



Introduction: Canadian Visual Methodologies and Visual Sociology

ANDREA DOUCET (GUEST EDITOR)
Brock University

VISUAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES and visual sociology embrace the cross-disciplinary fields of visual studies, qualitative and postqualitative methods, methodologies and epistemologies, and participatory research methodologies, and mediums such as film, participatory video, photography, digital and multimedia storytelling, and visual artifacts. The international burgeoning of this research area is evident in the steady increase in conferences, scholarly associations, books, handbooks, and journals focused on visual studies, visual research, and visual sociology. Within the International Sociological Association (ISA), attention to visual sociology in Research Committees led to the creation of a Visual Sociology Thematic Group in 2009, which was upgraded to a Working Group in 2013, and then, in response to growing membership and many international activities and publications, was promoted to a full Research Committee (RC57) in 2017. In Canada, a Visual Sociology/Visual Methodologies research cluster was created in 2015 as one of the Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) research clusters.

As part of a growing commitment to developing a Canadian community that could share research on visual theories and methodologies, I joined the ISA Visual Sociology Executive Board in 2014 as well as the organizing committee of the 2016 Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference (also known as “the Qualitatives”). This conference takes on a different theme every year, and as few conferences in Canada had focused specifically on visual methodologies and visual sociology, I chose the theme of “Visual

Andrea Doucet, Department of Sociology, Centre for Women's and Gender Studies, Brock University, 1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way, St. Catharines, ON, Canada L2S 3A1. E-mail: adoucet@brocku.ca

Research Methods and Visual Ethnographies.”¹ One of the conference objectives was to expand Canadian capacity in the growing transdisciplinary fields of visual methodologies and visual ethnographies and to showcase the work of emerging and leading Canadian visual scholars, including sociologists.

This thematic issue of the *Canadian Review of Sociology* is one of the publications that emerged from that Qualitatives Conference. We are delighted to publish the work of three Canadian visual scholars: Kirsten Emiko McAllister, who was our conference keynote speaker, and two of our featured speakers, Jacqueline Kennelly, and Carla Rice (who has co-authored her contribution with Ingrid Mündel).² Writing about diverse visual methodologies—family photographs, participatory video, and multimedia storytelling—and with distinct theoretical, methodological, and epistemological approaches, the innovative and highly creative research of these authors is helping to build the field of visual methodologies and visual sociology in Canada.

Kirsten Emiko McAllister’s paper, “Family Photography and Persecuted Communities: Methodological Challenges,” approaches family photographs as a “social practice” and works with a rich case study of family photographs from persecuted communities, including those of her Japanese Canadian family. She explores compelling methodological and epistemological challenges and dilemmas involved in this research, making analytical connections between her family photographs and the photos of Indigenous families of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation in British Columbia.

In her article, “Envisioning Democracy: Participatory Filmmaking with Homeless Youth,” Jacqueline Kennelly provides strong theoretical, methodological, and empirical insights from her research and participatory filmmaking with Canadian homeless youth. Inspired partly by theoretical insights on democracy from Hannah Arendt and Pierre Bourdieu, Kennelly argues that participatory filmmaking can help to envision new meanings and spaces for democracy, political participation, and social justice outcomes. She also explores the dilemmas and contradictions of using this medium to engage young people who are extremely marginalized by poverty and inequality.

In Carla Rice and Ingrid Mündel’s article, “Story-Making as Methodology: Disrupting Dominant Stories through Multimedia Storytelling,” they discuss visually oriented story-making methodologies, and explore the power of arts based research and its potential sociopolitical and social justice impacts. Reflecting on the storywork, they are leading at the Re•Vision

1. The Qualitatives organizing team also included Lisa Jo van den Scott, Nancy Cook, Jennifer Rowsell, Deana Simonetto, and Jennifer Turner. The conference was supported by a SSHRC Connection grant.

2. David Butz and Nancy Cook were also featured speakers at the 2016 Qualitatives Conference on the theme of visual methodologies and visual ethnographies. To view the paper that they wrote from their presentation, please visit *Studies in Social Justice*, which also published a thematic issue from the conference (<https://brock.scholarsportal.info/journals/SSJ>).

Centre for Art and Social Justice at the University of Guelph, Rice and Mündel highlight how their research with/on embodiment, queer sexuality, disability, and Indigeneity invites continuous and dynamic revision—of storytelling methodologies, of the material of people's lives, and of assumptions about difference within dominant cultural narratives and institutional structures.

These three articles are just a small Canadian sample of excellent visual research. We are thrilled to publish this thematic issue just prior to this year's ISA World Congress, which will be held in Toronto in July 2018. At that conference, the ISA's Visual Sociology Research Committee will continue to expand the field of visual methodologies and visual sociology by featuring the exciting work of international and Canadian visual scholars.