Research Methods at the Academy of Management, qualitative research conferences), or book chapters. It is unclear if photographic research or visual methods in general will go the way of sociology and anthropology, disciplines that have developed specialist journals (*Visual Studies, Visual Anthropology*) and societies (International Visual Society Association) dedicated to publishing studies that use visual methodologies, or if visual methods will remain within associations with a focus on organizations (e.g., Academy of Management). In sociology, the visual methods group was not able to form a separate division[10] and instead formed a new group with a large European presence. We can imagine a visual methods interest group in the Academy of Management, which might, in turn, be brought into the Research Methods Division or gain divisional status.[11] The benefit of keeping photography and, more broadly, visual methods linked closely to the Academy of Management is to avoid what has happened in sociology. Prosser (1998b) contends that visual sociology is still undervalued and laments the "poor status" (p. 97) of visual methods in sociology and even among qualitative researchers; the lack of cohesion or common meeting ground among different social science researchers using visual methods has limited learning, cohesion, and the benefits of critical mass.

We do believe that mainstream organizational and management journals are ready for photographs and visual methods. Warren (2005) shared her conversation with a *British Academy of Management* editor who was open to photographic research. In a 2011 editorial in the *Academy of Management Journal,* Bansal and Corley (2011) indicated that this journal was open to new methods and specifically mentioned photographs. We feel the time is ripe for researchers to consider the use of photographs in organizational research, beyond token illustrations or entertainment, to contribute to theory. We hope that our article, with a clear delineation of choices, potential research applications, and shared learning will increase momentum for the use of photographs in organizational research.

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Notes

We share equal authorship. Anne Smith took the photographs that are reproduced in this article.

1. We focus on photographs instead of hand-drawn images because of the increasing use in photographs in organizational studies (see Vince & Warren, 2012; Warren, 2009, p. 574). Also, we anticipate potential reluctance for business research participants to draw as part of a research project. Videotaping is increasing in use in organizational studies (e.g., LeBaron & Garrett, 2011), but it requires a skill set (at this point in time) more advanced than photographic production. Finally, we delimit our study to photographs and do not include screen shots of websites or cartoons in the focus of this article. Photographs embedded in websites, annual reports, or standalone ads, however, could be extracted and studied.
2. There is an extensive body of research in social psychology (see Ziller, 1990), but this research is focused at the individual level and more therapeutic in nature, whereas our interest is at the organizational level.
3. In 2002, *Visual Sociology* changed its name to *Visual Studies*.
4. We recognize that some qualitative researchers have pushed back against the use of photographic visual methods. Emmison and Smith (2000) have argued that photographic images too greatly narrow what qualitative researchers can see. Other researchers have highlighted other concerns related to photographic images, such as the privileging and power accorded to researchers who take photos (Banks, 2007).
5. In Burt, Johansson, and Thelander's (2007) IKEA store experience study, they described that each research participant was given a disposable camera in the parking lot outside an IKEA store. There was no discussion in this article about ethical instruction before sending participants into the store, although this information could have been removed during the journal review process.
6. In our review, we found limited discussion of qualitative software for photo analysis. Most qualitative software programs allow for photograph coding of both objective inventorying and interpretative categories (Silver, 2010). Yet, it seems that photo analysis using qualitative software is in an early state. There is a need for more published studies that guide organizational researchers with this type of analysis.
7. Our discussion of ethics is from a North American viewpoint. Taking pictures in other countries may require other legal and cultural considerations (Wiles, Clark, & Prosser, 2011).
8. Another aspect of this study was how values were manifested and maintained during rapid growth. The photographs in Figure 1 and Figure 2 reflect this part of the research.
9. The founders/owners of this company were pleased to have the company's name used in our research. This company designs and fabricates garments that are sold primarily to surgery practices to aid in healing, bruising, and support after plastic surgery and are also sold to the general public as shaping garments (i.e., to smooth bulges, to provide support during workouts).
10. It was the lack of only 15 signatures that visual methods did not become a division in the American Sociological Society (ASA) in 1981 (Curry, 1986). Visual sociology remained an interest group in the ASA for several years, but it is not currently identified as a section in the ASA.
11. North American Academy members interested in photographic methods in research also might reach out and join new visual methods initiatives such as the United Kingdom–based International Network for Visual Studies in Organizations (www.in-visio.org).

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