Photography and voice in critical qualitative management research

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Abstract

Purpose
The main objective of this paper is to discuss how photography might help give research participants a louder voice in (qualitative) critical accounting and management research, enabling their multiple voices to be better represented/performed through the technique of “native image making”. A secondary aim is to familiarise the reader with key developments and debates in the field of “visual research” more generally.

Design/methodology/approach
A brief overview of the field is offered, and, drawing on examples from the author’s visual research practice, how the concept of “photo-voice” might increase participants’ involvement in research in two ways is discussed.

Findings
First, it is argued that accessibility of the method, control of the research agenda and ownership of the images give a louder voice in the process of research. Second, and following Barthes, it is contended that through their iconic and quasi-representational nature, photographic images can communicate participants’ views of their worlds with more primacy than language alone, raising their voices in the dissemination of research.

Practical implications
The paper has especial implications for researchers engaged in critical studies of accounting and management seeking to give voice to marginal groups of people traditionally disregarded by mainstream organization/management studies.

Originality/value
The paper contributes to the development of a novel qualitative methodology for accounting and management research.

Keywords
Critical thinking, Photography, Qualitative research, Visual media

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Qualitative research is designed to explore the human elements of a given topic, while specific qualitative methods examine how individuals see and experience. Explore the research methods terrain, read definitions of key terminology, and discover content relevant to your research methods journey. Reading Lists. Find lists of key research methods and statistics resources created by users. Project Planner. Find all you need to know to plan your research project. Qualitative research is inductive in nature, and the researcher generally explores meanings and insights in a given situation [Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Levitt et al., 2017]. It refers to a range of data collection and analysis techniques that use purposive sampling and semi-structured, open-ended interviews [Dudwick et al., 2006; Gopalidas, 2016]. Qualitative researchers are interested in people's belief, experience, and meaning systems from the perspective of the people. Qualitative research does not include statistical analysis and empirical calculation [Brink, 1993]. The roots of qualitative research lie in social and cultural anthropology, philosophy, psychology, history, and sociology. Photography and Voice in Critical Qualitative Management. Research, Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, 18, 6: forthcoming. 48. Werts, A. B. and Brewer, C. A. (2015). First published in 1945, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's monumental Phénoménologie de la perception signalled the arrival of a major new philosophical and intellectual voice in post-war Europe. Breaking with the prevailing picture of existentialism and phenomenology at the time, it has become one of the landmark works of twentieth-century thought.