Using visual methods in research is a meaningful way of engaging participants during the data collection process. People communicate in different ways, and can connect differently with ideas depending on the media they are using to express themselves. Visual methods enable participants to show you how they see the world, as well as, or instead of, telling you.

During this symposium paper, participants will explore the process of the physical aspect of looking at images and then ‘sorting’ through them as a stimulus in two main activities: a diamond ranking activity and a photo choosing activity; with discussion centring on the process and products of these and related activities using photographs. Participants are therefore actively involved and are able to use the images as visual cues. Our experience has shown, as others (Jenkings et al. 2008) found, that the photograph is not simply a source of information, but it is a prompt in a collaborative interaction - the diamond ranking activity - by providing: ‘visual reassurance when outlining opinions and allow the use of imagination in expanding on the scene’ (Hazel, 1995).

Diamond ranking has been used in classrooms to explore and clarify the feelings and thoughts on a topic and is usually carried out with pre-written statements. At the workshop, however, participants will have the opportunity to learn about and try using this activity with visual images instead (Clark, 2012). In the second activity, workshop participants will focus on talking about and choosing pictures, mirroring the way that we have used photographs in school-based research (Woolner et al., 2012). Methods will be demonstrated of using the immediacy of photographs which are alternative or complementary to the semi-structured qualitative interview through photo-elicitation.

References


