

Four Qualitative Methods for Understanding Diverse Lives.

Photo Go-Along Activity Sheet.

Objective: To explore our connection with place through a combination of walking, talking and photography.



Materials:

- A camera or smartphone for taking photographs
- A notebook or journal for taking notes (optional)
- A dictaphone for recording thoughts whilst walking (optional)

Instructions:

Step One: Begin by choosing a location that is meaningful to you and that you would like to explore.

Step Two: Start by walking around the place taking photographs of the location and its surroundings as and when it feels right to do so.

Remember: The route taken could be pre-defined or a spontaneous wander. Moreover, the photographs do not have to be perfectly framed. The photographs could be of anything that is of significance. This could range from litter or graffiti to renowned buildings and architecture. The point is to use the camera as a device with which to reflect on the place as you move.

Step Three: As you take photographs, reflect on your connection with the place. What emotions does it evoke? What memories does it bring up? What thoughts and feelings does it inspire? You could either write down your reflections in the notebook or journal, or record them using the dictaphone. It is the combination of walking, talking (or reflecting in the journal) and photography which makes this method particularly valuable for exploring people's connections with place as they emerge.

Remember: When reflecting, make a point of dwelling on your senses. What sounds can you hear? What does the place smell like? What particular qualities of that place was it that made that memory bubble to the surface in that moment?

Step Four: Continue walking and taking photographs.

Step Five: When you are finished, take a moment to reflect on the overall experience. What did you learn about your connection with the place? What themes or patterns emerged? What route did you take and why?



Remember: Depending on the specific aims of your research, it might make sense to repeat this activity at different times of the day or in different seasons. Doing so would highlight the factors shaping place experience.

Step Six: Share your photographs and reflections with others if desired, and listen to their experiences and connections with place. If the routes, photographs, and experiences are shared with others; this could be completed as a focus group. Doing so would highlight the similarities and differences between people's experiences of place.

Note: This activity can be completed individually or in a group setting, and can be modified or adapted as needed. For instance, if the research project involves participants who would prefer to not walk, or if they are physically unable to do so, then this method could be completed online by following a route on Google Maps. The researcher could then ask questions about the route taken and encourage the participant to reflect on any memories or experiences they have in this place. Screen shots could be taken instead of photographs, or the participant could be asked to share any photographs they already have.

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