Video diaries: Creative, multimodal and technology-informed research methods

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Diaries as creative research methods

- ‘an approach that enables people to express themselves in non-verbal ways … often used in combination with more traditional methods such as interviews and focus groups’ (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 1).
- a ‘mode of meaning-making through visual construction [and others], often to communicate one’s innermost thoughts and feelings or to capture a meaningful element in participants’ worlds’ (Elliot et al., 2017, p. 482).
- ‘Creative research methods can help to answer complex contemporary questions which are hard to answer using conventional methods alone’ (Kara, 2020)

Diaries and their methodological evolution

Diaries are journals or records of events. They originally served as accounts of personal reflections on an event or a series of reflections on events extending over a significant length of time. Technological advancement enables creativity and flexibility in how diaries are recorded. Diaries are also recognised as research tools and methods for generating research data (Akinreni et al., 2024, p. 1).

Research diary methods

Solicited diaries are intentional generation of diaries, in which participants are instructed to prepare their diary inputs for research (Cao & Henderson, 2021).

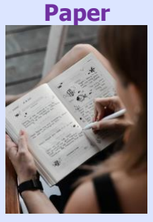
- **Written diaries.** A traditional way of recording personal journals using pen and paper and latterly digitally-typed text.
- **Photo diaries.** Focuses on using visual imagery (e.g. photographs, at times combined with text or drawing) to capture scenes, activities, places visited, etc. that are of interest to the researcher.
- **Audio diaries**. These are participants’ audio recordings of their thoughts and impressions, informed by their experience and are collected based on what the research requires, e.g. on a monthly basis (Dangeni et al., 2021).
- **Video diaries**. Research participants are asked to record short video entries to document and reflect on their experiences that are related to a specific area of interest (Elliot, Dangeni & Wu, 2026; Noyes, 2004; Wu et al., 2005).

**Note:* *This poster draws on the SGSSS Summer School workshop on Diary Methods (Elliot et al., 2026). Our study is funded by The Wellcome Trust InFrame Research Culture Catalyst Fund.*

Clay tablets



Paper



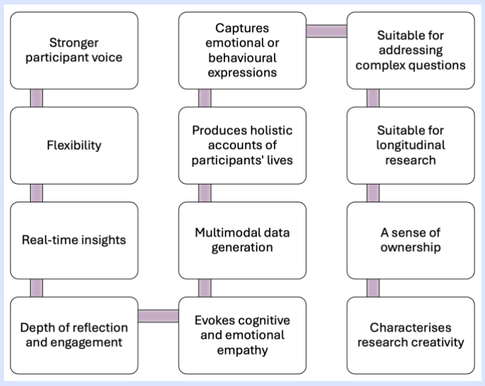
Cameras



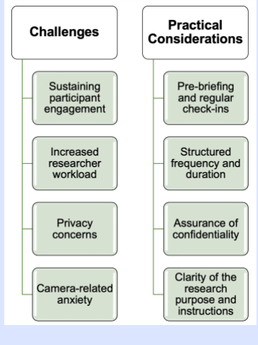
Computers



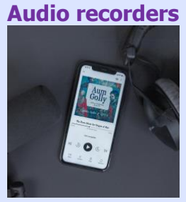
Why use video diagries?



On using video diaries



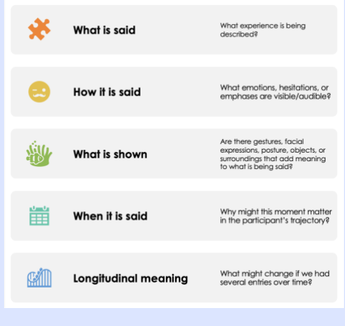
Audio recorders



Video recorders



Video diary analysis



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