Visual Sources in Teaching History and Gender in Social Work

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Abstract

Visual sources play a growing role in historical studies and in teaching as they offer new routes to understanding the past. The ways to construct and define social problems as well as approaches to solving them have varied in different periods of history. It is important to challenge the ideological base of concepts that are often taken for granted and to learn how to consider images as a means to conceive the world and as an important form of social knowledge. What are the differences between the roles of men and women in care work? How have these distinctions been represented in the sources and for which purposes? Photographs and episodes from films, posters and cartoons that depict various images of men and women acting in the roles of parents, tutors, social care workers and nurses, can be used not just as illustrations or representations but also as important elements of a studied context – as important as official documents or personal narratives. The aim of this article is to contribute to social work training by providing an overview of experiences, theories and methodologies on the visual, by collecting and building knowledge based on visual material and demonstrating its relevance to the study of human behaviour, social networks and welfare policies.

The visual has always been a fundamental means of perceiving the environment around us. We live in a visual culture, and the visual is becoming a key element in any kind of activity in our everyday lives, at work and leisure, in science, politics and business, and in public and private spaces. All this, however, does not automatically increase the visibility of many social problems, injustice and disparities. Thus, for social work professionals, it has become essential to understand the dynamics of images of self and identity, emotions and thinking associated with visualizing private and public spaces, social change and social policies, and to be able to interpret them effectively. It is especially important for the teachers or instructors of social work training programs to introduce students to the conventions, contexts and uses of the visual in professional practice. Visual methods can be used for different purposes: to capture a moment, to collect, preserve and even analyse data, to present the product, to share and discuss findings with others and to promote change in both the personal and social spheres.

New technologies, including image digitization and computer-based multimedia, are now extensively used in education. They can be employed in the study of social images and when exploring various kinds of visual sources and the methods of using them in the teaching and practice of social work– which according to Bart Miles[1] continues to rely on the technology of the 1960s. A similar concern is noted by Jen Marchbank[2] with regard to Women's Studies, which became reluctant to use Information and Communication Technologies in teaching, owing to its sophisticated critical perspective on the relationship between technology and gender as well as a particular pedagogic focus that values both re-cognition of the 'personal' and critical reflective thinking in learning communities.

It is therefore important to teach students recording techniques and electronic media in a way that encourages critical reflective thinking and examines ethical considerations.[3] This can be achieved by applying group work techniques and participatory approaches to research and practice as compo-nents of social work training. In fact, the technological capacity to digitalize images and deliver videos on the web enhances the accessibility, reflexivity and flexibility of social work teaching strategies.[4]

There are various traditions of working with visual sources, both art and documentary. Images are often treated as documents that contain and reflect the facts. An image can be used to illustrate one's ideas. From photographs and video to maps and drawings, a wide range of visual materials can add life to the lesson, making the lecture more vivid and attractive. Visual sources are used in sociology and anthropology to encourage informants to narrate experiences. This method is also useful in social work practice and education. Photo remi-niscence is used in occupational therapy as an animation method, for example, when working with survivors of strokes and in geriatric wards.

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[1] Bart W. Miles, "Moving Out of the Dark Ages: An Argument for the Use of Digital Video in social Work Re-search," Journal of Technology in Human Services, 24, no. 2, (2006): 181–196.

[2] Jen Marchbank, "Strange Bedfellows. Feminist Pedagogy and Information Technology," Challenges and Negotia-tions for Women in Higher Education, ed. Pamela Cotterill, Sue Jackson, and Gayle Letherby (Springer Nether-lands, 2007): 94.

[3] Luc Pauwels, "Taking and Using Ethical Issues of Photographs for Research Purposes," Visual Communication Quarterly 15, October–December, (2008): 1–16.

[4] Caroline Rosenthal Gelman and Carol Tosone, "Making It Real: Enhancing Curriculum Delivery Through the Use of Student-Generated Training Videos," Journal of Technology in Human Services 24, no. 1, (2006): 37– 52

In addition to this, the interpretation of visual sources helps to develop imaginative and creative thinking, offering new insights into the past and illuminating the complexity of social issues in contemporary reality. But this does not mean that visual methods must be used on their own. Visual methods and the use of traditional data (personal narratives and archival sources) may well complement each other. Indeed, different types of knowledge can be experienced and represented in textual, visual and other sensual ways.[5]

Representation Analysis

Following Marcus Banks,[6] we shall adopt a dual perspective on visual media, which includes two dimensions of analysis: content and context. On the one hand, visual data are concerned with the content of any visual representation: what is the 'meaning' of this particular design motif on an art object? Who is the person in the photograph? On the other hand, they are concerned with the context of any visual representation: who produced the art object, and for whom? Why was this photograph taken of this particular person, and then kept by that particular person? This idea is shared by Judy Weiser, Founder and Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre in Vancouver: "Ordinary personal snapshots serve as 'mirrors with memory' reflecting what and who has mattered most in people's lives. Therefore, what any snapshot is *about* emotionally is far more important than what its surface shows visually -- its value always having more to do with what the image *means* inside peoples minds and hearts, that what their eyes see." [7]

Visual methods provide means to understand the practices of representations as cultural texts, to develop interpretations of meanings in the socio-cultural context and to decode images of social relations and individual experience. What are the dominant images of disability, ethnic minorities or single parenthood, and how can an understanding of the dominant images

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[5] Sarah Pink, Doing Visual Ethnography Images, Media and Representation in Research (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

[6] Marcus Banks, Visual Methods in Social Research (London: Sage, 2001).

[7] Judy Weiser, PhotoTherapy Techniques -- Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums, 2nd Edition (Vancouver: PhotoTherapy Centre Press, 1999), available at http://www.phototherapy-centre.com/bookvid.htm.

along with the ideas of inclusion help us to look for images that suggest change? What published and unpublished images of social work and social workers do we have and where are they located? What photographs of early welfare workers are available in archives? Do we know of any movies featuring a social worker who separates a child and a parent? What kinds of images of men and women exist in the public imagination? How did those images change over the years in the history of a country or of welfare policies?

It is important to note that all visual representations are both produced and consumed in a social context.[8] Here we can draw on the study of Soviet political posters by Victoria Bonnell,[9] who treats propaganda images as part of a visual discourse on power in Soviet Russia and shows how it changed through 1917–1953. Her account traces the way people 'read' propaganda art – relying on their habits of interpreting folk, religious, commercial, political and other visual languages under the regime's effort to create the 'new Soviet men and women'.

Some tips for using visual sources as teaching tools:

- *Critical analysis of films* concerned with issues of gender, race and social problems, including the professional identity of a social worker. The choice of film and focal issue is made by an instructor.
- *Interpreting images* of changing social issues in archival photos or posters of different historical periods, whereby the goal is to discuss the social history of welfare, inequality, social problems, gender and social work.
- A course instructor may succeed in finding materials for these classes in local archives and in local contexts, enabling a tour into the social history of a region or country and an examination of the ideological successes and challenges of welfare policies and social work practice. Social changes will be seen through the lens of photographers of different eras, while family, gender and childhood will be revealed as ideological constructs.

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[8] Banks, 2001.

[9] Victoria E. Bonnell, Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters Under Lenin and Stalin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

We have used these ideas in classes on social work history and on social work theory and practice and research methods. All types of students found it a very valuable experience, which reveals the constructed nature of social problems and the ideology that has always been embedded in social policy and social work. Photos representing various activities of orphans in institutions are viewed in our study[10] as messages in the wider ideological and cultural context of the 1930–1940s, echoing professional media discourse created around the principles and values of Soviet upbringing and presented in chronicles and children's cinematography. We examine and discuss with students the pictures from the orphanages' albums, which manifest such principles as social hygiene, collectivity, 'cultureness', and labour participation, all of which are cornerstones of the concept of institutional upbringing (Figure 1).

The political-ideological context influencing the selection of materials, defines the limits of individual freedoms and the subjectivity of the figures, which tend to be represented in a social rather than individual dimension. Some visual units of analysis that we have considered as texts, are subjected to deconstruction, in order to show the interconnectedness between consumption and production in the practice of photography. Welfare policy is considered a contextual background for the understanding of ideology and specific social practices of care and control, embedded in the images themselves and in their own histories of creation and use.

Figure 1. Photo from the album of a children's orphanage in 1947. This image portrays social hygiene and collectivity as elements of socialist upbringing – the children are depicted as self-sufficient, disciplined, clean and happy.

[10] Pavel Romanov and Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova, "Landscapes of memory: reading photo albums" in Visual Anthropology: new visions of social reality, ed. E. Iarskaia-Smirnova, P. Romanov and V. Krutkin (Saratov: Nauchnaia kniga, 2007): 146-168 (in Russian).

Media and popular discourse analysis is an important tool when examining social policy and visual culture. Anna Szorenyi,[11] in her study of the photographic representation of refugees in 'coffee-table books', considers the practice of framing and thus inflecting the meanings of the images. Szorenyi argues that while some individual images offer productive readings that challenge stereotypes of refugees, the format of the collections and the accompanying written text work to produce spectacle rather than empathy, because they implicitly propagate a world view divided along imperialist lines, in which the audience is expected to occupy the position of privileged viewing agent while refugees are positioned as viewed objects.

As M. Banks suggests, "When studying visual representations that have been created by others, the dual strands of content and context are fairly easy to investigate in tandem".[12] This is very important to remember especially when the visual representations are produced by the investigator.[13] A good example of presenting their own visual project is given by Gwen Ellis and Mike Garland,[14] who are social work practitioners in New Zealand. They explore the joys and pitfalls of venturing into video production as a medium for creating a teaching and learning resource for social work, while providing practical tips and insights and demystifying the tasks and terminology associated with video production. A video teaching resource was created to present family work skills from a range of cultural perspectives. The core themes in this reflection upon the process and results of the project work are the following: pre-filming; filming; post-production; and marketing. In particular, they reflect upon the value of collaboration between educators and practitioners in meeting identified needs. Visual representations produced by students are important tools for engaging each member of the group in the process of creative and critical reflection.

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[11] Anna Szorenyi, "The images speak for themselves? Reading refugee coffee-table books," Visual studies 21, no. 1, (April 2006): 24-41.

[12] Marcus Banks, "Visual research methods," Social Research Update, no. 11 (Winter 1995) available at http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU11/SRU11.html.

[13] See also Banks, 2001.

[14] Gwen Ellis and Mike Garland, "The making of 'Home Improvements' - tools for working with families in Aotearoa/ New Zealand'. Reflections on creating a video resource for teaching purposes," Social Work Education 19, no. 4, (2000): 403–408.

Visualisation of concepts:
- Students make drawings in small groups, depicting concepts like "Social Work as a Profession". Critical reflection then follows. Some of the drawings may be used in a discussion of social work models, ethics and other issues.
- Students make photographs individually or in pairs, each required to make a symbolic representation of a concept (inequality, loneliness, identity, power, choice, dignity, etc.)
- It is useful to collect a portfolio of such images and to discuss them with other groups. This can serve as the first step when introducing visual participatory methods in teaching social work.

We use this technique every year in different courses (see Figure 2 and 3). It is especially effective when we split the students into several small buzz-groups and tell them to discuss certain theoretical or practical questions and ask them to draw an image that contains the results of their discussion. The students value this approach, as it helps them think both creatively and logically.

Figure 2. This picture was drawn by a group of social work students in Saratov, Russia. It is a great metaphor for social work in the context of global inequality and it helps critically deconstruct the effects of social work as a means of categorising people as clients.

Figure 3. Social work students in Saratov present the results of their group work on drawing the concepts

Participatory Techniques: What Can Students, Clients and Social Workers do with Visual Methods?

Using the ideas put forward by Spence and Solomon[15] in *What can a woman do with a camera? as a starting point and following Claudia Mitchell,*[16] we can pose the following questions: "What can a social worker or a social work student do with a camera?" and "What can a social work client do with a camera?"

How can we, literally, see the world through the eyes of students, social workers and service users? Perhaps an effective method is to focus on the everyday photographs of ordinary people. How can putting a camera in the hands of a child or a person with a disability or an employee of a local community centre help us to both deconstruct and understand social problems and social inequality? How may it modify and develop the approach to helping people?

What do streets and their homes look like through the eyes of children? What do images of gender-based violence look like through the eyes of battered women? What happens when we ask immigrants to take pictures of places and people which are important or threatening to them? How can social work

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[15] Jo Spence and Joan Solomon, ed., What Can a Woman do with a Camera? (London: Scarlet Press, 1995).

[16] Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, Researching Children's Popular Culture: The Cultural Spaces of Childhood (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2002); Claudia Mitchell, Naydene DeLange, Relebohile Moletsane, Jean Stuart, and Thabisile Buthelezi "Giving a face to HIV and AIDS: on the uses of photo-voice by teachers and community health care workers working with youth in rural South Africa," Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2, no 3, (2005): 257–270.

students express their expectations or understanding of cases they are faced with? What do photographs and drawings lead people to speak about?

Although it is not always easy to distinguish between them, we can try to imagine a continuum of participatory techniques ranging from research-oriented techniques to those that are linked with social reform or therapy.

Visual methods in participatory research

Visual sociologists and anthropologists have used variations on these methods, especially when studying the experiences of children. By putting aside adult assumptions about children and taking seriously children's use of the camera, researchers can gain insights into a child's perspective.[17] Phil Mizen,[18] in his description of a qualitative research project exploring the work of children in England and Wales, argued that research employing photo-diary techniques can enhance our knowledge and understanding of children's working lives. Marjorie Faulstich Orellana examined photos made by children as a part of a three-year, ethnographic study of childhood in various communities in California. In the study, the children's photographs — and what they say about these and other images — illuminate distinctions between the urban spaces meaningful to children themselves. These images and commentaries reveal some of the ways in which children's urban experiences are shaped by social class, gender, ethnicity, immigration and racialisation. They also confirm the importance of social relationships for the meanings that children attach to the urban landscapes in which they live.

The applied perspective is shared by researchers in education and health studies who stress the usefulness of visual methods in assessing physical activity and dietary intake, particularly among minority women with unique challenges related to gender, ethnicity and social context.[20] The authors argue that measures that are not culturally relevant or sensitive to the experiences, traditions or beliefs of ethnically diverse women might result in data that are

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[17] Erica Cavin, "In search of the viewfinder: A study of a child's perspective," Visual Studies, 9, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 27–41.

[18] Phil Mizen, "A little 'light work'? Children's images of their labour," Visual Studies, 20, no. 2, (2005): 12–139.

[19] Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, "Space and Place in an Urban Landscape: Learning from Children's Views of Their Social Worlds," Visual Studies, 14, no. 1, (1999): 73–89.

[20] Colleen Keller, Julie Fleury, Adriana Perez, Barbara Ainsworth, and Linda Vaughan, "Using Visual Methods to Uncover Context," Qualitative Health Research 18, no. 3, (2008): 428–436.

unreliable, or which cannot be interpreted. Thus, the visual data facilitate the gender sensitive process of refining measures of health in diverse ethnic groups.

Few researchers have focused exclusively on men's health or illness experiences. John Oliffe and Joan Bottorff [21] discuss the benefits of using photo elicitation among prostate cancer survivors in a large ethnographic study. Specifically, participants were asked to imagine that they were being paid to mount a photographic exhibition that would show prostate cancer from their unique perspective. The researchers subsequently discussed the photographs with the participants during individual interviews using photo elicitation techniques.

Mapping is another visual technique used in social work and health research. It is also employed in practical work and can be applicable in training.

Some initial ideas:

Mapping of various social services of a district or a town is one possible group assignment; it may take several days to complete. Such a map can be drawn using a city map and information from local social services and non-governmental organisations.

Another idea would be to draw cognitive maps of social-geographical spaces (maps of leisure space, family space, favourite paths, etc.). Students would compile the maps in class, gaining insights into cognitive mapping. Students would also interview each other about the maps.

Mapping was applied in an exploratory study of receipt of psycho-social services within the health and mental health sectors among a small sample (N = 56) of pregnant and parenting teens.[22] Utilising conceptual frameworks of barriers to service and potential spatial accessibility, this study demonstrated how mapping could contribute to analysing such issues as access to care. Geographic Information System (GIS) maps depicted the variation in census tract proximity to services, with those youths in greatest need typically residing in tracts isolated from service providers.

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[21] John L. Oliffe and Joan L. Bottorff, "Further Than the Eye Can See? Photo Elicitation and Research with Men," Qualitative Health Research, 17, no. 6, (2007): 850–858.

[22] Meekyung Han and Susan Stone, "Access to Psycho-Social Services Among Pregnant and Parenting Teens: Generating Questions Using Youth Reports and GIS Mapping Techniques," Child Youth Care Forum 36, (2007): 213–224.

We have used the mapping technique in classes on social work practice to discuss issues of access to various kinds of services among people with disabilities and other social groups. The technique was more effective when we asked the students to make photographs of accessible or inaccessible environments and attach these to the map.

Animation is another visual technique that may be used both in classes and in practical social work. It can be done in several ways, using toys, paper dolls with replaceable parts imitating movement and different emotions (eyes, mouth and legs), and cartoons.[23] A simple method is animation using toys.

Some initial ideas:

- This is group work that can be done simultaneously in two small groups with around 5-6 people in each. Assign a topic for animation, which could be, for instance, "The future of social work". You will need a collection of small toys and two video cameras with a frame record function. The cameras can be used to make still frame animation. The toys and other objects are moved to slightly different positions after each shot; they appear to be moving in the film. Instruct the participants on how to use the video cameras. The groups should then start discussing the scenario, selecting three of four toys as the characters and establishing a background for the shooting. They should run through the whole script, prepare necessary titles by writing or printing them on a sheet of paper and then start the film. In this case assembling is not needed; the product will usually be a very short animation film, which can be shown right at the end of the class.

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[23] See instructions for producing animated cartoons, for example here: http://www.cartoonster.com; http://www.instructables.com/id/Easy%2c-Cheap%2c-Animated-Cartoon-in-10-Minutes/

In our classes on Creative Subjects in Social Work we use this technique every year and our students find it very inspiring (Figure 4). Some of our students are taking classes in International Technology or Advertising, which makes them skilful enough to create more elaborate animations. Short professional animation films aimed at changing social attitudes have been used effectively in a project by Leonard Cheshire Disability, which campaigns to change the way people think about, and respond to, disability.[24]

We can also refer here to participatory visual methods used in medical anthropology and other disciplines: for example, studies of patients that inform physicians using visual narratives [25] and the use of visual methods in HIV/ AIDS activism in southern Africa. [26]

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[24] See Leonard Cheshire Disability http://www.creaturediscomforts.org/

[25] Richard Chalfen and Michael Rich, "Combining the Applied, the Visual and the Medical: Patients Teaching Physicians with Visual Narratives," in Visual Interventions, ed. Sarah Pink (Oxford – New York: Berghahn, 2007), 53–70.

[26] Susan Levine, "Steps for the Future: HIV / AIDS, Media Activism and Applied Visual Anthropology in Southern Africa," Visual Interventions, ed. Sarah Pink (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007): 71–90; Claudia Mitchell, Naydene De-Lange, Relebohile Moletsane, Jean Stuart, and Thabisile Buthelezi, "Giving a face to HIV and AIDS: on the uses of photo-voice by teachers and community health care workers working with youth in rural South Africa," Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2, no. 3, (2005): 257–270.

Some authors employ visual participatory methods in a feminist approach that leads from women's photography and interviews to a community education and action component. For example, Lisa Frohman[27] from Illinois-Chicago describes the Framing Safety Project that she developed in order to do collaborative, community action/education research with battered women about the meaning of safety in their lives. The project was built on the use of participant-generated photographs and photo-elicitation interviews as methods for exploring with Mexican and South Asian immigrant women, in support group settings, the meanings of violence in their lives and their approaches to creating safer spaces.

Ana Martinez Perez[28] conducted a project within the framework of applied and visual anthropology and in a way that reflected the social worker's objectives. She calls it an alternative form of social work practice through "participation in marginalized urban areas and producing the documentary to raise awareness and promote empathy amongst the wider population which has no contact with this social reality".[29] "The documentary script represents the analytical and interventional objects and consisted of a series of blocks: the introduction outlines the causes of exclusion – why it exists, macro/micro, institutional and personal reasons; the second part addresses the audience directly through individual characters from marginalised areas: from those who have work and are 'normalised', those who are in the process, to those who have extreme difficulties; the third part proposes possible alternatives to exclusion".[30]

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[27] Lisa Frohmann, "The Framing Safety Project. Photographs and Narratives by Battered Women," Violence Against Women, 11, no. 11, (2005): 1396–1419

[28] Ana Martinez Perez, "The Rhythm of Our Dreams: A Proposal for an Applied Visual Anthropology," Visual Interventions , Sarah Pink, ed. (Oxford, New York: Berghahn, 2007): 227–246

[29] Ibid., 231.

[30] Ibid., 235–236.

Visual intervention: research for social change

Recently there has been growing interest in action participatory research projects that include photography or film techniques. [31]

A bright example of visual participatory action research is provided in the work of Claudia Mitchell from South Africa, [32] which is based on the idea of "photo voice" in educational participatory research. [33]

As Mitchell suggests, visual studies – the use of photography, drawings, video documentary, visual mapping and so on – opens up the possibility for accessible viewing spaces. An exhibition resulting from a participatory visual project would work in a petrol station or community centre, and in so doing invite any viewer to comment, to imagine and to "access" a mode of inquiry.[34]

An **example** is a study in Swaziland of sexual violence in and around schools. Seventh-grade students in a rural school, "armed" with cameras, took pictures of what they saw as being "safe" and "unsafe" spaces. Their teachers, when they saw the exhibition, were surprised at how frequently toilets appeared. They commented that they had not thought about the ways in which the apparent isolation of the toilets actually made them dangerous for girls. When this same exhibition was shown to UNICEF workers, they too were surprised but began to explore ways of incorporating into their work on the physical environment of the school, attention to sexual violence, an area that had previously only be part of the Child Protection Unit. New alliances were formed. The visual in these instances serves as both a "voicing" technique and a means of change the space.

In a project in the Free State, students were asked to "draw gender violence". A video documentary, *Unwanted Images: Addressing Gender-based Violence in the New South Africa,* [35] was produced. It has been used with many audiences to raise awareness about the extent of school-based violence from a students' point of view.

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[31] See for instance: Lykes, 2001, Wang, 1999, see also International Visual Methodology for Social Change Project at http://www.ivmproject.ca/resource_bibliography.php.

[32] Claudia Mitchell, "Visual Studies and Democratic Spaces: Textual Evidence and Educational Research. Opening of Photography Exhibition," The Role of Education in a Decade of Democracy Conference (Johannesburg, May 13-14, 2004): www.ivmproject.ca/images/photo_voice/KZN.pdf

[33] Caroline C. Wang and Yanique A. Redwood-Jones, "Photovoice Ethics," Health Education and Behavior (Volume 28, Issue 5, 2001): 560-572; M. Brinton Lykes, Creative Arts and Photography in Participatory Action Research in Guatemala, Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice, eds. Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001): 363–371.

[34] Mitchell, 2004.

[35] Source: ibid.

Social work educators may develop their own videos depicting their own and their students' unique experiences, using an interdisciplinary, collaborative and problem-based approach. Caroline R. Gelman and Carol Tosone [36] analyse the creation of a student-centred, reality-based training video undertaken by students and faculty. There are several key and innovative aspects to this video. It was a collaborative effort between faculty and students of two schools: social work students play themselves and students and affiliates of the school of the arts played clients and were responsible for all technical aspects of the video. The script was based on real social work student process recordings, while client-worker interactions were followed by a supervisory session, underscoring the importance of feedback for learning. The video is described in their article, "Why Am I Here? Engaging the Reluctant Client". It may be obtained through the CSWE website at www.cswe.org.

Another example of a jointly created teaching aid is the audio-visual project "Learning from the Voices of Experience". The project was undertaken by academic staff, who worked with medical/social work students, service users and carers to create audio visual material suitable for teaching purposes in health, medicine and social work.[37] It has been developed by the Institute of Health at Warwick University and funded by the Education Innovation Fund. The aim is to make the voices and experiences of users and carers more central to health and social care teaching.

By representing social work practices in a certain location, teaching aids like the collaborative film present a model for intervention that may also function in other contexts of social exclusion.[38] Further potential uses of video teaching resources relating to social work with families are outlined by Ellis and Garland: [39]

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[36] Caroline Rosenthal Gelman and Carol Tosone, "Making It Real: Enhancing Curriculum Delivery Through the Use of Student-Generated Training Videos," Journal of Technology in Human Services, 24, no. 1, (2006): 37–52

[37] Gillian Hundt, Loraine Blaxter, Clare Blackburn, Ann Jackson, Claudette Bryanston, and Denise Tanner, "Learning from the Voices of Experience - Increasing the centrality of 'voices of experience' in teaching and learning," Education Innovation Fund - Audio-Visual Project (Warwick, 2008) available at: International Visual Methodology for Social Change Project http://www.ivmproject.ca/resource_bibliography.php

[38] Ana Martinez Perez, "The Rhythm of Our Dreams: A Proposal for an Applied Visual Anthropology," Visual Interventions , Sarah Pink, ed. (Oxford - New York: Berghahn, 2007): 234.

[39] Gwen Ellis and Mike Garland, "The making of 'Home Improvements' - tools for working with families in Aotearoa/ New Zealand'. Reflections on creating a video resource for teaching purposes," Social Work Education, 19, no. 4, (2000): 403–408.

- learning and teaching about family work skills and techniques;
- preparing social work students for fieldwork placements in agencies that work with families;
- providing a basis for discussion in supervision;
- developing staff in the form of a refresher course or where a practitioner is new to family work or changing his or her role in an organisation;
- showing potentially anxious families what to expect in family counselling; and
- offering a means of understanding the powerful influence of family dynamics when working with family sub-systems and/or individuals.

Audiences evidently differ in terms of how they capture the content and in their ability to criticise what they have seen. Some do so from an elementary level, focusing mostly on content and the narrative story of the family, while others add to this an ability to critique the process and skills demonstrated, based on their own models of practice. Ellis and Garland [40] describe working with the teaching material, thereby giving us some tips on the teaching process:

> This lesson was conducted with final year students. An instructor has shown the material twice. On the first showing, students were asked to critique the video. Some responded to this task by saying what was wrong with the demonstrated practice, while others were able to identify and name skills, but to varying degrees without an informed basis for the critique. On the second showing, students were asked to consider how implementing a different model of practice would change the questions asked and skills utilised. This promoted engagement with the video material on a different and deeper level. It also enabled these final year students, who were consolidating their own model of practice, to extend their understanding of systemic and narrative approaches to family work if these are their preferred approaches, or to compare and contrast these approaches with another model, for example a cognitive-behavioural approach.

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[40] Ibid.

Visual methods for social reforms: documentary photography

The tradition of making systematic observations of social problems, particularly poverty, is rooted in the history of social work. Some of the results of work by Jane Addams and her colleagues at Hull House describing the living conditions of poor migrants in Chicago were put into graphic form. [41] The collection of materials on Hull House, the first settlement house in the United States, contains detailed documents on the life and work of social workers and their clients, including photographs.[42] A British philanthropist Charles Booth conducted a sixteen-month project in which he made maps about poverty in nineteenth-century London and conducted a survey of life and labour in London (1886–1903). [43]

An important visual turn of analysis of social problems, aimed at promoting social change through the articulation of public concern, occurred when professional photographers and photojournalists engaged themselves in documenting social issues. Photography's capacity to provide unique sources of evidence in the social field is well known. The following are some of the leading figures in the history of social photography.

The American photographer Jacob Riis (1849–1914) is an important figure in the history of social welfare and social work. Riis was born in Denmark in 1849. His family was poor and he emigrated to America at the age of 21. He spent many years desperately trying to evade poverty. In 1877, he took a position as a reporter for the *New York Tribune*. Instead of photographing the beautiful landmarks and historical buildings of New York City, he chose to make honest photography, producing astonishing and profound images of life in the immigrant ghettos. He became a very public figure in the United States. A friend of Theodore Roosevelt, Riis was able to make a significant contribution to social work. He was responsible, directly or indirectly, for changes in the tenement housing of New York. [44]

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[41] Agnes Sinclair Holbrook, "Map Notes and Comments," Hull-House Maps and Papers: A Presentation of Nationalities and Wages in a Congested District of Chicago, Together with Comments and Essays on Problems Growing Out of the Social Conditions (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1895): 3–23, available at: Urban experience in Chicago: Hull-house and its neighborhoods http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/urbanexp

[42] See Urban experience in Chicago: Hull-house and its neighborhoods: http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/urbanexp/

[43] See Charles Booth Online Archive http://booth.lse.ac.uk/

[44] Jennifer R. Graham, "Jacob Riis. The Photographer as a Social Reformer," Suite (101.com Aug 19, 2008): http://historicalbiographies.suite101.com/article.cfm/jacob_riis

In the early twentieth century, photography began to play a significant role in the work of intellectuals and social reformers in the United States, where technology has been a significant social factor. We should note an initiative by Paul Kellogg, who published the journal *Survey Graphic* from 1921. This illustrated periodical published articles on important social issues; visual representations, according to Kellogg, were to engage the attention of a wide audience and to make professional information suitable for public consumption. He was very much inspired by the following idea: "The keynote of the thing (. . .) is interpretation and we are going to employ photographs, etchings, drawings and text of a sort which we hope will get a new hearing for the big human concerns which lie underneath all this technical discussion of social problems."[45]

A photographer who debuted in this journal was Lewis Hine (1874–1940). Hine studied sociology at the University of Chicago. For several years he taught sociology at the Ethical Culture School in New York City, where he encouraged students to use photography in research. He worked for *The Survey* in 1906–1908, where he specialised on documenting the lives of industrial workers; he gradually switched from teaching to photojournalism. Over the next decade, Hine worked closely with organisations lobbying for social reforms; he was particularly involved in efforts by the National Child Labor Committee to end child labour in American industry. His photographs of working kids are famous throughout the world. He also took part in documenting the work of Hull House in Chicago.

Until its final issue in 1952, *Survey Graphic* was a pioneer in debates on the acute social issues of American society. In the 1930s, a great visual contribution to efforts to document the Great Depression was made by the photojournalism of Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans and Russell Lee, who portrayed the living conditions of poor farmers during the economic crisis. In the 1940s, in addition to its extensive coverage of the war, *Survey Graphic* made the issue of race visible in two highly regarded special issues: "Color: The Unfinished Business of Democracy" (1942) and "Segregation: Color Pattern From the Past — Our Struggle to Wipe it Out" (1947). [46]

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[45] Kellogg, cited in: Cara Finnegan Social Welfare and Visual Politics: The Story of Survey Graphic, available at http://newdeal.feri.org/sg/essay01.htm

[46] Ibid.

One of the few women among the famous documentary photographers was Dorothea Lange (1895–1965). She became a very influential photo-journalist after her series on the tragic consequences of the Great Depression. She photographed the poor, displaced farming families and migrant workers. Although she suffered from polio and was partially immobilised, Dorothea Lange left a successful portrait studio in San Francisco in order to work for the Farm Security Administration. Her task was to document social upheaval and to record quiet suffering with a compassionate eye. She said that people trusted her because she did not appear "whole and secure" in the face of their poverty and insecurity (Abbey). She later reflected upon the philosophy of her work: "I had to get my camera to register things that were more important than how poor they were — their pride, their strength, their spirit." [47]

The task of photojournalists – which differs from that of social workers and therapists – is mainly to inform, interpret and report on social issues, rather than to help directly. Documentary photography can bring attention to underreported social issues, reveal human rights violations and exploitation, and inspire understanding and compassion with their images, thereby opening paths to change and reform. A contemporary initiative, the Documentary Photography Project, receives support from the Soros Foundation. Through its exhibitions, workshops, grants and public programs, the project explores how photography can shape public perception and effect social change. A major part of the Documentary Photography Project is the Moving Walls exhibition series. Launched in 1998, the exhibition series has provided an artistic interpretation of such obstacles as political oppression, economic instability and racism, as well as the struggles of people to tear such barriers down. The thematic collections include:

- **Moving Walls 10** at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/photography/movingwalls/10
- **The Fire Within.** John Ranard's images of injection drug users in Russia and Ukraine, many of whom are teenagers, give attention to the burgeoning HIV epidemic in the region.

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[47] Ibid.

- A Procession of Them. Eugene Richards shows us the cruelty and mistreatment that people with intellectual, psychological or developmental disabilities suffer in public psychiatric institutions.
- **Dads.** Stephen Shames counters the stereotype of low-income fathers as deadbeat dads. Enrolled in parenting programs that provide them with job skills and self-esteem, the men in his photographs play an active role in their children's lives.
- **Moving Walls 12** at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/photography/movingwalls/12
- **Sharing Secrets: Children's Portraits Exposing Stigma**. Donna DeCesare's portraits document the lives of Central American and Colombian children living with AIDS, surviving as sex workers or struggling with the scars of war. They carry a burden of fear and stigma that leaves them seeking a safe environment in which they can share their secrets.
- **Survivors: Domestic Violence in South Africa.** Using powerful attention to detail, Jodi Bieber's triptychs are a grim portrayal of the scenes, weapons, and faces of domestic abuse. But beyond the testimonies of South African women who survived years of beatings by their partners, the pictures tell of a culture of violence against women — one that persists in South Africa and across the world.

Photographers clearly face ethical pitfalls when documenting stories about communities or individuals who have been through traumatic experiences. In studio photography, a particular challenge is taking family photos of special children. Children with disabilities and their families often face prejudice and hostility in society A non-profit organisation Special Kids Photography of America[48] strengthens these families' self-esteem through training professional photographers in the art of photographing children with special needs and severe disabilities, including autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and many other conditions.

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[48] www.special-kids-photography.com

We were inspired by this idea and recently arranged for such a photo session at the Saratov Rehab Centre for children with disabilities (Figure 5). It was a real challenge both for the parents and children, as well as for us, a photographer, staff and students who volunteer in our project. One boy who recently underwent facial surgery was shy but soon became engaged playing an Indian chief, and other children and parents were inspired and relaxed as they posed for the photographer. All participants received gifts – beautiful portraits of themselves.

Figure 5. An image from a photo session with special kids at Saratov Rehab Centre (Photographer Alexei Leontiev)

By displaying beautiful portraits of children with special needs and disabilities in public places, we let the world know that they are just like other children – precious and perfect.

Visual techniques in therapy

In child psychology children's drawings are widely used for diagnosing and treating trauma. The use of images in social work –photographs, drawings or video –is important in order to facilitate discussion and for re-framing techniques.

Ephrat Huss and Julie Cwikel[49] demonstrate how marginalised Bedouin single mothers define pain through depictions of their bodies and their embodied experiences. The potential of drawing as an indirect but deeply communicative symbolic vehicle, which can be used to express the women's pain and struggle as marginalized and impoverished women, was demonstrated in the themes that emerged from a content analysis of the women's art and their verbal comments. A central theme was the identification of pain derived from painful life circumstances rather than due to inherent sickness or weakness. Other themes included the body as a site for cultural transition, power negations with men, intellectual development and the struggles of motherhood.

In the 1970s, several phototherapy[50] approaches were experimented with. Three women are prominent figures in this field. Judy Weiser is a famous psychologist, art therapist, consultant and trainer in Canada. Her PhotoTherapy techniques[51] use personal snapshots and family photos (and interactions among these) as non-verbal tools to assist therapeutic communication and personal healing, to help clients bridge into feelings and memories in ways that words alone cannot. In PhotoTherapy-based counselling sessions, photos are taken, viewed, posed for, actively reconstructed or "sculpted", worked with in memory or imagination, or even explored through interacting with photographs taken by others. This work is about "photography as symbolic communication", rather than "photography as art". Using these techniques requires no prior familiarity or experience with cameras or photographic art and is extremely "user-friendly" for the client.[52]

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[49] Ephrat Huss and Julie Cwikel, "Embodied drawings as expressions of distress among impoverished single Bedouin mothers Arch," Women's Mental Health, 11, (2008): 137–147.

[50] Not to be confused with phototherapy as a medical treatment.

[51] Judy Weiser, PhotoTherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums, 2nd Edition. (Vancouver: PhotoTherapy Centre Press, 1999).

[52] See www.phototherapy-centre.com

Jo Spence (1934 – 1992) was a British photographer who began documentary work in the early 1970s, motivated by her political concerns as a socialist and feminist. "A Picture of Health?" was an exhibition in which Jo Spence responds to her disease and treatment through photography, channelling her research and feelings about breast cancer and orthodox medicine into an exhibition. The representation of the body, particularly the female form in sickness and health, was of special concern to Jo, as both a patient and a feminist. In the words of Jo Spence, phototherapy is:

> using photography to heal ourselves. Phototherapy should be seen within the broader framework of psychoanalysis and its application to the photography of family life, but should always take account of the possibility of ACTIVE CHANGE. We drew upon techniques learned together from co-counselling, psychodrama, and a technique called 'reframing'. We have found ways of having a dialogue with ourselves about the conflicts and constraints of marriage, or of health, education, aging, class economics and oppression for us as women, and working 'against the grain' around dominant definitions of sexuality and love. The whole technique depends upon expecting photographs to help us to ask questions, rather than supplying answers. Using this framework for photography it is possible to transform our imaginary view of the world, whilst working towards trying to change it socially and economically. [53]

Rosy Martin is a British artist, photographer, writer, lecturer, workshop leader and therapist, and a colleague of Jo Spence since 1983. As a phototherapist she works to extend the range of potential meanings that lie within notions of domestic photography and to explore the relationships between photography, memory, identities and unconscious processes. Themes which she has explored in exhibitions and articles include: gender, sexuality, ageing, class, desire, memory, location, urbanism, shame, family dynamics, power/powerlessness, health and disease, bereavement, grief, loss and reparation. [54]

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[53] Jo Spence, available at Sparerib No. 163 February 1986, available at

hosted.aware.easynet.co.uk/jospence/jotext2.htm

[54] See Rosy Martin, "Phototherapy: The School Photograph (Happy Days Are Here Again)," Photography/ politics: Two, ed. Patricia Holland, Jo Spence and Simon Watney (London: Comedia Photography Workshop, 1986): 40-42.

The Five Techniques of Photo Therapy by Judy Weiser

Each of the five techniques is directly related to the various relationships possible between person and camera (or person and photograph) although in practice, these categories often naturally overlap:

1) Photos which have been taken or created *by* the client (whether actually using a camera to make the picture, or "taking" (appropriating) other people's images through gathering "found" photos from magazines, postcards, Internet images, digital manipulation, and so forth),

2) Photos which have been taken *of* the client by other people (whether posed on purpose or taken spontaneously while the person was unaware of being photographed -- but where people other than the client have made all the decisions about timing, content, location, and so forth),

3) Self-portraits, which means any kind of photos that clients have made of *themselves*, either literally or metaphorically (but where in all cases they themselves had total control and power over *all* aspects of the image's creation),

4 Family album and other photo-biographical collections (whether of birth family or family of choice; whether formally kept in albums or more "loosely" combined into narratives by placement on walls or refrigerator doors, inside wallets or desktop frames, into computer screens or family websites, and so forth -- which were put together for the purpose of documenting the personal narrative of the client's life and the background from which they developed. Such albums have a "life" apart from, and far beyond, the individual images which comprise them; and, finally...

5) "Photo-projectives" technique, which is based on the fact that the meaning of any photo is primarily created by its viewer *during* their process of viewing it (or taking or even just planning it). What is the story behind each of these pictures below? Why was it taken? What thoughts, feelings, or memories come to mind in response to seeing it? What might its voice say or ask if it could speak? What message, secret, or information might it hold? What does it remind you of in your own life?

The most effective application of these techniques will occur when they are creatively combined -- because they comprise an integrally interconnected system that is far more useful as a holistic system, than in any linear summation of its parts. [55]

There are important distinctions between these approaches: "Photo-Therapy is used by therapists in their work helping others, while Therapeutic Photography is done by individuals *by and for themselves* in non-therapy settings for the purpose of their own personal growth and insight, creative artistic statement, as an agent of personal/political/social change or community-strengthening -- or even more broadly when using the camera for the purpose of qualitative research or as part of organized community-based research projects (such as "PhotoVoice"). These practices are not opposites -- they are different ways of using emotional information that has been unconsciously embedded in people's personal snapshots." [56]

Conclusion

The reading of visual data as cultural texts enhances students' understanding of such issues as social order, gender roles and inequalities. Pictorial constructs of normality and social problems are characteristic of certain historical periods; visual evidence may illuminate social issues of the past as well as contemporary society. The interpretation of visual texts may serve to highlight peculiarities in social relations and individual experience and offers a new understanding of the visual within a culture and a society. We have outlined the historical and interpretive frameworks of such methods as photography and video. We have also provided maps that can be used in social work training and research and in the practice of intervention and lobbying for social reform. In developing the visual component of social work training, we cross the fields of cultural studies, anthropology, communication and media studies, film, art, design, psychology, sociology and education. The application of visual methods in social work teaching combines practical and technical elements as well as reflexive and theoretically-driven aspects. Participatory visual methodology serves to amplify the voices of silenced groups, while offering opportunities for community education and social action.

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[55] Source: http://www.phototherapy-centre.com

[56] See www.phototherapy-centre.com

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