

Developing Geographers through Photography: Enlarging Concepts

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ABSTRACT This paper explores how photographs can be used to teach urban social geography to second- and third-year university students. In it the author describes her work acquainting students with the skill of 'directed observation'. She argues that teaching geography through photography is not merely asking students to take pictures but rather, the process of looking with intention. Capturing what is seen on film encourages students to engage with geography by seeing how ideas ground themselves on the landscape. This work also challenges how geographers think about what they require of students and calls into question normative classroom practices. Most importantly, it adds to our understanding of concepts that are central to geographic analyses and heightens our awareness of how well students understand. Photographs provide an opportunity to hear multiple voices in multiple ways. The author suggests that the methodological and pedagogical contributions of photographs have been overlooked in geography.

KEY WORDS: Conceptual photography, geographic education/college–university, urban social geography

Introduction

Geographers teaching courses for second- and third-year students often grapple with how to present the discipline in a way that makes it interesting and engaging, and simultaneously builds on what students learned in introductory courses.¹ One of the goals often cited in these upper-level undergraduate courses is to put students in the role of active participants in the learning process and get them to make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and their life worlds. More often than not however, goals such as these take a backseat to the urgency of imparting knowledge and content. Moreover, second- and third-year students, having been acquainted with the basics (and not yet ready to pursue independent research) need something that is both different and familiar—challenging but carefully monitored. Neither the teaching strategies used in the introductory courses nor those used in senior capstones (where most curriculum efforts are directed) are ideal. Teaching in a way that connects with students' life worlds, captures their energy and enthusiasm, and challenges them to stretch themselves often demands that we re-stock our toolkit of strategies and methods. This can be a daunting task.

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This paper recounts my experience integrating photography into an upper division urban social geography class that I teach. It is not uncommon to ask students to take pictures. However, often when photography is integrated in geography classes, it is lower-level classes and students are given the simple assignment to go out and take pictures. The result is often description—a picture of a street, a corner, a community profile, a route to school—little more than a snapshot.² Upper division courses offer an opportunity to use photographs in a more substantive way by building on concepts students have already learned in previous courses as well as heightening appreciation of the geographer's mission: to understand how ideas ground themselves on the landscape. The photograph has the added advantage of appealing to today's students' fascination with the visual.

Why Photography?

The photograph has always lurked in the background of what geographers do. In the early 1900s the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee commissioned a photographer to travel around the world and photograph images of place, power and empire (Ryan, 1994; Driver, 1995). Geographers' interest in the photograph and in 'picturing place' began with this colonial project.³ Although an important goal was to develop proficiency and test the limits of the new technology, the illusion of objectivity and the prospect of precise, accurate depictions of places and things was what was *really* desired.

Today, geographers' interest in the photograph is directed more toward critical inquiry (Rose, 1996); imagineering (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003); exposing manifestations and constructions of power relations (Ryan, 1994; Driver, 1995); interpretations/meanings and hermeneutics (Lutz & Collins, 1993); and elaboration of the known world (McGuire, 1998). The choice to focus on critique rather than the potential contribution of the photograph and the photographic enterprise makes sense given geography's current affair with the postcolonial project and the desire to understand culture and power relations. Picture taking provides "a certain kind of gaze to powerful social identities" (Rose, 1996, p. 289). Crang's (1996) historical work on old Bristol illustrates this well. He employs antique picture postcards to tell the story of how Bristol was variously represented through visuals. These more recent uses of the photograph are strikingly different from photography's initial purpose: to provide precise, accurate depictions of places and things.

According to critical theorists, the major shortcoming of the photograph is that it is 'linguistically reflective' and 'inauthentic'. It says more about the picture taker than the picture. The camera does not act; it has no agency. It is the picture taker who decides what to photograph and which perspective to capture.⁴ This is without a doubt true but it seems to me that privileging this critique and neglecting the contribution that the photograph can make to understanding geographical concepts is tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Photographs are intimately related to reality. To dwell only on the issue of 'social constructedness' leads not only to analytical paralysis and frustration but also runs the risk of depriving the photograph of any potential it might have in the classroom, or as a research tool, or as an aid to policy-making.

Putting the issue of social constructedness aside, there are two other issues that need to be addressed before the photograph can be incorporated into upper-level geography courses. The first is the uncertainty over how the photograph can (and should) *be used* in social inquiry. And the second is how it can (and should) *be read*. In other words, what

data does it provide? What questions does it prompt? What is its contribution to academic practice?

In many ways, these questions speak to the tension between communication specialists and photography aficionados⁵ over whether or not the photograph is a realist document, an iconic document, or an evocative document. For a thoughtful, well-reasoned discussion of this highly charged issue, see Sturken & Cartwright (2001). Sociologists and anthropologists⁶ suggest that these tensions have created an ever widening gulf between the theoretical/interpretive work undertaken by those engaged in critical reflection (the relativists) and those engaged in the realist practice of actually *doing* research with photography.⁷ It seems that when the emphasis shifted to image-making and the evocative qualities of the photograph, interest in *doing* photography was pushed to a back burner. Gone are the days when a geographer's preparation for a lecture was preceded by a careful (though unexamined) sorting of slides for the ubiquitous picture/slide show.⁸ In the last five years, relatively little effort has gone into exploring how the photograph can help us understand what is happening on the landscape; how it can aid social inquiry; how it can be pushed beyond its current resting place in cultural studies⁹ to enhance the teaching of upper-level geography.

There are some who would suggest that despite the landscape images of cultural geographers, dealing with visual sources is beyond the remit of the discipline of geography (see Rose, 2003, p. 212). For a discipline that purports to be a description of the world, why is this?

What is even more interesting is that picture books depicting city life are seldom done by geographers but rather by photographers who have very little formal training in geography. Vergara's *The New American Ghetto* is an example. In his critically acclaimed text, he provides the viewer with a bird's-eye view of Newark, Chicago, Detroit and other declining urban landscapes. He notes that he is struggling to give meaning "to the dumps of the non-historical past ... to pull together disconnected ways of seeing ... and to document how things end" (Vergara, 1995, p. 34).¹⁰ Vergara's work is very similar to the work of another social photographer, Jacob Riis. Riis, in *How the Other Half Lives* (1971), documents the conditions of life for early immigrants to America. His work, like Vergara's, touches on the voyeurism, aestheticism and colonization in the relations between photographer and subject. Though compelling, not to mention strongly geographical, the intent of both of these works is to present a point of view—and a middle-class one at that. Neither author makes a claim to further the understanding of what is going on. Poverty and race become over-determined metaphors and the photographs end up fostering stereotypes, inciting fear and disgust, and distancing the viewer. The information in the pictures becomes unwieldy, vast and essentializing.

Making the Connection between Concepts and the Lay of the Land¹¹

Geographical concepts almost always represent themselves as ideal types¹² and have signature imprints that are recognizable even on the small neighbourhood scale. Sociologists and anthropologists routinely use photographs to examine idealized notions around assimilation, acculturation, poverty, inequality, disenfranchisement and alienation in American cities. In 'Zooming in/Zooming out', Barndt (1997) explores how globalization¹³ looks on the landscape of Toronto. She traces the journey of a tomato from Mexico to Toronto and uses documentary photography to highlight the connections

between people—from the women who prepare breakfast tostados for the workers on the farms in Mexico to the women cashiers in Toronto who scan the final product in the Canadian supermarket. Barndt demonstrates how everybody along the trail is similarly impacted by global corporations and she does it in a way that we can see. In making these connections, Barndt allows photographs to give a multilayered portrayal of the global–local nexus.

Similarly, Gold (1995) uses photographs to compare social life in New York City and Los Angeles. His aim is to link the local-level context with macro theory and apply the sociological/photographic tradition of building generalizations from multiple sources to explore differences in the nature of public life in two contrasting social environments. The question he explores is, “what is to be learned by comparing photographs of people’s behavior in public settings of the nation’s two largest cities?” (Gold, 1995, p. 86).

DeCuyper (1997–1998) relies on the photograph to guide her thinking around urban activism and urban/regional policy-making. In her work, she highlights the efforts of several British community photography projects to critique redevelopment, economic disparity and community. She notes that community photography projects in Britain were viewed fundamentally as radical efforts designed to further the goal of democracy (DeCuyper, 1997–1998, p. 4). The artists saw themselves questioning both the right to represent their circumstance and the underlying structure of British society. The most notable of these projects was the Docklands Project, focused on an area in East London. Similar to Barndt and Gold, deCuyper’s argument is that “photography can (and should) be used in ways that are analytical and socially relevant, not merely as illustrative support for text” (p. 8).

Orellana (1999, p. 75) in her work on space and place in an urban landscape, uses photographs to examine the landscapes of childhood and “the ways in which class, gender, ethnicity, immigration, and racialization” affect children’s lives. She situates her work in several neighbourhoods in Madison, California, and argues that her photographs illuminate the landscapes of childhood. They can be used to think about children’s agency in navigating across settings and sometimes changing the sociospatial context of their lives. She explores the geographies of childhood and the landscapes of their lives. Her focus is on children’s embodied experiences as they take place in time and space. She is also capturing children’s views of their social worlds—“the standpoints and perspectives of children who are differently positioned and who differently take up the challenges of moving in and through this environment” (Orellana, 1999, p. 74). Certainly there is tension between the photograph as iconic, voyeuristic practice, and the photograph as datum but it is apparent in the work of Barndt, Gold, deCuyper, and Orellana that the photograph stands apart from other communicative systems (see also Becker, 1974; Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 1998). In all three instances, the photograph gives rise to new concepts (e.g. glocalization); clarifies concepts (e.g. public space); and sets out metaphoric relations between concepts.

The common thread in all of these studies is place—what *has* happened, *is* happening and *will* probably happen *in a place* and *to a place*. Barndt’s work on globalization, Gold’s on public spaces in LA and New York City, deCuyper’s on urban activism and Orellana’s on children’s landscapes all acknowledge scale¹⁴ and merge picture taking with the geographer’s concern with how ‘ideas’ ground themselves on the landscape. The studies succeed in disentangling what is strictly impressionistic from what is evidentiary and, when they come from trained eyes, tell a story in ways that statistics cannot.

The photograph offers a visual record of ‘moments’ that can be measured against future changes (Geertz, 1973; Harp, 1975; Pink, 2001); it authenticates verbal descriptions of place; and it is data that aid in the task of categorizing, classifying, naming and controlling information (Sekula, 1982; Secondulfo, 1997; Pauwels, 2000; Harper, 2002; TenHave, 2003). Accordingly it becomes a powerful aid in seeing the impact people and places have on one another and how they mutually reinforce one another; in other words it is a powerful tool in examining the sociospatial dialectic.

The Course/Students

My course is Urban Social Geography. It has been offered regularly (once a year) for the past 12 years. Last year was the first time I included a visual/photographic component.¹⁵ It is a cross-listed course, meaning that it enrolls both undergraduates and graduate students. Ideally, the undergraduates are sophomores and juniors who have had some introduction to geography in previous courses (most probably the department’s basic introductory-level geography course—World Urban Patterns). Several students had done formal coursework in visual studies and/or photography.¹⁶ The graduate students were all familiar with basic geographical concepts either because they were geography majors or because they elected to include one or two geography courses in their undergraduate curriculum.

Roughly half of the students were from film and media arts, journalism or radio/television broadcasting. When asked why they took the course, they indicated that they were interested in learning about cities. Some had heard from other students about my interest in integrating visuals (photography, film, etc.) into geography courses.

The goals of the course are to acquaint students with urban social geography;¹⁷ to expose them to the multiple ways of understanding cities; to sensitize them to the importance of skilful observation and reflection; to encourage critical thinking; and in this instance to challenge normative practices and rethink how we ‘do’ geography.¹⁸ Photography demands that students register complexity, sort information, look for—and find—pattern and make meaning. It is an ideal way to accomplish the goals of the course.

The course lasts 14 weeks and consists of 10 three-hour lecture/discussion sessions, outside readings, fieldwork, in-class writing assignments and class presentations. Throughout the course students are encouraged to work together in small groups, bounce ideas off one another, critique each other’s work, and provide feedback to the instructor. The last three weeks are spent doing presentations that typically last 15–20 minutes each. Very little class time is spent discussing photography and photographic method.¹⁹ Neither is class time allotted to issues of how to interpret a photograph, how an image engages with cognition, or how power relations become embedded in the photo. The task is simply to get students to become skilful, astute observers and make them aware of how geography spatializes the concepts they learn in other classes.

Assignments

Students are given four assignments. The first assignment is given during the first week of class. They are asked to write a short narrative describing their neighbourhood. They can elect to write either about the neighbourhood they grew up in or the neighbourhood they currently live in. This activity serves a number of purposes. First, and most importantly

it gives me a gauge of their 'native' writing and observation abilities. They are asked to see from multiple perspectives and describe deeply. I look for thoughtful, contemplative, pure description. At this point in the class, students will not have been introduced to any of the conceptual content of the course. This initial pre-test (Assignment #1) can then be compared with a later post-test (Assignment #4) narrative they are asked to do in the last week of class. The pre- and post-test are an indication of how much they learned.

Four or five weeks into the course (after students have acquired some command of the subject matter), they are given a second assignment: to isolate a concept (e.g. exclusion/marginality, gentrification, disintegration, gentrification, identity) that we have been discussing in class, go out into their neighbourhoods and photograph how it 'congeals' on the landscape. This is the assignment that allows me to see how well they understand the concepts at play on the landscape.

Concepts

Concepts such as social exclusion/marginality, community (disintegration), gentrification, identity, and new urbanism feature prominently in urban social geography. Moreover, they ground themselves on the landscape and can be captured by the trained, observant eye.

Social exclusion/marginality²⁰ is based on deeply held notions regarding difference, normalcy, 'purity' and worth. Typically we think of these notions in binaries such as *good* and *bad*; *insider* and *outsider*; and *us* and *them*. The binaries lead to distancing behaviours and, subsequently, the construction of boundaries. Boundaries have both a social and a spatial dimension. The social dimension is marked by feelings of anxiety, hostility, disgust or desire when in the presence of the 'other'. Many social practices aid in maintaining distance (e.g. increased surveillance and policing of public spaces).²¹ The spatial component is characterized by exclusionary (exclusive) landscapes in the form of gated communities, cordoned entryways (Figure 1a), bench restrictions (Figure 1b–1d) and the domination of space by the majority.

Community (disintegration) as discussed in the work of sociologists Julius Wilson (1987), Massey & Denton (1993) and Charles Murray (1984) tends to focus on characteristics of people who inhabit spaces that are experiencing disintegration (e.g. multigenerational welfare recipients, multiple out-of-wedlock childbirths, and the presence of few, if any, role models). The concentration of the 'disadvantaged' in isolated locales 'spatializes' the culture of poverty and makes community disintegration conspicuous and visible in the form of adverse environmental conditions (e.g. lack of positive neighbourhood identification, trash pile-ups, graffiti, broken windows, and abandoned buildings; see Figure 2). When no people are pictured, race is no longer an over-determined metaphor and thus it loses its explanatory grip.

Gentrifying communities (islands of renewal in seas of decay) are both temporally and spatially situated. Pioneer gentrification occurs early in the life cycle of a gentrifying community whereas mature gentrification occurs in the later stages.²² Gentrification occupies a space in the discourse that is uncaptured by theories of suburbanization or urbanization. The lifestyles and distinctive consumption (fancy boutiques, pricey coffee shops, health food stores, vintage clothing shops, upscale restaurants) make it possible to represent it in locational, spatial terms (Figures 3a–c).

Identity refers to the collectivities of physical, material, structural or behavioural elements that contribute to definitive recognition. Communities (through conscious and

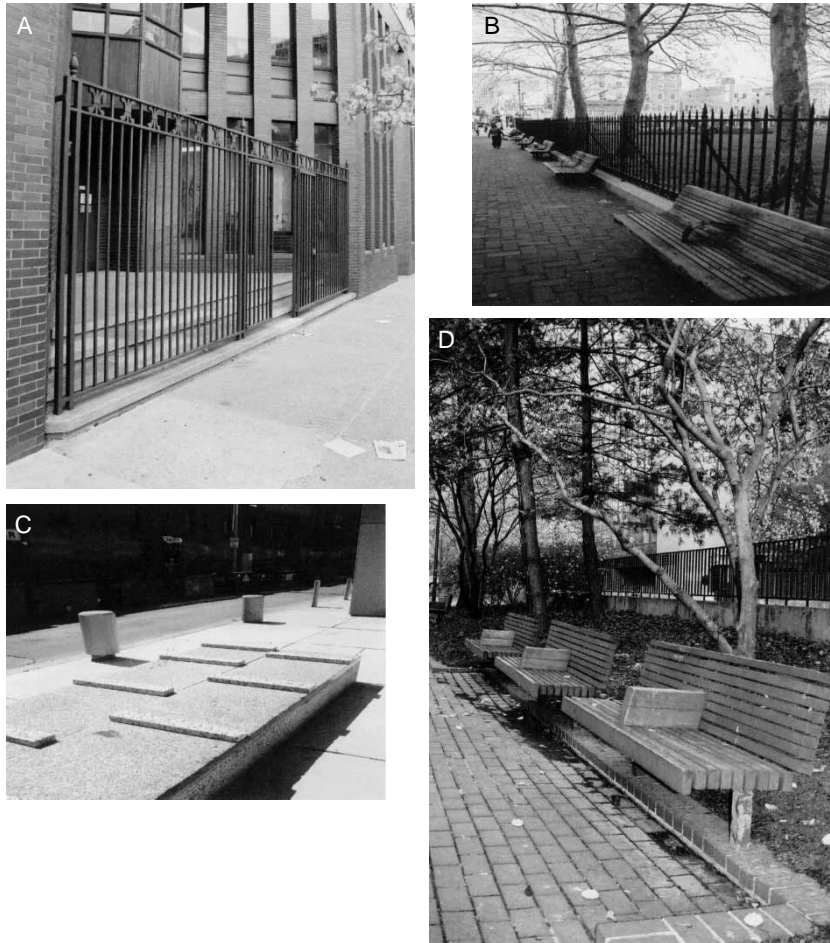


Figure 1. (a) Cordoned entryway of Friends Select keep homeless out of doorway. 17th and JFK Parkway. William Kaiser, photographer. (b) Bench restrictions. 2nd and Market. William Kaiser, photographer. (c) Bench restrictions make it impossible for homeless to stretch out. 17th and Ranstead. William Kaiser, photographer. (d) Bench restrictions. 11th and Market. William Kaiser, photographer.

unconscious markings) seek to represent themselves publicly to outsiders (and to themselves). Identity is both derivational and reflective. The set of identifiers by which a community represents itself spatially include ‘territorial markers’ that often reflect structural elements such as social class, income and race (Figure 4).

Similar to the previous concepts, the new urbanism is an idea that represents itself on the landscape. It is an architectural form that seeks to give physical/spatial impression to the concept of community. Thus, it is a quintessential geographical concept—the spatial expression of the merger of ideology, material form, and function. The idea behind the new urbanism comes from planners, architects and others interested in shifting the emphasis in the design of cities, towns and neighbourhoods away from its current reliance on the private automobile²³ towards a smaller-scale, more easily negotiated, user-friendly spatial



Figure 2. *Disintegration?*. Visual language of the Latino community. Collage and photography by Sarah Spangler.

form. Although the new urbanism is most often associated with new towns, it can also be found on smaller spatial scales—the neighbourhood, the block, or even an apartment complex as Figure 5a–5d illustrates. New urbanist developments may be in-fill projects, new towns or individual blocks, but the basic identifier is the material expression of community, which provides a distinctive sense of place.²⁴

There are several reasons for asking students to think about how ideas ground themselves on the landscape and to photograph what they see. First, they develop an appreciation for looking and seeing and accordingly recognize that they are active endeavours—not passive. Skill and knowledge of method are required for both. Second, students learn that they are not just taking pictures. It is not a snapshot. Photography of the sort I ask them to do demands both pre-history in the form of theoretical context and continuation in the form of substantive analysis. Essentially, what students do in this exercise is equivalent to ‘naming’—reifying, attaching a handle/name to something that has an established (yet unnamed or *mis*named) representation; drawing in closely and distinguishing it from something else; looking at it from different angles to make sure all the facets are exposed. What they do is concrete (not abstract), hot (beginning in the real world not just in the head) and part of an ongoing process (Barndt, 1998, p. 8). I often respond to the initial photos by suggesting that they go back, give more thought to what



Figure 3. (a) Gentrifying Fairmount. Typical Philadelphia rowhouses renovated. Caroline Guigar, photographer. (b) Gentrifying Fairmount. Newly opened upscale restaurant. Caroline Guigar, photographer. (c) Gentrifying Fairmount.. New businesses find opportunity Curves. Caroline Guigar, photographer.

it is they are trying to capture and take several more photos in order to reach a point where (ideally) the picture speaks for itself.²⁵

The third assignment is a synthesis/capstone project. Students are encouraged to do a project that best demonstrates their command of the subject matter.²⁶ Of the 23 students in the class last term, eight chose photo-essays;²⁷ two did audio reports; four spliced together a series of photographs to form a moving film; two did graphical displays (maps of streets, neighbourhoods) that supplemented either a narrative or photographic analysis, and three did ethnographic and 'literary' analysis, e.g. musings. Interestingly, only one (a graduate student in Social Work) did a more traditional, normative science research paper.

Evaluation and Assessment of Student Work

With little prior precedence, introducing photography in an upper-level class was not without problems. In addition to the cognitive dissonance (how do we know that what we looked at is indeed what we see), there was also endless revisiting, rethinking, and redoing.



Figure 4. Visual Language of the Latino Community. Collage and photography by Sarah Spangler.

Initially I thought that the difficulties arose from the challenge to normative practice and the desire to push the boundary of conventional pedagogy. Thinking outside the box even in small ways always carries with it some degree of risk and unintended consequences. On reflection however, I realized that there were other explanations more connected to the specifics of the tasks.

First, when looking at urban landscapes, it is not easy to identify and disentangle what is cause and what is effect. Social and spatial processes are symbiotically and parasitically embedded in one another. Even sociologists and anthropologists who have worked hard to ‘picture’ urban change often note how difficult it is to make a connection between what we see on the landscape and the social process that triggered the representation. Reiger (1996, p. 5) for instance noted that “visual changes on the landscape may precede social change, e.g. a flood or tornado . . . or may lag behind social change as in the case of a hospital shutdown or a plant closing”. It is also possible for the landscape to give clues regarding what is occurring *at the time* that it is occurring (e.g. markers of ethnic identity). Sometimes what is photographed does not tell the whole picture, only part of the story.²⁸

Second, in the photos of visual anthropologists and visual sociologists, the picture is often used to capture the actions of individuals in concrete situations at particular times. What is captured is intensive, immediate, unique, non-recurring and often part of a spectacle. It is also often voyeuristic and colonial. In my class, students were given specific instructions to *exclude* people and *not* take photos of events. As a result, one gauge of how we know what we know (the certainty arising from unspoken but implied mutual understandings between the observed and the observer) was removed.

Third, initial encounters are naïve, visceral and frequently lack sophistication and critical appraisal. What we gain from them is often instinctive and a *quick read*. In order



Figure 5. (a) *subUrban*dreaming. Newly built housing development by Philadelphia Housing Authority. 11th between Spring Garden and Girard, West side of street. Mark Kauffman, photographer. (b) *subUrban*dreamingOlder housing development. 11th between Spring Garden and Girard, East side of street. Mark Kauffman, photographer. (c) *subUrban*dreaming. Brand new homes sport all of the modern amenities. 11th between Spring Garden and Girard, West side of street. Mark Kauffman, photographer. (d) *subUrban*dreaming. Open spaces reminiscent of suburbia. 11th between Spring Garden and Girard, West side of street. Mark Kauffman, photographer.

to marry what we study in the classroom with what we see in a place, the rethinking and revisiting that seemed so arduous was actually essential.

Fourth was the challenge of constructing assignments and developing a grading rubric that could accurately access all of the goals of the class (building on what has already been learned, mastering content/subject matter, and effectively presenting what has been learned). The decision to give students *carte blanche* in terms of how they demonstrated mastery of the subject matter was most problematic. At best, the assessment was value laden, contained a measure of imprecision and raised as many questions as it answered.²⁹ At worst, it was purely subjective. Nevertheless, students reacted positively to the class and what they learned. There were no grade disputes. In year-end class evaluations students commented on what they thought about the class: “I liked that we were introduced to something new and different”; “fieldwork was a great element”; “challenging classroom atmosphere”; “good course material”; “we looked at all different sides of an issue”. “I liked getting out of the classroom and taking pictures”; “we covered a large amount of topics”; professor was able to generate good class discussions”; “she made us think a little”; “we delved deeply into issues”; “I liked that we were given the freedom to explore topics of interest to us”; “the freedom to explore different mediums [*sic*]”; “the free flow style is not for everyone. I loved it and would not change it.”

In terms of the course goals, students noted that they were forced to think critically and not make snap judgements. They learned that all things are not what they seem.³⁰ They also commented on problems, disconnects and things that could have been

improved, e.g. “Although we could visit the instructor in her office as much as we wanted, I wished there had been more discussion or insight into the final project”; “there were too many students at different levels of interest and academic standing in the class”; “makes me think about absolute freedom in a whole new way!” The penultimate indication of my satisfaction was the three students who declared geography as their new major (or minor) after taking the class.

Conclusions

Teaching geography well requires that we make concepts real. Students understand even very complex, non-linear ideas when they can see how they resonate in their lives. Likewise, they appreciate geography if they can ‘see’ it, relate it to their life worlds and connect the theory with practice. A challenge for teachers of upper-level courses is to move beyond mere definitions and meanings of concepts to the point where students come to appreciate geography as multidimensional, integrated and performative. Seeing geography’s ‘realness’ is enormously valuable. In addition, when students see what they are studying in the world around them, they gain an appreciation for what goes on in the classroom. This is what I sought to give students when I introduced photography into my teaching of Urban Social Geography—an appreciation for what goes on in the classroom. Unlike sociology where the task is to explore how concepts resonate across social groups (e.g. race, class, gender), I asked students to explore (and photograph) how social processes impressed themselves on the urban landscape. The task of taking a picture with the intent of shedding light on what is happening to (and in) a place is neither easy nor intuitive. It requires a trained eye and an awareness of what is being played out. Many factors come together to frame what we see in a photograph—a stereotype that has already been imprinted on the senses; a reality constructed by attending to what is in one’s head; and thoughts formed with the help of education, memory and imagination. These are mutually enforcing and totally inescapable.

Before students took pictures, they read the theory and talked among themselves and sometimes with neighbourhood residents. Afterwards, they studied their photographs and asked questions of the product. What exactly were they seeing? What had 1/100th of a second captured?

It often turns out that what is happening to urban neighbourhoods cannot be communicated using the written word (e.g. the fear of what is around a dark corner—literally and metaphorically). Photographs make it possible to represent another layer of the narrative; they capture what everybody can see but, lacking an analytical frame, have little grasp of.

Even with the challenges and complications noted previously, introducing photographs into mid- and upper-level geography courses deserves further attention. After all is said and done, it would seem that we can either train photographers in urban social geography or train geographers in the art of photography. Although both would yield a desirable result, enlarging the geographer’s toolkit is always of interest. I prefer the latter.

Notes

¹ Teaching introductory courses differs from teaching intermediate and advanced-level courses in a number of ways. First, core competences in introductory courses include such things as basic comprehension, recognition of difference, and construction of simple essay arguments. Intermediate and advanced courses on the other hand emphasize competences such as critical examination of

materials, command of sophisticated, advanced concepts, exposure to the research process, formulating research questions and constructing arguments.

- ² DeCuyper (1997–1998, p. 3) in her work on community photography makes a similar observation.
- ³ For a readable and thorough historical account of photography and the geographical imagination, see Schwartz & Ryan (2003). They date the affair between geography and photography to 1839 with the announcement of the invention of a “process for fixing an image directly from nature using optical chemical means (the daguerreotype)”. Geographers latched on to the new technology immediately.
- ⁴ This idea is discussed in the work of Griffin (1993) as he references Sol Worth’s groundbreaking project, ‘Through Navajo Eyes’ (1972).
- ⁵ Communication specialists are interested in the meaning of images whereas aficionados of photography are more interested in discussions of sampling density, the effect of sky cover and sun direction, and messages implied by cropping, zooming, perspective and foregrounding/background. Thanks to the reader in the blind review process for pointing this out.
- ⁶ See deCuyper (1997–1998); Burgin (1982); and Sekula (1982) for more on this topic.
- ⁷ Van Leeuwen & Jewitt (2001) suggest that many images contain an element of both ‘record’ and ‘construct’. In the same volume, Collier (2001) cautions against the constructivist discourse because it runs the risk of creating the illusion that photographs are nothing beyond their constructed content. It is paralyzing.
- ⁸ For a discussion of slides as visual accompaniments in geography, see Rose (2003).
- ⁹ Rose’s (1996) very important work on teaching visual geographies, although focused on method, falls more appropriately within the cultural studies approach. Lister and Wells (2001, p. 2) are highly critical of Rose’s work and note that it seems not to advance a specific methodology but, rather, lists an agenda of questions and issues for addressing specific images.
- ¹⁰ One can only speculate on why he thought photographs documented the end.
- ¹¹ Of note, the theme of the 2002 meeting of the International Visual Sociology Association was Visualizing Community, State, and Nation: Images of Power and Social Bond.
- ¹² The notion of ideal type as used here draws on the work of Weber (1958). Specifically he suggests that because social phenomena involve human behaviour, understanding them requires that they be situated in one of four categories—emotion, custom/habit, rational, or irrational. Ideal types, then, are phenomena that appear normal, logically consistent and sufficiently different so as to stand out.
- ¹³ Globalization is defined as the increasing integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment, capital flows, and flows of workers and technology.
- ¹⁴ Barndt’s work is international; deCuyper’s work is on the city scale; and Orella’s is on the neighbourhood scale.
- ¹⁵ I have been teaching for 22 years. During that time, it has become apparent to me that although students can answer a question about a geographic concept, often they cannot place it in the ground—‘see’ how it looks and how it plays out spatially. Observing this has led me to believe that the ability to ‘see’ does not come naturally. I began formal coursework in photography five years ago. Since then, I have learned to appreciate visual culture. Importantly, what I realized was that everything I saw, I did not necessarily understand. The possibilities connected with marrying the practice of geography with the practice of photography were indeed unlimited as the early geographers with the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee (COVIC) had already observed.
- ¹⁶ The university’s core curriculum requires that students take courses such as Art History and Introduction to Visual Language. I think these courses provide some foundation for the visual demands of this class.
- ¹⁷ Urban social geography is that subfield of the discipline that seeks answers to questions like: Why do city populations get sifted according to race and class producing distinctive neighbourhoods? What processes are responsible for the sifting? How do households and individuals become physically segregated within the city? Does location within a city affect behaviour? How do people make choices regarding where they live? What groups are able to manipulate the geography of the city and to whose advantage? These questions are noted in the introduction to Knox and Pinch’s classic textbook, *Urban Social Geography* (2000).
- ¹⁸ This is accomplished by fostering learning not only through traditional ways of reading and writing but through non-traditional ways of seeing, listening, talking, etc. In other words, using all the senses to acquire knowledge.

- ¹⁹ As noted, however, many students come to the class having already taken a photography course or with a very keen interest in picture taking. For those with absolutely no foundation, several supports (e.g. sociological and anthropological sourcebooks, one-on-one discussions outside class, and email conversations) are available. I also have on hand a number of 'photography' books that students can use as a guide.
- ²⁰ For a fuller discussion of geographies of exclusion, see Sibley (1995).
- ²¹ Sibley (1995) and Low (2003) provide an excellent discussion of the issues surrounding exclusiveness and its spatial manifestation.
- ²² For an exhaustive discussion of gentrification, see Lees (1996).
- ²³ Reliance on the private car is peculiar to the US in particular and even so, not in all cities, e.g. New York City.
- ²⁴ These material expressions include small-scale doors and windows that face the street, walkability, comfort and accessibility.
- ²⁵ Though it is rare not to need a caption, captions do 'play with' viewer independence in a hyper-realistic way.
- ²⁶ Although students have considerable flexibility, projects like food tastings and fashion shows are not allowed. The project has to be one that can be presented to a professional association, an academic audience or a policy group. Many elect to do something akin to a photo-essay.
- ²⁷ While some of the photo-essays were 'realist' in that they took the viewer on an actual route through an area, others were more iconic or representational.
- ²⁸ DeCuyper (1997–1998) notes in her work that the photographs depicting the redevelopment of the Docklands in East London captured only the reality of white dock workers. During the initial phase of redevelopment, however, the Docklands comprised almost 50 per cent people of colour.
- ²⁹ While this might seem problematic for some, Schilling and Schilling (1998), in their work for the ASHE-ERIC, list these among their 'Ten Principles Underlying Effective Assessment'.
- ³⁰ The classic instance of this was the student who brought in photos of a new development in Exton (an upper-income suburb of Philadelphia) and captioned it as an example of new urbanism. It was only after other students critiqued his work and forced him to delve deeply into the concept that he could see that his photographs were of a quasi-new-town development, not new urbanism.

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