Framing the Social World With Photo-Elicitation Interviews

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This article discusses the photo-elicitation interview (PEI), a qualitative methodology, by addressing its fundamentals, providing examples of how to use it, and arguing its benefits and potential challenges. In PEIs, researchers introduce photographs into the interview context. The photographs used in PEIs can originate from the interviewee or the researcher. Researchers can use photographs as a tool to expand on questions and simultaneously, participants can use photographs to provide a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives. Featured, in detail, are school ethnography and inner-city childhood studies that used PEIs.

Keywords: *photo elicitation; photography; school; children; methodology*

This article aims to explain the photo-elicitation interview (PEI) and its relation to other qualitative methodological approaches. In brief, when conducting PEIs, researchers introduce photographs into the interview context (Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002). I will discuss how I used the PEI as a supplement to ethnography and as a stand-alone methodology. The scope of this article addresses the fundamentals of the PEI, provides examples of how to use it, and argues its benefits and potential challenges.

ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE PEI

I set out to study two types of elementary schools in an urban setting (Clark-Ibáñez, 2003). One was a charter school that held an "academic success for all" ideology and provided the students with rich academic resources. The other school was a noncharter public inner-city school about 10 minutes away from the charter school. I hypothesized that the charter school in my study would more likely subvert rather than perpetuate the systems of inequality found in the regular school's classrooms. Using primarily participant-observation methods, I found that charter and noncharter school students' social location affects the quality and quantity of interactions with their teachers. Specifically, I found

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significant differences in various types of micro interactions (praise, putdowns, etc.) based on students' gender, ability group placement, language, and race. The hypothesis and many of my findings emerged out of conventional qualitative methodological techniques such as participant observation.

Indeed, the bulk of my research involved observing and participating in the daily life of two classrooms at each school. I worked 4 days a week in a fourth-grade classroom at each school and frequently returned for a 5th day to accompany one of the classes on fieldtrips. I alternated Mondays and Wednesdays in one classroom and Tuesdays and Thursdays in the other. My research role in the field site went beyond the classroom; I alternated between volunteer aide, a recess supervisor, substitute teacher, Spanish translator, and observer. With parental permission, I also took some students on weekend outings—we went to the beach or movies, drove through exclusive neighborhoods in Los Angeles, California (girls wanted to find actor Leo DiCaprio's house), and went to eat at Shakey's Pizza, Burger King, or Hometown Buffet. I also chatted with parents about school, life, diet, and work. I helped Spanish speakers fill out forms in English and accompanied teachers on student home visits. In summary, I became immersed in the students' school and social lives for more than a year.

Through my ethnographic fieldwork, I realized that many children had complicated home lives, and I wanted to understand how it affected their school lives. Because of time constraints, I could not begin conducting additional participant observation in the community and homes of all 60 students'. I thought student-generated data would be an ideal way to understand students' lives from their perspective. My first method was to create a journal project during the school year that allowed me to compare the students' writing skills and offered data on students' lives and ambitions (see Clark-Ibáñez, 2003, for details about this type of methodology). Through the ritual of weekly journal writing, I noted the students' thoughtful reflections—through drawings as well as words—that I doubt could have been achieved through face-to-face interviews.

My second method for collecting student-generated data was to conduct PEIs during the summer (after I spent an academic year with the students in their classroom). I wanted to attain additional data in a way that was creative for the children and helped them develop a skill (picture taking, verbal communication, and analysis). By asking students to take photographs of what is important to them, I hoped to give them a project in which they could present the very best parts of their lives. Also, I believed that the PEI would complement my ethnographic field style.

Ethnography features "direct, qualitative observation of natural situations or settings using mainly techniques of participant-observation or intensive interviewing" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 1). Toren (1996) described ethnography as a particularly intense way to live, "a day-to-day experience in which you are simultaneously caught up and distant" (p. 103). Conducting research among children of South Central Los Angeles, California, reached my five senses. I smelled lotion, the kind given away by Aid to Families With Dependent

Children, on Irma's skin.[1] I tasted Gisela's chili powder brought to school in small plastic bags meant for dipping fingers. I heard the soft chatter of Spanish among girls in both classrooms. I saw Abel's perfectly combed and gelled hair. I felt Dante leaning against me as we read *Cinderelly* together and Laura holding my hand as we walked to recess.

Ethnography allowed me to uniquely encounter poverty among the students. Seeing Luis's rotting, orange teeth. Smelling the feces ground into the carpet of Sergio's two-bedroom, 15-occupant house. Tasting the *platanos fritos con crema* at Enrique's house and listening to his mom talk about their life in Guatemala. Touching Pati's arm, being careful of her enflamed scabies. Hearing the sewing machine whir at Selena's and Melissa's houses and seeing the bundles of piecework yet to be sewn together. Qualitative methodology captures the visceral component and experiences of life in a poor community. The PEI method helped capture the tangible and intangible aspects of children's lives.

DOING PEIs

There are a variety of approaches to doing PEIs. Researchers must decide who will take the photographs.[2] Some researchers, who are also talented photographers, take the photographs, develop, organize, and present them to the interviewee. For example, Harper (2001) used aerial views of farmland and historical photographs to interview farmers about their identity and community and took detailed, close-up photographs in a rural workshop (Harper, 1987). Schwartz (1992) created a "descriptive record" of a rural community and was able to group the photos in ways meaningful for her topic.[3]

Using researcher-produced photographs is an excellent way to conduct theory-driven research. Researcher-photographers may capture taken-for-granted aspects of the participants' community or life that prompt discussion. Yet they may limit themselves and miss an essential aspect of their research setting. In some cases, the interviewees alert researchers to omissions and questions that can be later included in the interview protocol. As previously mentioned, some researchers have reported easier entry to research sites with the use of cameras (Shanklin, 1979). Finally, researchers must also be cautious of the tendency to capture the "visually arresting" images (e.g., homeless person asleep near a school entrance) rather than what might be meaningful for the interview participants (Orellana, 1999). In documenting visual descriptions of South Central Los Angeles, California, for my study, I noted my tendency to include images that as an outsider, I found unique or beautiful (e.g., a Domino's Pizza deliveryman on a bicycle or the meat store mural with the Virgin de Guadalupe) but lacked meaning for the children in my study (see Figure 1).

For a more inductive research approach, researchers ask their interview participants to take their own photos to be used later as interview stimuli, this is sometimes called a photo-elicitation "autodriven" interview (Clark, 1999). This

Figure 1: Domino's Pizza Delivery Man on a Bicycle

is the approach I used in my research of two schools in South Central Los Angeles, California.

LOGISTICS OF PEIs

It took about 2 months to obtain permission from parents, the school, and students.[4] Several parents helped me craft a permission form that would be clearly understood by other parents and address issues such as costs, care of equipment, time commitment, reciprocation, and intended follow-up. I gave the following written instructions to the children who participated in the project:

> **What you'll do:** Take pictures of the people and the things that are the most important to you (for example, family members, favorite places, toys—it's up to you!). This is a FREE project—it will not cost you or your parents anything.
>
> - This camera belongs to you! Remember to keep it out of the sun.
> - I will pick up the camera when you are done taking the pictures. I think a week should be enough time but let me know if you need more time.
> - After the photos are developed, I will bring you the photos.
> - We will take some time to talk about the photos you took.
> - Call me with any questions: [my phone number]
> - Have fun!!

Parents talked with me after school or called me at home to discuss the "camera project." They wanted to be clear about the monetary costs to them (none),

and others expressed anxiety about giving their child a camera for fear they would lose it. I explained to them that they were to be disposable cameras, and I would have a few extras in case some children lost theirs. (I bought the cameras wholesale for U.S.$5 each.)

I gave students their cameras as soon as I received their signed permission slips. Although most children had never taken a photograph, they understood the basic principles of operating a camera and required little instruction. Most students completed the project within a week of receiving their camera. The local drugstore developed double copies of their film (approximately U.S.$8 per camera). Once the film was developed, I arranged an interview time and day with the child. Frequently, parents and siblings were present during the interview.

Viewing photographs gave other family members incentives to be present. Most parents worked two or three jobs each, many times they alternated shifts so that someone could be home with the children. Initially, I thought the students might be shy about sharing their photographs, but most had arranged the interviews to include their families. As I will discuss later, photographs elicit extended personal narratives that illuminate the viewers' lives and experiences, especially when viewed in a group setting (Schwartz, 1989).

The interviews lasted from ½ to 2 hours. Of the 55 students who participated in the project, 47 completed interviews. I spent 3 summer months exclusively conducting PEIs and then returned to Los Angeles, California, for the rest of the interviews in the subsequent year. All interviews were conducted away from the school setting. Most interviews took place in students' living rooms and at their kitchen tables or on front porches and in backyards when it was hot. I also conducted several interviews on Saturdays inside warehouses in the garment district of Los Angeles, California, where students helped their parents.

THE PEI AS A METHODOLOGY

There are many benefits to using the PEI, but it is first helpful to understand the meaning of photographs in this methodology. In his review and history of the PEI, Doug Harper (2002) presented the approach's three main uses of photographs. First, photographs are used as visual inventories of objects, people, and artifacts. Second, photographs depict events that are a part of collective or institutional paths (e.g., photographs of schools or images of events that occurred earlier in the lifetime of the participants). Third, photos are intimate dimensions of the social. For example, photos of family or other intimate social groups, images of one's own body, and photos that connect one's self to society, culture, or history. It is important to add that there may be multiple uses in a single roll of film. For example, a child in my study took photos of her refrigerator and Barbie dolls (inventory), her after-school program building (institution), and self-portraits and sisters (social).

Yet there is nothing inherently interesting about photographs; instead, photographs act as a medium of communication between researcher and participant. The photographs do not necessarily represent empirical truths or "reality." In this sense, photographs used in the PEI have a dual purpose. Researchers can use photographs as a tool to expand on questions and simultaneously, participants can use photographs to provide a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives.

The PEI can enhance qualitative methods and help address some pitfalls in conventional interviews. Photographs can ease rapport between researcher and interviewee. For researchers, information provided in photographs can facilitate asking respondents questions (Collier, 1967). Photos can provide structure for the interview by creating a semistructured interview schedule. Photos can lessen some of the awkwardness of interviews because there is something to focus on, especially if the photographs are taken by the interviewee and they are therefore familiar with the material. When researchers are the photographers, cameras can help researchers better interact with the people they are studying (Collier, 1967; Schwartz, 1989) although it can take time (Shanklin, 1979). Respondents' memories are stimulated in different ways than through verbal-based interviews and in ways potentially unknown to the researcher.

I have found that when adapted for the purpose of interviewing children, the PEI becomes an ideal methodology to engage young people. Previous researchers have outlined the limitations and problems of research with children (Adler & Adler, 1998; Thorne, 1993). Interviews are especially problematic for children. Clark (1999, p. 38) summarized the following challenges associated with interviewing children: children's level of linguistic communication, their cognitive development, the question-and-answer setting, and the accentuated power dynamics of the adult interviewing a child. Photos can improve the interview experience with children by providing them with a clear, tangible prompt. Clark also reported that photographs capture and introduce content area that otherwise (from an adult viewpoint) might be poorly understood (or even overlooked). Thus, for studying childhood or for projects with children, the PEI can be an appropriate and successful methodology.

The PEI is concerned with the subjective meaning of those images for the interviewee that can disrupt some of the power dynamics involved with regular interviews. For example, Willie, a rural artisan featured in Harper's (1987) book *Working Knowledge*, teaches a college professor about his mechanical skills along with his perspective on work, community, and social change.[5] Similarly, in my study, when Silvia went to Oregon for the summer to work in the fields with her relatives, she brought along her camera. In our interview in the fall, Silvia explained how various farm machinery works, the production of tomatoes, and how her relatives live—all topics, despite growing up in an agricultural area, I knew nothing about and would not have been able to ask about in our interview had it not been for the visual data that Silvia provided (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Silvia's Photograph of Farm Equipment

The PEI can be a powerful tool to simultaneously gather data and empower the interviewee.

As I conducted interviews with children in South Central Los Angeles, California, I found that the data generated from PEIs went beyond the normal scope of that generated in regular words-alone interviews. For the interviewees, photographs seemed to allow them to reflect on related but indirect associations with the photographs themselves. In group settings, photographs served to illustrate multiple meanings for the participants and sometimes revealed tensions among the participants.

The most common experience conducting PEIs was that photographs spurred meaning that otherwise might have remained dormant in a face-to-face interview. The images may not contain new information but can trigger meaning for the interviewee (Collier, 1967; Schwartz, 1989). Three examples illustrate this point. One of my first interviews was with Janice, who took 38 photos of her new kitten (see Figure 3). I admit, I dreaded this interview. What would we discuss besides her *gatito*? Janice was still at the school in my study but had moved midyear to a slightly better off community. The content of the photos did not end up being as important. For Janice, moving to a new community and not yet knowing anyone were factors in her strong attachment to her kitten. What became more important (and interesting) was the conversation about how her parents let her have the kitten after moving from Watts to Oak Park: a mixture of being able to afford having pets and compensating for the loss of friends. For example, Janice explained her family's slightly improved economic situation that allowed her to have a kitten. Also, the images of the kitten sparked Janice's

Figure 3: Janice's Kitten

memory of the pets she had in México, eliciting a detailed discussion about her immigrant journey from México to Los Angeles, California.

In another example, when Melissa showed me the photograph of a gigantic tree across the street, she commented it was her favorite tree (see Figure 4). I asked her why. She explained, with tears filling her eyes, that she can only look at it and never really be near it. I probed, wanting to know why she could not cross the street. She told me that her dad makes her stay in the house, and he told her she would be deported to México if she is caught by *la migra* (Spanish slang for the Immigration and Naturalization Service). Indeed, the Immigration and Naturalization Service's vans did troll the community. With a rush of words, Melissa revealed that she was not documented, and neither were her mom, 20-year-old brother, or 16-year-old sister. But they all had to work, so they needed to risk leaving the house. Melissa stayed at home alone until 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. each night. Thus, the tree was not just a tree (just as the kitten was not just a kitten) but also a symbol of Melissa's immigration status that restricted her movement.

A third example shows how the PEI methodology can "mine deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews" (Harper, 2002, p. 23). Antwon's father had remained interested but quiet as Antwon discussed the photos he took of his schoolmates, family members, and neighborhood. As I gathered my things to leave, he commented to me about the photographs Antwon took of his school. He said that he installed the new carpet at the school last summer as his parent commitment hours, but that he had wanted to work in the classroom or help with playground activities. He

Figure 4: Melissa's Tree

expressed resentment that after spending weekdays as a Salvation Army truck driver, he had to be at his son's school during the weekend doing manual labor. This side comment, provoked by Antwon's photos of the school (including rooms his father had carpeted), provided me with alternative insights to the school's revered parent participation program.

Many of my interviews with the children included their families and sometimes even their neighbors and friends. The group setting served two important functions. First, it revealed that the children's photographs are polysemic—capable of generating multiple meanings in the viewing process (Becker, 1986; Schwartz, 1989). For example, Toño took photos of his family in portrait (see Figure 5) and in action (e.g., his brother on a skateboard), his neighborhood, his after-school care, and his favorite games in his room. As the family and I sat around the dining-room table, the content of the photos spurred much conversation about the meaning of each artifact or action. What also occurred, especially when his father sat down at the table, was discussion of the graffiti (and the gangs it belonged to) that showed up in the background of the photos taken outside of the house and the day workers who also appeared in the photos taken outside. Each family member who joined the conversation had her or his own perspective and reality concerning these details that were inadvertently included in Toño's photos. After viewing the photos, the family began to discuss the hardship of being *sin documentos* (undocumented or illegally in the United States), finding work, and the trouble of having the gang members use their front

Figure 5: Portrait of Uncle and Nephew in Toño's Driveway

driveway as a hangout. Relational and contextualized meanings emerged from the interview that may not have otherwise.

Second, the photographs triggered discussions and revealed contrasts and tensions among the viewers. Victoria took her assignment very seriously and documented her social world in detail. She took photos of a secret club house, friends who dressed up for the "photo shoot," her little sister's chalk artwork, and the "blue line" train (taken by daylight) in front of her house that wakes her up at night. In her lively interview, Victoria explained her photos and their meaning with passion. Her mother, who occasionally passed through the living room where she and I sat for the interview, told Victoria that she was upset and "embarrassed" that Victoria did not take pictures of her own mother and father and "wasted" photos on her friends (see Figure 6). Victoria countered that her mom goes to school and works two jobs and because she does not see her except at night and she could not figure out how to do the flash on her camera, she could not take her photo. Her mother asked me for another camera so that Victoria could take photos on their next family trip to Waterworld. I agreed and gave them another disposable camera and later conducted a second interview. In this case, the content of Victoria's first set of photos was very interesting as it painted the creative and rich social life that Victoria, her sister, and their friends created when not in school. In addition, the conversation on the content yielded data about Victoria's family dynamics.

Finally, photographs can generate data that illuminate a subject invisible to the researcher but apparent to the interviewee (Schwartz, 1989). For example, in Toño's photos, because I am interested in children's interactions, I noticed the

Figure 6: Victoria's Friends

boys playing outside and how they used the sidewalks. However, I missed the significance of the graffiti "tagging" of gang names and symbols (e.g., Grape Street High Rollers) in the background and on which the other family members immediately focused (see Figure 7). This early interview alerted me to other details that I might have otherwise considered "background."

I have shown the strengths of adding the PEI to one's methodological repertoire. Yet the PEI poses challenges of which researchers must be aware. As with all qualitative methodology, researchers must strike a delicate balance between their goal of collecting data and retaining compassion for participants. The PEI allows the researcher into the interviewee's home and life through photographs in different ways and with different results than when the researcher is physically present. Thus, the PEI can create a more intimate and delicate situation than other methodological approaches. Like other methodological approaches, PEI practitioners also grapple with issues of confidentiality and ethics. Although the PEI is a useful tool to gather data, we should be aware of some challenges, both for the interviewee and for the researcher to conduct and then analyze data from the PEI, that go beyond challenges inherent to words-alone interviews.

For interviewees who take photos, there are mundane challenges that would not happen in a words-alone interview context. For example, participants may lose their camera or they may be unskilled at photography. If the researcher does not communicate that the interviewee will be the first to view the photographs, there may be images that the interviewee regrets taking but that the researcher has already seen by developing the photographs. (This dynamic may be countered if researchers communicate to the interviewee that they will not view the

Figure 7: Toño's Brother on Skateboard With Gang Tagging on Cement Divider

images until the interviewee has had a chance to look through them first and take out any "regret" photographs.) The interviewee may use the camera in inappropriate ways; Stanford's mother informed me that she caught him taking photographs of his naked sister and so she destroyed the camera.[6] Also, when an interview is under way, the principal informant's perspective or voice may be lost or diminished if photographs are viewed in a group setting.

There are challenges to the researcher who uses the PEI. Researchers have reported that institutional support or insider connections were prerequisites for conducting PEIs (e.g., hospital in Clark, 1999; school in Clark-Ibáñez, 2003; community center in Orellana, 1999; kin in Schwartz, 1992). For interviewees, the addition of photographs may mean an additional layer of intimacy than regular face-to-face interviews, which may make it harder for the researcher to obtain permission from institutions or recruit interviewees. However, the potential for the interviewees to own a camera and the novelty of taking photographs for an outsider can help researchers overcome barriers to soliciting interviewees. The financial cost, coordination of camera dissemination and retrieval, and time spent developing the photographs and conducting the interview may be prohibitive for the researcher.

If the interviewees produce the images, researchers should be aware of differing definitions of what belongs in a photograph. For example, in my study, Victoria's mother had a predefined concept of photographic content: What Victoria should represent to her as important is her family, not her friends or a clubhouse. Interviewees could experience technical difficulty with the flash or be frustrated with not being able to capture an up-close or faraway image with a

Figure 8: Maria Sonia's Barbie Doll Collection

simple disposable camera. If children are producing images, researchers must understand that family dynamics of power and authority may affect the child's ability to take his or her own photographs or to finish the project. In addition, Clark (1999) has pointed out that not everyone has the patience or sensitivity involved with the PEI, especially when involved with children's pace, style, and playfulness.

In terms of data analysis, the PEI presents a challenge of coding both words and images.[7] Analysis may be difficult if the researcher must sift through the data from a lively group who viewed and referred to multiple photographs. People may talk over each other, it may be hard to identify which individuals are talking, or conversation may significantly shift themes. Researchers can begin to address these challenges by at least realizing their possible effects on the project and informants.

THE PEI: A STAND-ALONE METHODOLOGY

I am using the data generated from conducting PEIs as the basis for a new project about inner-city childhood. My preliminary findings are promising. First, contrary to popular media, the children's photographs reveal more intimate and reflexive aspects of what we consider a middle-class childhood. Students showed me their photos of the artifacts meaningful to them (e.g., soccer trophies, a doll collection, pop star fan books) and dimensions of the social (e.g., friends and parties; see Figures 8 through 13).

Figure 9: Ezequiel's Soccer Trophies

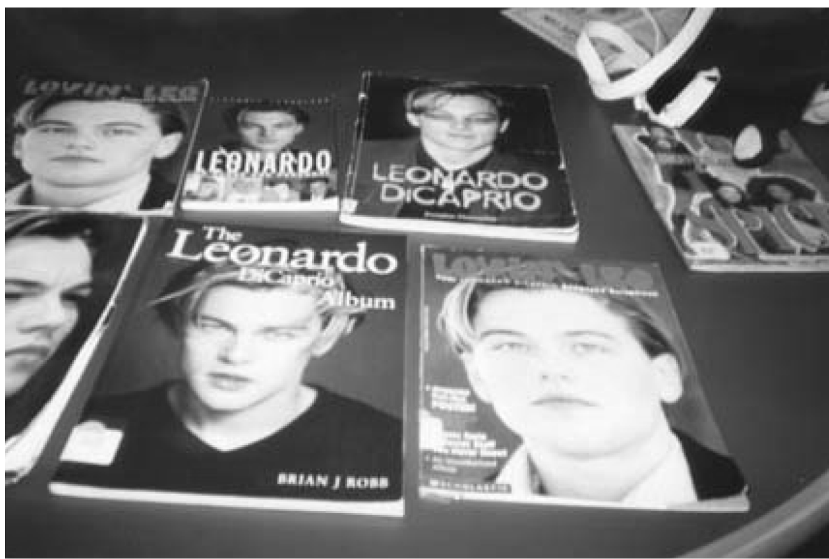

Figure 10: Victoria's Leonardo DiCaprio Fan Books

Second, these autodriven photographs showed me students' interpretation of material reality. For example, when present, they inventoried their "big-ticket item" such as a computer, Nintendo, or a washing machine (see Figure 14). The

Figure 11: Melodie's Best Friends

Figure 12: Dante's Friends in Apartment Building

most common theme of why they photographed items such as their computer or television was because they will have a memory of it in case it gets stolen or taken away. Indeed, within 1 year, several students did experience robberies of the very things they captured on film. However, most students did not own expensive items. After conducting content analysis of all the photos, I found

Figure 13: Carmen's Party

Figure 14: Felix's Computer

students mostly took photos of people or (inexpensive) things with social attachments and meaning.

Figure 15: Pati's View of Front Yard From Second Floor of Her House

Finally, I am finding a gender difference in the position from which the photos were taken. More girls take photos of the outside from inside compared to boys (see Figure 15). Also, boys are more likely to be outside the home than girls are. As we saw in Melissa's case, immigration status may make a difference, but the trend held true for Latinas and African American girls who do not have immigration issues.

Although I have just begun to code the photographs and interviews to examine inner-city childhood, the data provide a rich perspective of "growing up poor" from the kids' own visual and verbal expressions.

CONCLUSION

Social scientists have been using the PEI since anthropologist John Collier (1967) introduced it as a valid and useful method for collecting data. Several recent articles and books explain the PEI methodology (see Banks, 2001; Collier, 2002; Harper, 2002; Pink, 2001; Rose, 2001; van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). The PEI is not only gaining popularity in the image-specific journals such as *Visual Sociology*, *Visual Studies*, and *Visual Anthropology* but also making inroads into general methodological overviews such as *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education* (Grant & Fine, 1992) and *Qualitative Sociology* (Schwartz, 1989). I predict there will be an increase in journals that publish

research using photographs if only for the practical reason that new technology makes photographs as easy to work with as tables or charts.

Of the 140 studies in Sociological Abstracts database mentioning the keyword *photo* in their abstract, 80 used photographs as an integral part of their research. In the past 10 years alone, social science researchers have used photographs across an array of disciplines and topics.[8] The majority of studies using photography specifically use the PEI alone or in combination with other methodologies.[9] These numerous studies show social scientists are using photos and PEIs in a variety of ways and in diverse substantive fields.

Howard Becker (1974) argued for the complementary nature of visual techniques, such as photography, and sociological inquiry. Jon Wagner (1979) wrote that methodology such as the PEI can benefit "social scientists interested in examining the connection between people's lives and the social and economic structures of the larger world" (p. 18). Using the PEI alone or with other qualitative methodologies such as interviews or participant observations can illuminate dynamics and insights not otherwise found through other methodological approaches. In addition, the PEI empowers the interviewees to teach the researcher about aspects of their social world otherwise ignored or taken for granted. When he introduced the PEI methodology, Collier (1967) wrote, "no type of fieldwork requires better rapport than an intimate photographic account of family culture" (p. 51). PEI methodology, alone or supplementing qualitative methodologies, can be used with almost any topic and produce rich data.

NOTES

1. All names from my research are pseudonyms.

2. Researchers also use historical photographs or the interviewees' family photo albums as interview stimuli.

3. Researchers elaborate on photo-elicitation interview methodology. Suchar (1997) used "shooting scripts," systematic and detailed collection of data then to be used as interview prompts with participants, for his urban gentrification study.

4. Permission obtained from the institutional review board (IRB) at my home university included the use of videos in the classroom and photography with the children. The IRB process took 6 months to complete. I wrote the IRB letter to the children and parents in my study in both Spanish and English. Once in the field, I realized that parents did not understand the content of the official letter; so with the help of several parents, I rewrote the letter, maintaining its spirit but simplifying its language. I believe I would have done more of a disservice to the parents, thereby violating the true goal of the IRB, by giving them a letter they did not completely understand.

5. This aspect of the photo-elicitation interview can potentially change policies and services that affect the participants. For example, kids with asthma and diabetes give the university researcher, and later medical doctors, intimate knowledge of the psychological and physical pain of living with chronic illness (Clark, 1999).

6. This is the only time such an incident occurred in my study. However, students revealed that they took surprise photographs of their mothers, siblings, or friends. Thus, sometimes the cameras were being used for pranks and not for their intended use.

7. See Wagner (1979) for a terrific discussion of avoiding production and analysis errors using the photo-elicitation interview.

8. For example, researchers have used photographs to interview participants in experimental research (e.g., eyewitness accuracy in Lindsay, Nilsen, & Read, 2000; gender roles in Lippa, 1997; and racism in Maluso, 1995). Others have analyzed photographs for historical comparative research (e.g., New Mexico community in Barrera & Trejo, 2000; class pictures in Margolis, 1999; and urban development in Orum, 1995). A few have used photographs to study current social phenomena (e.g., community in Adams, 2001; globalization in Barndt, 1997; family in Vidmar Horvat, 2001).

9. See, for example, gerontology in Whitmor (2001); advertising in Harper and Faccioli (2000); race and advertising in Craig, Kretsedemas, and Gryniewski (1997); attitudes about economic aid in Radley and Kennedy (1997); attitudes about newcomers to a community in Lopez (2000); alcohol use in Faccioli and Zuccheri (1998); sport and pain in Curry and Strauss (1994); sport and children in Stiebling (1999); and children in Clark (1999), Orellana (1999), Rasmussen (1999).

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