

Kirova, A., & Emme, M. (2006). Using photography as a means of phenomenological seeing: “Doing phenomenology: with immigrant children. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* Special Edition: *Methods in Phenomenology*. 6 1-12.

Abstract

In this article we present a study, the aim of which was to understand the lifeworlds of children who experience immigration and whose lives are marked by dramatic changes in their being-in-the-world. More specifically, we asked: What does it mean for an immigrant child to enter a new school? Two methodological questions were also explored, namely: How do we conduct a phenomenological investigation of a childhood phenomenon when the researchers and the participants do not share a common language? and: How do we engage children in the research process so that they provide not only “thick” descriptions of their experiences using alternative, nonlinguistic means, but also make meaning of these experiences? We used still photography to help them recall and make meaning of what they experienced on their first day of school and enabled them to become conscious photographers who came to see the world in such a way that photographic seeing became phenomenological seeing. We present two examples of the children’s visual narratives in the form of fotonovelas to illustrate a methodology that involves fusion of the horizons surrounding the children, captured images of situations they encountered as they entered the classroom, and how the viewer saw the created image. The expanded notion of text and the use of digital technology in developing the text opened a space not only for visual representation of the children’s lived experiences, but also for phenomenological analysis of these experiences. We suggest that although the written and visual texts produced as a result of the study differ, they are similar in

how they allow for phenomenological reflection and in their ability to show the phenomenon so as to evoke the reader's "phenomenological nod."

Introduction

What is the experience of childhood that has been interrupted by immigration? How is school experienced when a child becomes a stranger in the world of others? What does it mean for a child to undergo an experience with schooling in a new country?

To undergo an experience with something—be it a thing, a person, or a god—means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us. When we talk of "undergoing" an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it. (Heidegger, 1982, p. 57)

In Heidegger's sense, immigration is an experience that children undergo. The sudden change in their life-worlds is a thing that befalls them and must be endured. Going to school is only a fraction of this new existence in which one "ceases to belong to the world one left behind, and does not yet belong to the world in which one has nearly arrived" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 23). Nevertheless, the first day at school is perhaps one of the landmarks of this new existence. What does it mean for an immigrant child to enter the new school? This is how Ianuk, a ten-year-old child from Korea recalls his first day of school in Canada:

I came with my mom. [Then] the teacher take me to the class, and call my name. I was shy and scared [because] I don't speak English.

I am shy. I can't hear what the teacher says. I just looked and watched the others to find out what she [the teacher] wants me to do. I brought my own lunch that day. (Individual interview, Dec. 6, 2004)

Although the above description of the child's experience of entering the classroom is brief, it opens possibilities for the researcher to explore its meaning in the child's life. However, the account reveals that as a novice speaker of the English language, Ianuk was experiencing difficulties in expressing himself in this new language and thus in providing "thick descriptions" of his lived experience of going to the school for the first time. Addressing linguistic limitations in studying immigrant children's experiences became a central methodological task in the study.

Methodological Challenges

Danaher and Briod (2005) point out that phenomenological research of children aims to clarify, describe, and interpret children's unique way of attending to the world. However, the authors stress that researching childhood's life world—the world as directly meant and immediately experienced—is largely closed to adult understanding. In the study presented here this methodological challenge was amplified not only by the fact that the children had certain limitations in their spoken English language, but also that we, as the researchers did not share a common language with the children. The specific methodological question for us became: How does one study the experience of immigrant children's first day in their new school when the children and the researcher do not share a common language? We began to question the use of language as a means of gathering lived experiences with immigrant children. Were the "blanks" in the description provided by Ianuk only due to the limitations of his English language, or the experience of his first

day in a school where everything was different from what he was used to was so overwhelming that no words could capture its complexity? Can words capture human experiences? How do we find a way of involving immigrant children in the process of re-collecting their experiences without relying solely on spoken language as a form of expression so that they too gain insight into them. What other ways of engaging children in the research process can we develop so that they not only provide “thick descriptions” of their lived experiences but also make meaning of those experiences through self-reflection?

After exploring the possibilities offered by the research methodologies that we were familiar with (i.e. hermeneutic phenomenology and visual arts-based research), and after considering several options including children’s drawings (Alerby, 2003), we decided that still photography can be used by the immigrant children as a means of recalling and making meaning of their experience of the first day of school. We hoped that through engaging children in the research process that used still photography, we could help them to become “conscious photographers” who were able to exercise a particular kind of seeing the world, “a kind of photographic seeing that is also a way of phenomenological seeing”(Chan-fai, 2004). Thus images, not only words, would allow immigrant children’s experiences of going to school for the first time to be *shown*. To play with language a bit, what was needed as a compliment to thick description was a way to represent non-verbal, embodied knowing, a kind of ‘thick depiction.’¹

Bridging Methodologies: An Attempt

Van Manen (1990) acknowledges the limitations of the spoken language in phenomenological descriptions, and states that beyond the verbal language, there is the

unspeakable which he calls “epistemological silence” (p.113). The fact that that the non-linguistic way of knowing cannot be captured or expressed in words has been recognized both within and outside of the phenomenological tradition. Dewey (1991) for example, too asserts that language includes much more than oral and written speech, but he goes on to specify that by this he means paintings and visual pictures and illustrations:

‘...anything consciously employed as a sign is, logically, language’ (p. 170). Similarly, Nordstrom (1991) argues that pictures can be regarded as a sort of language which can be interpreted.

In our attempt to understand the role of images in phenomenological research, we would like to go beyond this understanding of images as “language.” We argue that images allow for a different way of “seeing” in which, by “bracketing the unnecessary elements” (Chan-fai, 2004, p. 261) of an object or a situation as part of a human experience, the “unspeakable” reveals itself. This process of “bracketing” is a form of interpretation of meaning, as well as understanding that constitutes the central feature of hermeneutics.

There is a mutual belonging between hermeneutics and phenomenology as they both involve interpretation and understanding.. “On the one hand, phenomenology remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics. On the other hand, phenomenology cannot constitute itself without a hermeneutical presupposition” (Ricoeur,1987, p. 101).

Hermeneutics, as the “theory of the operations in understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts” (Ricoeur, 1987, p. 43) has its first ‘locality’ in language and more specifically in written language. However, in his analysis of hermeneutics of seeing, Davey (1999) points out that “hermeneutics’ deep concern with language does not subordinate image to word but applies the sensitivities we acquire from linguistic

exchange to reveal how our experience of art is not isolated monologue on personal pleasure but a complex dialogical achievement involving the fusion of horizons surrounding artists, subject matter and viewer” (p. 3).

Phenomenological Seeing:

Seeing has a particular meaning in phenomenology. Husserl insists on the absolute difference of phenomenological seeing and sensuous seeing.

This having in one’s glance, in one’s mental eye, which belongs to the *essence* of the *cogito* ... should not be confused with perceiving (in however wide a sense this term be used), or with any other types of act related to perceptions. (Husserl, 1972, section 37)

Visual perception is a methodological starting point in Husserl’s phenomenological method. For him phenomenological evidence, which is “nothing more than grasping an entity with the consciousness of its being itself there [*Sebstda*]” (Husserl, 1981, p. 257) takes the form of experience (Husserl, 1960, p. 93). This experience is explicitly characterized as seeing. “Evidence is, in an extremely broad sense, an ‘experiencing’ of something that is, and is thus; it is precisely a mental seeing of something itself” (Husserl, 1960, p. 52). In order for the “seeing subject” or the transcendental ego to “experience” something however, he or she has to be abstracted from the world, “not aiming confusedly at something, with an empty expectant intention, but being with it itself, viewing, seeing, having insight into, it itself” (Husserl, 1960, p. 93). This seeing is a phenomenological seeing when it is detached from actuality and rendered “only an example” (Husserl, 1973, section 87a). Thus, as Rawlinson (1999) indicates,

[P]henomenological analysis produces at once a nonsensuous seeing and a ‘univocal language’ of the general. The phenomenologist describes visual perception only in order to recapitulate certain of its features in a strictly nonperceptual register, and the descriptions of perception themselves already reflect a theoretical itinerary. (p. 266)

Phenomenological seeing therefore is nonperceptual, but is based on a remembered sensuous perception. It results not from what is presented to the senses but from the general synthetic activity of consciousness.

Photographic Seeing:

The word photography comes from Greek and it is a compilation of two words, *photos* (“light”) and *graphein* (“to draw”). Thus photography as “an art of showing a given object through the action of light” (Chan-fai, 2004, p. 260) has the capacity to draw in-sight as sight or seeing into a thing or subject (Emme, in preparation). We need to point out, however, that in our discussion of the use of photography in relation to this study, we are not referring to the growing interest in the phenomenological, semiotic, and hermeneutic investigations of the texture of the visual aesthetic experience (Heywood & Sandywell, 1999). Rather, we see photography as a form of capturing and communicating the “unspeakable” in the experience. Weidel (1995) argues that photographs are capable of recording a range of nonverbal dimensions of a situation, and that a photograph can catch and portray aspects of a situation impossible to record when using only written observations or transcribing verbal interactions” (p. 76). Fasoli (2003) too states that “a photograph, especially when compared to the use of verbal data, offers the researcher a distinctly different and potentially richer ‘new way of telling’” (p. 36). However, both

authors point out that although photographs “have a power that words often lack” (Weaidel, 1995, p. 76), they are “similar to a written account in that they are incomplete and tell a partial story” (Fasoli, 2003, p. 36). We would like to extend this statement by arguing that not only do photographs not capture the whole story but also that they don’t capture “reality” either. We view the process of creating photography and discussing it as an interpretive, hermeneutic practice in which there is no room for simple reductionism. As Ricoeur (1987) reminds us, “hermeneutics itself puts us on guard against the illusion or representation of neutrality” (p. 43). Indeed, the role of the photographer is precisely in selecting what to “draw light” into or to “draw with light”. Thus by privileging certain aspects of the situation and excluding others, the process of photographing is an active re-creating of reality, a process which we may call “photographic seeing”. But can this process of re-creating be also used to re-call the richness of past experiences in a way that words may not? As an aspect of the phenomenological methodology, the experience of recalling has been described as a form of collecting from past experience (Heidegger, 1968), a gathering up of the kinds of understanding that belong to being.

The ability of a photograph to evoke past memories, feelings and experiences has been pointed out by a number of researchers (e.g. Berger & Mohr, 1982; Holland, 1992; Wells, 1997; Prosser, 2000).

An instant photograph can only acquire meaning insofar as the viewer can read into it a duration extending beyond itself. When we find a photograph meaningful, we are lending it a past and a future. (Berger & Mohr, 1982, p. 89)

In the language of hermeneutics, this process allows for the fusion of horizons surrounding the photographer, the photograph itself and the viewer. These dimensions are

made explicit by Hugunin (1988) in his exploration of the link between subjective photography and phenomenology and by Casebier (1991) in his realist theory of cinematic representation. In the context of the study presented here, we attempt to describe how the visual representation of the experience of a first day in school involves the fusion of the horizons surrounding the children, the captured image of the situation they encountered as they entered the classroom, and the viewer of the created image. In the language of phenomenology, the process of viewing photographs has some of the characteristics of the process of phenomenological reduction as it involves “modifications of the pure imagination” (Husserl, 1973, sec. 87a) and is disconnected from the life-world which the photograph represents. It is also similar in the a sense that the viewer may or may not have been involved in the visual perception of the context captured in the image. Thus the process of interpretation and explication, although subjective, has the capacity to transcend meaning beyond the visible. However, we would like to argue that it is not only the process of viewing an image that has the capacity to bring forward common and essential elements of human experiences but also that these elements can become central to the methodology that involved photographing as its central element. Following is a description of the methodology we developed in the process of conducting the study of recent immigrant children’s experiences of schooling that is described here.

Fotonovela as a Collage Research Methodology

Photography in general has been defined as a valuable participatory technique for eliciting children’s opinions (Ells, 2001). However, the methodology used in the study was unique because the still photographs were used not only as a basis of discussion, but were also manipulated and arranged in a narrative format as a fotonovela. As a

storytelling form, fotonovela can combine the familiar framing devices, sequencing, and text balloons of the comic book with posed or candid photographs of the participants in place of pen-and-ink sketches. As a form of popular literature, the fotonovela was present in Mexico, Italy, France, Portugal, and Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s. This blending of a highly entertaining and approachable narrative structure with the naturalness or realism of photography (Emme, 1989) suited the melodramatic content of its popular form (Reed, 1998). Sometimes referred to in the literature using the anglicized spelling, the *photo novella* form has also proven a useful and important communication device in communities where literacy is a problem. As one example among many organizations dealing with public health issues, UNICEF has produced fotonovelas for use in Nepal to tell about AIDS and health care options (Emme & Kirova, 2005).

Current literature on the fotonovela as a research tool is found in the fields of health and nursing. For example, Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey, and Cekic (2001) used the fotonovela as a research method in encouraging Bosnian refugee children to represent their memories as well as their first experiences in Canada. Wang and Burris (1994) used the fotonovela to gain an understanding of the experiences of Chinese women. In both cases, and typical of the literature, the fotonovela is seen as a leveling and even liberatory medium in contexts where varying literacies create inequities and representational disparity.

As it developed over the course of this study, the process of producing fotonovelas involved two distinct stages. First, children were invited to join a noon-hour photography club. Starting with the fun of learning a new (for some) technology, initial experiences allowed the children to play with the camera and keep thumbnail prints that their teacher

incorporated into various class projects and journals. As researchers, we understood these images to be the children's. They were not data that could leave the school with us. As the act of photography became familiar (and even boring) we invited the children to start photographing around themes such as 'life on the playground', 'the cafeteria' and 'me pretending.' Through interaction and observation we moved to the second stage by identifying children who seemed particularly committed to continuing with the photo club. This smaller group of six children was engaged in conversations about their documentary images and some of the ideas they evoked. As part of this process the children were introduced to the fotonovela and asked if they would like to create a similar, photo-comic style story for the next kids who were new to the school. From this discussion we identified several stories including the first day of school, the lunchtime routine (Kirova, Mohamed & Emme, in press), the life on the playground (Emme, Kirova, Kamau & Kosanovich, in press), bullying, etc. that they wanted to tell. For the purpose of illustrating this methodology, we will focus here on the fotonovela called, *My First Day in School*.

In addition to using still photography, we also used elements of performative research in developing the fotonovelas. Acting scenes to be photographed as tableaux was one such element. As another form of arts-based research, performative research provided deeper in-sights into participants' lived experiences. Originating from anthropology and communication and performance studies, "performance is regarded as both a legitimate and ethical way of representing ethnographic understanding" (Conrad, 2004, p. 9). According to Conrad, performances allow participants to depict and examine their real-life "performances," thus "providing insight into their lived experiences and their cultural

world” (p. 10). From the point of view of the goal we had for the children, namely to become ‘thoughtful photographers,’ the performing part of the development of the fotonovelas was supposed to help the children select “telling moments” in their experiences that would later become images in the fotonovela.

We would like to argue that the performance portion of the fotonovelas lead to two major methodological accomplishments. First, the performance allowed the children who had limited vocabulary in English to re-call and re-enact details of their lived experiences which they would have not had the linguistic ability to describe had we relied solely on verbal descriptions. Second, the performance, being a group activity, allowed the children and us not only to get an in-sight into each individual child’s lived experience of entering the classroom for the first time in a new school, but also to see in a phenomenological sense each experience as “an example” of the lived experience of entering the “alienworld” (Husserl, 1993) through the door the classroom.

A final element in our methodology involved the composition and manipulation of the tableau images when they were formatted into the fotonovela text. As we have argued elsewhere (Emme & Kirova, 2005) the organization of the images into a narrative format, the application of text balloons, and the digital filtering of the images to “break the chain of evidence with the lens” (p. 147) each serve to suspend the images somewhere between the perceived objective referentiality of a photograph and the imagined world of a hand-drawn picture. The resulting stories are rich with the essence of gesture, proximity, and place without being excessively burdened by the distracting minutia of the perceived moment. Thus we believe the process of developing the fotonovelas allowed us to bring both “photographic seeing” and “phenomenological

seeing” in a research process in which the children became researchers of their own lived experiences.

The Setting and the Participants

This study took place at Greenview, an inner-city elementary-junior high school in a large city in western Canada. Because of the large number of low-income students in the school, it had a free lunch program. The school had a high percentage of visible minorities. Some of the main ethnic groups were Aboriginal, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Arab, East Indian, and African. Many were first-generation immigrants. More than seven languages were spoken among the 204 children. Over the course of the study, which began in February 2004, we have worked with the same small group of 6 children who were in grade 5 when they developed the *My First Day in School* fotonovela. All children were recent immigrants from China, Japan, Cambodia, Pakistan, Korea, and Taiwan.

Gaining In-Sight through Photography

The term ‘insight’ addresses the meaning of knowing in personal, social and pedagogic dimensions through a metaphor of visibility that “has meant seeing into a thing, it has meant a capacity for self-understanding and it has meant the giving of sight to another” (Emme, in preparation). The place of visibility in meaning has been framed in recent years by the precautions of critical theory which problematized vision as a metaphor for universal knowing, and called understanding of vision in a smaller, more useful way, as a complex construction of a responding individual (Ihde, 1998, p.89). In the context of the study presented here, we explore the meaning of visibility in immigrant children’s learning to see through the camera’s lenses as they re-visited and re-called

their experiences of their first day at school in the new country. Following is a description and interpretation of the process of developing the fotonovelas. Two illustrative examples are provided.

Individual interviews: After establishing a trusting relationship with the children and spending two months of “playing” with the digital cameras, and a month of using the cameras to “document” life in the school as they saw it, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the children in order to gather their recollections of their first day at school in Canada. Two of the interviews were conducted in the children’s native language (Mandarin) with the help of a bilingual research assistant. The other interviews were conducted in English. Presented below are the experiential accounts as extracted from two interviews. The interview with Mahmoud, a ten-year-old refugee from Pakistan was conducted in English, and the interview with Amelia, a ten-year-old girl from Taiwan was conducted in Mandarin and then translated in English.

Mahmoud’s recollection of his experience of the first day in school is as follows:

When we came [to Canada] there was snow. It was a Thursday when I came to school. I was with my father, and my older brother and sister who are in this school. The first person we see is the principal. The principal show me my classroom.

And then I came here [in the classroom], met all people and our teacher. It was kind of scary. Lots of people looking at me. And there’s look like they were going to fight with me. I am scared of these people and they are scared of me. First I was scared. Why are they looking at me like this? [with squinty eyes] (shows with his eyes). And then I sat right there (pointing). And then I eat my snack and then

at ... uh... at lunch recess... um... I go with this boy to show me where the bathroom is, where the lunchroom is, and show me a little bit of rules. (Individual interview, Dec. 2004)

Amelia's recollection of her experience of the first day in school is as follows:

When I came here I feel a little bit scared. [I was scared] because the first day I come to school, lots of teachers and lots of people looking at me. I felt very scared. I hug my mom, I was with my mom, holding [her] hand. Then my mom said, 'These people and these teachers are very nice, you don't need to be scared.

Based on the descriptions provided by all six of the children participating in this part of the study, two themes emerged as being central to children's experiences of their first day at school in the new country—being scared, and feeling “being looked at.” We felt however, there was a lot more to the experiences that the children had than they could communicate in words. To facilitate children's ways of expressing and communicating the complexity of their lived experiences of entering the unknown world of schooling in Canada through the door of the classroom, and seeing their classmates from the point of view of an outsider, we initiated a group conversation about their experiences of first day in school. Our goal as researchers was to engage the children in the process re-enacting their experiences as a step forward the development of the fotonovelas.

Re-enactment:

Following are excerpts from the group conversation aimed at setting the task of re-enactment:

R: When we talked with each one of you individually last week, you had different feelings about what it was like to walk into the classroom for the

first time. Do you remember what some of the words you used for those feelings were?

Child : Scared.

Child : Scared.

R: Scared, mmmhmm.

R: What we're hoping to do today is to spend a little bit of time talking with all of you about what you remember about coming into the classroom for the first time. What we're going to do is to try to be characters, you know somebody has to be the teacher and who else, who else was involved in the first day you came to the class?

Children: The other kids.

R: And what we'd like to do is to talk about that and pretend those characters and how you remember what it was like. And then we'll take roles and then we're going to take a picture.

R: So, maybe what we should do is to make two pictures. We'll do a picture from inside the classroom as if you were, the camera is one of the kids in the class looking up at the new kid, do you think, can you imagine that? Now who needs to be in these pictures, we talked about that a little bit, who are the important people that were a part of that?

Child: The new student.

Child: The teacher.

Child: The principal, the parents and the [other] students.

R: Also, think about what the other people were thinking? Do you remember

thinking about them when you first entered the classroom?

Children: Yeah....

R: How about the other kids in the classroom? What did they all do?

Children: Looking at you.

R: How did they look? Show me.

Child: (showing with his eyes and body).

R: And you? Did you look at them or you did look at the teacher or where did you look? Show me.

The conversation continued by bringing more details regarding the children's own body position and movements, the physical layout of the classroom (the positions of the desks), the position and movement of the teacher, the principal, the parent who came with the child to the classroom. The children remembered, showed with their bodies and described the first thing that they noticed when they came to the classroom (e.g. the bright windows, the other kids, the teacher). The children and we agreed that the first picture that we would take would be from the point of view of the other children who were looking at the new child entering the classroom. We explained to the children that the camera was going to be "the other children" looking at them. After lengthy and elaborate negotiations in terms of roles and positions of the characters in the room, as well as the physical layout of the room, the children agreed that this picture had the essential elements of the experience each one of them had individually. Later this picture became the central frame in the finished fotonovela (see examples below).

We worked from this frame both backward and forward in time (e.g. what happened before and after) to help each individual child to create their own fotonovela

based on their own experiences of entering the classroom and finding his or her place in it. For example frame one, which was taken from the point of view of the child coming through the door, captured the child's experiences prior to the experience of "feeling being looked at" by the rest of the children. Frame three showed each child at their place in the classroom. Thus while the central frame of the fotonovela shows elements of the experiences commonly shared among all children, the first and the third frames show the unique elements of the experiences as recalled and captured in images by the children themselves.

Arranging the Images in a Narrative Format

In order to develop their individual fotonovelas, each child was guided through the process of remembering and re-enacting the moment of entering the classroom for the first time. These scenes were shot individually and added to the fotonovelas as their first frame. For the third frame, the children were given a choice in terms of representing their memories of the first day in school. They could take another photograph, showing what happened after they were introduced to the class by the principle and the teacher or to draw a picture on this part of the experience. Following below are excerpts from the conversations with Mahmoud and Amelia during the development of the first frame in their individual fotonovelas:

Mahmoud's re-collection/re-enactment of his first day in school:

R: We have the new kid coming. OK. So you want us to be your
 parents.

Mahmoud: (Nods)

R: And where was the teacher the first day?

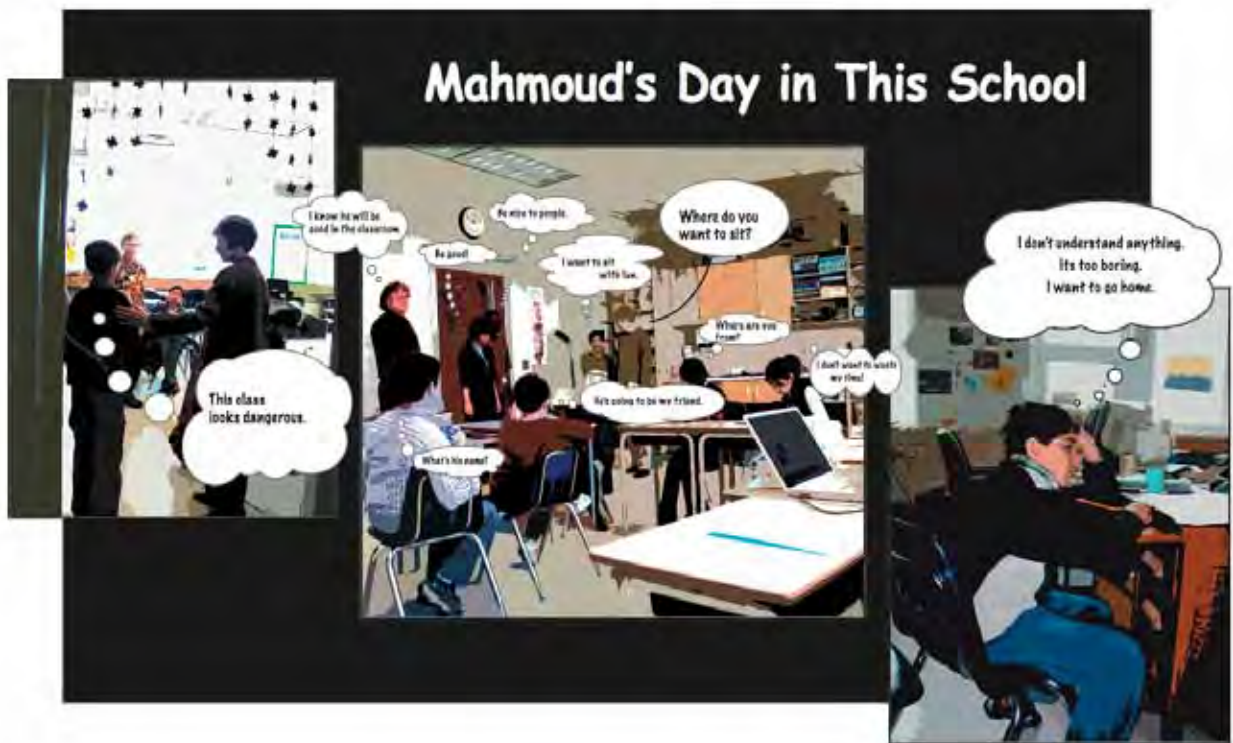
Mahmoud: The teacher is standing...(points)

R: What do the other kids need to be doing?

Mahmoud: Writing.

R: And where was the principal?

Mahmoud: Here (points)?

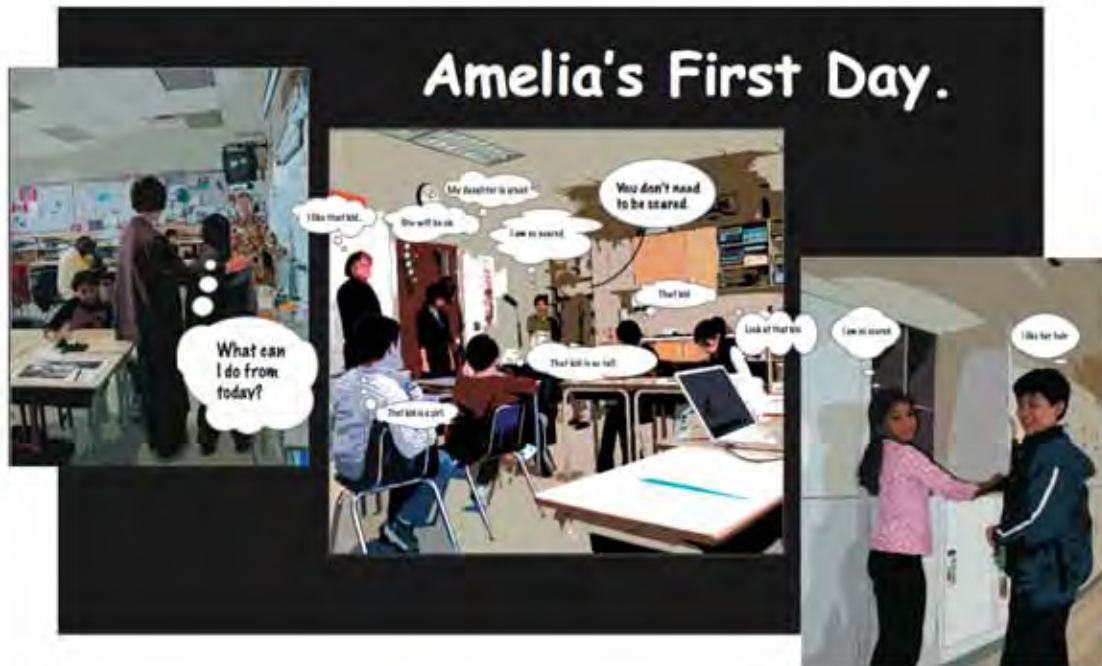


Amelia's re-collection/re-enactment of his first day in school:

R: And what were you thinking as you looked in the door for the first time?

You were standing at the door. Remember that the camera is you, right?

- Amelia: Mmm, the windows...
- R: What about the windows did you notice?
- Amelia: They were bigger than the classroom in China... about half of the size of these ones.
- R: So the room looked...
- Amelia: Very bright. I can't see the other students... the light is in my eyes.
- R: So were you by yourself?
- Amelia: No, with my mom.
- R: So who's your mom for the picture?
- Amelia: How about you?
- R: OK, I'll be happy to be your mom for the picture. Where was your mom?
- Amelia: Oh she was ... Right here (points)
- R: How about the teacher?
- Amelia: She just, stayed ... over there (points).
- R: Now, Amelia, everyone is where you remembered them to be. Go and look through the camera. Does that feel like the way you remember it from the first day? OK? Press the button then.



“Writing” the Text, Engaging the “Reader”

For the human sciences, van Manen (1994) insisted, “and especially for hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself” (p. 125). The project of phenomenology (and hermeneutics) traditionally involves or even is often described as writing perhaps because it was the historical fact of literacy that led to a transformed consciousness that created a distance between understanding and experience, reflection and action (Ong, 1982). Recently however, philosophers of science, technology and the arts have drawn attention to the expansion of hermeneutics in response to the growing significance of images and technologies in experience and expression (Flusser, 2000; Ihde, 1998). Media critic and philosopher, Vilém Flusser, suggests that the invention of photography represents a transformation in consciousness of the same order of significance as the growth of written language that was seen as the foundation of literacy (and thus, hermeneutics).

Provocatively, he suggests that just as literacy was a rationalist response to idolatry, technical images, such as photographs are a response to what he calls ‘textolatry’ (Flusser, 2000, p.18). Idhe (1998) clarifies this by tracing the relationship between the ‘perceptionism’ of Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology and the linguistic turn in Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology. Linking the first with the phenomenology of speech and the second with the phenomenology of language, Idhe argues that these two dimensions belong together. Similarly he sees an experiential dimension and a theoretical dimension in the form and use of technologies, and argues that technologies are always both culturally embedded and culturally relative. His argument, that science can and must be interpreted using an expanded hermeneutic phenomenology, links back to Flusser. Although Idhe warns that technology pushes its users in the direction of becoming ‘functionaries’ serving what he calls the program of the camera, he also argues that it is possible to go beyond the barriers embedded in the technology to authentic expression and insight.

This study is, in part, an effort to provide an example of an “expanded hermeneutic phenomenology.” It is built on a notion of text that requires an expansion of the traditional meaning of literacy as “reading and writing”. Our new notions of reading, writing and literacy (we are still served, but also limited by the linguistic analogies implicit in these terms) need to include knowledge of the basic visual elements, to understand the meaning and components of the visual syntax (e. g. Dondis, 1973; Owen, 1970). As suggested by both Flusser (2000) and Ihde (1998), we also need to play a part in developing well-theorized, sophisticated strategies for interpreting the impacts of technologies, cultures and contexts on visual meaning. We also need to go further. What

makes this extension possible is that verbal and visual literacies have the same goal—to communicate, create and interpret meaning. In each mode of communication there is structure through technology, cultural convention and context. However, it is important to recognize that image and text are not at all identical, and certainly have a different role in creating phenomenological text. What is similar, is the relationship between phenomenological reflection and the use of essential elements, both linguistic and visual, in “an artistic endeavor, a creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life” (van Manen, 1994, p. 39) that is called phenomenological inquiry. For instance, both writing and creating visual narratives allow for phenomenological reflection as they require the researcher to distance oneself from the immediate involvement with the things in the lifeworld.

As in writing and re-writing the phenomenological text (van Manen, 1994), arranging and re-arranging the visual frames was not the end of the process of creating a text. The process of arranging the frames in particular order that reflected the chronology of the experiences of entering the classroom on their first day in school was followed by digital manipulation of the images that included insertion of text written by the children. This visual manipulation was used to choose a balance between the perceptual and the linguistic. As the specific, and seemingly realistic images of particular children were abstracted using photoshop® filters, they became cartoon-like icons. This process of turning the three-frame visual narratives developed by the children into fotonovelas can be seen as a process of reduction. The method of reduction developed by Husserl aims at promoting understanding of the essential features of the experience. According to Husserl (1972) in the *phenomenological* (or psychological reduction) the aim is to focus attention

on consciousness and its experiences while correspondingly turning attention away from external objects.

From our phenomenological standpoint we can and must put the question of essence. What is the perceived-as-such? What essential phases does it harbor in itself in its capacity as noema? (section 88c)

We argue that the use of digital manipulation in the visual narrative is not only a form of visual representation but also a form of phenomenological analysis. Thus contrary to Heidegger and Horkheimer who are concerned that with advances in the technologies of vision, “our natural capacity for vision diminishes and atrophies in a culture that fails to encourage its aesthetic, imaginative, spiritual, and rational-critical potential” (in Levin, 1997, p. 15), we argue that technology does indeed help us represent visually the essential elements of the experience. As demonstrated elsewhere (Emme & Kirova, 2005) digital post-production manipulation allows us to engage in a form of “collage hermeneutics” (Brockelman, 2001, p. 187) that creates a critical tension between idealizing pictorial unity and a material awareness of meaningful fragments.

If “textual practice” that is both phenomenological (in that it describes lived experiences) and hermeneutic (in that it is an interpretation of the expressions and objectifications in lived experiences in an attempt to determine the meaning embodied in them) is essential in “doing” human science research (van Manen, 1994) then the production of a “text” introduces the notion that readers, based on their own lived experiences, may have multiple even conflicting interpretations of that text. This was evidenced in the written text produced by other children from grade five who did not participate in the development of the fotonovela *My First Day in School*. The fotonovela

was given to this new group of children with only a title and blank speech and thought balloons. These children were invited to read the body language and sequenced images and record their understandings by filling in the speech bubbles. This extension of the study, implying as it does a limitless cycle of writings, depictions and readings and viewings, hints at the rich potential of the fotonovela for developing a research and interpretation culture with children in schools.

Although it has been argued that lived experiences seem to have a linguistic structure, and that one could speak of all experiences, all human interactions as some kind of text (Ricoeur, 1981), based on the fotonovela “text” produced by the children in this study, and the text produced by the readers of the fotonovela, we argue that the visual and the linguistic not only compliment each other in capturing the phenomenon of the first day of school, but allow the reader to engage with the text in multiple ways. The children have embodied their stories. Like their lived bodies these stories simultaneously engage us visually and linguistically. Embedded in those two dimensions are many others that express meaning through organization, selection, abstraction, and elaboration; visual and linguistic interpretation. While the “phenomenological nod” is a result of readers’ engagement in their own experiences on the phenomenon as *shown* through words in the text, we suggest that a visual narrative as in fotonovelas has the same evocative power.

Endnote

1. For an extended exploration of the phenomenological hermeneutics, technology, and depiction in research see Ihde (1993, 1998)

References:

- Alerby, E. (2003). 'During the break we have fun': a study concerning pupils' experiences of school. *Educational Research*, 45 (1), 17-28.
- Berger, J. & Mohr, J. (1982). *Another Way of Telling*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society.
- Brockelman, T. (2001). *The frame and the mirror: On collage and the postmodern*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Casebier, A. (1991). *Film and phenomenology: Toward a realist theory of cinematic representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chan-fai, C. (2004). Separation and Connection: Phenomenology of Door and Window. In D. Carr and C. Chan-fai (Eds.) *Space, Time, and Culture*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Danaher, T., & Briod, M. (2005). Phenomenological research with children. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experiences: Methods and approaches* (pp. 217-235). London: Sage.
- Davey, n. (1999). The Hermeneutics of Seeing. In I. Heywood, and B. Sandywell (Eds.) *Interpreting Visual Culture*. New York: Routledge. pp. 3-30.
- Dewey, J. (1991). *How We Think*. New York: Prometheus Books; originally published, 1910.
- Dondis, D., A. (1973). *A Primer of Visual Literacy*. The Massachusetts Insititue of

- Technology.
- Emme, M. (in press). InSight: Critical Multi-Vision of Art Education. In (K. Keiffer-Boyd, J. Jagodzinski, & M. Emme (Eds.) InCite, InSight, InSite: 25 Years of the Journal of Social Theory and Art Education.
- Emme, M., Kirova, A., Kamau, O., & Kosanovich, S. (In press). Ensemble Research: Immigrant Children's Exploration of Peer Relationships through Fotonovela. *Alberta Journal of Research in Education*
- Emme, M & Kirova, A. (2005). Photoshop semiotics: Research in the age of digital manipulation. *Visual Art Research*, 31(1) 145-153.
- Fasoli, L. (2003). Reading Photographs of Young Children: looking at pictures. *Contemporary issues in Early Childhood*, 4 (1). 32-47.
- Flusser, V. (2000). *Toward a Philosophy of Photography*. Translated by A. Matthews, London: Reaktion Books.
- Gadamer, H.G. (1989). *Truth and Method*. New York: Crossroad.
- Grinberg, L. & Grinberg, R. (1989). *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1968). *What is called thinking?* New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, M. (1982). *On the way to language*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and Time*. Albany: SUNY.
- Heywood, I., & Sandywell, B. (1999). Introduction: Explorations in the Hermeneutics of Vision. In I. Heywood and B. Sandywell (eds.), *Interpreting Visual Culture: Explorations in the Hermeneutics of the Visual*. New York: Routledge, IX-XVIII.
- Holland, P. (1992). WHAT IS A CHILD? *Popular Images of Childhood*. London: Virago.

- Hugunin, J. (1988). Subjektive fotografie and the existentialist ethic. In *Afterimage* 15(6) 14-16.
- Husserl, E. (1981). *The Origin of Geometry*. Translated by D. Carr. In P. McCormick and F. Elliston (Eds.) *Husserl's Shorter Works*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Husserl, E. (1960). *Cartesian Meditations*. Translated by D. Cairns. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1972). *Ideas*. Translated by B. Gibson. New York: Collier.
- Husserl, E. (1973). *Experience and Judgement*. Translated by J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Ihde, D. (1993) *Postphenomenology: Essays in the postmodern context*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Ihde, D. (1998) *Expanding Hermeneutics: Visualism in Science*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Kirova, A., Mohamed, F., & Emme, M. (In press). Learning the Ropes, Resisting the Rules: Immigrant Children's Representation of the Lunchtime Routine Through Fotonovela. *Journal of the Canadian Association For Curriculum Studies*.
- Levin, D. (1997). Introduction. In D. M. Levin (Ed.) *Site of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy*. Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press. 1-67.
- Nietzsche, F. (1968). *The Will to Power*. New York: Random House.
- Nordsrom, G. (1991). Children and pictorial language. In H. Hansson, G. Nordsrom, K.

- Pedersen, K., & O. Stafseng, O. (Eds.) *Children's Pictorial Language*.
Stockholm: Classon Bokforlag.
- Ong, W., J. (1982). *Orality and Literacy: the technologizing of the word*. New York:
Methuen.
- Owen, P. (1970). *Painting*. Oxford University Press.
- Prosser, J. (2000). *The Moral Maze of Image ethics*. Online at:
http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/~edu-jdp/image/moral_maze.html
- Ricoeur, P. (1987). *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press.
- Stonehill, B. (1994).
<http://www.pomona.edu/Academics/courserelated/classprojects/Visual-lit/intro/credits.html> retrieved on Feb 4, 2006).
- van Manen, M. (1994). *Researching Lived Experience*. London, ON: The Althouse
Press.
- Wells, L. (1997) *Photography: a critical introduction*. London: Routledge.