This Visual Research Methods annotated bibliography documents parts of the literature review which informed the detailed research design and establishment phase activities of the “Developing a community approach to supporting literacy for pre-schoolers in Fiji” Project, which was funded by the Australian Aid Development Awards Scheme 2013-2016.

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Photography now used as an established method for working with young children across a range of disciplines and outside the academy, in evaluation and policy research and by practitioners working with children and young people. Documents the advantages of photography when researching children's diverse contexts, including providing active roles within the research space, increased collaboration, enabling genuine communication between children and researchers, placing children at the centre of research, flexibility and autonomy for participants.

Argues that where photographs are socially produced artefacts, their interpretation is complex and contested and requires critical consideration of the context of the photograph and photography. Examines three methodological issues: what photographs record, interpretation and analysis of photographs and how ownership is attributed to photographs in published works from a critical perspective. The discussion references two cases with primary school children in the UK. Concludes that photographs provide partial and incomplete account, and as socially produced artefacts require critical consideration and reflection about what is photographable and not in children's lives, the exercise of power within the social context of the photograph, how intended meanings are teased out from participants and ways to recalibrate issues of ownership, copyright and attribution of sources when publishing papers.


Explores the potential of participatory video to support learning for local innovation (in agriculture and natural resource management) through literature review. Review suggests participatory video has capacity to enable vertical and horizontal flow of local knowledge and information and stimulates reflection and experimentation.

Participatory video has worked to building capacity for marginalised groups to be involved in dialogue and debate with multiple actors, exchange of knowledge across stakeholder groups, as a tool for mutual learning and conflict resolution, as an opportunity to include marginalised groups in communication and knowledge sharing and to revitalise social capital.

However, the paper also argues that use of video alone is unlikely to have these impacts, rather the use of facilitation process and facilitators, institutional support or mandate, access to video making equipment and careful consideration of the social contexts of participants and therefore the ways in which participation is constructed.

Cites Fijian case of the Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group as review of Harris (2009).
This article discusses the use of photo-elicitation interviews (PEIs) in classroom settings as both a stand-alone methodology and as supplementary approach to ethnography, describing how to use the approach and discussing benefits and challenges associated with it.

Whilst researcher taken photographs are suited to theory driven research, they risk capturing what the researcher attends to or sees as meaningful, rather than interview participants. For more inductive studies, participant taken photographs maybe more useful as tool in the subsequent interview.

In this method photographs are tools (rather than representations of truths or realities) for the purpose of extending questions and for participants a unique way of communicating the dimensions of their lives. Similarly they can ease rapport between researcher and participant, provide a semi-structured interview schedule and jog memories. When used with children it overcomes some of problematics interviews pose for children and provide clear tangible prompts for them.

On the challenges front, when using method with children need to consider family power dynamics affecting the child's capacity to take his or own photos, data analysis can be overwhelming, especially if working with groups of children and multiple photos etc.

Discusses the use of photography in early childhood setting (Icelandic playschool ages 2 to 6) in both supervised and unsupervised modes in the context of a project to look at children think about their playschool and listen to their perspectives. argues child centred research methods should be based upon children's preferred method of communication to address issues of power relations. Non-verbal language methods used to date include artwork, photography, sounds, videos and picture stories.

Describes the advantages of photographs as method for child research including providing children to access to visual and verbal language in research settings, provides agency for child to direct interview, improving opportunities for and timings of engagement between children and researchers and leaves children with a concrete product from their participation. Emphasis the importance of follow up interview with children to understand the intention and focus of the photographer.

This paper argues that use of digital filming and photography with children has further capacity to enhance children's agency and hear their voices when it allows for experimentation and unexpected forms of expression and participation that emerge from children's actual picture making practices. It discusses the learnings and research methods deployed in a project researching 7-12 year olds school journeys in Helsinki. Proposes the scope of visual research extends beyond production and interpretation of images into diverse performances involving the image making equipment itself. Argues that characterising visual media as having a relative stable set of properties and conventions constrains the ways in which children 'do' visual expression and is contrary to artistic practises. Proposes that allowing for children's improvisation and expression in visual research methods further provides children with opportunities to participate, where participation is an ongoing process, within which engagement is situated and partial. Provides an example of an experimental style of 'doing' visual methods which assume uncertainty and openness as inevitable within the methods.


This paper provides a three case studies of visual methods for use with children and young people. The cases span early childhood, primary and secondary school aged children. Argues for visual methods used to work ‘with’ children (rather than ‘on’ them) provides insights into children lived experiences. By examining the benefits and challenges of the three distinct methods the paper highlights that visual methods must be attuned to the spaces in which they are situation and the participants who will use them. Emphasis the importance of combined visual and oral approaches to when using this method and the potential for visual methods to include children of different ages within discriminating between confidence levels and academic attainments.


Van Maanen, J 1988, Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Walters, K & Early Childhood Australia 2006, Capture the moment: Using digital photography in early childhood settings, Early Childhood Australia, Watson, ACT.

Written from a practitioners perspective this booklet provides example and tips for the use of digital images in documentation, planning, learner portfolios and family communication within early childhood settings. It argues that digital practices in early childhood settings enhance communication with families, allowing them to see both the product and processes of their child’s learning, enhances positive participation, leads to powerful ‘teachable moments’ and sustained interest of children.


This paper argues that the photograph ‘conflates reality with its representation, thus making it a tool to elicit reactions to a presumed truth that has supported colonial and neo-colonial agendas and discourses in international relations. It's point of critique is the use of photography by development workers and the use of photographic images in international agencies reports, brochures and informational material.

Outlines an analysis methodology relying on Banks(2001) and Barthes (1980) proposed as way of disrupting the naturalisation of images (where the concept that is literally signified (e.g. child) serves to naturalise the connoted message of the sign (e.g. innocence or helplessness) as a way of critically analysing international development images of women and child.

Proposes the ability for photographs to continue neo-colonial agendas can be overcome by practices of critical analysis when using images as documentation and ensuring photographs identify those people in the photograph, as well as the photographer and are accompanied by contextualising information that highlights issues of social justice and makes visible the ability to resist injustices.

Wolcott, HF 1999, Ethnography: A way of seeing, Alta Mira Press, Walnut Creek, CA.

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