
Depicting our Lives in Photographs: the Politics of Family Life in Santiago de Chile

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Abstract

This presentation looks at how different families depict themselves through the visual in their everyday lives. Pictures and other images are everywhere in our social activities. They shape our social relationships and daily social behaviour as well as making apparent social differences and hierarchies. The proliferation of digital technologies has been particularly important to families' portrayal of family life, and has become a key way they communicate among themselves (Rose 2010; Sandbye 2014). This paper analyses family photographs which I collected in Santiago, Chile during 11 months' fieldwork involving 50 in-depth interviews with people of different social classes living in straight and gay partnerships or as single-person households. The participants were asked to choose a digital family photo that they believed represented their family well. Based on what interviewees said about their photograph, as well as my own analysis, I will discuss how my interviewees understood 'family' and sought to represent it visually. I am particularly interested in their attachment to the photos, expressed in terms of not just of who is included in the image, but also who the photographs are shared with, how they are shared and where they are kept and finally how the digital family photographs have "democratised" the maintenance of family memories across different social classes in Santiago de Chile.

Keywords: gender, social class, digital photographs, family photos, everyday life, Latin America

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