

Additional finding, from Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.2.3 The Enabling Power of Creative and Visual Research Methods

In Chapter 4 a variety of studies that have employed creative and visual methods to evoke different types of information from participants were discussed. Importantly, these works did not suggest that language-based research is deficient and outmoded, rather they proposed creative and visual methods offer crucial and distinct methodological advantages over such techniques. Indeed, an exploration of these studies revealed that individuals may struggle to produce instant verbal responses to direct questions, and feel ill-equipped in framing and communicating their opinions about such matters within a research environment. Therefore, by engaging participants in the creative production of visual materials these research projects afforded individuals, as David Gauntlett (2007) has noted, ‘to spend *time* in the *reflective process* of making something [and] the opportunity to consider what is particularly important to them *before* they are asked to generate speech’ (pp. 182-183). Hence, in contrast to language-based approaches the *reflective process* of making a creative artefact helped facilitate more thoughtful and *holistic* responses by participants. For example, if an individual was asked to give a verbal description of their identity they would inevitably detail attributes in a linear pattern, and it is therefore possible that features identified earlier would receive greater attention or the researchers’ questions may foreground specific areas for analysis. Conversely, when constructing a *visual* representation of identity individuals are offered time to create and consider this work, as well as an opportunity to display their ideas on the self as a *whole* or, to use Gauntlett’s words, ‘all in one go’ (p. 183). For instance, when assembling their identity collages participants within the present study appeared to attempt to establish a sense of balance in this work; that is, participants utilised diverse images to express the multi-faceted nature of their identities, and by juxtaposing and arranging these materials they illustrated the complex relationships between different aspects of their character – a similar finding reflected in Gauntlett’s (2007) Lego identity study. Moreover, the non-linear quality of such creative

products allowed individuals to articulate concepts, emotions and information concurrently without prioritising elements of their response. Thus, although language was required to expand upon the visuals, the image maintained primacy whilst effectively demonstrating relationships between constituent parts.