

The background of the cover is a photograph of a clear, bright blue sky with several fluffy white clouds. Below the horizon line, the ocean is a deep turquoise color, with some darker blue patches visible in the distance. The overall scene is bright and serene.

Enacting Epistemic Freedom: Visual Methodologies and Methods for Caribbean Research

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Editors**

Call for 750-word Abstracts for Chapters

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Rationale for the Text

Qualitative researchers often undertake sustained observations in the field and study the logic, arrangements, and explicit and implicit rules of the context (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 6). Qualitative data collection methods can foreclose what can be observed and therefore documented in the research, as a consequence. Thomas (2019) indicated that while Caribbean education research has proliferated, components of research design, inclusive of “modes of questioning” have been “modeled after Western ways of thinking and interpretation” (p. 66). She called for transgressive research methodologies that “decolonise Caribbean educational practice” and bring about the “indigenization of qualitative inquiry” (Thomas, 2019, p. 66).

Within the last decade, there has been a growing awareness of the significance and use of visual data in qualitative research to this end (Bedi & Webb, 2020; Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2018; Twine, 2016). Visual research methods (VRM) comprise methods of data collection and analysis that incorporate visual elements such as maps, drawings, word-clouds, concept maps, photographs, videos, as well as three-dimensional objects into the research process (Bedi & Webb, 2020). Visual methods of data collection enable researchers to access a wider range of participants for qualitative studies in different ways. Visual methods provide participants with additional ways to communicate their ideas and experiences. Additionally,

the growth of visual media in our daily lives (we all have cameras in our hands) means that we are collecting and sharing images more than ever before. As Swaminathan and Mulvihill (2018) argued, “photography and other visual- and arts-based methods have come increasingly into use with the intent to decolonize methodology and correct the imbalance of power between researcher and the participants” (p. 134).

Using a systematic study and analysis of visual data in Caribbean contexts can give a more nuanced understanding of Caribbean lived experience. Patel (2016) asked, “Why must context always be considered as part of educational research?” (p. 80). One clear reason is addressing historical colonialist exclusions in order to excavate suppressed forms of life obscured by Eurocentric domination (Patel, 2016). Contextualizing research underscores not only the humanizing refusals during the eras of suppression, but also modes of thriving that nevertheless flourish and continue to do so..

While there is research on specific visual methodologies (Kortegast et al., 2019; Kortegast et al., 2021) and specific visual data collection methods, e.g. photovoice (Latz, 2017), participatory visual methodologies (Phelps-Ward et al, 2021), and arts-based research (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2020), few of these have any Caribbean examples. International research methodological texts on visual methodologies do not have published case studies on the Caribbean region. For example, Kedra (2022) drew on case studies from Finland, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Poland, Turkey and the United States. Additionally, recent methodological texts for research in the Caribbean region have very limited discussions on VRM. While Stewart’s (2020) edited volume focused on providing a collective body of scholarship for innovative uses of decolonizing qualitative research in the Caribbean, VRM were not discussed in any of the chapters. Nakhid et al. (2023) focused on research

methodologies and pedagogies within an affirming methodologies framework that highlighted local and indigenous ways of knowing in research and education praxis in the Caribbean, but no chapter was included on VRM. Kempadoo and Deshong (2021) have a section entitled *Researching the Visual and Cultural*. These chapters explore the use of photographs and images as data in feminist research praxis. Therefore, there is a need to see more examples of VRM in studies based on the Caribbean context.

Philosophical Underpinnings of the Text

In this text, we use the term *methodology* to refer to the systematic procedures for data collection and analysis. This concept is closely related to a researcher's philosophical perspectives, ontology (the nature of reality and being), and epistemology (beliefs about the nature of knowledge) (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This term is distinct from *methods* as defined by Punch (2005, p. 28) which generally refers to research design “data collection and data analysis” that together constitute the “empirical procedures of research” (p. 28).

As a byproduct of colonization, many researchers working in Caribbean contexts normatively draw from the epistemology and ontology of Western European philosophy. Yet, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) argued, there is a struggle for people, especially those from the global south “to think, theorize, interpret the world, develop [their] own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism” (p. 3). Thomas (2019) maintained that decolonial shifts legitimate the knowledge that arises from diverse geographical contexts. This shift requires a freedom of inquiry that restores the agendas and processes deep within the ways of life carried out by the formerly “enslaved, displaced and colonized and racialized people” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 3). In this kind of qualitative research, the epistemic norms (e.g. of truth and knowing) situate and systematically derive

research findings in thick descriptions from the global south as a field of study (Geertz, 1985). Therefore, this proposed text and accepted chapters draw on Afro-Caribbean Philosophy (ACP) and its conceptual frameworks to enact *epistemic freedom* through research methodology. ACP presupposes that the African continent and diaspora are sites of original philosophical thought, questions and ideas (Gonzalez de Allen, 2012). The notion of epistemic freedom draws on extant standards of truth and knowing and ontological norms to “shift the geography of reason” away from Eurocentric nomenclatures of objectivity and to excavate the inherent logics in lived experiences of the global south (Gordon, 2020).

Research methodology that fosters epistemic freedom broadens the methodologies to capture the forms of life in this context and the methodology of what counts as qualitative research data. In epistemic freedom there is overt acknowledgement of embodied reasoning localized to the African diaspora and its multivocality, as one “epistemic platform” (Thomas, 2019, p. 66). Most distinctively epistemic freedom presupposes the Caribbean body as a “knowing subject” to generate “knowledge/understanding” while foregrounding the Caribbean subject as its primary beneficiary (Thomas, 2019, p. 66).

What We Are Seeking

This text is intended to contribute to discussions in the literature on the development and use of visual methodologies and methods of data collection for Caribbean research. The visuals in these studies can be participant and/or researcher generated (e.g. word clouds, drawings, conceptual maps) and serve as actual data or data antecedents. Therefore, we seek submissions that meet one of the following criteria:

1. Original, never before published, empirical research in various fields (e.g. social science, health sciences, STEM, management, environmental research and education)

that use visual methodologies and/or visual methods of data collection and focus on the Caribbean contexts. This work must be completed by the time of publication and should be approved by an Research Ethics Board (REB) or Institutional Review Boards (IRB). Please include the REB or IRB number, or an explanation of why none exists.

2. Conceptual and theoretical papers that theorize aspects of visual methodologies and methods through the lens of epistemic freedom.

Proposed Outline of the Text

Part One: Epistemic Freedom and Visual Methodologies: Rationale for a Focus on Caribbean Research

The chapters in this section should explore the meaning of epistemic freedoms in the Caribbean context as well as rationale for visual methodologies.

Part Two: Visual Methodologies in Caribbean Contexts

The chapters in this section should explore examples of research conducted using visual methods of data collection.

Part Three: The Future of Visual Methodologies in Caribbean Research

The chapters in this section should focus on visual methodology futures in Caribbean Research.

Technical Components for the Abstract Submissions

1. APA 7th Style
2. 750 words for abstract (5500-6000 words plus references for the final chapter).
3. First person appreciated.

4. For empirical papers: detailed discussion on the background, purpose, theoretical or conceptual frameworks, methodology, data sources, findings, and recommendations.
5. For conceptual papers: detailed discussions that support a clearly defined argument.

Submit Abstracts

Please submit abstracts to epistemicfreedom@gmail.com and copy sfraserburge@bsu.edu.

Important Dates

Call for Abstract Submissions on **2 August 2023**

Abstract Submissions by **5 September 2023**.

Final Chapters no later than **31 January 2024**.

Proposed Submission to Publisher: **30 June 2024**.

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