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Gathering Insights on Inequities and Inequalities from a Photovoice Project with Community Organizations in Havana, Cuba

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ABSTRACT
This article describes how the PhotoVoice methodology can be utilized to study inequities and inequalities within the broader scope of an ethnographic research project. We illustrate how participatory photography provides valuable visual representations and critical analyses that can identify or corroborate unequal lived experiences and interpretations; and more novel to visual ethnography, how the nuances that permit or hinder a PhotoVoice project's completion are also invaluable qualitative data, especially for the study of inequalities. Specifically, this article describes a PhotoVoice project which brought together leaders from seven different community organizations in Havana, Cuba. The initial intention of the project was to visually unveil and critically analyze each community organization's greatest opportunities and challenges, and to better communicate their primary goals. While the final gallery of PhotoVoice photos/captions did provide powerful visual representations and creative analytical narratives of the project's main themes – which indeed proved beneficial, ethnographically – critical observation of the methodology's execution further demonstrated the ethnographic richness of participatory photographic research.

KEYWORDS: PhotoVoice, community-based participatory research, visual methods, inequalities, community organizations, Cuba.

The Cuban government's state-run economy and social welfare policies were once the main social elevators for marginalized people in socialist Cuba (Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020). However, recent political economic transformations, including the proliferation of market-oriented economic sectors and increased possibilities for foreign investment, among others, have caused socioeconomic rifts to reemerge in Cuba (see Espina Prieto, 2013; de la Fuente, 2001b). This is a complicated phenomenon because political economic transformations can, at once: ignite different sectors of the economy; draw support for local development projects; and become important

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sources of personal income, while also fueling social and economic disadvantages that lead to macro-economic dependency issues and micro-level inequities and inequalities.

As you will notice throughout the article, we frequently articulate inequity and inequality separately but list them together to draw attention to their definitional differences. We interpret inequality as an imbalance in the number of resources or opportunities. Inequity refers to injustice or unfairness – in a more qualitative interpretation – when people go to access resources or opportunities. These two terms may seem interchangeable, but their nuances are important, especially in this particular socio-historical moment in Cuba. Political economic transformations have made it so that certain areas in Cuba – like popular tourist areas – or certain groups of Cubans – like white Cubans who live in tourism zones or Cubans who have family abroad – have flourished over others in recent years (Mesa-Lago, 2002). This has led to unequal resource distribution or better or more frequent opportunities in different areas, which are both largely based on the political economic transformations described above. For example, tourism areas often have more basic-necessities while more marginal areas see much more resource scarcity. When intersected with racial, gendered, or aged stereotypes and discrimination, inequities have grown in terms of how someone can attain valuable resources and what barriers they may face when trying to access coveted opportunities in more lucrative areas or industries.

In an attempt to address some of these negative socioeconomic outcomes in a collective manner, as well as paving the way for better access to positive transformations, 17 local community organizations from 9 (out of 15) municipalities in Havana formed a network in 2019 – La Red de Proyectos Comunitarios de la Habana (the Network of Community Organizations of Havana). Their objective was to work together to solve common challenges and support one another through community (inter)action. Their individual community activities were diverse – including teaching permaculture, providing[2] vocational training, preserving cultural heritage, and advocating for environmental, social, and economic sustainability, among others – though they were all bound by their intentions to effect positive social change, fight for social equity, and combat the negative socioeconomic outcomes that arose since the Cuban economic collapse in the 1990s and throughout the subsequent political economic transformations.

One of the network's first initiatives brought together 15 leaders from seven different community organizations to search for and identify the greatest opportunities and challenges that their communities faced, as well as communicate and in some cases refine their community organizations' primary goals (Vertovec, 2021). The authors of this paper – John Vertovec and Mitra Ghaffari, here on referred to as "we" – helped facilitate this endeavor with the PhotoVoice methodology. This PhotoVoice project is the focal point of this article.

PhotoVoice is a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methodology that trains community members in basic photography skills as well as elementary ethnographic methods and then encourages them to document social dilemmas, obstacles, as well as advantages from the community members' perspectives (Hergenrather et al., 2009; Wang & Burris, 1997). Together with the community organization leaders, we sought to facilitate collective awareness of broader social, political, cultural, and interpersonal factors that shape everyday experiences in Havana (see Wang, 1999), and that exist in connection with community challenges, opportunities, and goals.

[2] In Cuba, locals refer to these organizations as *Proyectos Socioculturales* (Sociocultural Projects) or *Proyectos Comunitarios* (Community Projects) though they are more organizational in nature because they do not have a start or end in vision, like you would see with a project. They cannot be considered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) because NGOs are not recognized by the Cuban government unless they are, paradoxically, run by the government. We use the term "Community Organization" because it is the best term to describe these community groups. All the community organizations discussed in this article are directed by two or more people and are sustained financially via small-scale entrepreneurial ventures and local or foreign donations.

By the end of October 2019, the seven community organizations finalized their gallery, entitled: *Habana Pedazos* (Havana Pieces). This gallery contains 21 "photos that speak" through the combination of the images and their captions (see, also, Padilla, 2019). Each community organization submitted three photos total, one for each of the PhotoVoice project's main themes: (1) opportunities, (2) challenges, and (3) the community organization's primary goals. The captions were comprised of a title, creative description of the photo's contents, and a suggestion for how to improve or maintain the idea conveyed in the photo.

This specific usage of the PhotoVoice methodology provided powerful visual representations of opportunities and challenges across different neighborhoods and subject positions in Havana. The process also helped leaders think through and better describe their community organizations' primary goals, opportunities for improvement, and challenges that hinder their development. Combined with their analyses and the suggestions the group put forth for continuing or disrupting current narratives, *Habana Pedazos* also helped highlight and better understand different inequities and inequalities in Havana, Cuba. But, the gallery of photos is not the end of this project's ethnographic usefulness. Critical observation of the methodology's implementation and execution processes adds to the ethnographic richness of a participatory photographic research project like this.

The purpose of this article is to draw from the *Habana Pedazos* PhotoVoice project to describe how the PhotoVoice methodology can be utilized to study different inequities and inequalities within the scope of a broader ethnographic project. To achieve this goal, we first illustrate how PhotoVoice photos and captions are useful data sources that speak to local or emic lived experiences and interpretations. Then we describe how the nuances that arise during the execution of a PhotoVoice project – i.e., the day-to-day circumstances that permitted or hindered the project's completion, what could otherwise be considered minutiae or trivial – are also invaluable data, especially for the study of inequities and inequalities. While some scholars mention the challenges they face in PhotoVoice projects (see, e.g., Krieg and Roberts, 2007), they rarely consider these challenges as ethnographic opportunities. In this article, the nuanced challenges encountered while executing the PhotoVoice project reveal how PhotoVoice projects, from start to finish and everywhere in between, are overflowing ethnographically and qualitatively.

After this introduction, the article is divided into four parts. First (1), we discuss the methodology and overarching theoretical perspectives used in this study. Second (2), we discuss four photos from the *Habana Pedazos* gallery, exploring how inequities and inequalities can be interpreted through the project's main themes. Third (3), we describe how the execution of the *Habana Pedazos* PhotoVoice project revealed important considerations and broader circumstances that directly influence the important work these community leaders/organizations are doing as well as the inequities and inequalities some of these leaders regularly encounter. Finally (4), we end with a discussion of how focusing on and examining the facilitation/implementation process of a CBPR methodology, like PhotoVoice, is an added tool that can deepen analyses garnered from CPBR as well as provide additional moments to ethnographically observe or interview about.

Methodology

Anthropologists have long utilized camera-based imagery, both still and moving (Weber, 2008). These types of imagery are valuable to the social sciences because of their ubiquity in society and their iconic and indexical qualities (Pauwels, 2011, p. 10). Participatory or collaborative visual methodologies have generally been utilized within two distinct approaches: (1) as visual stimuli in interview or focus group situations and (2) as a stimulating mechanism where participants from the field produce their own images regarding a certain issue (Pauwels, 2015).

Participatory photography methods that fall into the latter group help place the documentation of personal and local phenomena in the hands of the participants (see also Witkowski et al., 2021). The PhotoVoice methodology is one such method and it can be fashioned as a social science tool that aims to combine reflection on social conditions with photographic images that are taken by participants from the field and which are analyzed collectively by community members/research participants and social scientists (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997).

PhotoVoice is a CBPR methodology focused on empowerment and critical analysis. Critical theories underpin the process and empower community members to think critically about their experiences both within their own communities and in broader society. Wang and Burris (Wang & Burris, 1997) describe the three main goals of PhotoVoice as: "(1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large- and small-scale group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers" (p. 370). As Padilla et al. (2019) explain,

> *PhotoVoice is beneficial to ethnographic research because it allows people to express their daily life-worlds in a language that is beyond the purely verbal, and to think critically about their worlds in the process of uncovering their hidden or implicit logics*. (p. 152)

The methodology has been used across an array of topic themes including community rebuilding, health promotion, living with disabilities or illnesses, among others (see Hergenrather et al., 2009). Since 2012, Vertovec has conducted extensive fieldwork in Havana, Cuba; most recently, his dissertation fieldwork combined document analyses of changes in the Cuban self-employment system with participant observation and semi-structured interviews, in order to determine the interrelated inequities and inequalities that shape Cuban self-employment and the hybrid formal/informal strategies that Cuban entrepreneurs utilize to navigate their unique social and economic circumstances. Ghaffari has studied and worked in Havana since 2016, helping initiate the community organization Proyecto Akokán and facilitating its youth photography and visual narrative workshops. For three years, she worked as an editor for Prensa Latina's headquarters in Havana.

To create our PhotoVoice exhibit *Habana Pedazos*, 10 formal meetings were held over the course of two months. These included workshops on contextualization, ethics, narrative construction, and basic photographic techniques. The artist-participants (organization leaders) went to the "field" – in their own communities – to take photographs on the following three themes: challenges, opportunities, and primary community organization goals. Leaders from each community organization returned to the indoor workspace with approximately 10 photographs which were then analyzed collectively to make sure they attended to the project's three themes and critiqued on photographic and analytic quality. The artist-participants were then given two more weeks to hone their photos before the final selection was made.

During the last two meetings, we worked on creating captions for each photo. As you will see below, the analysis is a description/interpretation of the photo or what the artist-participants wanted the person viewing the photo to consider or understand. The suggestion highlights how the topic could be improved or maintained. Sometimes, the analysis and suggestion are brief, inspirational messages. Other times, they are more direct plans for instigating change. The analysis and suggestion are each three sentences or less to (hopefully) give the viewer/audience time to think through the photos and corresponding captions independently and in the context of the gallery as a whole.

On October 21, 2019, we hosted the first gallery exhibit at a centrally located, outdoor space of a participating community organization. Various areas of Havana and socioeconomic groups were represented by the organization leaders and community members present, diversifying exchanges among artist-participants and viewers. At the exhibition, we hid the photo captions, artist-participants' names, and community organization names under a flap of cardstock. Our intention was to let the audience consume the photo first, before contextualizing the image in the organization leaders' analyses. This strategy also discouraged bias, mitigating the influence of preconceived notions about the community organization or its associated spaces. Hiding the captions helped facilitate inclusive, meaningful discussion among the community members and the organization leaders, opening interpretation beyond the artist-participants' relative representation to the ways in which community members interpreted and responded to the photos. From an ethnographic standpoint, this helped document the tensions between the organization leaders and community members, opening new lines of inquiry beyond the ones that had been discovered through the production and discussion processes of the PhotoVoice workshops.

Admittedly, PhotoVoice is most often used as a needs assessment tool and to reach policy makers, as Wang and Burris (1997) describe in one of the seminal articles on the methodology (see Pauwels, 2015). For *Habana Pedazos*, however, the organization leaders were less interested in reaching policy makers and instead decided to have inter-community conversations about their opportunities and challenges and to illustrate the ways they could improve or maintain those narratives themselves. Based on informal conversations we had with some of the leaders, we concluded that the organization leaders were not as interested in taking this project to policy makers because Cubans, in general, are often disillusioned with the possibility that their voices can be heard politically[3].

Throughout the PhotoVoice project, we did participant observation with all the community organizations. This entailed volunteering at each organization one day per week. We also conducted two interviews (at the beginning and end of the project) with one community leader from each organization (14 interviews total)[4]. We took detailed notes of all the group meetings as well as conversations that arose before, during breaks, or after project meetings. We then uploaded all the data into NVivo qualitative data analysis software, where we did thematic coding to look for key themes in the data and then used "axial coding" to discover dominant patterns in the data

[3] Other authors have also made similar observations, noting how community activists and, more specifically, social entrepreneurs are often frustrated by Cuba's rigid political culture which has continuously brought into question whether public consultation or inclusivity could ever exist under Cuba's current centralized bureaucracy (see, e.g., Henken 2019; Betancourt and Sagebien 2013).

[4] This PhotoVoice project was conducted at the tail-end of a broader dissertation project that examined the interrelated inequities and inequalities that shape opportunities and challenges for Cuban entrepreneurs in Havana, and how those individuals conceptualize, rationalize, and draw upon local and global resources to navigate or influence their unique circumstances. The dissertation project combined document analyses of recent changes in Cuban self-employment (2017-2019) with participant observation and 40 ethnographic interviews with 35 self-employed business owners and six private sector employees (one of which was also a business owner). One goal of the dissertation project was to study entrepreneurship as an expanding formal/informal sector of the Cuban economy. Therefore, we used theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and systematic diversification – based on a matrix we developed – to gain access to a diverse range of entrepreneurs from different industries (e.g., beauty services, food and restaurant, IT services, educational services, artisanal) and intersecting subject positions in Cuba (i.e., race, gender, age, and geographic location). The theoretical sampling and subsequent critical analysis were done under a multiple case study logic (see Small, 2009), where each interviewee and observed participant were considered separate case studies in the broader political-economic environment. The interviews and participant observation conducted in the broader dissertation project were used to corroborate or to help identify key findings in this article.

(Saldaña, 2015). Altogether, this allowed us to scrutinize the intricacies of the PhotoVoice project's implementation/execution and identify or corroborate key findings described in this article.

Theories of intersectionality informed the project's focus on inequities and inequalities, emphasizing ethnographic analysis of broader social, political, and economic circumstances and the ways that intersecting inequities and inequalities give meaning to and, in that way, produce different axes of social difference. The PhotoVoice methodology also facilitated access to social settings that might be considered "hard-to-reach" or potentially impossible to observe ethnographically (Padilla et al., 2019). As foreign researchers, this was particularly useful because our presence had the potential to disrupt local dynamics.

A PhotoVoice project also attempts to combat the "extractionist" tendencies of social science research. Too often, social science researchers go to foreign communities, conduct their research, then leave to go publish in another country (often in another language) and earn incomes that are far higher than their "local" counterparts. One could argue that is exactly what we are doing here. At the very least, though, the PhotoVoice methodology (1) gives local communities additional ways to document their social experiences and, if the participants choose, to curate a formal gallery, (2) gives the local community a collaborative work of art to celebrate and to continue engaging with. Participatory methodologies also attempt to mitigate power imbalances either between the researcher and local communities or among local community members (see Enria, 2016). In these ways, a PhotoVoice project can help create an archive of contemporary issues that are created and decided upon by local actors, and which attempt to create non-hierarchical knowledge and messaging.

Habana Pedazos: Inequities/Inequalities and More Specific Challenges, Opportunities, and Primary Community Organization Goals

In this section, we first present the title photo from the *Habana Pedazos* gallery because it helps contextualize the reemergence of inequities and inequalities in Havana, Cuba. After this photo, we discuss one photo/caption from each of the project's main themes: challenges, opportunities, and primary goals of the different community organizations. Overall, this section illustrates how the photos and captions help interpret different inequities and inequalities in Havana, as well as the ways that organization leaders link individual experiences to their community organizations and the larger social conditions that frame them. For brevity, we include only the English translations of the Spanish captions written by the artist-participants. Titles are given in both languages.

Reemergent Inequalities

In Figure 1, entitled "*Habana pedazos*" (Havana Pieces)– the namesake of the final PhotoVoice gallery – remnants of an unfinished structure frame the well-maintained, 14-story building that stands tall behind it. Together, the two buildings are metaphorical to the inequalities that have reemerged in Havana since the economic crisis of the 1990s. One building (read as one person, one neighborhood, etc.) is discarded or left to waste while the other building (another person, another neighborhood, etc.) is developed and maintained. In combination with the caption, the artist-participants also reveal the "dichotomy in official discourse" – or the incongruencies between government intentions and the real outcomes of recent economic transformations. Now, despite government rhetoric that holds the mitigation of inequalities as central to Cuban socialism, "one recognizes the existence of social classes [and] the source of privilege [e.g., international tourism and foreign remittances]" as contemporary trends across Havana.

Figure 1
Habana pedazos [Havana Pieces]

Analysis: One recognizes the existence of social classes, the source of privileges and the dichotomy in official discourse. The two buildings represent social inequalities that exist in contemporary Havana.
Suggestion: Promote neighborhood empowerment to achieve the possibility for self-management that permits us to design strategies for change inside the national collective project.

In their caption, the artist-participants also mention dichotomous political discourses of late. The government has helped solve many social problems, and they celebrate those achievements, but they also overlook current inequities that are now commonplace. In the suggestion, we learn how different neighborhoods have become so excluded from the broader plan that they are now looking for ways to manage their own problems. The benefits of tourism and other development projects have not reached many of them and now they must turn inward to create solutions. This perpetuates the inequalities as some Cubans have connections to remittances, tourism, or gainful self-employment while others do not.

In contemporary Cuba, patterns of intersecting inequities and inequalities determine the ability to generate sufficient income (see Vertovec, 2018). Often, Black/Afro-descendant Cubans are limited or even prevented from participating in the most gainful sources of hard currency that have emerged under civic and economic reforms, namely, the international tourism industry and foreign remittances (see Eckstein, 2010; Perry, 2015). While it may be legally prohibited to discriminate in any state sector, at least on paper, Black Cubans are often denied the best positions because they supposedly lack buena presencia (good appearance). These quotidian stigmatizations highlight the racist ideologies and stereotypes re-surfacing in Cuba (Cabezas, 2009; de la Fuente, 2001b). Black Cubans also have disproportionate access to material and financial remittances because the majority of Cubans living abroad are white and most often send to their social networks in Cuba – who are also overwhelmingly white (Clealand, 2017; Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020).

While the racialization of inequality in Cuba is undeniable and increasingly important, there are additional social differences that shape specific socioeconomic experiences. For example, older Cubans (60+) have found that private sector work can prove exhausting because of the long hours and a constant search for resources (Strug, 2017). This is important because the Cuban population is aging at a rapid rate, which is an effect of higher life expectancy, persistent low fertility, and high emigration rates (Díaz-Briquets 2015)[5]. The majority of older workers (60+) work for the state, with salaries that often do not cover the costs of basic needs (Brundenius & Torres Pérez, 2014). Social security pensions have lost significance because of rising food prices and limitations in the ration system, revealing how the state is abandoning this vulnerable group (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013)[6]. When older Cubans do open their own businesses, they often do so in small-scale operations like phone card sales or small-scale cafeterias because these operations are less physically demanding. However, attracting a consistent clientele stream can be difficult because of oversaturation in these specific types of businesses.

Location is another important factor shaping socioeconomic outcomes in Cuba. The increase in investments across Cuban industries has produced geographic inequalities, with certain areas developing while others are left behind (Mesa-Lago, 2002). Generally speaking, access to the tourism industry gives Cubans better opportunities to increase their personal incomes. Nevertheless, the condition of one's house or even the location it has within a building (e.g., not facing the street or being located on a high-up floor) can prohibit access to foreign clients even if it is located within a tourism zone. This intersects in important ways with racial disparities as Black Cubans often face significant challenges in accessing employment in the tourism industry because of racism (see de la Fuente 2001b), and especially if their homes are not in a good position to target foreign clients in their own venture.

For example, Figure 1 depicts the disparities that exist even within a tourism zone. The image was taken in the heart of Centro Habana, a neighborhood that receives some of the most foreign visitors in all of Cuba. And yet, the artist-participants who took the photo–and the community members they work with through their community organization–are mostly cut off from gainful opportunities because their buildings are in such terrible disrepair that it would be impossible to house a lucrative business; in many cases, they live on the inside of a large apartment building and therefore find it difficult to attract prospective customers/clients. When they go to the streets to discover sources of employment, they are often stereotyped as street hustlers or sex workers because they are mostly Black Cubans and they come from an area of the city that is stigmatized as a delinquency center (see Cabezas, 2009; Roland, 2011). Furthermore, Cuban regulations require Cubans to take out licenses for any would-be money-generating activity, most of which are severely restricted by different state policies (Ritter & Henken, 2015). When the artist-participants of the photo say that they want to "promote neighborhood empowerment to achieve the possibility for self-management" it is because they realize the importance of simply having the chance for social mobility, in this case, the opportunity to create their own solutions. However, access to these chances in Cuba is greatly very disparate, now more than ever, and continues to be hindered by strict government policies and regulations.

[5] Currently, Cubans over age 60 make up 20 percent of the population and will make up more than 30 percent by 2030 (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas 2012).

[6] These circumstances have been exacerbated by the economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent downturn in tourism and resource shortages.

Project Theme 1: Challenges

There was a wide array of challenges presented throughout the final gallery. The photos/captions touched on a range of topics from the fight against time to alcoholism to different forms of disillusionment. From our observations, disillusionment was one of the most hindering challenges in terms of a community organization's effectiveness or success. One of the most captivating illustrations of disillusionment is "En el borde del camino hay una silla" (On the Edge of the Path There is a Chair) (Figure 2).

Figure 2
En el borde del camino hay una silla [On the Edge of the Path There is a Chair]

Analysis: The options of life in our neighborhood oscillate between violence as a relational discourse and emigration as a solution.
Suggestion: Build new paths of economic management with Cubans as protagonists.

This photo shows a young man looking out of a dilapidated building towards people walking along the Malecón, a seawall that borders Havana. The ocean's unbounded horizon line offsets the layers of a cage-like structure that the subject, artist-participant and therefore, also the viewer, are positioned within. This is the same place that thousands of Cubans fled Cuba with hand-made rafts during the Cuban rafter crisis in 1994. The caption conceptualizes the subject of the photo as someone considering emigration to pursue the opportunities that lie outside his country. The flash, composition, and point of view makes viewer feel enclosed / trapped along with subject.

The title of Figure 2 refers to a song by the famed Cuban singer-songwriter and pro-revolutionary Silvio Rodriguez. The song – "Historia de las sillas" (Story of the Chairs) – promotes advancing one's ideas and dreams even if there are obstacles in the way. The chair on the edge of the road is a metaphor for the temptations in life that urge you to stop and take a break. It is normal for young Cuban people in Havana to talk about how much easier it would be in another country. The artist-participants suggest building new economic opportunities in Cuba, with Cubans as the main protagonists. However, what is not clear is that this is also a commentary on contemporary inequities in Cuba.

The young man looking out at freely roaming subjects in the background could also represent friends or family who have emigrated. This perspective signifies a very important difference between many Cubans: those who have foreign connections and those who do not. For many, the existence of a family member abroad can mean an incredible difference in quality of life because of better access to material or financial remittances. Cubans who receive remittances have an easier time securing important resources for their home, and often have better opportunities to start their own businesses and be more (economically) self-sufficient in the future.

For community organizations, global connections are just as crucial. Some organizations receive support from families and friends abroad or foreign donors. Others lament that they need more tourists to visit their space, or that they wish for an outside donor. In the latter groups' minds, if they just had those things, they think, their community organizations could prosper.

Project Theme 2: Opportunities

Opportunities are often a question of how you interpret them. In Figure 3, the emergence of the metal sculpture from a messy pile of nuts alludes to how organization leaders interpret their opportunities. The artist-participants of this photo/caption work with children, adolescents, and young adults with developmental disabilities. For all intents and purposes, this would be considered a challenge for most organizations around the world. For these organization leaders, though, it allows them to effect positive social change in their community.

The community organization consists of several artists who train young people at a local school for special needs in different forms of art: mostly papier-mâché, painting, and clay work. In Cuba, when a person with developmental disabilities turns 18, they usually have nowhere to go. There is no room for them in the school system and it is unlikely they will be hired in either the public or private sectors. Their families become solely responsible for them and this familial burden serves to deepen the stigma people with developmental disabilities face. This also further marginalizes them even in their home settings. For this community organization, their goal is to help these individuals learn new trades and, hopefully, help provide for their families. As the photo's suggestion explains: "Search for people who feel abandoned or forgotten and transform them into feeling useful and direct them."

Additionally, this community organization's neighborhood is predominately Black and located outside the tourism zones of Havana. The neighborhood is dominated by poor housing conditions and rampant unemployment. Most of the neighborhood's residents earn their incomes from the black market. Whenever possible, the leaders of this community organization employ community members to help with events or to develop and maintain the organization's workspace – an old dilapidated building that has been unused since the 1990s.

Like many other predominately Black neighborhoods in Havana, this neighborhood is stigmatized, discriminated against, and imagined as a space of crime and delinquency. This is a sequel of colonial-era racial discourse which fashioned Black people as hyperviolent or simply socially deviant (de la Fuente, 2001a). The leaders of this community organization are trying to change the image of their community and its members by linking them to their organization. During one of our PhotoVoice meetings, we asked one of the leaders to elaborate on the suggestion they provided. He said: "you know, it is not just the kids we are working with, it is also the people who live in our neighborhood. They feel abandoned, they feel forgotten, and we are trying to help them feel useful, like they mean something to our neighborhood again."

Nevertheless, we should note that the organization leaders in this example are both older white men. Their use of the phrase: "unrefined nature" is concerning because it has the potential to suggest, as is so often been the case in (post-)colonial spaces like Cuba, that white equals refined

and anything else is unrefined and worthy of change or – as they say in the suggestion – direction (see, also, Barrow, 1996). While we do not believe this phrase is maliciously intended, it may reveal how these sorts of colonial power dynamics may continue to seep into quotidian realities and shape individual worldviews across the racial, gendered, and aged spectrums.

Figure 3
Mecamorfosis [Mecamorphosis]

Analysis: It is the transformation of the obsolete into a work of art. Despite the unrefined nature of the material, it can be changed.
Suggestion: The search for people who feel abandoned or forgotten and transform them into feeling useful and direct them.

Project Theme 3: Primary Goals of the Community Organization

Overall, the community leaders found it useful to use our PhotoVoice project as a means to refine or work on better communicating their community organizations' main goals or objectives. Figure 4 is an excellent submission for this theme. It is powerful because of its simplicity. The photo shows the moon alone in the sky, without any stars helping to illuminate it. As the analysis says, "We want to be, in this society that is in darkness, submerged in conflicts and problems, a light that illuminates with solutions."

Some neighborhoods are stigmatized as black holes. They are described as zones of delinquency and therefore often lack investment or development projects. This also means they lack quality infrastructure, making them even harder to live in and perpetuating their residents' desperation. Figure 4 comes from such a community. It is akin to Figure 3's community, but it lies in Havana's periphery. There is only one bus that passes through the neighborhood. That bus takes over an hour to get to Havana's center. It is also infrequent, meaning people cannot rely on it if they want to work in more lucrative areas like tourism zones or the central business district. Instead, residents of this community must use what they have readily available, which is not much. Since social welfare has all but disappeared, this means that many residents must also use the black market to survive. This exacerbates stereotypes of this community.

Figure 4
Una luz en la oscuridad [A Light in the Darkness]

Analysis: We want to be, in this society that is in darkness, submerged in conflicts and problems, a light that illuminates with solutions.
Suggestion: Turn on a light and let it shine.

We observed that even the community members participated in a sort of auto-stigmatization of their community, explaining that their society (read: community) is in darkness, "submerged in conflicts and problems." This demonstrates their potential pessimism and, furthermore, saying that they "want to be… a light that illuminates…," instead of "we are… that light," could be a passive illustration of the power that these sorts of stereotypes and (auto-)stigmas have. They play such a fundamental role in the imaginations of most Havana residents today. Indeed, this community organization has been around for over 15 years and during our frequent conversations with their leaders they were still hesitant to say they are making a difference.

Facilitating *Habana Pedazos*: Discoveries and Corroborations

The photos and captions that the organization leaders created are ethnographically valuable, no doubt. However, observing the intricacies of the PhotoVoice project's execution also reveals some important considerations regarding the inequities and inequalities that exist in Havana today. This section analyzes the implementation process of the PhotoVoice project and the benefits it provides to broader ethnographic research.

Figure 5, entitled "Haciendo caminos" (making pathways), has a critical message and is a valuable point of departure for this point in our discussion. The photo and its analysis pertain to initiating a task. The leaders wrote, "To start building a road you must start with the first stone."

We first saw this photo relatively early in the *Habana Pedazos* project. Quickly, it prompted us to consider the factors that influence the initiation and maintenance of community organizations and more specific social projects. We asked: who was able to take the first step, and why? Were there certain factors that hindered or helped that first step and future steps? We addressed these questions through observations we made as we undertook the PhotoVoice project.

Figure 5
Haciendo caminos [Making Pathways]

Analysis: To start building a road you must start with the first stone. The Procession of the Cabildo Nuestra Señora de Regla, based on the rehabilitation of the Regla Cabildo tradition, considered the maximum expression of religious syncretism in Cuba, has been the first step to join the religious community of the territory.
Suggestion: Stick together with all the temple houses of Regla to achieve greater social recognition, thinking from the collective in the search for solutions to the problems of everyday life.

From the start of the PhotoVoice project, there were apparent inequities and inequalities. Our first meeting took place on September 14, 2019, just a few days after public transportation was cut by 80 percent because of gasoline shortages. The day before our first meeting, we called each artist-participant to make sure they could participate. All of them said yes, though a few expressed the difficulties they would face in getting to the meeting site. At the first meeting, everyone made it on time. Later, however, we learned that some of the participants came in their own private cars – meaning they got there in 15-20 minutes – while others endured a nearly five-hour journey, each way.

A car in Cuba is a very powerful indicator of privilege. Owning a car means that you have either had one handed down from another family member – indicating a higher-class level across generations – or you have some access to financial aid that is extraordinary. A car in Cuba costs upwards of $20,000 USD. Oftentimes, that means paying the equivalent of more than 47 years' worth of work – at the national average salary of $35 USD per month – for a used car that would probably be sold for scrap metal in another country. Knowing this, we privately asked each of the car owners how they came to own their cars. For one, it was handed down to them by their father. For the others, they had family abroad who helped them buy the car.

Another inequity that became apparent during *Habana Pedazos* was who could commit more time to complete their responsibilities within the project. For some of the participants, there was no problem in making it to every meeting and reaching all the deadlines agreed upon before the project began. For some, though, there were some difficulties.

In Cuba, like many other Latin American and Caribbean countries, women are often required to work a second or even a third shift (see Barrow, 1996; Freeman, 2000; Safa, 1995). This means that they are often responsible for helping provide an income for their household while also handling all the domestic responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, and childcare. For one artist-participant, these domestic responsibilities hindered the completion of her PhotoVoice responsibilities. On one occasion, she told us she would not be able to make the meeting because her daughter was sick, and her husband was unavailable to care for the child. At another meeting, she had to leave early to take her daughter to buy school supplies – something she was unable to accomplish another day because of her regular employment. While we were able to make up these meetings later, and her photos/captions were still included in the final gallery, it did corroborate the gender inequities that other social scientists have discussed across the Caribbean (see Barrow, 1996; Freeman, 2000; Safa, 1995).

For the male counterparts in the group, there were much fewer issues. For example, one of the participants was a 40-year-old single father of a two-year-old daughter. Every time we had a meeting, he simply left the daughter with his ex-wife or some other relative. It is to say, his domestic responsibilities were much less likely to get in the way of his aspirations and his ex-wife/family had no problem taking care of the child when he had other things come up. Indeed, most organization leaders – both within this PhotoVoice project as well as in our broader experiences in Havana – are men. Of course, this also has to do with the patriarchy that exists in Cuba, like elsewhere, but is nonetheless exacerbated by social norms regarding gendered responsibilities.

A final inequity–though surely there are many more–has to do with technological know-how. Simply put, not all people have the same technological experience/expertise. We first observed this discrepancy when the participants started practicing with the cameras. For most, there were relatively few issues. For a few older people, however, there were problems in finding basic components like the on/off button or the charger input holes. This describes an aged inequity that, generally speaking, predisposes older people to difficulties with mastering technological advancements. For running a community organization, this can mean unequal possibilities for promotional success, leading to less notoriety from potential constituents or donors, or fewer possibilities to draw on technologies to innovate problem solutions.

These are all problems, inequities, and inequalities that this group of organization leaders is now trying to address through La Red de Proyectos Comunitarios. One of the powerful outcomes of this PhotoVoice project was solidifying their commitment to helping one another in their personal neighborhood goals as well as more collective aspirations for positive social change. As the suggestion in **figure 5** says, “align and stick together to achieve greater social recognition, thinking from the collective in the search for solutions to the problems of everyday life.”

Conclusion: Deepening Critical Analyses through the Facilitation of a CBPR Methodology

PhotoVoice allowed us to critically analyze the biggest problems, as well as opportunities, facing a diverse group of communities in Havana. Beyond the conclusions and outcomes described in this article, this CBPR also helped us manage a geographic barrier that would have normally been impossible to overcome. The 10 workshops and field work in between allowed us to conduct deeper critical research in all these spaces at once. The participants interacted regularly with one

another; realizing the usefulness of their different positionalities and searching for ways to apply their unique understandings and expertise to solving different problems collaboratively. Furthermore, the execution of the project – i.e., getting to meetings, participating, taking photos and constructing narratives, curating the final gallery, etc. – allowed us to analyze different experiences from individual perspectives. It helped the network of community organizations form a stronger cohesion and allowed each participant to evaluate something shared from a diversity of subject positions.

Throughout this article, we have triangulated the photos and their analyses with participant observations of the execution processes of the *Habana Pedazos* PhotoVoice project. What we found is that critical analysis of the steps it takes to carry out a PhotoVoice project – what may seem minutiae with regards to the project as a whole – are pivotal details that can open new lines of inquiry as well as corroborate previous and ongoing observations/analyses. The experience illuminated the importance of the process in and of itself, as well as the ways that the process influences the evaluation of the product. Specific to the Cuban context, the dynamics of carrying out a PhotoVoice project in this specific moment in Havana reveals sharp socioeconomic inequalities having to do with broader structural conditions like access inequities for each community organization's financial, cultural, or environmental sustainability in addition to other pertinent circumstances like public transportation inequalities or gendered, racial, or aged disparities. While the final PhotoVoice gallery provides a powerful visual analysis tool, its implementation is also apt in its ability to evoke "silenced visuals" of socioeconomic inequalities as well as capture the "invisible voices" of marginalized communities.

In any CBPR methodology, the process may be equally revealing as the end-product. For a PhotoVoice project, it proves interesting to ask: what is happening before and after the shots? How are the participants in the project negotiating their choices – including how to arrive to the meetings, what sorts of questions to ask during the meetings, or what questions they chose not to ask – as well as the inner-group collaborations that form during or after the project takes place.

For the study of inequities and inequalities, focusing not only on the photos and their analyses but also on the nuances and intricacies of the implementation process of a PhotoVoice project provides more ethnographic depth. These sorts of observations take place between the lines and require an air of optimism. For example, discovering the technological inequalities within the *Habana Pedazos* group illustrated that what can be a challenge or a drawback in most photography projects became a moment of critical analysis. So, what we mean about maintaining optimism is that instead of simply looking at challenges as frustrating barriers to success, we suggest looking at them as ethnographic opportunities to understand the socio-cultural dynamics that surround the project.

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