Auto-driven photo-elicitation interview (PEI) with young girls in rural Morocco: A case study of visual ethnography

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Abstract

A male researcher has difficulty doing research on the world seen from young girls' point of view! This article examines the use of auto-driven photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) while engaging young girls in rural Morocco in a study of children's role in the household in the midst of tension between tradition and rapid socio-economic changes. In this case, the article describes an example of auto-driven PEI and discusses the feasibility of this qualitative method to establish a good rapport between a group of young girls (approximately age 7 to 12) and a foreign, male researcher (age 58). The point being, the male researcher attempts to achieve insight into the children's thoughts and views of their present situation and imagined future. The article argues for the feasibility of using auto-driven PEI for this purpose, yet applying it in a sensitive and sensible way. The road to follow is not straight forward and there are dilemmas that have to be faced in each case, for example in this case to weigh local requirements for appropriate behaviour up against a researcher's wish for information as little as possible tainted by adult relatives or family.

Keywords: auto-driven photo-elicitation interview; rapport; qualitative research methods; girls' experiences of tradition and change; Amazigh people in Moroccan High Atlas Mountains

Introduction

Without having any prior knowledge of Morocco, the male author of this article was invited to co-supervise a Ph.D. student from Morocco for her Ph.D. thesis[1]. She was going to undertake an action research project in a Moroccan mountain village. With the hope of achieving some first-hand knowledge about the life of children in this place, the male researcher followed the student's research team on various short visits to the village doing his own quick immersions into the local community aided by participant observations and interviews. The present article discusses using the method of auto driven photo elicitation interview (PEI) as a means of establishing good rapport between a group of young girls (approximately age 7 to 12) and the male Norwegian researcher (age 58) in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Since the 1950s the term "rapport" has been a shorthand description of the necessary, minimum level of inter-personal understanding and communication that will give the researcher the possibility to get insight into the life world of his research subjects (Marcus, 1997). However, to obtain an ideal relationship of mutual interest in the fieldwork can be difficult. As Marcus says: "[...] the path to rapport seems always to have been fraught with difficulties, uncertainties, happen-stance, ethical ambiguity, fear, and self-doubt" (1997, p. 86). But it can also, as Clifford Geertz experienced in Bali, be achieved by chance. He and his wife got great respect from his subjects because they did not hide themselves behind their identity of being foreign researchers but shared everyone's flight from the police when they were chased from a cockfight (Geertz, 1973). Sarah Pink argues that photographs can be a short-cut to catch the informants interest and trust and refers to her own experience as well as others (2007, p. 73). In the present article we describe a way to establish rapport or a common ground for communication through the use of photographs taken by the girls themselves. The reason for choosing the PEI-method was the wish to facilitate an arena for communication in which these young girls could freely express their views of their present situation, as well as, ideas about their future.

The method of PEI was coined by Collier (1967) and his research team more than 50 years ago. Later it has been used by many sociologists and anthropologists who see and advocate the advantages of using photos in interview situations (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007, 2004; Smith, Gidlow, Steel 2012; Clark ,1999; Collier, 1967; Harper, 2002; Hurworth, 2003; Samuels, 2007). In sum, the arguments are that photo-interviewing is a "particularly powerful tool for the researcher" because it can "challenge participants, provide nuances, trigger memories, lead

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[1] The research was part of research collaboration between Lillehammer University College in Norway (LUC) and the University of Cadi Ayyad (UCA) in Marrakech.

to new perspectives and explanations, and help to avoid researcher misinterpretations" (Hurworth, 2003, p. 4). However, Hurworth also says that there exist certain limitations with the method, i.e. concerns for ethics, privacy, sampling and validity issues. Thus, in spite of an overall positive attitude held by the users of this method, there is still a need to explore the use of photographs in ethnography, and as Hurworth says, "In comparison with other methods, relatively little has been written about how photographs can be useful for interviewing purposes" (our italics) (2003, p. 1). Therefore, in the present case, we tested out this method's feasibility (validity) when it came to creating good rapport in what we believed to be a particularly demanding interview situation for the researcher: a cross-cultural context, with age as well as gender and power issues involved.

Inspired by Marisol Clark-Ibañez's studies of school children, we hoped that this method would spark the interviewees interest and lead to cooperation in the interview situation (2007, 2004). The present focus on the necessity of good rapport in the interview situation also acknowledges that each individual is situated in a historic and cultural context that neither researcher nor researched can escape. For the researcher, in this case, this means to reflect over these positions then choose the best possible method for the situation. Of course, one could argue that much could have been changed by using a younger, female researcher who spoke the right language and knew the local culture. However, that was not an option as the intention of the researcher was to acquire first-hand knowledge of the field situation.

In the next sections of this paper, we will give an outline of the location of the study and the main persons involved, some socio-cultural background, the method used and the results or observations from the interview. Finally, the use of auto driven photo elicitation in this case will be analysed with a focus on the rapport obtained, power relationship and preliminary findings.

1. The study

The location of the study is a small village in the High Atlas Mountains about 100 km east of Marrakech in Morocco. The photos, which are the focus for conversations with the girls, were taken by the interviewees themselves in 2011. The first interview based on the photos took place two years later in 2013, and there were several conversations with three of the girls who in 2014 also wrote texts based on the photos. Because the photos were taken by the interviewees themselves, we call it auto-driven PEI (Clark, 1999). This method was a supplement to shorter spells of participant observation in the village, as well as semi-structured interviews with parents and grandparents. We will come back to a description of the method used, but first we will present the interviewees, the translator,

the research assistant and the researcher. As this article is about methodological issues, the role of the persons involved is a crucial element.

1.1. Roles of people involved

The interviewees were five young girls aged approximately 7 to 12 years old. They lived with their parents in extended families with traditional division of labour, subsistence farming and economic support from labour migrants. Education for girls in this area was relatively new. None of the mothers and only some fathers had had any schooling. The girls were of the first generation in the village where girls, at large, benefitted from modern schooling from the age of seven. Therefore, due to modern education, it was our hypothesis that the future of these girls would be different from the lives of their mothers. Because of the national policy for development of the region, there will probably be many socio-economic changes in the years to come, and it had already started as will be described below.

The research assistant, Omar Aatabi (45), was a local man from the village who lived in Marrakech and made a living from tourism. He often invited tourists to the village to meet his family and see how people were living in the village. He spoke Arabic, French and English in addition to his mother tongue, Amazigh.

The translator, Nisrine Lmariouh (24), was at the time of the first interview a masters student at University of Cadi Ayyad. She was Moroccan Amazigh and spoke Arabic, Amazigh, English and French. The first interview with the girls using auto-driven PEI was undertaken when Nisrine visited the village for the first time to prepare her own Ph.D. project. Omar and Nisrine are themselves examples of modernization in Morocco.

The researcher, Frank Jarle Bruun (58), Ph.D., a male Norwegian social anthropologist with experience from various fieldwork research projects in Botswana and Nicaragua, but, not in Morocco. He spoke any of the local languages and therefore, to a large degree, depended on the use of a research assistant and an interpreter.

2. Background and justification of the research project

2.1. Rapid socio-economic changes

Since the 1990s, the government had stimulated socio-economic changes in the poor, rural areas of Morocco, especially in the province of Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz (from 2015 the name of the region was changed to Marrakech-Safi) and, by this, boosted modernization in the area (Kechkech, 2012).

Changes in the family law, the *mudawana*, had also changed the legal status of individuals and strengthened women's position in the Moroccan family. For example, the minimum age for marriage was now 18 years for both men and women, women had been granted more rights in the negotiation of marriage contracts, rights to divorce, etc. The woman's place in Moroccan society had gradually changed in some respects, for example, with the growth of women's organizations and female participation in politics (International IDEA, 2015). However, with lesser changes in the rural areas.

The village for this research had 59 households. Recently, the village had become accessible by car from the neighbouring village, and the houses had been connected to an electric power supply. Before 2014, the households depended for water on private wells or a communal well by the river in the bottom of the valley. Since 2014, it had become possible to connect houses to a water-network made by a village committee, and most houses had already connected. There was now a primary school with two classrooms. Two teachers had 24 boys and girls attending the school in 2014. For junior high school, the children walked two kilometres to the nearest village; however, for high school they had to travel daily or stay at a boarding school some 15 kilometres away.

According to our survey in 2014, all the inhabitants of the village were Amazigh and belonged to the Muslim faith. The houses in the village were traditional in style, which meant that they were built in squares with a closed front to the outside and an open inside with the different rooms: bedrooms, kitchen, toilet, barn etc., around a central courtyard. The most conspicuous sign of socio-economic change was the satellite dish on the roof of most houses. Through this the inhabitants were connected to national TV network. Some individuals also had internet connection for a cell phone.

The households were organized in a traditional way. Men worked outside the house, while women did their work in or nearby the home. For example, the men worked the fields, did the shopping (in the market) and took part in local political discussions, while the women cooked, washed, milked the cow and looked after the hens, goats and sheep. Both the children and the elderly helped with the chores.

The illiteracy rate in the Al Haouz province was 61,6% in 2004, compared to the national average of 43% (Kechkech, 2012). In our survey of the village, we estimated that most adults could neither read nor write, while all the children of the village went to primary school. This was probably the most interesting point in relation to the socio-economic and cultural situation in the village at the time.

Kechkech (2012) sums up that although Morocco, as a whole, has managed to achieve advances in human and economic development in the last decades, the statistics show an unresolved challenge of regional imbalance in which

the mountain areas, with the Al Haouz province, including our village, on the low end of the scale.

From the background outlined above, the hypothesis developed that cultural values grounded in social institutions, like family and village would be challenged by rapid socio-economic changes, including modern education and social media that were now a reality. In the present paper, we are approaching this discourse between modernity and tradition from the point of view of young girls in the village and how they experienced the situation.

3. The use of auto drive photo elicitation interview (PEI) with young girls

Inspired by literature on visual anthropology and examples of research involving PEI (Anderson, Hamilton, Hamilton 1971; Clark 1999; Clark-Ibáñez, 2004, 2007), a disposable camera was given to a group of young girls who were asked to take photos of their activities from one day to the next. This was in September 2011; however, until the project team made a visit to Morocco in 2013, there was no suitable occasion to meet the girls and interview them about the photos.

According to Douglas Harper, the first scientific paper in which the use of PEI, was mentioned, was John Collier and his team's study of how mental health was affected when families had to move and then settled in new neighbourhoods among ethnically different people in a Canadian town in 1957 (Harper, 2002, p. 14). Collier maintained that the method had several advantages: it sharpened the memory of people, it was more precise and it stimulated latent memory in ways that could release 'emotional statements about the informant's life…' (1957, p. 858 in Harper, 2002, p. 14). Harper, who has been elaborating the use of photographs in research, says that PEI can elicit more information and information of a kind that differs from an interview based on words only (2002, p. 13). Furthermore, it can reveal information of importance for the interviewee which is surprising, unexpected and might otherwise be inaccessible to the researcher. These issues were at the centre of our quandaries when we approached the new research site.

A good example of the use of auto-driven PEI in order to meet the above challenges is Marisol Clark-Ibáñez's study in which she compares two types of elementary schools in a poor neighbourhood of Los Angeles, USA (2004, 2007). The photographs, which the pupils in Clark-Ibañez's study made, were used to 'provide participants a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives' (2004, p. 1512). This was information that Clark-Ibañez felt was missing in her data. We understand this to mean that photographs may facilitate verbal exchange of ideas and meanings about themes which may be difficult to express without the help of this second medium. It might include issues like pain, shame,

or even humour. Clark-Ibañez claims that the use of PEI also empowered the children while being interviewed by her because they were the holders of the information attached to the photos. With her new focus on the children's experience, she also found that research and, consequently, the literature on children and poverty did not examine the children's own lived experience (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007, p. 170). Since the focus in our study was to be on the Amazigh children's lived experience, we thought that the photographs would be a help in that direction, in the same way as it was for Clark-Ibáñez, namely, to empower them in the interview situation and thus lay the ground for a subjective view on their own lived experience.

Most often studies where photos appear have been done by researchers with an interest for taking pictures in their fieldwork situations and showing them to the interviewees in order to facilitate the interview (Harper, 2002; Collier, 1967). However, in the present work, the interviewees were invited to take the photos and then to talk about them afterwards. In the continuation we will explain how the girls were 'recruited' and instructed in using the camera as well as what to take photos of. Then we will show some of the photos and how the first interview with the girls evolved.

4. Results from an interview with five girls

It was Omar Aatabi, research assistant and local contact in the village, who was asked by Frank to find a group of 5–6 school girls that would like to take photos of what they were doing and to talk about the photos on our next visit to the village. Omar gave the assignment to his niece and her friends from the neighbourhood. Omar was related to some of them, knew all the parents and said that they would not object to the girls doing this.

When we gave the camera to the girls, Frank told Omar to avoid giving the girls detailed instructions about what to photograph, only say that we asked them to take photos of what they were doing that particular afternoon and the following day. They were then shown the basics of how the camera functioned, i.e. how to point the camera, hold it still and where to push the button. The instruction ended with a test shot of Frank and Omar together with some of the girls. During this meeting, which took about ten minutes, it was Omar who talked and the girls nodded and said that they had understood. The following day in the afternoon the girls handed the camera back to us. Mission accomplished!

The film in the disposable camera was developed and downloaded into an electronic device upon the researcher's return to Norway. On the next visit to the village two years later, we brought colour paper copies in A4 format and found a suitable time to meet the girls.

Omar organized our visit so that we could sit in a room in his family's house. We placed ourselves in a semi-circle around a low table on which we put a digital sound recorder, the paper copies of the photographs as well as some sweets for the girls (Moroccan petit fours). There were three of us from the research team. Omar, the research assistant, was local "door opener" to the village, as well as uncle to one of the girls. Nisrine, the masters student (and later Ph.D. student) who visited the village for the first time, acted as translator. Frank Bruun, the researcher, was responsible for the plan and process of the interview. Frank expressed his questions and comments to Nisrine in English. She then translated back and forth in Amazigh and English. The questions were open-ended, focusing on themes that were directly connected to the situation in the photos, like what they were doing in each photo. From the answers, Frank and Nisrine followed up with questions which they thought were relevant to what the girls had already mentioned. However, these questions were also directed towards the feelings and intentions of the girls in the situation of the photo. For example: "What do you like about the things you are doing in this photo?" "Why do you like it?"

Figure 1. The interview situation.

In the figure 1 we see the interview situation. Nisrine, to the left, converses with three of the oldest girls leaning over the photos. The two youngest girls were sitting to the left of Nisrine and were not visible in this photo. Omar had been sitting on the empty chair in the background but attended the interview only the first 15 minutes. When he was there, he was joking and making the girls smile. He was the one who suggested to bring some sweets for the girls. Frank sat behind Nisrine and took this photograph. The door was open so that people could come and go, as well as see what was going on in the room.

Let us then turn to the photos that the girls made in 2011. In the interview, we wanted to ask the girls what they had taken photos of and why. However, the main focus for the researcher was whether and how the photos, taken two years earlier, could facilitate a good environment for conversation between the young girls and the older male researcher from another country. In other words, could the use of auto-driven PEI create good rapport?

Figure 2. The girls in the fields collecting flowers.

The girls explained that this photograph (figure 2) was taken by themselves while they were in the field collecting flowers for decoration and grass for the animals at home. They said this with very low voices. We asked them about more details about the task at hand, and they said that they found the flowers in between the strands of grain. Frank asked about names of the plants, but they said that they did not know any names.

Twenty minutes had passed when this photo came on the table. The uncle, Omar, had left the room some minutes before. The girls focused on the photo, pointed, commented, one at a time, and answered when Nisrine asked questions. The oldest girls were becoming more audible than in the beginning, while the youngest ones were still mostly smiling, giggling and did not say much.

Photo A

Photo B

Photo C

Photo D

Figure 3. Compilation of photos from out-door activities.

This is a compilation of photos from out-door activities. The girls said that they had been accompanying an adult woman who was taking her sheep to a field nearby the village (photo A and B). The photographer had been one of the oldest girls in the group. Out in the field and by a river, the girls made pictures as they were playing different games, among other things a song dance (photo C) called "Iftahi ya warda" [the opening of the flower – translator's comment]. On the last photo (D), it was starting to get dark and the girls were sitting under a tree. One of the girls was clapping her hands, but in the interview she could not remember why she did this. Other things that they were doing and taking photos of were, for example, climbing trees and playing games, like a running-competition while carrying each other piggyback.

When they had told us what they actually had been doing and why, we asked what they enjoyed the most with what they were doing. They said "we like to be together". When we asked them to compare different types of activities like collecting the flowers (as we saw in one of the photos) and collecting firewood, something they sometimes had to do, they did not answer the question, but repeated that the important thing for them was to be together.
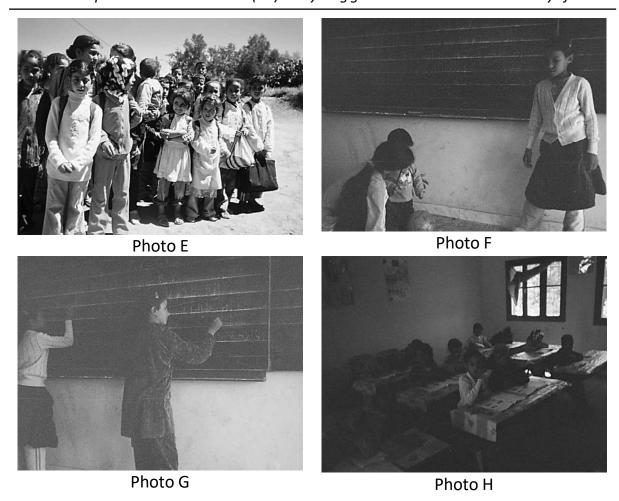
Photo E

Photo F

Photo G

Photo H

Figure 4. Compilation of photos from the school environment.

The second day with the camera and here we see a compilation of four photos from the school environment (figure 4).

The girls explained that these photos were from the classroom and of the other school-children inside and outside the school. On the follow up questions about their attitude to school and education ('what do you like about going to school?'), the girls said that they loved their teachers and they loved to be in school. Then, spontaneously, they pointed out that in one of the photos, we can just see the small child of one of the teachers. This child, they explained, used to be together with them in the classroom. They loved that it was present, they said. Of the school subjects, they said they preferred Arabic, Islamic religion, mathematics, geography and history. On the interviewer's question about what they wanted to do after they finished primary school, the girls said that they wanted to go to school and become teachers themselves. "But", added one of the oldest girls: "that is up to the wish of my father". Nisrine followed up on this and asked her what she thought her father would like her to do, and she answered in a low voice, "to stay at home". We asked her to explain more about this; however, she seemed to become uncomfortable and did not say more about it.

After one hour, when the interview ended, we went out in the courtyard and the girls and Nisrine performed the song dance "Iftahi ya warda" [the opening of the flower] which had been mentioned earlier. The girls seemed very happy to perform this dance, and in this way the conversation over the photos ended (figure 5).

Figure 5. Demonstration of the song dance "Iftahi ya warda" (the opening of the flower) after the interview.

5. Analysis of the use of the auto-driven PEI

In the first part of the conversation, the girls were very quiet. The researcher could hardly hear what they said. Nisrine, an Amazigh herself, explained after the interview that she thought the reason for the giggling and the low voices was, first and foremost, because the girls spoke to a foreigner who represented another style of men than they were used to. Second reason was because they spoke to her, a girl from the city, while they themselves came from the countryside and had little knowledge of people from the city. Third reason, she said was because it was difficult for them to speak to Omar who was an adult male and the uncle of one of the girls. To speak in a low voice to the uncle could, according to Nisrine, be a way of showing respect towards the uncle. She explained that in Amazigh culture, children were supposed to behave in a shy and subordinate-like way in order to show respect towards older people, and especially an uncle, as in this case.

Before we get to the issue of rapport, we will clarify two matters which we thought could make it impossible or maybe difficult for us to work with photography in this locality. First, would we be allowed to let the children take photos

of themselves for us? Second, would the children manage to take photos, would they have the necessary skills?

Our worries about cultural obstacles were not unfounded. We knew that taking photos of women in Morocco, and especially in rural areas, could be frowned upon; however, no such thing happened. The girls received the camera and set out to take photos. The parents did not protest against this and gave their consent to use the photos afterwards in our publications. Therefore, we must ask ourselves why this went so smoothly. We will argue that, in this case, possible cultural barriers against the use of photography were overcome because one very central person in the project paved the way so that auto-driven PEI could take place. It was Omar, the uncle of one of the girls, who approached the girls and explained the wish of the researchers in ways that he said were acceptable by the parents. Omar's status as a man born here with social and familial ties in this village made him our "door opener", the one making the project possible. Normally, he worked as a tourist guide and regularly brought tourists to the village to see how the villagers, especially his own family and close neighbours were living. Thus, many people in the village were used to being photographed by tourists. Another thing that maybe added to the good-will was that at the same time as the girls were asked to do this, Omar and other researchers had had a meeting with the villagers with the purpose of discussing future collaboration in relation to school and education of the children in the village. Many of the parents had already participated in focus group interviews, where they had said that they saw school as important for their children's future. They were eager to facilitate schooling for their children, they said in interviews. Because of this, an action research project with a Ph.D. student from Marrakesh was being planned. Due to this special context which existed when we set out to test the auto-driven PEI, the parents might have been more flexible and let us do the photo-interview with their children. In addition, the action project's team leader, with the help of Omar, had for three to four years been establishing a good relationship to the men in the village development committee by helping them with donations for a project to get potable water to the village, as well as money to repair the school building. The fact was that Omar was the one who brought these foreigners to the village and was instrumental for all this to happen. It is, therefore, likely that this made him a powerful person with influence in village politics. With this context in mind, we can understand some reasons why the researcher with camera was met in such a positive way by the parents.

We also had some worries that the girls would not like to participate. In a research project, the informants will always have the opportunity to say no, to refrain from participating or to stop participating whenever they would like to. They could have had other interests, have school-work to do, or simply not find

it interesting or even finding it scary to have something to do with a foreign man. However, none of this happened and we think that they found it interesting to be given a camera and take pictures. In addition, when Omar, the influential uncle in the village, asked them to do a favour to the foreigners, they would probably feel obliged to do their best to fulfil his wish.

The researchers also worried that there might be technical problems since the girls were very young and did not have any experience with using a camera. However, the girls seemed to have no problems learning how to use it. They were shown how to point the camera and where to push the button. Then one of the oldest girls practiced photographing once and took a photo of Frank and Omar together with the other girls. That was the whole technical preparation! The composition of the photos, as we have seen, seemed to present no problem for the girls. As the girls had not been instructed in the use of the camera flash, some of the photos were very dark. The reason for not explaining about the flash was that the researcher thought the girls would have problems handling the camera if they got too much information in this short preparation. As an afterthought we think that this was maybe wrong and an indication of the researcher's preconceived ideas about these children's abilities to learn new things.

The film had 24 exposures, but we do not show all of them here. The reason for omitting some photos in the article is that the darkness dominated the scene and it is hard to see what was going on in some of them. Three photos were more or less identical with others (like the schoolchildren outside the school), and two photos were of an adult woman who had asked the girls to take her photo. The authors believe that this woman, more than likely, did not know that the photos might be used by the researchers for publishing. Therefore, we think that it would be ethically wrong to use them without her permission.

At the end of the interview, we asked the girls whether there were things they did not take pictures of but would have liked to photograph? Yes, they said. They would have taken photos of their family, "but the memory card was full". The girls also said that they did not have a camera at home, but a cousin who lived in the city had showed them one.

This comment by the girls can illustrate how much they knew about modern cameras without having used one before. In the interview they said that "the memory card was full". In a simple way the expression illustrated the technical world which these girls had entered into, at least mentally. Although they had no camera themselves, they had learnt about it, probably from TV, visitors and others using cameras or mobile phones. However, they had not learnt about the history of photography and the development of mechanical cameras. Neither had they, like the researcher, experienced the excitement of developing black and white film in the dark-room. They knew about digital cameras and,

probably, did not know about cameras with film. In 2014 we did auto-driven PEI with a digital camera and three of the same girls mentioned here, also without any technical problems. An issue which will not be discussed further here is the ease with which the young girls adopted the use of a camera. Suffice to say that this was a worry more for the researcher than for the girls, but, in other in-stances, it can be a real problem. For example, Jeffrey Samuels encountered practical problems when he was "Eliciting Children's Experiences of Buddhist Monastic Life Through Photographs" in Sri Lanka (2007). Participants opened the camera exposing the film, forgot to use the flash when appropriate and ex-perienced technical problems with the cameras. Of course, this type of problem can have much to do with the socio-cultural context and gender differences. But after having done similar, auto-driven PEI with boys in the same village, we found that also most of the boys did exactly what they were told and had no technical problems. Only one of the boys took the digital camera with him on a weeklong trip with the local folk-lore group and made videos instead of still pictures. In con-clusion, we experienced that the children quickly became competent with the camera and actually took photos of what they were doing during two days.

With that said, we can go to the main issue of this paper and ask whether the photos contributed to the relationship or the quality of the connection be-tween the researcher and the subjects interviewed. Reportedly a good rapport in a field situation is a basic requirement for obtaining valid information which can help the researcher to see the "webs of significance" of which the inform-ants are part (Geertz 1973). Did this use of the girls' photographs in the inter-view situation contribute to a good rapport and open the possibility for the re-searcher to get glimpses of "webs of significance" from these young girls?

If we observe the interview situation around the photos (Figure 1), the photographs formed a focus of interest for both the girls and the researcher during the time we sat together. It is not, like in Geertz's case a drama that hap-pened out of the blue which made him a likeable person in the eyes of the in-formants, but a situation arranged by the researcher and his team with the in-tention of creating a good rapport. We took the wisdom from Geertz's example and applied it to a situation in which the researcher tried to establish some of the same, good relationship by sharing something or having something in com-mon with the interviewees. We believe that the girls' positive cooperation in taking the photos contributed to their interest in talking about the photos in the interview, even two years after the actual photo shoot. Their body language showed that they were interested in the photos and, although they behaved in a way that the researcher defines as being very shy, they seemed to enjoy the situation and they did explain what happened in the different pictures.

When we apply a meta-perspective on what the girls said, we believe that there are some hints at important but hidden cultural values. Especially the expression "we like to be together" and the tendency of repeating what the one before them had said are examples of such values. The researcher asked each and every one specific questions in order to get individual answers, but the girls looked at each other, smiled and answered in a similar way as the others. However, could it be that the girls agreeing so well with each other and liking so much to be together were statements confirming local, collectivistic values and not signs of shyness or lack of individual thoughts?

In Morocco in general, and the rural areas especially, the traditional values of family and collectivism are strong. Every individual is considered a member of a big collective, the family. In their role as children, or young girls, we think that the girls in the interview reflected their ideas of how to behave and what to say. Below we will demonstrate an expression which will show that these traditional values are challenged in the new socio-economic situation. But, for the moment, we go back to the interview situation and our attempts at creating good rapport.

In the rural areas of the Al Haouz region, the social daily life was quite different from the life style people had adopted in the cities. For many women and young girls, this meant staying most of the time at home, taking care of the family members and getting married at an early age, sometimes when they were only 16 years old. The people´s practices, beliefs and choices were considered to be a reflection of the fact that every individual was a member of a big collective, where everybody was a member of the "big family". In the extended family, public reputation was very important. Honour and integrity were core values.

We had taken into consideration this collectivistic nature of the society when we decided to interview the girls together about the photos, and not individually. In this collectivistic culture it could have created misunderstanding and suspicion about what the researcher was up to if we had interviewed them individually. By having the girls together, we tried to avoid rumours. While Samuels (2007) and Clark-Ibañez (2007) made their interviews individually and in places that were private, we made it a point that the room should be open and accessible for others, so that they easily could check what was going on. Therefore, we had people coming and going or peeping through the window. This was to ensure that the honour and integrity of the girls' families was intact. One may say that by doing the interview as a group interview, open to the public gaze, we were also willing to break the ethnographer's frame (Samuels, 2007). Interviewing in a group may be seen as a sacrifice of the researcher's possibilities to achieve his aims, i.e. to get the information that *he* wants. On the other hand, by sacrificing a bit of his more powerful position in the relationship with the interviewees, he broke *his* frame and by this upgraded the value of the reality

held by the interviewees. Perhaps, as Samuels points out, when the interviewer has little knowledge from the area of the interviewees, he has little chance to pose the right questions anyway. The challenge is, therefore, to create a situation that makes it possible for the subjects to bring out their views and that the interviewer does not prevent this from happening.

If the interviewer is bringing his own photos to the interview, it is likely that the interviewees will not talk about other things than what the interviewer indicates to be his theme of interest in the conversation. This can happen if the interviewer is letting his own preconceived idea about what is interesting to talk about become the frame of the conversation (Samuels, 2007). Letting the girls take the photos was, from our point of view, an attempt to break the ethnographer's frame. Thus, we assume that the photos taken by the girls themselves brought us together over something that was of interest to them. In this way we can say that they were also empowered in the situation. The girls were the ones who were the experts on the contents of the photos. Although very shy, they were able to explain what was going on and what they, at the time of the interview, saw as interesting in the pictures. Moreover, we did not try to discuss photos taken by the researcher. Maybe they would have been happy to comment and talk about these photos as well; however, taking into consideration our observations and impressions from other interviews, we think that auto-driven PEI gave us a more open dialogue with the girls. That was also our goal, i.e. to open up the situation so that we could learn about the children's point of view, how they interpreted and understood the situations they illustrated with the photos.

Furthermore, the researcher thinks that it could have been difficult for him to pose the "right" questions when he is not an insider of the culture of young girls in the High Atlas Mountains. As pointed out by Samuels, it is a common challenge for the ethnographer "arriving at questions and issues that are meaningful to the interviewees" (2007, p. 197). At least, in this situation they were given the chance to talk about something that they themselves, to a large degree, had chosen to take photos of. When we now have seen the girls' interest in making the photos, we think that they appreciated this responsibility.

The fact that the girls were shown trust and given the responsibility to make the photos themselves may have made them feel more involved in the researcher's project than they would have if the researcher directed the photo "shoot" and the girls had just done what they were instructed to do in front of the camera. Therefore, the researcher interprets the conversation about the photos to also have an aspect of empowerment because the focus of everyone present enhanced the focus on the children's lived experience and, in this way, signalled that this was also interesting for the researcher (Clark-Ibáñez, 2007).

The girls may also have felt a bit more secure about what to say when they made the photos themselves. Empowerment is also Cindy Dell Clark's main argument for letting children themselves take photographs to be used in interview situations (1999). The auto-driving, she says, is recognition of the child as an active agent in his or her own life. This method, because it puts the child in more control of the events during the interview, may have the potential of acknowledging the child's own experience as important to the researcher since the experience of being interviewed is socially situated, mediated and interpreted by the child. This effect could have been jeopardized by the presence of the uncle in the interview situation. Both the interpreter and the researcher noticed a change in the children's attitude when the uncle left the room. And since it seems obvious that he affected the ways the girls talked, one could ask why the uncle was there in the beginning of the interview?

The researcher surmises that this is an example of a situation where there are several issues at stake simultaneously. First, the uncle was the necessary "door opener", one who made the interview possible. Second, his presence during the interview seemed to make the girls behave in a special way. The girls held him in great respect. They did as he said, spoke very softly in front of him and had a body language, which signalled obedience. This is how young children, following tradition, are supposed to behave in front of older men (Davis, Davis, 1989). Thus, the researcher thinks that the girls played their roles as young girls according to local cultural norms and in this way revealed important cultural values. However, we believe that although his role as a facilitator was successful, it was better for the empowering process of the girls that he did not stay during the whole interview. For example, his absence, we think, facilitated the heartfelt expression about the power of the father to decide the future of his children. The girls had said that they loved the school and wanted to become teachers, thus, the oldest girl's expression followed by a bodily reaction indicated to the researcher and the interpreter that the girl was in opposition to her father when she said [he wants] "me to stay at home".

Could the photographs have been done by the researchers alone with the children? We think not. If the male researcher had been the photographer, the researcher thinks that on the background of the cultural context, it would have been necessary for an adult man, a relative of the girls, to be present to ensure the girls' propriety. To secure that there was nothing happening which could be interpreted as a mistake by the villagers thus jeopardizing the whole research (see for example Mernissi, 2003). The Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi, researched the role and expectations of women's behaviour among rural Amazigh. She emphasizes among other things, that in rural areas, young women are expected to safeguard the honour of the family. This means they work hard

with household chores and do not go outside the house unnecessarily or without the company of a male relative. The girls in our case were children under the age of 12 and they may not be thought of as "young women" with the same expectations attached to them as Mernissi mentions. However, as a foreign researcher with little experience in this field, it was difficult to act otherwise than to include Omar, the important "door – opener" in the situation. We thought it prudent not to run the risk of behaving in a way that could have been considered offensive and provoked a negative reaction in some way. Now, as it turned out, the girls made the photos alone and in this way we avoided the presence of adult men or interference of adult persons in the photo situation.

Conclusion

Is it, thus, possible to conclude that the photos created, supported or contributed to as good a rapport in the interview situation as they could, in accordance with Collier (1967), Harper (2002), Clark (1999) and Clark-Ibáñez (2004)? From our observations we cannot say how much auto-driven PEI contributed. Nor did we even try to measure it in objective ways. But we think that there are enough clues that go towards verifying our hypothesis, that the auto-driven PEI created an atmosphere of common interest, or rapport as we call it here. This factor contributed to the empowerment of the girls in the interview situation and thus gave us some glimpses into their perspectives of growing up in this village.

The interview situation in this example shows that the dialogue was inspired by the photos and that the girls seemed empowered by the process. The dialogue was structured by the photos and the issues which were visible in the photos were not chosen by the researcher's assumption of what could be interesting for the girls to talk about. The researcher's questions also tried to follow the flow of the conversation and we think, in this way, it was less structured by the researcher's ideas and more driven by what the girls wanted to show from their daily activities, or what Clark-Ibáñez called the children's lived experience (2007). Thus, to the PEI research team, an expression like "but that is up to the wish of my father" accompanied by physical signs of stress as she said it is seen as an indication that the use of photos created an atmosphere or rapport in this interview situation so that sometimes the girls gave us insight into their perspective on cultural norms in the village.

It is obvious, but nevertheless, we like to mention that obtaining ethnographic information in an interview situation depends on several factors, not only rapport. The present case demonstrates that the photos themselves do not obliterate factors like power, age and gender differences, nor the need for language and cultural knowledge. All of which will affect the outcome of the interview.

However, we conclude that the use of auto-driven PEI, due to its empowering function in this case, facilitated rapport in the interview situation and thus contributed to an interview situation with possibilities for small insights into the life world of these young girls in spite of age, gender and cultural differences.

Of course it can be said that the time lapse of two years between the interview and the actual shooting of the photos could have had an impact on what the girls remembered about why they took these photos. This is true. We cannot say what they were thinking at the moment of making the photos, but from the interview we can say a little bit about what the girls were thinking about it two years later. From the methodological perspective of using auto-driven PEI with young girls, this shows a strength in this method that lasted over a long period of time. In the year 2014, we again invited three of the oldest girls to talk about the same photos. This time they had more comments, but it was still difficult to get longer accounts. Therefore, we asked them to write a text to each photo. This proved to function in the way that they wrote an informative text of about half a page for each photo. The production of these texts and their willingness to talk about the photos and their own texts afterwards seemed to be a good argument for the use of these photos over a long period of time. We are now planning to come back in 2016 and invite the girls to new conversations over the same photos. Then they will be young women and can see the photos from that perspective and look back at when they were children in the village.

Acknowledgements

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