Using Photography as a Means of Phenomenological Seeing: "Doing Phenomenology" with Immigrant Children

by **Anna Kirova and Michael Emme**

Abstract

The aim of the study presented in this paper 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, the study proceeded from the question: What does it mean for an immigrant child to enter school in a new country? Two methodological questions were also explored, namely (1) How does one conduct a phenomenological investigation of a childhood phenomenon when the researchers and the participants do not share a common language? and (2) How does one engage children in the research process so that they provide not only "thick" descriptions of their experiences using alternative, non-linguistic means, but also make meaning of these experiences? In the current study, still photography was used to help the immigrant children recall and make meaning of what they experienced on their first day of school in a new country. In the process, they were enabled to become conscious photographers who came to see the world in such a way that photographic seeing became phenomenological seeing. Two examples of the children's visual narratives in the form of fotonovelas are presented 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. It is suggested that, although the written and visual texts produced as a result of the study differ, they are similar in the way in which 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 does a child experience school as a stranger in the world of others? What does it mean for a child to undergo the experience of schooling in a new country?

To undergo an experience of 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 lifeworlds 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, December 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 and thus in providing "thick descriptions" of his lived experience of going to school in Canada for the first time. In this study, addressing linguistic limitations in studying immigrant children's experiences became a central methodological task.

Methodological Challenges

Danaher and Briod (2005) point out that phenomenological research involving children aims to clarify, describe, and interpret children's unique way of attending to the world. However, they stress that childhood's lifeworld - the world as directly meant and immediately experienced - is largely closed to adult understanding. In the current study, this methodological challenge was amplified not only by the fact that the children had certain limitations in their spoken use of the English language, but also that we, as the researchers, did not share a common language with the children. Thus 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 information about their lived experiences from immigrant children. Were the "blanks" in the description provided by Ianuk due only to the limitations of his English language usage, or also to the fact that 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 could 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 a 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, p. 261). Thus, not only words, but also images, 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 complement to thick description was a way to represent non-verbal, embodied knowing, a kind of 'thick depiction'.

Bridging Methodologies: An Attempt

Van Manen (1994) 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 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 (1910/1991), 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 that 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 the 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 (1972) insists on the absolute difference between phenomenological seeing and sensual 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. (section 37)

Visual perception is a methodological starting point in Husserl's (1981) phenomenological method. For him, phenomenological evidence, which is "nothing more than grasping an entity with the consciousness of its being itself there [*Sebstda*]" (p. 257), takes the form of experience (Husserl, 1960). 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" (p. 52). In order for the *seeing subject* or the transcendental ego to *experience* something, however, he or she must 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"

(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 (1997) indicates,

> Phenomenological 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 sensual 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 the Greek and is a combination 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), is able to draw insight as sight or seeing into a thing or subject (Emme, n.d.). However, in our discussion of the use of photography in 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 an experience. Weidel (1995) argues that photographs can record a range of nonverbal dimensions of a situation and can catch and portray aspects of a situation impossible to record using only written observations or transcribing oral interactions. Fasoli (2003) similarly 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" (Weidel, p. 76), they are "similar to a written account in that they are incomplete and tell a partial story" (Fasoli, p. 36). We extend this statement by arguing that photographs not only do not capture the whole story, but they also do not capture "reality". We view the process of creating photography and discussing it as an interpretive, hermeneutic practice where 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 to select what to "draw light" into or to "draw with light". Thus, by privileging certain aspects of the situation and excluding others, the process of

photography is an active re-creating of reality, a process that might be called *photographic seeing*. But can this process also be used to recall the richness of past experiences, as words may not? As an aspect of phenomenological methodology, the experience of recalling has been described as a form of collecting from past experience (Heidegger, 1968), a gathering of the kinds of understanding that belong to being.

A number of researchers have pointed out how a photograph can evoke past memories, feelings, and experiences (Berger & Mohr, 1982; Holland, 1991; Prosser, 2000; Wells, 1997). "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. Hugunin (1988) explains these dimensions in his exploration of the link between subjective photography and phenomenology, as does Casebier (1991) in his realist theory of cinematic representation. In the context of our study, we describe how the visual representation of the experience of the first day of school involves fusion of the horizons surrounding the children, the captured image of the situation they encounter as they enter the classroom, and the viewer of the created image. In the language of phenomenology, viewing photographs has some of the characteristics of phenomenological reduction, as it involves "modifications of the pure imagination" (Husserl, 1973, section 87a) and is disconnected from the lifeworld that the photograph represents. It is also similar in the sense that the viewer may or may not have been involved in the visual perception of the context of the image. Thus the process of interpretation and explication, although subjective, can transcend meaning beyond the visible. However, we argue that it is not only the process of viewing an image that can bring forward common and essential elements of human experiences, but also that these elements can become central to the methodology that involves photography as its central element. What follows is a description of the methodology we developed as we conducted the study of recent immigrant children's experiences of schooling 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 our study was unique because the still photographs were not only used 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 anglicised 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, UNICEF has produced fotonovelas for use in Nepal to convey information 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 to encourage Bosnian refugee children to represent their memories and their initial 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 levelling and even liberatory medium in contexts where varying literacies create inequities and representational disparity.

As it developed in the course of the study, 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. We understood these images to be the children's, not data that we could take with us. As photography became familiar (and even boring), we invited the children to start taking pictures around themes such as "life on the playground", "the cafeteria", and "me pretending". Through interaction and observation, we moved to the second stage, identifying children who seemed to be particularly committed to continuing in the photo club. These six children were engaged in conversations about their documentary images and the ideas they evoked. As part of this process, the children were introduced to the fotonovela and asked if they wished to create a similar, photo-comic-style story for children who were new to the school. From this discussion we identified several stories that they wished to tell: the first day of school, the lunchtime routine (Kirova,

Mohamed, & Emme, in press), life on the playground (Emme, Kirova, Kamau, & Kosanovich, in press), bullying, and so forth. To illustrate this methodology, we describe the fotonovela *My First Day in School*.

In developing the fotonovela, in addition to still photography we used elements of performative research, including acting scenes to be photographed as tableaux, which provided deeper insights into the participants' 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, performance allows 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 to become thoughtful photographers, the performing part of developing the fotonovelas was intended to help the children select *telling moments* in their experiences that would later become images.

The performance portion of the fotonovelas led to two major methodological accomplishments. Firstly, the performance allowed children with limited English vocabulary to recall and re-enact details of their experiences that they would have been linguistically unable to describe had we relied solely on oral descriptions. Secondly, as a group activity, performance allowed both the children and us not only to gain insight into each child's experience of entering the classroom in a new school for the first time, but also to see in a phenomenological sense each experience as an example of entering the "alien world" (Husserl, 1990) behind the classroom door.

A final element in our methodology involved the composition and manipulation of the tableau images when they were formatted in 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) all served to suspend the images between the perceived objective referentiality of a photograph and the imagined world of drawing. The resultant stories are rich with gesture, proximity and place without being burdened with the distracting minutiae of the perceived moment. Thus we believe that developing the fotonovelas allowed us to bring both *photographic seeing* and *phenomenological seeing* into a research process where the children became researchers of their own 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. The school had a free-lunch programme because of the large number of low-income students. It also had a high percentage of visible minorities. Some ethnic groups were Aboriginal, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Arab, East Indian and African, and many were first-generation immigrants. More than seven languages were spoken among the 204 children. During the course of the study, which began in February 2004, we worked with the same small group of six children who were in grade 5 when they developed the fotonovela *My First Day in School*. All were recent immigrants from China, Japan, Cambodia, Pakistan, Korea and Taiwan.

Gaining Insight Through Fotonovela

The term *insight* addresses the meaning of knowing in personal, social, and pedagogic dimensions through a metaphor of visuality 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, n.d.). The place of visuality 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 for understanding of vision in a smaller, more useful way, as a complex construction of a responding individual (Ihde, 1998). In the context of our study, we explore the meaning of visuality in immigrant children's learning to see through the camera lenses as they revisited and recalled their experiences of their first day in school in the new country. What follows is a description and interpretation of the process of developing the fotonovelas, with two illustrative examples provided.

Individual Interviews

After establishing a trusting relationship with the children and spending two months "playing" with the digital cameras and a month using the cameras to document life in school as they saw it, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the children in order to gather their recollections of their first day in 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 others were conducted in English, although many of the words were replaced by gestures. 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 translated into English.

Mahmoud recollects his experience of the first day in school this way:

> 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, December 2004)

Amelia's recollection of her experience of the first day in school 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." (Individual interview, December 2004)

Based on the descriptions provided by all six children, two themes emerged as central to their experiences of the first day at school: being scared and being looked at. However, we believed that there was much more to the children's experiences than they could communicate in words. We initiated a group conversation to facilitate how they could express and communicate the complexity of their experiences of entering the unknown world of school in Canada through the door of the classroom and seeing their classmates from the point of view of an outsider. Our goal was to engage them in re-enacting their experiences as a step toward developing the fotonovelas.

Re-enactment

The following are excerpts from the group conversation intended to set 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 did you look at the teacher or where did you look? Show me.

The conversation continued, bringing out more details about the children's body positions and movements,

the physical layout of the classroom (the positions of the desks), the positions and movements of the teacher, the principal, and the parent who accompanied the child to the classroom. The children remembered, positioned themselves, and described what they had first noticed on entering the classroom (for instance, the bright windows, the other students, the teacher). The children and we agreed that the first picture we took would be from the point of view of the other children seeing the new child entering the classroom. We explained that the camera would 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 each individual's experience. 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 (focusing, for example, on what happened before and after) to help all the children to create their own fotonovela based on their own experiences of entering the classroom and finding their places. For example, *Frame 1*, which was taken from the point of view of the child coming through the door, captured the child's experiences before the experience of *feeling being looked at* by the other children. *Frame 3* showed each child in his or her place in the classroom. Thus, although the central frame of the fotonovela shows elements of the experiences commonly shared by 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

To develop their individual fotonovelas, we guided all the children through remembering and re-enacting their first entry into the classroom. These scenes were shot individually and added to the fotonovelas as the first frame. For the third frame, the children could choose how to represent their own memories of that first day. They could take another photograph showing events after they were introduced to the class by the principal and the teacher or could draw a picture about this experience. Below are excerpts from conversations with Mahmoud and Amelia during the development of the first frame of their fotonovelas.

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

R: We have the new kid coming ... okay? 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)
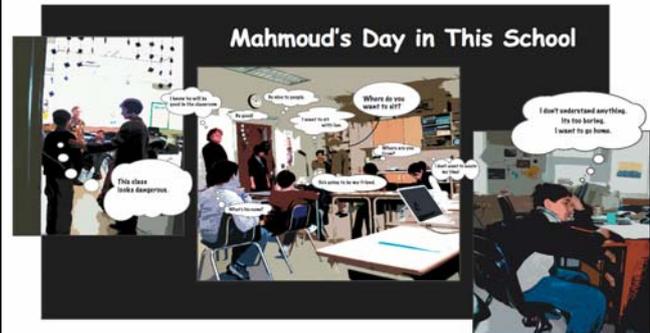R: What do the other kids need to be doing?
Mahmoud: Writing.
R: And where was the principal?
Mahmoud: Here? (points)
(See *Figure 1*)

Figure 1. Mahmoud's First Day of School

Amelia's recollection/re-enactment of her 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: Okay, 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? Okay? Press the button then.
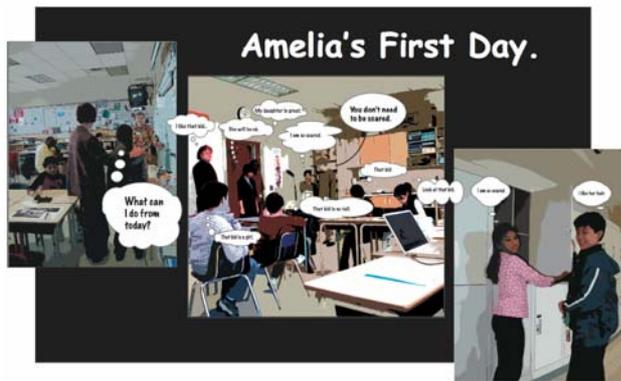
Figure 2. Amelia's First Day of School

"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) historically involves, and 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 Flusser suggests that the invention of photography represents a transformation in consciousness of the same order of significance as the growth of written language, which 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" (p. 18). Idhe 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 programme 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, in order to understand the meaning and components of the visual syntax (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 effects of technologies, cultures and contexts on visual meaning. We need to go further. Oral and visual literacies have the same goal, which makes this extension possible: to communicate, create and interpret meaning. Each mode of communication has structure through technology, cultural convention and context. However, it is important to recognize that image and text are not identical and play different roles in creating phenomenological text. The relationship between phenomenological reflection and the use of essential elements, both linguistic and visual, is nevertheless similar in "an artistic endeavour, a creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life" (van Manen, 1994, p. 39) that is called phenomenological inquiry. For example, both writing and creating visual narratives allow for phenomenological reflection, as they require the researcher to distance him- or herself from immediate involvement with objects in the lifeworld.

As in writing and rewriting the phenomenological text (van Manen, 1994), arranging and rearranging the visual frames was not the end of the process of creating a text. Once the frames were arranged in a particular order that reflected the chronology of the experiences of entering the classroom on the first day in school, the images were digitally manipulated, including inserting 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. Reduction as developed by Husserl (1972) aims to promote understanding of the essential features of the experience. According to Husserl, in the *phenomenological* (or psychological reduction), the aim is to focus attention on consciousness and its experiences while deflecting attention 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 harbour in itself in its capacity as noema? (section 88c)

We argue that digital manipulation in the visual narrative is not only a form of visual representation, but also a form of phenomenological analysis. Thus, unlike Heidegger and Horkheimer (Levin, 1997), who were 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" (p. 15), we argue that technology helps 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 (describing lived experiences) and hermeneutic (interpreting the expressions and objectifications in experiences in an attempt to determine their embodied meaning) is essential in *doing* human science research (van Manen, 1994), then the production of a text introduces the notion that, based on their own experiences, readers may have multiple, even conflicting, interpretations of this text. This was evidenced in the written text produced by other children from grade 5 who did not participate in the development of *My First Day in School*. The fotonovela was given to this new group of children with only a title, and with speech and thought balloons blank. We invited them to read the body language and sequenced images and record their understandings by filling in the speech balloons. This extension of the study, implying as it does a limitless cycle of writings, depictions, readings, and viewings, hints at the rich potential of the fotonovela for developing a research and interpretation culture with children in schools. (For more detailed information on this stage of the research process, see Emme, Kirova, Kamau, & Kosanovich, in press; Kirova & Emme, in press; Kirova, Mohamed, & Emme, in press.)

It has been argued that 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). However, based on the fotonovela text produced by the children in this study and that produced by the readers of the fotonovela, we argue that the visual and the linguistic not only complement 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 these two dimensions are many others that express meaning through organization, selection, abstraction and elaboration, and visual and linguistic interpretation. Although the "phenomenological nod" is a result of readers' engagement in their own experiences of the phenomenon as *shown* through words in the text, we suggest that a visual narrative as in fotonovelas has the same evocative power.

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About the Authors

Anna Kirova is an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta in Canada. She holds a PhD from the University of Sofia, Bulgaria, and a PhD from the University of Alberta, Canada. She is currently the Education Research Domain Leader with the Prairie Centre of Excellence in Research on Immigration and Integration (PCERII) based at the University of Alberta. Her main research interests are in childhood phenomena including loneliness, boredom, and solitude, as well as the phenomenon of moving childhoods as it is lived in the experiences of immigration. Her publications on these topics include: "Lonely or Bored: Children's Lived Experiences Reveal the Difference" (*Interchange, 35*(2)), and "Accessing Children's Experiences of Loneliness through Conversations" (*Field Methods*, *15*(1)). She has recently co-edited an international volume entitled *Global Migration: Children, Schools and Families*. Her most recent publications are related to the exploration of Fotonovela as a research method in a collaborative school-based project with Dr Michael Emme.

Michael J. Emme is an Associate Professor of Art Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta in Canada. He holds a doctorate in Art Education from the University of British Columbia, Canada. Former editor of the *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, he is currently the editor of the *Canadian Art Teacher*. His main research interests include creative inquiry into photography as a studio practice with a focus on portraiture and collaborative self-portraiture, and image-based and arts-based research methods. He has exhibited and published internationally as a photographer and printmaker. His academic publications include: "The Meaning(s) of Lens Meaning" (*The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, *9*), "Unruly Research: Visuality in the Academy" (*The Canadian Review of Research in Art Education*, *26*(1)), and "Visuality in teaching and research: Activist art education" (*Studies in Art Education*, 43(1)). Recent publication with co-researcher Dr Anna Kirova includes "Photoshop Semiotics: Research in the Age of Digital Manipulation" (*Visual Arts Research*, *31*(1)).

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