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Using Photovoice as Pedagogy

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Feminism

In class we will discuss the differences in online versus face-to-face documentation. Ask participants to respond to questions or reflect on their experiences with both methods. The goal is to raise awareness of individuals and societies by focusing on images created by the individuals.

Photovoice is grounded in feminist and critical theories. Latz (2017) noted three primary theoretical strands that undergird photovoice:

- Feminism—the research pays attention to issues of power, particularly in regard to gender, promotes different voices/perspectives, honors diversity, honors action, and is reflexive
- Frierean Education for Critical Consciousness—images of the community are created by the participants rather than the researcher(s). The goal is to engage people in their own learning and empowerment
- Participatory Document Photography—the goal is to raise awareness of individuals and societies by focusing on images created by the individuals

Photovoice is a research method that, with some work, can be adapted for classroom use at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in a variety of disciplines. I see its greatest potential as elevating the students’ voices into teaching and learning conversations, which can help us improve our pedagogy for better learning.

Eight Steps of Photovoice for Pedagogy

1. Identification. Identify place, people, and purpose of study/activity. Answer the questions: What is the purpose of the study/activity? Who will be involved? What is the research site? How will images be captured and submitted?
2. Invitation. Invite class members to participate
3. Education. Teach co-researchers/participants about consent and how their photographs might be used
4. Documentation. Ask participants to respond to questions or prompts related to the project’s purpose.
5. Narration. Participants will narrate the contents of their photographs through either individual interviews or focus group sessions. This could also be done online using a discussion board in Elearning or as a writing exercise.
6. Ideation. The researcher/instructor generates themes. This may be done alone or in concert with participants/co-researchers. The themes will be converted into findings with practical implications.
7. Presentation. Exhibitions can be held in a variety of ways: poster, brochure, website, digital story, museum display, or in class. During this step, participants have the opportunity to interact with people in the community, such as policymakers, who have the capacity to enact change.
8. Confirmation. The researcher/instructor should try to understand how people who interacted with the exhibition received the presentation. Were the messages clear? What perceptions did they have? Will policy be influenced? In the classroom, this might involve other instructors and/or students, or it may be limited to the instructor and co-researcher/class members. (Adapted from Latz, 2017)

I intend to use photovoice in a qualitative research class this fall. I have multiple goals:

1. Enhance a feminist teaching approach. I employ a feminist approach to teaching and learning. This will allow the students to be co-constructors of teaching and learning in the classroom in a new way.
2. Teach methods. The course is aimed at teaching students how to conduct qualitative research. Many have not conducted a study or participated in a study before. Engaging them in a mini-photovoice study will provide an active and experiential learning opportunity.
3. Help students experience both sides of the qualitative research relationship firsthand. Employing photovoice will allow me to teach them about conducting qualitative research while they also have the experience of being a participant in the study.

Purpose of Study/Activity: How do students learn to become qualitative researchers?

The activity will be presented as a homework assignment. Participants will be presented with a consent form, and I will use 10-15 minutes of class time to explain the project, its goals, and how the photographs will be used.

1. Students will use their cell phones to capture 3 photographs in response to the prompt: How are you becoming a qualitative researcher? They will submit their photos to a private Google Drive folder.
2. I will host two focus groups in which students are asked to narrate one of the images they took. Half of the class will participate in the in-class session while the other half observes; the other half will narrate their responses online using a class discussion forum while the other half observes.
3. In class we will discuss the differences in online versus face-to-face participation. We will also host an exhibition in which other faculty who teach qualitative research methods are invited to attend and interact with the students.

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