



PHOTOVOICE IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH METHODS

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WHAT DOES BEING ARMENIAN MEAN TO YOU?

- This is a question I ask all of my research participants...and myself.
- Here is what I came up with in the last month of living in Yerevan.

TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES



REMINDERS
OF A
FOREIGN
CHILDHOOD



LANGUAGE



PROGRESS

AT TRANS
INCENDIER

ANCIENT HISTORY



DIASPORA EFFORTS



LIFE IN 2021



WHAT IS *PHOTOVOICE*?

- A feminist participatory action research (PAR) approach (Wang 1999) that can enhance qualitative research projects
 - Big question to ask: how can research participants help answer our research questions through their own photos?
 - What do photos add to our research study? In what kind of study/classroom?
 - *Why did you take this photo?*
 - Not just the photo that is important: focus on what feelings come up as participants take & share their photos (the before and after is key)
 - “Those with the camera in the study take on the role of participant observer” (Kaplan 2013: 19), i.e. participants (and students) are active members in the direction of the study
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PHOTOS ARE DATA

- Photos allow us to better understand how people think of place and identity (Mcintyre 2003)
- The comments that participants have about the photos, and the photos themselves, can serve as data, for understanding how students process course content or how research participants think through our major themes/ideas (Warren 2015)
- Useful for migration and urban studies as photos have been used to better understand migrant communities (Gold 2004) and cities (Gold 1995)
- Creates a relationship between researcher/instructor and participant/student
- Allows for a creative comparative study approach, between two sites



FIG. 5. 'Life.'

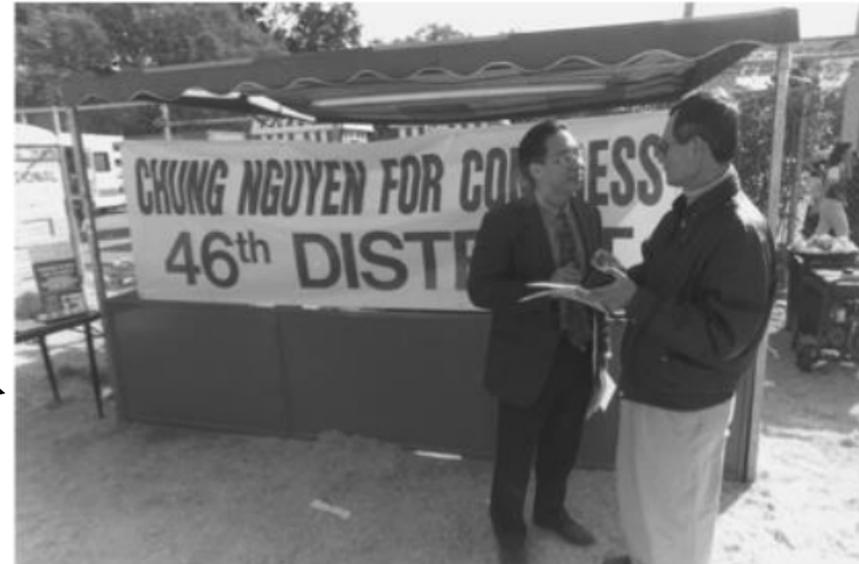


Figure 2: Community. Photographs reveal diversity in social orientations and access to resources even within a single migrant community. The existence of various subgroups suggests diverse orientations and patterns of association and cooperation. Social capital is shared among those bonded by common social features. 2A (top), a Soviet Jewish doctor's association banquet. 2B (bottom), a Vietnamese American runs for political office, Orange County, California, 1994.

SETTING UP A RESEARCH STUDY

- 1) Participants complete a consent form giving permission to use their photos
 - 2) After the interview, photovoice is introduced and participants leave thinking about the below questions:
 - *What does being Armenian mean to you?*
 - *What does your local Armenian community look like?*
 - Follow up with participants after they leave Armenia to reflect on their time and what photos they took OR follow up a few weeks after initial interview (if in the diaspora) to see their communities in the diaspora
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MY PARTICIPANTS' PHOTOS (IN THE DIASPORA)

“Photo 3: Taken in DC on June 25, 2021

This Middle Eastern looking building has always stood out in downtown DC among a bunch of generic commercial spaces and seems an odd venue for the loudest bars and clubs. I would guess that hardly anyone knows that it was designed like this almost a century ago when it housed an Armenian carpet store. I chose this photo because this place turns my head every time, and being Armenian means always looking for and finding little slivers of significance amidst the noise, literally in this case

It's one of Mihran Mesrobian's works, and the carpet store belonged to one of his friends. His story is fascinating, especially as far as DC Armenian history”



“Photo 2: Taken in LA on May 31, 2021

Little Armenia in Hollywood has several striking Armenian murals, but this one was put up during the 2020 Karabakh war and it was my first time seeing it recently. Its placement in a parking lot with ads on the wall captures pretty neatly the oddness of being Armenian in America, namely the deep attachments we have to far-flung, ancient places and concepts while we go about our mundane lives among neighbors who are oblivious to most of what we have inside.”

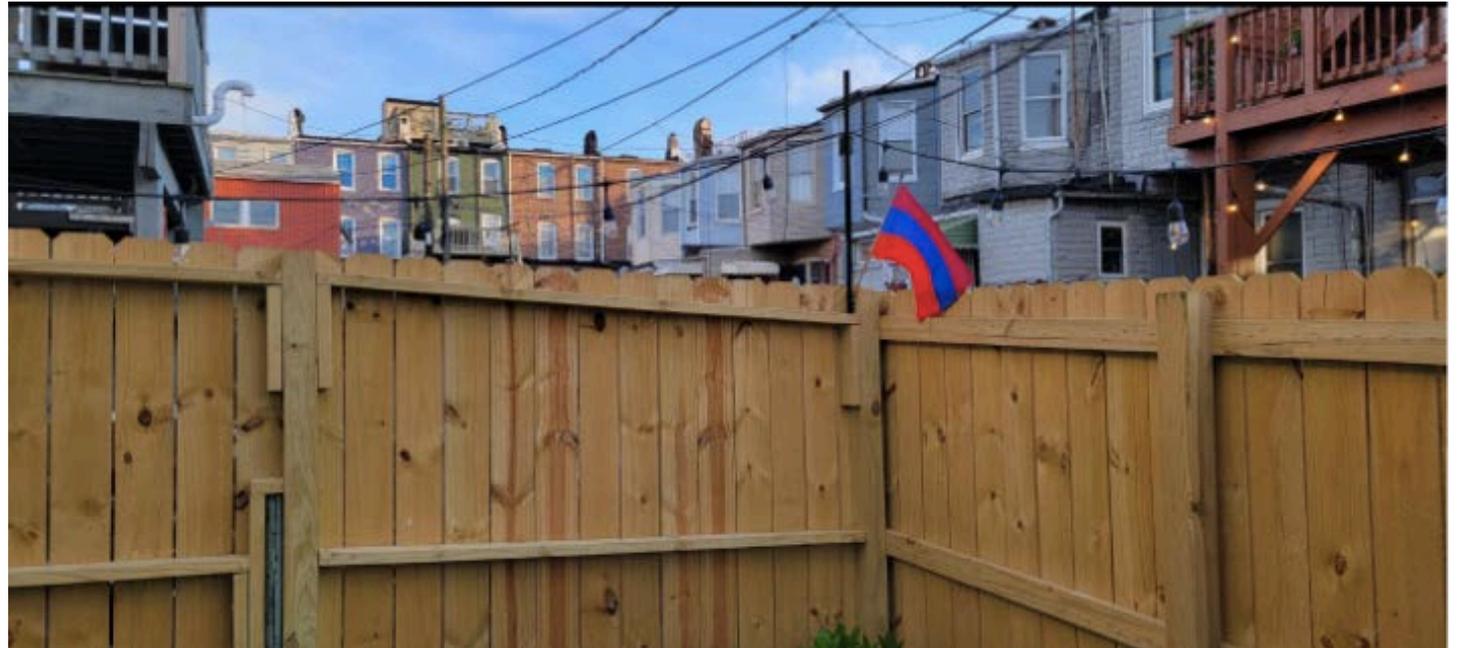


“Khachkar

The photo of the khachkar
symbolizes Armenian
Christianity, what I define my
Armenianness to be”



“Taken in my backyard of my house in Baltimore, even though I am not in Armenia, Armenia will always be with me”



“These are of my high school (Ferrahian High School in Encino). They hosted a basketball game against another local Armenian school (Pilibos High School in Hollywood). Felt very fitting as it’s a perfect representation of the community I grew up in”



“Unfortunately, being Armenian is associated with so much plight and heartbreak. This photo was taken at Yerablur and houses the bodies of the soldiers who perished in the recent war. It was a sad reminder of the sadness our identity is continuously tied to”



PARTICIPANTS IN ARMENIA (BIRTHRIGHT ARMENIA AND OTHERS)

“ (cheese pastry):

Half of my diet in Armenia is bread and cheese, but I don't think I will ever get tired of it. Yerevan's "hatsatouns" (bread bakeries) are gastronomic gems. They're often tucked into courtyards, and sometimes the only way I find them is by following the intoxicating aroma wafting onto the street. My lunch ritual is to pick up a savory pastry from the hatsatoun near my jobsite, take it to the park, and people-watch as I revel in every salty and satisfying bite.”



“(Courtyard with playground):

I wander into every courtyard I pass in Yerevan. Hidden, narrow entrances lead to vast open spaces with fruit stands, hatsatouns, Soviet-era playgrounds, and tables of men playing chess. Yerevan's courtyards are my favorite part of the city”



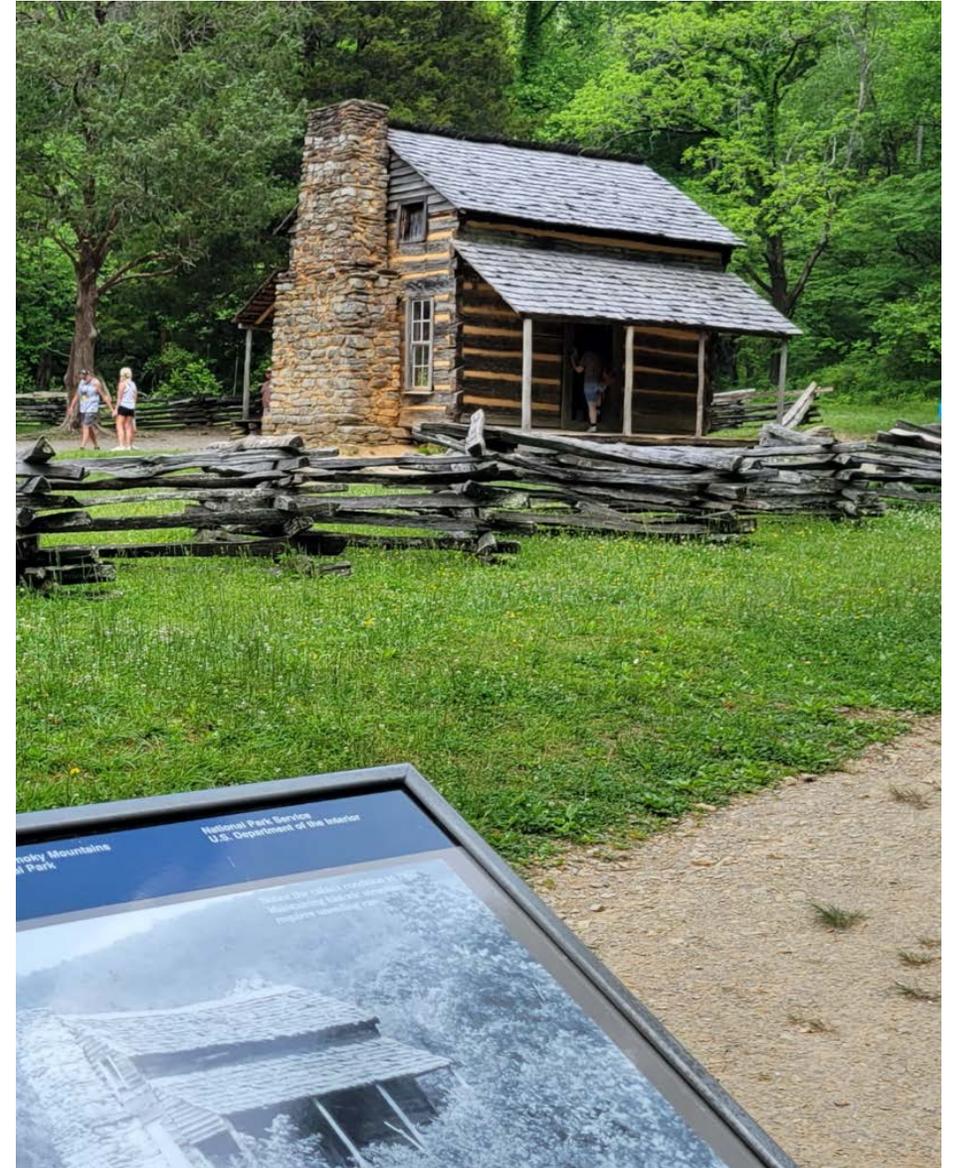
PHOTOS IN THE CLASSROOM

- Used in SOC Family & Society, Summer 2021
 - Weekly assignment w/ background lit. for students to learn/supplemental readings ((can share rubric upon request)
 - Students must submit 1 photo per chapter with a title and caption
 - Captions must have page numbers referencing back to key terms and concepts covered in that chapter
 - Due to COVID-19 and virtual learning, photos could be previous ones in the household rather than just the ones they took during the semester...also makes it easier for them to get more meaningful photos within a one week time frame but less of the authentic photovoice experience here
 - Reflection essay at the end of the semester
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EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK – FAMILY AND SOCIETY CLASS

“Title: John Oliver House, Tennessee

Caption: This week, my family and I took a camping trip to Tennessee. We saw some of the homes of the first settlers of the Smokey Mountains. One of those settlers was John Oliver, who arrived in 1818. Seeing this house got me thinking about what families were like in the early 1800’s and 1820’s. The Oliver family would be a part of **“The emerging modern family”** that lasted from 1820-1900 (Cohen, 46). In this family, there was most likely a shift in what roles a husband and wife would take on in the family, making John the main provider for their family, and it was likely that his wife would stay at home and have a few children in order to help create more household labor, even though nationally the birth average was decreasing (Cohen, 46-48). Additionally, there was an upstairs to the house and it is possible that this was a bedroom for children, reinforcing the idea that the relationship between parents and their children changed to even having their own rooms around this time period (Cohen, 48)”



EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK – FAMILY AND SOCIETY CLASS

“Title: Personal Family in Disney

Caption: In April, my family took a trip to Disney’s Magic Kingdom in Florida. I went with my personal family members, or the people to whom I feel related and who I expect to define me as a member of their family (p. 7). This includes my **legal family** members — my dad, biological sister, half-sisters, nieces, and nephew — who are related to me by birth and marriage (p. 8). But also, people outside my legal family such as family friends, “cousins” and my siblings’ significant others came. However, only my dad and my one biological sister are a part of my household (p. 10) because I live and eat with only them. Our trip to Disney represents an intersection between **the family arena** (p. 9), the institutional arena where people practice intimacy, childbearing and socialization, and caring work, and **the market arena** (p. 13), the institutional arena where labor for pay, economic exchange, and wealth accumulation takes place because we had to pay for the family experience of going to Disney”



EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK – FAMILY AND SOCIETY CLASS

“Title: Family Bookshelf

Caption: Pictured above is the bookshelf from my family home. This is one of a few bookshelves that we have, lined with many books. In my childhood, I always had access to a large variety of books on many different subjects and at many different reading levels. Many of the books we own are considered classic literature. Because I had access to these books, I was able to avoid making lengthy trips to the library and was able to read whenever I wanted to. Additionally coming from a family that valued reading and being in the middle class resulted in my parents practicing **concerted cultivation** (Cohen, 150). This meant that they took strides to ensure that me and my siblings were involved in a large array of different activities including sports, music lessons, and reading. All of these things were part of the values that my parents had and helped them succeed in their own lives. Having been raised in the concerted cultivation strategy I have been provided some benefits that I would not have had otherwise and will likely have a skill set that is important for the same type of work that my parents do (Cohen, 150).”



COMMENTS FROM REFLECTION ESSAY

- “I enjoyed taking the photos because it made me **utilize the concepts** presented in my textbook. For example, I made sure to take pictures at my aunt’s wedding that happened during the semester because **I remembered reading** about the effects of delaying marriage until later in life, exactly what my aunt did, as opposed to my parents, who got married in their early twenties. The photos added a more **personalized touch to the lessons** and allowed me to put myself into the scenarios I was reading about and **think critically** about them. As mentioned before, I **started analyzing all aspects of my family outside of actual classwork**. I believe that this project will **help me remember the concepts after the semester has concluded.**”
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COMMENTS FROM REFLECTION ESSAY

- “Using photos allows me to show things that I am trying to explain. Often when writing about an experience, I wish that I could include **supplemental pictures to help further drive my point**, and this assignment allowed me to just that. I am a very **visual learner**, so being able to see ideas and concepts represented visually is very helpful. This also **challenged me** to think of different ways to convey thoughts and helped me to be **more creative** when coming up with photos for each chapter. Often in classes, **assignments are about repeating information**, but this added an interesting and thought-provoking aspect to the class.”
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SHORTCOMINGS AND WAYS TO IMPROVE

- In research – difficult to encourage participants to stay involved with your project
 - Follow up, follow up, follow up!
 - Easier in teaching because...they are graded for submitting their photos
 - Students have said they want to see more from me...include photos of yourself each week as a template and a way to practice vulnerability for students to learn more about their instructors
 - If you wish to publish, difficult to get consent from students particularly during COVID and online learning
 - Explain the importance of publications
 - Add a reflection essay portion to get comments and feedback for next semester and to include in a teaching note for publication
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THANK YOU, AUA!

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