Article

Fotonovela as a Research Tool in Image-Based Participatory Research with Immigrant Children

Anna Kirova, PhD
Faculty of Education,
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Canada

Michael Emme, EdD
Faculty of Education
University of Victoria
Victoria, Canada

Abstract

In this article the authors explore the effect of word-image relationships on the collection of data and the reporting of research results for a study involving the development of a series of fotonovelas with immigrant children in an inner-city school. The central question explored in this article is Can experiences such as producing visual narratives in the form of fotonovelas stimulate multiple expressions of voice and position and bring awareness of embodied ways of communicating in a culture-rich school context? The processes involved in collaboratively developing the photographic narrative format of the fotonovela combine visual elements and structures and embodied, reflective performance together with written text. As a research method fotonovela does not merely translate verbal into visual representations but constructs a hybrid photo-image-text that opens new spaces for dialogue, resistance, and representation of a new way of knowing that changes the way of seeing and has the potential to change the author's and the reader's self-understanding.

Keywords: arts-based research; immigrant children; participatory research with children; fotonovela

Background of the Study

As noted elsewhere (Kirova & Emme, 2006a, 2006b), the initial concern of the study was assisting new-immigrant children to examine the nonverbal strategies used in gaining access to majority-culture peers. At the beginning of the study, misunderstandings were conceptualized as decoding culturally embedded meanings (Archer, 1997; Pearce & Cronen, 1980). Any newcomer to the culture was seen as a recipient decoding a nonverbal message according to his or her cultural heritage, personal experiences, identity, and life scripts (Goffman, 1974). These are usually contrary or even contradictory to the encoder's intentions (Archer, 1997; Schneller, 1985). The difficulty is heightened by the fact that most gestures that appear similar differ greatly in their emblematic meaning (Ekman, 1980; Heslin & Patterson, 1982; von Raffler-Engel, 1980). This leads to false decoding (Poyatos, 1984), which produces miscommunication and misunderstanding (Mehrabian, 1971).

Our most recent conceptualization of nonverbal communication was influenced by an understating of the complex ways in which cultural, social, and psychological factors as well as gender, ethnicity, age, space, time, and technology enter into everyday nonverbal communication (Canfield, 2002). From this point of view, meaningful lines of action are best created when people are aware of the dynamics of the social context in which they find themselves. Thus, everyday interactions among members of varied cultural groups need to be understood beyond the simplistic notion of "translation" of cultural knowledge. Shi-Xu's (2001) conceptualization of such interactions as intercultural communication was central to our most recent understanding of immigrant children's interactions, both nonverbal and verbal, with their majority-culture peers. Intercultural communication is considered at a level of social action; that is, people acting with and on each other and their world. Thus, socially related actions are not simply understood but also interpreted and appropriated at the same time (Gadamer, 1975/1989). Intercultural communication also marks "Self-Other relationship and identity" (Shi-Xu, 2001, p. 286) and is typically "situated in a context of an imbalance of power between majority and minority cultural groups" (p. 279).

Studying intercultural communication at a nonverbal level is a challenging task because differences among individuals and groups are implicit and exist at a deeper, more subtle level (Archer, 1997) that people have difficulty describing (E. Hall, 1976, J. A. Hall, 1984). Thus, because research on and with immigrant children (de Block, 2006; Kirova, 2001; Kirova-Petrova, 2000; Osterman, 2001; Rao & Yuen, 2006) has relied mainly on interviews, there are clearly limitations to what is known about children's understanding and interpretation of their nonverbal interactions with their peers and how they cope with their rejection or peer conflict. In the study described here, we aimed to address the role of image-text-body relationships in studying intercultural nonverbal communication.

We also aimed to involve immigrant and refugee children as co-investigators of their school experiences in general and peer relationships in particular. We consider Chambers's (1997) assertion that methods should shift the historical balance "from closed to open, from individual to group, from verbal to visual, from measuring to comparing" (p. 104) as instrumental in developing the main research question of the study: What participatory research methods can be designed so that immigrant children become engaged in the exploration of their school experiences in general and peer relationships in particular? More specifically, for the purposes of this article, we explore the question, Can experiences such as producing visual narratives in the form of fotonovelas stimulate the expression of multiple voices and positions and bring

awareness of embodied ways of communicating in a culture-rich school context? We anticipated that such narratives could facilitate a dialogue about intercultural communication among children in culturally diverse school contexts that would go beyond language barriers.

Method

The critical examination of traditional research methods and the search for new methods that can serve as tools for children's participation in research has put photography at the forefront; it is an increasingly popular child-centered research method (Barker & Weller, 2003; Orellana, 1999). The value of using drawings, photography, digital video, and other art forms has been noted by researchers as affording the possibility of restoring the balance between adults and children in terms of biological age, body size, knowledge, experience, and social, political, and economic status (Valentine, 1999).

Photography and fotonovela as research tools

Recently photography has become closely allied with scientific investigations (McNiff, 1998) in research with children. Although it has been defined mainly as a valuable participatory technique for eliciting children's opinions (Ells, 2001), we see photography as a form of capturing and communicating the "unspeakable" in the experience. We share Weidel's (1995) and Fasoli's (2003) view that photographs "have a power that words often lack" (Weidel, 1995, p. 76), while holding a "similar[ity] to a written account in that they are incomplete and tell a partial story" (Fasoli, 2003, p. 36). We also extend this position by arguing that not only do photographs not capture the whole story but also that they do not capture "reality" either. Instead, 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) has reminded 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." 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 (Keifer-Boyd, Jagodzinski, & Emme, in press). By privileging certain aspects of the situation and excluding others, the process of photography is an active re-creating of reality.

The method developed and used in the study was unique because it combined still photographs with digital manipulations and narrative sequencing as a student-driven fotonovela-building process: an attempt to re-create children's understanding of their school life. 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 rather than pen-and-ink sketches. 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 (Emme & Kirova, 2005; Emme, Kirova, & Cambre, 2006).

In terms of its potential to involve children authentically in the research process, the fotonovela as a research method provides alternative ways for children to communicate their experiences. Although we designed and managed the study, it was the children who decided what story to tell, which pictures to use and in what order, and who would play each character and which thoughts or words would be linked to each character using text balloons.

Setting, participants, and researchers

The study took place at "Greenview," our pseudonym for a small inner-city elementary-junior high school in a large city in western Canada. A high percentage of students were members of visible minorities, including Aboriginal, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Arab, East Indian, and African. Many were first-generation immigrants, and more than seven languages were spoken among the 204 children. Over the course of the study, we worked with 28 children, all but four of whom were recent immigrants or refugees. Consent was sought from both parents and children. Letters of consent were translated into all seven languages spoken by the children who were enrolled in grades 4 and 5 and sent home. The letter included a sample of various levels of the use of filters to obscure facial features (in this case our faces) from which the parents could choose and indicate their comfort level. The children included in the study had the permission of their parents. Those who did not receive parental permission to participate in the study but wished to be part of the photo club that we offered still enjoyed the activities but were not involved in the production of the fotonovelas.

The diversity among the children who participated in the research was only one aspect of diversity among the individuals involved in the research team. As the principal investigators we brought to the project our unique and quite different research traditions and cultural backgrounds. Because we were convinced that "the creation of new knowledge emerges from an interplay of contributors" (McNiff, 1998, p. 45), we sought research assistants who also came from varying academic disciplines and cultures. We have referred to this research as ensemble research (Emme, Kirova, Kamau, & Kosanovich, 2006) because, like improvisational performance and play, it involved a mutual commitment to invention. As members of a research team we were open to the possibility for a complex convergence of the skills, interests, cultures, and insights brought by all participants.

The research process

As a form of arts-based research fotonovela can best be understood if viewed as a studio in which all participants are involved in a creative process that has the potential to bring them to deeper level of insight and knowledge. As McNiff (1998) put it, "Art-based research grows from a trust in the intelligence of the creative process and a desire for relationships with the images that emerge from it" (p. 37). In comparing the process of development of fotonovelas to studio, we emphasize the importance of process (how) while acknowledging the nonlinearity of the process, which inevitably leads to the production of unpredictable results (what). We also emphasize that both the experience of studio (i.e., process) and the results of this experience (i.e., images) cannot be limited to "translation" into verbal language. Thus, fotonovela as a research method not only acknowledges the interplay of language and visual image but also addresses the fundamental epistemological question, How can the language of inquiry correspond to the expression of the phenomena being studied?

The emphasis on the process of inquiry as studio suggests that the researcher/artist "loses himself or herself" in the process. Therefore, the orientation is not toward the "consciousness of the researcher" but, rather, on the experience or the process itself. Thus, there is similarity between art and play, as first described by Gadamer (1993). This similarity allowed us to develop a method in which both the process and the outcome embodied the notion of playfulness as researchers and participants entered a game and thus abandoned themselves to the space of meaning created by photographic images. This playful process allows, in Davey's (1999) terms, a fusion of horizons surrounding the photographer, the photograph itself, and the viewer. The

process of interpretation and explication of a photographic image, 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 method that involves photography as its central element. Between material and idea, photograph and word, authorship and audience, child and adult, one culture and another exist spaces that not only accommodate but demand to-and-fro movement. By bringing together all these elements, the study became full of play in many senses of the word.

Photo club: Candid/documentary photographs

The process of developing fotonovelas began with an invitation to all children to join a noon-hour photography club. For the children's first studio experience we made sure that they had opportunities to experiment with the medium (i.e., digital cameras) and see the product in the form of small thumbnail prints. We understood these unmanipulated images to be the children's, not data that we could take with us. Once the children were familiar with the digital technology, we believed that we needed to begin showing the children how to use photography in a focused and more meaningful way. As a first step, we invited them to start taking pictures around themes such as Life on the Playground, The Cafeteria, and Me Pretending. We asked the children to become reporters of school life and to document what they saw happening in relation to these themes.

With the Life on the Playground theme, for example, we first asked the children to generate a list of all the activities that took place on the playground during lunch break. In response to the question, "What do children do on the playground?" they suggested the following possibilities: playing games with "kids' rules," playing games with "grown-up rules," playing with equipment, listening, talking, being alone, leading, following, and being together. Partly as a result of our limited number of digital cameras and partly because of our goal for the children to develop their "camera vision" (Chiarenza & Luxenberg, 2004), we asked them to work in pairs. The task for each pair was to take as many photographs as possible in each of the above categories (the children took the list outside as they played at being reporters). Equipped with the cameras and the list of events or activities to document, the children began to view things differently, that is, as potential photo opportunities. Our research assistants, who accompanied the children outside on several occasions, heard comments like "Look, there is *listening*!" being exchanged between the members of the team. The children also used a combination of candid and posed photographs to capture a certain type of playground activity that they imagined being most appropriate for a particular category. "Could you do this for me, please [showing a pose on the monkey bar]? I will buy you lunch," was documented as a request made by one of the "reporters" to a group of kindergarteners playing on the playground (field notes, October 27, 2004). Some of the children were also concerned with the quality of their pictures; they would take several shots of the same scene and delete those that were "ugly" (field notes, October 29, 2004).

The playground photographs were printed in the classroom as pages of thumbnail prints immediately the reporter returned from the assignment and then examined for content.

Frame selection, color coding, sequencing

To facilitate the process of examining how their photographs represented the categories on their lists, we suggested that children choose a color for each of the categories and use these colors to categorize their pictures on the sheets of thumbnail photographs. The children quickly understood

that a single photograph could have several meanings and thus could belong to several of the initially identified categories. For example, some of the games with kids' rules were also games that included equipment; they could be played alone or with others. Similarly, photos showing listening also could include the person doing the talking, or the child that followed others' leads could be alone or with others in so doing. The conversations about meaning captured in each of the photos led the children to understand the role of the context in which each photo was not only taken but also placed and interpreted in relation to others. Thus, the notion of a story being told by the photographs was introduced. In addition, the need for sequencing as a means of telling a story without words as one of many possible stories was generated. A simple question like, "If this is the central photo of your story, how can you tell me what happened before and after it?" was used to guide children's choices in sequencing the images. In telling a three-frame story, the children could use either all photos, or a combination of photos and drawings (Figure 1).

Through individual and group interactions, interviews, dialogue, and negotiation of meanings, we were able to identify the children who were genuinely interested in all aspects of the photo club, including talking about their documentary images, the ideas they evoked, and the possible ways they could be arranged to tell a particular story. As part of this process these 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. We all agreed that for this to happen, we would need to become actors in the story and show (with our bodies) what the story was about.

Figure 1

Dramatization: tableaux

From the point of view of our goal for the children to become thoughtful photographers, the performing part of developing the fotonovelas was intended to help the children select telling moments, incidents or encounters in their experiences that would later become central images in developing the visual narrative. It became a tool for exploring what the children knew about and felt in the situation that they were representing through their bodies.

In describing how humans enact or act out their lives both verbally and nonverbally, Goffman (1959) used the word *dramaturgical*. He observed that people acted as if they were on a stage— the stage of life—and as if an audience were observing them. The notion of acting is based on the ability to know through and with the body (Levin, 1985), thus allowing both the performer and the viewer to understand human experience without necessarily having to conceptualize it through language. The body is central in the study presented here not only as a "subject," that is, children's body language, but also as a means of em-bodi-ment of meaning, both as meaning making and meaning representation in and of the world. The notion of embodied meaning is also central to our method because it allows us to involve children bodily in their understanding of their experiences both as individuals and in general.

Therefore, in seemed natural to use some form of performative art in acting out the scenes included in the visual story told by the children. In addition to using still photography, we 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 insights into participants' lives. Originating from anthropology, communication, and performance studies, performances allow participants to depict and examine their real-life performances, thus "providing insight into their lived experiences and their cultural world" (Conrad, 2004, p. 10). Most important for the study was the ability of tableau, as a non–language-dependent medium, to

> transcend the customary limits of discursive language, making coherent the
> knowledge and the understanding that students may not be able, at first, to express in
> spoken language but that, once embodied in movement, can be translated into
> spoken and written language. (Salvio, 1990, p. 272)

In the study children used their bodies—through hand gesture, facial expression, body posture, and body positioning relative to others (Wilson, 2003)—to show emotion and action. By using performative gestures, which build on the natural gestures used in communication (Wilson, 2003), as well as through culturally established gestures, the children showed a range of emotions related to situations involving peers. In drama, as in play, children had to negotiate with each other to create a single vision of the meaning of a gesture or any other visual sign—"*this* stands for *that*"—in the context of the visual narrative. As an effective means for helping children create meaning and deepen their understanding of peer relationships in their school life, the process of playful dramatization was invaluable as children "launched on a voyage toward a truth beyond mere facts" (Wagner, 1998, p. 33).

The performance portion of the fotonovelas led to two major methodological accomplishments. First, the performance allowed children with limited English to recall and reenact details of their experiences that they would have been unable to describe had we relied solely on oral descriptions. Second, as a group activity playful performance allowed the children and us not only to

gain insight into each child's experience but also to identify the common elements of shared experiences that were performed through tableaux such as entering the classroom for the first time (Kirova & Emme, 2006b) or being rejected when trying to join an ongoing game (2006a).

Composition: thought/speech bubbles

The development of the cartoon format of the common fotonovelas involved superimposing speech and thought bubbles onto the sequenced images that represented particular situations. Unlike Wall and Higgins (2006), who used McMahon and O'Neill's (1992) earlier idea of bubble dialogue to look at internal and external factors of the learning context, we asked the children to use speech and thought bubbles according to the conventions of a cartoon format. Speech bubbles were to be used for a conversation among the characters, and thought bubbles were to represent unvoiced thoughts. Because almost all participating children were non–native speakers of English, we told them not to worry about writing conventions (e.g., spelling or grammar) and to ask us for assistance in expressing their ideas on their individual copy of the fotonovela.

Thought and speech bubbles were used in three ways. First, children who were working on a particular fotonovela collaborated to negotiate decisions about the text of the bubbles that expressed the shared meaning of the situation. Second, each child had a chance to create his or her own version of the story told through the fotonovela by choosing which bubble to use for each character and writing his or her own text in the bubbles. Third, pages of printed blank speech and thought bubbles were provided with the fotonovela to a new group of children who had not participated in developing the fotonovela and who were asked to write text in them according to their understanding of the visual narrative.

Getting into Basketball **Fotonovela**

The *Getting into Basketball* fotonovela was created when one of our research assistants drew three of the photo club members—Margaret, a recent immigrant from China; Shannon, an immigrant from Vietnam; and Veronica, a Canadian-born White student—into the world of make-believe: a story of her imaginary niece (Amy) who was coming to their school from a foreign country with no knowledge of school, city life, or the language (see Emme, Kirova, Kamau, et al., 2006, for more details).

Although creating an imaginary situation was part our method (i.e., tableau performance), inviting children to respond playfully to an imaginary character in a fictional story was a new approach to invigorating the children and encouraging them to recall some of their own experiences as newcomers to the school. Responding to an imaginary newcomer's request for help in finding her way around their own school shifted children's attention from the real world of their playground experiences to the fictional world of a stranger's possible experiences of their school. As a result, the children became involved in a reflective, creative process that, as in play, asked them to assume other voices as they imagined themselves to be someone else. As Greene (1994) pointed out,

> Imagination, after all, is the cognitive capacity that allows human beings to construct alternative modes of being, to look beyond the actual in their own experience, to envisage what might be if things were otherwise. It enables us to summon up the needs of strangers and to attend to them in their integrity. (p. 456)

Margaret, Shannon, and Veronica had the most suggestions about the strict code of conduct between children in the basketball court. They advised Amy, "If someone's shooting, don't go by." "If the ball rolls to you, don't take it." "Ask if you want to play." Prompted by photographs of the school taken by our research assistants, the girls developed a script and then performed tableaux in the playground. Once all three girls were embodied comfortably in their characters' roles in the story, we completed photographing the fotonovela in less than 10 minutes. The six-frame visual story is presented in Figure 2.

Widening the inner circle: dissemination

Sharing the final products, the fotonovelas, in the school community was an essential part of our method for several reasons. First, we firmly believed that the visual stories developed by the participants in the photo club did not belong exclusively to them; rather, as stories about the school life, they belonged to everyone. We hoped that by sharing stories about newcomers' school experiences from their perspectives, we would influence sensitivity and awareness in the whole community.

Second, we wished the club members to see themselves as researchers and authors of the stories. Thus, creating an audience or a readership of these stories was an indispensable part of helping immigrant children become authors. Ricoeur's (1987) analysis of the author and the reader as playful figures helped us understand how not only the representation of the world (i.e., the photograph) is playful, but also the position of the author (i.e., the photographer) who puts him- or herself on stage by giving a presentation is also playful. The choice of the authors to distinguish themselves, to assume the various voices of the characters, or to hide behind them is a form of play, a playful relation between authors and readers (i.e., the viewers). The reader/viewer too "is a fictive creation, a role which we can assume in order to look at ourselves" (Kayser, 1970; cited in Ricoeur, 1987, p. 189); the reader/viewer then is the imaginary me created by art as a playful representation of a world.

Figure 2

Finally, we realized that through the process of reading the body language of the characters of these comic-like stories, we would be able to gain some insights into how these readings might be similar or different. We hoped that the multiplicity of meanings would provide us with a better understanding of the challenges of intercultural communication.

In the course of the study, the fotonovelas were shared with various groups of children who had not participated in developing the visual narrative with varied purposes and at varied times. First, each fotonovela was presented to the authors' classmates and included both the title and the text as originally written. Our goal as researchers was to document how children who had not participated in developing the visual narrative would respond to its content.

The second time, each fotonovela was shared with another group of students who were not authors' classmates. This time the black-and-white copies of the fotonovela that were given to each child had no title or speech or thought balloons. The title was left blank, and separate pages of blank speech and thought balloons were provided for the children to cut out and place as they saw fit. Our goal this time was to find out how children who had not participated in the development of the fotonovela would interpret the scenario based solely on their reading of the participants' body language.

Whereas the first sharing of the visual narrative gave us a general sense of the readability of the narrative by the children, the second gave us a detailed understanding of the meanings assigned to each frame by the individual children. The analysis of these meanings provided some insights into the varied ways that children understood and interpreted the body language of the characters in the story. The seven stories included here are those that the children completed fully.
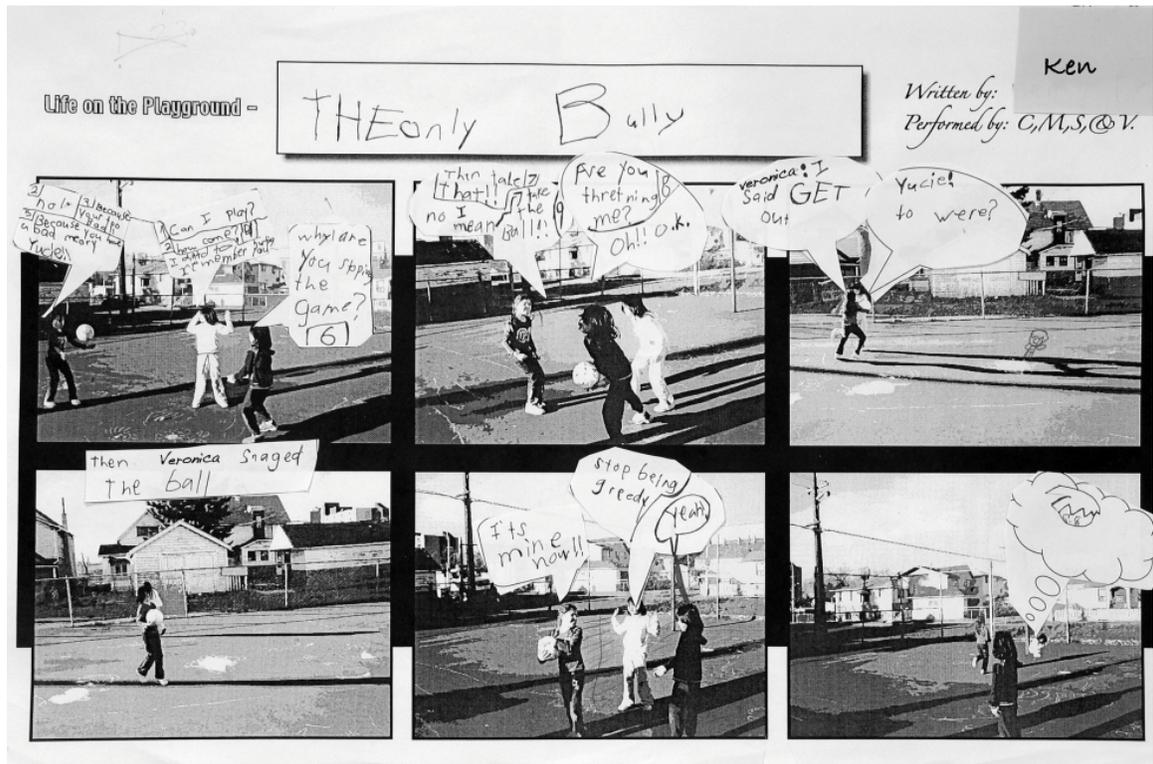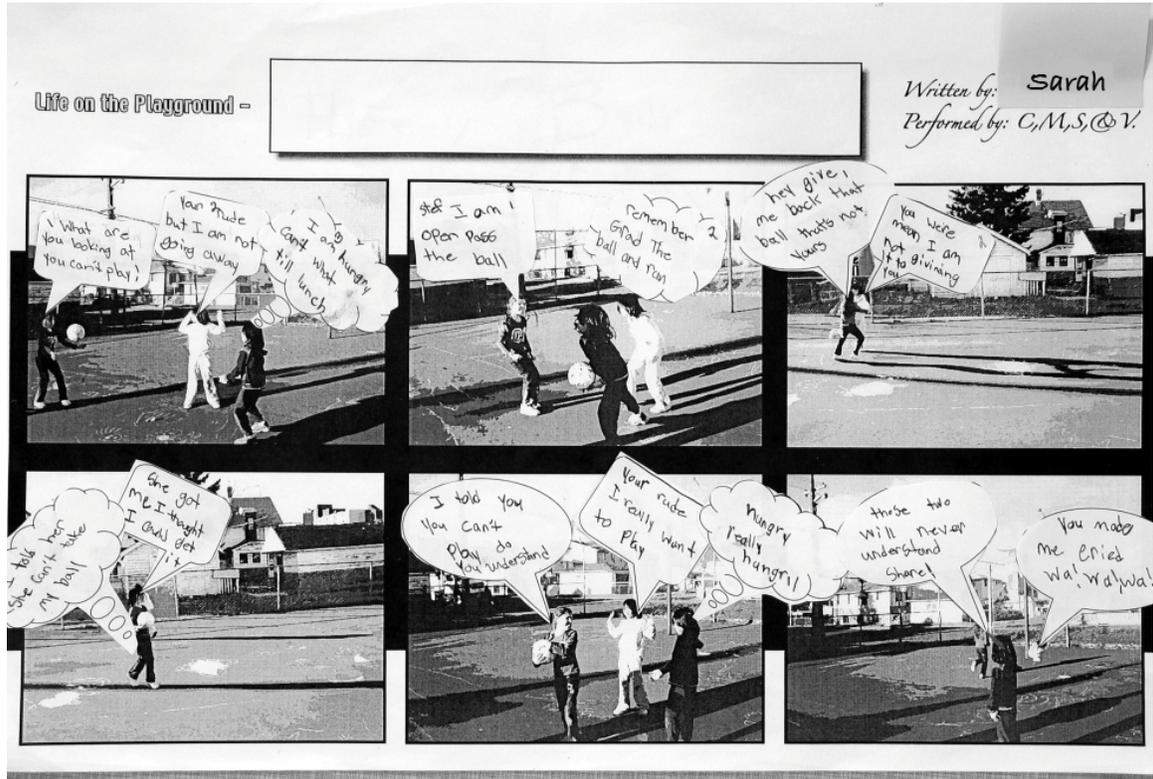
Children's Readings of the
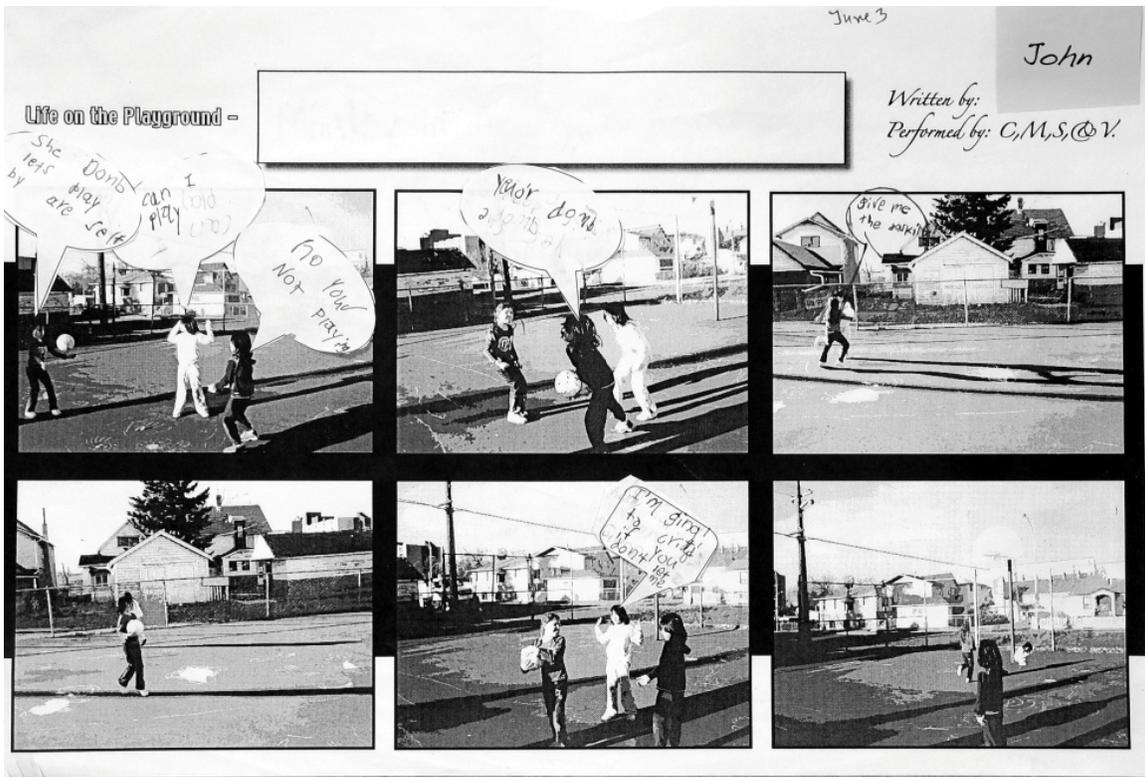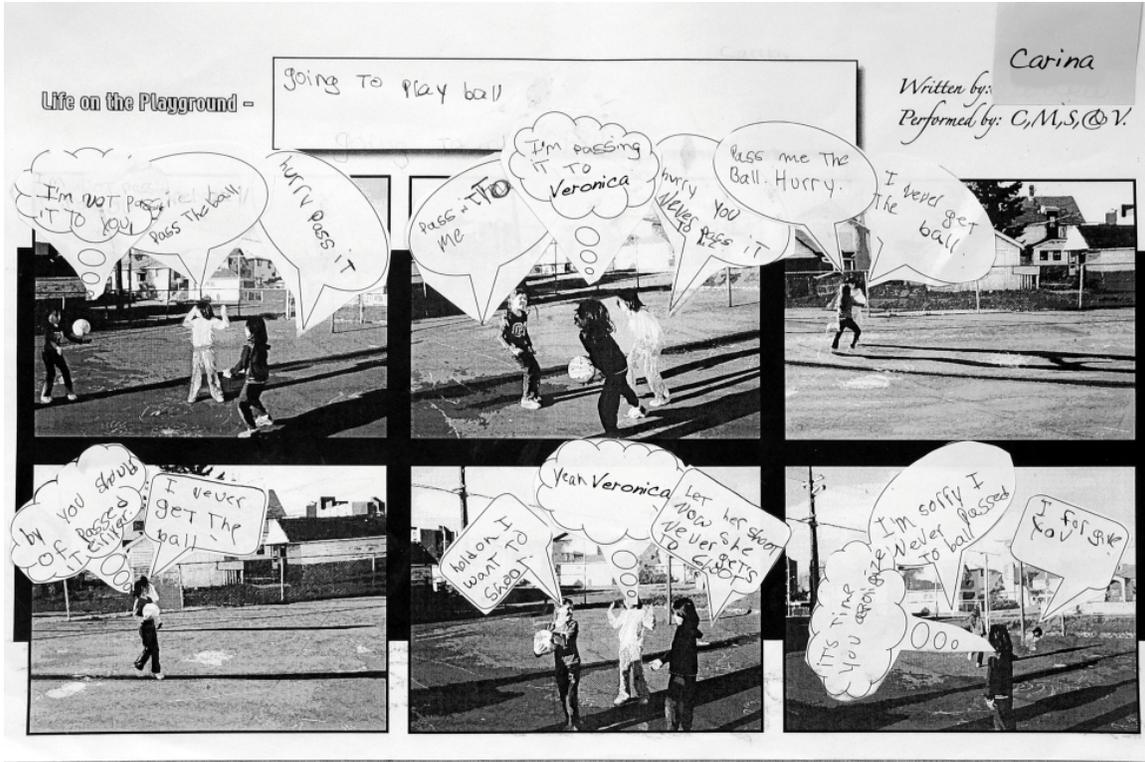### *Getting into Basketball* Fotonovela

The fact that all 13 grade 4 children who were given the *Getting into Basketball* fotonovela and were asked to create their own story based on their understanding of the visual narrative did create some text about it showed us the potential for visual stories to engage children in making meaning. In all instances the children were immediately drawn to the content of the visual narrative. Although the comic was short, the children revisited the images several times before engaging in writing the text. Choosing the type of bubble (speech or thought) was also a thoughtful process. Some children, for example, started writing some text in a thought bubble and then decided to change it to a speech bubble, so they copied the text or came up with another version of it. This deliberate and thoughtful process is reflected in the children's stories.

In reviewing the texts for the individual stories, we could see how each child assumed the role of a reader from which he or she could look at his or her own experience. In our view, this explains the great variety in these new stories both in terms of the plots and the complexity of the relationship between speech and thought. At the same time, all the children who saw the fotonovela for the first time interpreted the overall meaning of the visual narrative similarly: the story was about a new girl's exclusion and loneliness on the basketball court.

The seven stories shown in Figure 3 were chosen because they were completed fully.

Figure 3

Analysis of the readers' stories

These stories demonstrate peer exclusion and rejection, resulting in isolation and loneliness of the newcomer. The new child's repeated failed attempts to join in an ongoing game between friends dominated the children's interpretation of the visual narrative. The harsh language used in response to a sometimes polite or even shy request to join in and the intentionally harmful descriptors used by the two friends in referring to the new girl gave us a bitter sense of wonder about the realities of these children's lives in school. Given that 11 of the 13 children who were invited to read the visual narratives and to create their own comic based on it were recent immigrants, it was highly likely that they had experienced similar rejection. The conflict between the newcomers and old-timers was apparent. Yet a second reading of some of these stories showed a much more complex picture of the relationships between the representatives of these two groups. The analysis of the stories presented here is organized around the three emergent themes: friendship, rejection/exclusion/inclusion, and agency.

Friendship

The stories presented a picture of children's understanding of friendship. In all cases friendship meant alliance; that is, stating and securing the exclusive nature of the relationship. Regardless of how the new girl approached the two friends, at least at the beginning one rejected the newcomer's attempt to join in. In Jeremy's story, for example, Margaret replied to the request of the new student to pass the ball with a clear statement that there was no room in the game for anyone else: "No, it is just me and her playing catch." Reaffirming their exclusive friendship, in John's story Veronica ignored the request of the new girl and turned to her friend, saying, "She is dumb, let's play by ourselves." More often in the stories, however, the rejection was not through

talking to the new girl but through nonverbal attempts to ignore her. For example, in Carina's story Margaret paid no attention to the new girl's request to Veronica to pass the ball. Instead, she turned to Veronica impatiently and nudged her to pass the ball: "Hurry, pass it! Pass it to me!" In Nicole's story too the two friends continued to play, paying no attention to the new girl, who was crying. "I am open, Veronica!" "Thank you," said Margaret as she caught the ball. Furthermore, in some stories the friends exchanged comments about the new girl as if she were not there. Ben wrote that Margaret, in support of Veronica's insult to the girl ("No way, girl! You little wimp"), added an affront without making direct contact with the girl but, rather, commenting to Veronica, "She is such a crybaby." "What a baby," repeated Veronica, thinking to herself, "We won't let her play!"

Another strategy used by the two friends to remain unified in their opinion of the stranger was providing convincing arguments against the new girl. An example is given in Ken's story. When the new girl wanted to know why she was not allowed to play, Veronica told her, "Because you are really bad!" Not remembering insulting the girls, when the new girl tried to clarify her guilt, she was told, "Because you have bad memory." This was enough to convince Margaret, who insisted that the game continue and was ready to blame the new girl for interrupting the game: "Why are you stopping the game?"

The strategies that children described in their stories ranged from direct claims of unbreakable friendship to indirect demonstrations of loyalty and support for each other's opinions and decisions about the newcomer's attempts. It seemed that the children understood the situation created by the appearance of a newcomer as an opportunity to strengthen the friendship by showing support for the initial decision made by the friend not to include the new girl in the game. Making additional negative comments about her was perhaps intended to demonstrate like-mindedness and unity (the we-ness) in the initial response to the stranger's request to join in. By making her "invisible," the two friends created a shield around their own perhaps fragile friendship.

Rejection/exclusion/inclusion

Overt rejection was the initial response to the new child's plea to participate in the game in most of the stories. In Sarah's story Veronica was straightforward with the girl: "What are you looking at? You can't play!" Similarly, Ben wrote that Veronica's answer was a straight no: "No way, girl!" Then later in the story, when the girl asked politely again, "Please can I play?" Veronica repeated, "You will never play with us. Never, never, never!" The response to the new girl's subsequent attempts to join the game was almost identical in Jeremy's story: "No! Get out of here!" shouted Margaret to the new girl after she dared to say the second time: "Come on [pass the ball to me]." Ken too wrote that Veronica's response to the second request made by the new girl was no: "I said, get out!" Sarah also was convinced in her story that Veronica would not change her initial response and wrote, "I told you, you can't play. Do you understand?!"

Although the friends' intention to exclude the stranger was dominant at the beginning of most stories, as the stories developed, the relationships among the three characters became more complex. United by the initial "threat" that the newcomer presented to their friendship, the two girls' individual responses to the new girl's subsequent requests differed in the later parts of the children's stories. Whereas some of the stories showed clearly opposite views of what the two friends' next step should be, others showed strategies used by either of the friends to maintain a unified position.

Carina's story is a clear example of the conflict arising between the two friends about their initial decision to reject the new girl's request. When the new girl complained that she "never gets the

ball," Veronica was willing to let her play: "Let her shoot. She never gets to shoot," she said to Margaret. Margaret, who was not willing to give up, referred to her own desire as an excuse for not wanting to change her position: "Hold on. I want to shoot." Another example of disagreement between the two friends is illustrated in Jeremy's story. Noticing how upset the new girl was as a result of their initial rejection caused Veronica to try to portray their initial rejection as a joke. Turning to Margaret, she said, "Can't believe she can't stand a joke," and then to the new girl, "Can't you even stand a joke? Let's play!" However, Margaret did not seem to agree with Veronica and held onto the ball, making the new girl cry.

These disagreements escalated at the end of some stories and led to varied ways of handling the fact that by keeping the girl out of the game—except for the short moment illustrated in frame 4 of the fotonovela, which was interpreted by most of the children as a victory for the new girl, who obtained possession of the ball—the two friends managed to upset her. In Sarah's story Margaret, aware of the consequences of their behavior, suddenly remembered an important rule: "Share!" Carina's story showed that, challenged by her friend's unexpected change of tone, Veronica apologized to the new girl: "I am sorry; I never passed the ball to you." In Jeremy's story, although Margaret did not change her decision about the new girl, Veronica, hearing the new girl's saying, "Oh, that hurts," apologized to her: "Oh no, sorry!" Nicole's story too showed Veronica's ability to reconsider her decision not to play with the new girl and to invite her, "Come and play."

Were the children who showed empathy wishing that someone back when they were new to the school had allowed them to be part of the group, or were they "remembering" their own experiences? Were they more compassionate now after having experienced such episodes themselves, or were they trying to give some hope to the (imaginary) new girl for whom the visual story was developed? Although we cannot know for certain the answers to these questions, the two stories that clearly ended with acceptance of the new girl and her inclusion in the ongoing game between two friends demonstrated that the children did not reject the possibility that one can make friends in a new school. However, the fact that most of the stories ended with no response to the new girl's attempts and even tears indicated that most knew that making new friends would take more than one attempt.

Agency

That the newcomer was not portrayed as a victim is striking in the stories. Although the children demonstrated clearly that they knew she suffered rejection and that her feelings were hurt, most depicted her character as persistent and inventive in her attempts to gain access to the game. The strategies the children described included asking politely, snatching the ball, making her feelings known by making clear and explicit statements about how she felt, or declaring that she had no interest in playing with people who were mean to her.

From the beginning of the story, the new girl played an active role in her attempts to achieve her goal of making friends, and she approached the two friends with a specific request: "Can I play?" (Ken's story). She also actively suggested a new, more inclusive game, "Monkey in the middle" (Ben's story). She stood up for herself and confronted Veronica, who accused her of being bad and used this as a reason for not letting her play: "How come? . . . I don't remember hurting you" (Ken's story). In Sarah's story she was not shy about saying what she thought of Veronica and Margaret when they made it clear to her that she could not play: " You are rude but I am not going away," and later stated firmly, "You are mean and I am not giving [the ball] to you." Even later in the same story, when the two friends brought her to tears, she told them, "You are rude. I

really wanted to play." She also dared to suggest to the two old-timers not to be greedy and let her play ("Don't be greedy"; Ken's story), and urged the two friends to pass her the ball ("Hurry you! You never pass it to me . . . I never get the ball" (Carina's story). She was clear about how she felt when the two girls rejected her attempts to join in: "Oh that hurts" (Jeremy's story); "I'm going to cry if you are not going to let me play" (John's story), and also told them to stop insulting her: "Stop it. You are hurting my feelings!"

A real moment of courage exhibited by the new girl was picked up by Ken, who felt that there was a short-lived shift in power when **s**he "snatched the ball." The new girl, having gained possession of the ball, was trying to keep it: "You are mean and I am not giving it to you" (Sarah's story). She was apparently capable of resisting peer pressure. She even said to Veronica, "You know what, I don't even want to play so buzz off!" (Nicole's story). Another form of strength exhibited by the new girl is depicted in Carina's story, where she was able to forgive her opponents and said to Veronica, "I forgive you." One may wonder if these strategies had been used by the children who suggested them with various degrees of success or if they thought that new girl was likely to use them. Whatever the case, the new girl was not always able to defend herself against the combined attacks of the friends. Ken felt that the new girl was not successful in her attempts and finally gave up, leaving in tears.

Discussion

The analysis presented in this section is not the only way to analyze children's readings of the visual narrative. For example, to gain insight into the variations among individual children's understanding of the characters' body language, we also analyzed each frame separately and across all stories (Kirova & Emme, 2006a). Both types of analysis suggest that the understandings, intentions, and meanings of peer interactions in school are not uniform and can be challenging not only for immigrant children but for all children in a multicultural context. Because the nature and meaning of body language in interpersonal communication depends on one's familiarity with the larger cultural context in which it occurs and on one's previous experiences, the interaction of immigrant children's previous experiences with school peers might be less helpful in this understanding when they are forced to interact with peers from other cultural backgrounds.

Although the fotonovelas created as part of this study show that ways of expressing and understanding meanings, feelings, and emotions through body language varied from one individual to another, the study participants from nine cultures—including Aboriginal and majority (White) cultures—did not form large enough cultural groups to allow any generalizations about such differences between cultures. Fotonovelas both as a process and as a product provide tangible manifestations of how human communication, including intercultural communication, involves continual interacting, reinterpreting, and reapplying of individual understandings of both verbal and nonverbal components relevant to communication. This suggests the need for ongoing research in a classroom group that aims to renew continually children's and researchers' understanding of body language. The experiences of this study suggest that fotonovela storytelling is an effective approach to this inquiry both because of the balance it allows children to strike between the embodied, the visual, and the written in their life stories and because the fotonovela process can be easily integrated into teachers' curriculum requirements in a number of ways.

The method developed and used in this study provides an avenue for children to explore their and their peers' understandings of the various ways that intentions, desires, feelings, and emotions can

be expressed and interpreted. Like Christopoulou and de Leeuw (2005), who used media and communication technologies as means of empowering migrant children in constructing their social and cultural worlds in a large-scale European research project on Children in Communication about Migration (CHICAM), we found creative media processes helpful to children in articulating their experiences "without the researchers having to ask about these directly" (p. 133). The combination of visual and textual forms of representation of these rules produced through the fotonovela provided a space for the immigrant children to convey multiple layers of understanding and interpretation. As well, the processes of documentation, interpretation, tableaux, graphic design, and negotiated dialogue opened possibilities for multiple forms of depicting children's views of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the power position between newcomers and old-timers.

The results of the study related to the *Getting into Basketball* fotonovela suggest that the process of developing the fotonovela was a form of active exploration of peer power relationships. Through this process immigrant children were encouraged to become self-reflective as they reexamined and recognized their own struggles to fit into a peer culture that may have been completely new to them. As Greene (1994) stated,

> To recognize this is to become awake to the process of our own sense making in a radically different way . . . to engage with intensified awareness in acts of becoming different, acts of re-describing and redefining ourselves and our contacts with the world. (p. 440)

The sharing portion of the study also implied a limitless cycle of writings, depictions, readings, and viewings, and hints at the rich potential of the fotonovela for developing a research and interpretation culture with children in schools. Helping others who, like the children who participated in the study, were from another part of the world to understand the school rules and the peer culture not only gave purpose and focus to their photo club activities but also helped them reflect on and understand their own experiences as newcomers. Their participation in "publishing" and disseminating the fotonovelas gave the participants a well-deserved sense of accomplishment and pride. Close relationships that developed among them extended beyond the photo club noon hour and contributed to their sense of belonging in the school.

Implications for research with children

Based on the fotonovela texts produced by the children in this study and those produced by the children who read them, we suggest that fotonovela as a research method characterized by collaboration between researchers and participants changes both the way of seeing and readers' self-understanding. As a method produced in relationship with research participants, fotonovela opens possibilities for negotiating authorities in the research process in which "understanding does not entail agreement, and multiple perspectives are valued" (Clark & Moss, 1996, p. 522). It provides an example of the effect of media innovations and "inscription technologies" (Hayles, 2002, p. 24) on the conceptualization and communication of academic inquiry in response to changing social, pedagogical, technological, and cultural contexts (Voithofer, 2005). However, the open-ended, spontaneous, playful nature of projects like those described here requires the researchers to relinquish control of the research process, or at least to be willing to share it with the children. Thus, opportunities for involvement might mean that researchers need to redefine what constitutes research and engage in research practices with children that create such opportunities. Inevitably such attempts would also mean that researchers would need to create another space, one that Lather (2001) calls a "double space." Both science and nonscience would

position academic work "as both within a disciplinary discourse of the human sciences and as a wonderer outside of the science" (p. 248). Thus formation of new generative methodology practices would allow researchers to situate validity "as a discursive practice that registers a passage to never arrived place where we are sure of our knowledge and our selves" (p. 247). In this space researchers' methodological inventions of practices of co-creating data, collaborative analysis, and democratic forms of dissemination would not only raise ethical and epistemological issues of validity above the more regulatory ethics and practices of validation of educational research but would also bring ethics and epistemology together.

Whereas as researchers we had access to "polyphonic expression" of multiple voices, "allowing for consensual, dissenting and conflicting perspectives to emerge and exist" (Veale, 2005, p. 269), the children had opportunities to embody and narrate their stories. Like their lived bodies, these stories engage the reader visually and linguistically. Embedded in these two dimensions are many others that express meaning through organization, selection, abstraction, elaboration, and visual and linguistic interpretation. These interpretations, however, are not free from tensions. As Gadamer (1975/1989) said, the interpreter experiences two claims: one from the object of interpretation (the text, the dialogue, even the mode of action) and one from the interpreter's own lived circumstances. Thus, a person attentively involved in interpretation does not know dispassionately, "as one who stands apart and unaffected, but rather, as one united by the specific bond with the other, he thinks with the other and undergoes the situation with him" (p. 306). We believe that through such passionate involvement with the text, the fotonovelas open new spaces for dialogue, for resistance, and for representation of a new way of knowing that change the way of seeing and have the potential to change the author's and the reader's self-understanding.

Notes

1. In the spirit of Eisner's (1968, 1998) and others' (Sanders-Bustle, 2003), understanding of the place of expressiveness in educational research and pedagogic practice we have been involved in a collaborative research studio. This article, rendered through three years of creative exchange, is built from several first sketches of fotonovela methodology published elsewhere as well as extended new consideration of embodiment, play, and movement as they articulate and frame unpublished text- and image-based data on cartooned interviews and student storytelling as data analysis.

References

Archer, D. (1997). Unspoken diversity: Cultural differences in gestures. *Qualitative Sociology*, *20*(1), 79-105.

Barker, J., & Weller, S. (2003). "Is it fun?" Developing children centered research methods. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *23*(1/2), 33-58.

Canfield, A. (2002). *Body, identity and interaction: Interpreting nonverbal communication*. Retrieved May 18, 2006, from: http://canfield.etext.net/

Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts: Putting the first last*. London: Intermediate Technology.

Chan-fai, C. (2004). Separation and connection: Phenomenology of door and window. In D. Carr & C. Chan-fai (Eds.), *Space, time, and culture* (pp. 253-263). Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic.

Chiarenza, C., & Luxenberg, A. (2004). Photography and painting: The evolution of modern picture making. *Exposure*, *37*(1), 3-16.

Christopoulou, N., & de Leeuw, S. (2005). Children making media: Constructions of home and belonging. In J. Knörr (Ed.), *Childhood and migration: From experience to agency* (pp. 113-137). Piscataway, NJ: Transaction.

Clark, C., & Moss, P. (1996). Researching with: Ethical and epistemological implications of doing collaborative, change-oriented research with teachers and students. *Teachers College Record*, *97*, 518-548.

Conrad, D. (2004). Exploring risky youth experiences: Popular theatre as a participatory, performative research method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *3*(1), Article 2. Retrieved April 6, 2005, from: http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/pdf/conrad.pdf

Davey, N. (1999). The hermeneutics of seeing. In I. Heywood & B. Sandywell (Eds.), *Interpreting visual culture: Explorations in the hermeneutics of the visual* (pp. 3-29). New York: Routledge.

de Block, L. (2006). Talking television across cultures: Negotiating inclusion and exclusion. In L. Adams & A. Kirova (Eds.), *Global migration and education: Schools, children and families* (pp. 169-185). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Eisner, E. (1968, February). *Instructional and expressive objectives: Their formulation and use in curriculum*. Paper presented to the Seminar for Research in Art Education, Chicago.

Eisner, E. (1998). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Ekman, P. (1980). Three classes of non-verbal behavior. In W. von Raffler-Engel (Ed.), *Aspects of non-verbal communication* (pp. 89-102). Lisse, the Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Ells, H. (2001). Talking pictures in working school lunches: Investigating food choice with children and adolescents. *British Food Journal*, *103*(6), 374-382.

Emme, M., & Kirova, A. (2005). Photoshop semiotics: Research in the age of digital manipulation. *Visual Arts Research*, *31*(1), 145-153.

Emme, M., Kirova, A., & Cambre, C. (2006). Collaborative storytelling: Researching the spaces between image, text and body. *Exposure*, *39*(2), 45-51.

Emme, M., Kirova, A., Kamau, O., & Kosanovich, S. (2006). Ensemble research: A means for immigrant children to explore peer relationships through fotonovela. *Alberta Journal of Research in Education*, *52*, 160-182.

Fasoli, L. (2003). Reading photographs of young children: Looking at pictures. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *4*(1), 32-47.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1989). Hermeneutics and social science. *Cultural Hermeneutics*, *2*, 307-316. (Original work published 1975)

Gadamer, H.-G. (1993). *Truth and method* (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshal, Trans., 2nd ed.). New York: Continuum.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis.* New York: Harper & Row.

Greene, M. (1994). Epistemology and educational research: The influence of recent approaches to knowledge. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Review of research in education* (Vol. 20, pp. 423-464). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Hall, E. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York: Doubleday.

Hall, J. A. (1984). *Non-verbal sex differences: Communication accuracy and expressive style.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hayles, N. K. (2002). *Writing machines*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Heslin, R., & Patterson, M. L. (1982*). Non-verbal behavior and social psychology*. New York: Plenum.

Keifer-Boyd, K., Jagodzinski, J., & Emme, M. (Eds.). (in press). *InCite, InSight, InSite: 25 years of the Journal of Social Theory and Art Education*. Reston, VA: NAEA.

Kirova, A. (2001). Loneliness in immigrant children: Implications for classroom practice. *Childhood Education*, *77*(5), 260-268.

Kirova, A., & Emme, M. (2006a). Sharing immigrant children's experiences of schooling through the development of visual narratives. In L. Adams & A. Kirova (Eds.), *Global migration and education: Schools, children and families* (pp. 151-169). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kirova, A., & Emme, M. (2006b). Using photography as a means of phenomenological seeing: "Doing phenomenology" with immigrant children. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, *6*(1). Retrieved June 17, 2008, from http://www.ipjp.org/SEmethod/Special_Edition_Method-01_Kirova_&_Emme.pdf

Kirova-Petrova, A. (2000). Researching young children's lived experiences of loneliness: Pedagogical implications for linguistically diverse students. *Alberta Journal of Research in Education*, *46*, 99-116.

Lather, P. (2001). Validity as an incitement to discourse: Qualitative research and the crisis of legitimation. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed., pp. 241-250). Washington, DC: AERA.

Levin, D. M. (1985). *The body's recollection of being*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

McMahon, H., & O'Neill, W. (1992). Computer-mediated zones of engagement in learning. In T. M. Duffy, J. Lowyck, & D. H. Jonassen (Eds.), *Designing environments for constructive learning* (pp. 29-50). New York: Springer-Verlag.

McNiff, S. (1998). *Art-based research*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Mehrabian, A. (1971). *Silent messages*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Orellana, M. (1999). Space and place in an urban landscape. *Visual Sociology*, *14*, 73-87.

Osterman, K. F. (2001). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*, 323-367.

Pearce, W. B., & Cronen, V. E. (1980). *Communication action and meaning: The creation of social realities*. New York: Praeger.

Poyatos, F. (1984). Linguistic fluency and verbal-nonverbal cultural fluency. In A. Wolfgang (Ed.), *Nonverbal behaviour: Perspectives, applications, intercultural insights* (pp. 431-459). Toronto, ON: C. J. Hogrefe.

Rao, N., & Yuen, M. (2006). Listening to children: Voices of newly arrived immigrants from the Chinese Mainland to Hong Kong. In L. Adams & A. Kirova (Eds.), *Global migration and education: Schools, children and families* (pp. 139-151). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ricoeur, P. (1987). *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Salvio, P. M. (1990). The world, the text, and the reader. In A. A. Lunsford, H. Moglen, & J. Slevin (Eds.), *The right to literacy* (pp. 269-275). New York: Modern Language Association.

Sanders-Bustle, L. (Ed.). (2003). *Image, inquiry and transformative practice: Engaging learners in creative and critical inquiry through visual representation.* New York: Peter Lang.

Schneller, R. (1985). Heritage and changes in the non-verbal language of Ethiopian newcomers. *Israeli Social Science Research*, *3*(1/2), 33-54.

Shi-Xu. (2001). Critical pedagogy and intercultural communication: Creating discourse of diversity, equity, common goals and rational-moral motivation. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *22*(3), 279-293.

Valentine, G. (1999). Being seen and heard? The ethical complexities of working with children and young people at home and at school. *Ethics, Place and Environment*, *2*(2), 141-155.

Veale, A. (2005). Creative methodologies in participatory research with children. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experiences* (pp. 253-272). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Voithofer, R. (2005). Designing new media education research: The materiality of data, representation, and dissemination. *Educational Researcher*, *34*(9), 3-14.

von Raffler-Engel, W. (Ed.). (1980). *Aspects of non-verbal behavior.* Lisse, the Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Wagner, B. J. (1998). *Educational drama and language arts: What research shows*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wall, K., & Higgins, S. (2006). Facilitating metacognitive talk: A research and learning tool. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, *29*(1), 39-53.

Weidel, J. (1995). Being there: Using pictures to see the invisible. In M. Schratz & R. Walker (Eds.), *Research as social change: New opportunities for qualitative research* (pp. 72-90). New York: Routledge.

Wilson, P. (2003). Supporting young children's thinking through tableau. *Language Arts*, *80*(5), 375-383.