



checklist

- Think about how you will address such practical issues as copyright fees and the cost of reproducing images in reports and published works.
- Confidentiality and anonymity, when these are promised, need very careful consideration. This means that extra care is needed when securing permission for research which generates visual materials.
- Be sure that you make images only where you will be safe and where you have permission to photograph or film.
- Visual images are always ambiguous. People produce them, usually with a particular purpose in mind. They are consumed by other people (including researchers) who may make alternative interpretations. You may wish to address these issues by paying attention to intended audiences or by making your own interpretation clear in your analysis. A reflexive approach may be useful in this regard.



projects

This chapter may have helped you see social research in a different light. Now go out and take a *good look* at society!

- 1 Media analysis:** Choose a research question – for instance, how a social group (either a broad one, like mothers or young people, or a narrower one, like motorcyclists or police officers) is depicted. Choose a type of existing visual data – movies, newspaper photographs, advertisements, illustrations in children’s books, television programmes, historical paintings or something else – which might portray your group. Analyse your data using one of the methodologies mentioned. In your write-up, defend your choice of method and sampling. Think about how to present the visual component in your essay.
- 2 Photo elicitation:** Choose one of these projects – or create your own. (A) Ask a few people from an older generation to show you photographs from their youth. Interview them about consumption patterns (what did they buy, make or do without?) or social rituals (how did they celebrate birthdays, what did they do and where did they go with their friends?). (B) Pick a controversial topic, for instance ‘Fashion models encourage girls to be anorexic’. Gather a number of images (e.g. ten advertisements or pictures of famous people from newspapers, showing different body compositions) or find a movie or TV show, on video, that captures the issue. Organise a focus group of your friends and lead a discussion using your visual material as prompts. Consider how best to convey the content of your images to your readers.
- 3 Envision data:** Use your device to gather visual data. (A) Show how gravestones and cemeteries preserve memory, prestige and power. (B) Study what the buildings that house different kinds of organisation say about their occupants. (C) Examine behaviour in shopping districts, asking how shoppers browse, circulate and queue, or what people communicate by their dress and speed of walking. In all of these, be scrupulous about research ethics. It is acceptable to photograph cemeteries and the outsides of buildings, but you will need permission to shoot inside offices and stores. You may find this permission difficult to obtain, but do not be tempted to cheat. You will be more unobtrusive, and safe, if you choose a busy high street in a tourist area. ‘Quote’ your data, or describe them, in your report.