

'Say Cheese' – Photovoice and Over 50s Women: To exercise is to socialise.

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The teaching of research methods to sport development students can be challenging in many ways, such as, the practical nature and the increasing desire to professionalise the discipline. However, as CORD (2014) state, it is the contextualisation of the subjects which is vital to engaging Higher Education (HE) students in the learning and teaching process.

The focus of this paper is the findings of a small pilot study as part of my on going PhD. The discourse analysis used for this study explores the use of the ethnographic photovoice data collection method, a tool that allows participants to tell their story (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). It also contextualises the subject in relation to the discipline of sport development, which by definition, aims to increase participation in sport, exercise and physical activity (Hylton & Bramham, 2010). This paper will firstly outline the research methods and provide a rationale for using photovoice and older women as a participant group. The findings will then be discussed and the method analysed as to possibilities of its use in underpinning pedagogy of qualitative research methods for students. Finally, conclusions will be drawn.

I had already understood that qualitative methodologies are most appropriate to elicit people's thoughts and opinions (Denzin, *et al*, 2005) and ethnography in particular, studies society, its people and their cultures creating data from observations of the participants by the researcher i.e. the data is categorised from the data collected (Rose, 2006). But it is through visual representation that we can actually see people's cultures and everyday social lives which can enhance written and verbal data. Photovoice as an innovative method of data collection allows not just for the production of visual representations but it actively encourages analysis to be carried out by the participants themselves. The researcher therefore becomes the facilitator to the creation and interpretation of the data rather than the producer.

Despite the variety of both qualitative and quantitative research on the physical, mental and social benefits to participation in sport, exercise and physical activity (NWHN, 2014; Houlihan & White, 2002; Coalter, 2010), little is produced in relation to the opinions of older women. Older women are those, according to the British Heart Foundation (BHF) aged over 50 (BHF, 2010). As a sector within a community they have perceived barriers to sport participation, such as cost and level of fitness, whilst also being categorised as a minority group (**sport**Scotland, 2003).

A group of older women who regularly take part in an Over 50's exercise class run by their Local Authority were chosen for the pilot study. This class has become their Tuesday morning ritual which involves them meeting beforehand, participating in the class and then an hour of socialising afterwards in a local tearoom.

Three meetings were arranged; one for information with a question and answer session, the second where willing participants filled in consent forms and volunteer photographers were given guidance and instruction on the digital cameras and the third was the discussion forum

of analysing, categorising and theming their photographs all of which were digitally recorded on a Dictaphone.

With positive feedback from the group after the first meeting, photovoice was deemed an appropriate method to initiate discussion and solicit their opinions on participation in the exercise class as it allows their voices to emerge from their own data (Wang & Buriss, 1997). At the second meeting the group chose the date for data collection and volunteer photographers were recruited. One photographer was to take photographs at random of the group at their exercise class and the other was to take photographs in accordance with a set of prompts. This was to determine which aspects of the photovoice method would be suitable for the main study.

The cameras were delivered to a group member with a prompt sheet for Photographer A – however, they forgot to mark them down which led me to disregard this part of the data collection for the main study. This did not hinder the analysis process as the photographs would be presented altogether. After the photographs were taken they were printed off, given a number and randomly displayed on two tables in the tearoom at the third meeting.

The women chose three photographs from the 214 that represented their experience of the Tuesday morning exercise class and they all chose one of them meeting up, one of them exercising and one from the tea-room. I facilitated, observed and took notes from the discussion as the participants selected, contextualised and codified their photographs. This created personal and group commentary which they controlled i.e. they became co-authors of the data.

They then grouped the photographs into five themes, including “blethering” and “the perfect ending”. These two themes are the key findings of the study, in that they felt the social aspects of participation in their exercise class are the most important. Further, that this approach is a useful way of gathering insights into the experiences of older women and exercise.

The Honours requirement for the degree in Sport Development requires students to submit a dissertation which involves the collection of primary data. To date, no student has used this type of methodology perhaps due to little or no encouragement to explore qualitative methodologies available to them. Therefore, my own learning, not just as part of the PhD process, has proven to be doubly beneficial. That is, reflection in my own teaching and learning practice as well as a theoretical understanding of qualitative research methods (Hay, 2013).

In conclusion, the pilot study found that using photovoice allowed the women to communicate their feelings prompted by the photographs whilst engaging with the process of self-producing visual, verbal and written data. Despite some reservations about ethical issues, handling of digital cameras and the ownership of the published photographs few perceived problems arose. This has confirmed that for the main PhD study an ethnographic approach will be taken and the main tool used to reflect participant response will be photovoice. For the sport development students, it is hoped they will be encouraged and

enthused through sharing my experiences to explore these distinctive qualitative research methodologies and methods which could enhance their learning experience.

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