**FUNDAMENTALS OF VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS**

**EXAMPLES OF VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS**

**WHY USE VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS?**

1. Images can be used to capture the ineffable, the hard-to-put into words.
2. Images can make us pay attention to things in a new way.
3. Images are likely to be memorable.
4. Images can be used to communicate more holistically, incorporating multiple layers, and evoking stories or questions.
5. Images can enhance empathetic understanding and generalizability.
6. Through metaphor and symbol, artistic images can carry theory elegantly and eloquently.
7. Images encourage embodied knowledge.
8. Images can be more accessible than most forms of academic discourse.
9. Images can facilitate reflexivity in research design.
10. Images provoke action for social justice.

(Sandra Weber)

“Visual methods can: provide an alternative to the hegemony of a word-and-number based academy; slow down observation and encourage deeper and more effective reflection on all things visual and visualizable; and with it enhance our understanding of sensory embodiment and communication, and hence reflect more fully the diversity of human experiences.” (John Prosser and Andrew Loxley)

What are your reason(s) for using visual research methods?

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**THREE SITES OF THE IMAGE**

Visual methodologist Gillian Rose argues that every visual research project has “three sites of the image.” Consider your own visual research project, and write or illustrate the different sites of the image. Where will you place the majority of your (analytical) attention in the project?

**THE POSITIVIST-INTERPRETIVIST CONTINUUM**

Visual methodologists Jon Prosser and Andrew Loxley assert that a positivist-interpretivist continuum underlies all visual research and impacts its epistemological and ontological commitments. Situate your own study on the continuum.

The positivist

The researcher trusts the images to create narratives about the world that are based upon what’s inside the photograph and the researcher’s mind.

The “polysemic” nature of images is recognized; images are used to create an external, rather than internal narrative of the world.

The interpretivist

INTERPRETIVIST

POSITIVIST