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# Video Testimony on Rural Poverty and Exclusion

Presentation to Social Research Association Annual Conference: Research  
'Social Research in the Digital Age' (London, Dec 2012)





Multi-Media Testimony on Rural Poverty and Exclusion

## Project overview

The **Rural Media Company**

### About the project

- Big Lottery-funded collaboration

### Research Question

- How is poverty experienced in rural areas?
- What are the personal and social impacts of rural poverty?

### Methods

- 'Video testimony' with 33 people experiencing low income in rural Herefordshire
- Semi-structured follow-up interviews



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### Sampling

- Purposive sampling through existing local third sector agencies
- Target populations:
  - Older people; single parents; young people; disabled people; minority groups; unemployed

### Analysis

- Structured thematic analysis using CAQDAS software (Atlas TI)
- DVD report disseminated to policy makers, practitioners, and agencies

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## Understanding experiences of rural poverty

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### Poverty as a social relationship

e.g. Bourdieu, Nancy Fraser, Ruth Lister

➤ Redistribution and recognition: symbolic injustice (Fraser) & symbolic violence (Bourdieu)

➤ 'Othering' (Lister): social representations of poverty characterized by:

- Denial of rights
- Stigma, shame/humiliation
- Isolation and powerlessness
- Assault on dignity and esteem

### Poverty and the 'rural idyll'

e.g. Paul Cloke, Paul Milborne

➤ The 'invisibility' of rural poverty

➤ The discursive marginalisation of rural poverty

➤ Rural recomposition and othering 'the rural poor'



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## Using video methods in poverty research

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### Claimed advantages of visual approaches:

- **‘Emancipatory designs’** - giving voice: Observation vs. testimony
- **Positionality**: objectification and the role of the researcher
- **Reflexivity**: understanding of how the process and researcher impact on the results
- **Power** in the research process: the use of video diary methods



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### ‘Testimony’ on rural poverty: some dilemmas

*Testimony: 1. ‘a declaration of truth or fact’; 2. ‘evidence given by a witness’*

- Documenting the experience of poverty vs. the social labelling of ‘the poor’
- Challenging the objectification of research subjects



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## Key ethical issues in video research

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- **Confidentiality**  
Almost impossible to guarantee anonymity. Research must address this issue with the participant
- **Control over images**  
Linked to confidentiality , once images are taken who controls them? Where can they be shown?
- **Reception**  
Often assumed that an 'intended' audience will respond in a certain way
- **Generating images**  
Visual images are a product : to what extent should a participant be able influence this process?
- **Non participants**  
Pictures or film may capture those who haven't consented



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## Results and dissemination

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### Themes:

- The Necessities of Life  
[http://youtu.be/FJwLZeQ7p\\_k](http://youtu.be/FJwLZeQ7p_k)
- Access to Services and Opportunities  
<http://youtu.be/LDV0yJ9YAZs>
- Isolation and Powerlessness  
<http://youtu.be/54liwwsfUY8>
- Denial of Rights  
[http://youtu.be/9b\\_ivzhbbFE](http://youtu.be/9b_ivzhbbFE)
- Aspirations and Opinions  
<http://youtu.be/bl4PZugSLnU>





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## Participants' views on the research

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'I think I am probably more aware that there are people with similar views to myself, I am not alone...it's not just me...there are many people in the same or worse situation

'having to think seriously, having to put your thoughts into a voice, it just makes you more positive that what you said is what you feel'

'It was just nice to be asked...it was a good thing, because it is at least getting things out there, that need to be talked about'

'Actually participating in this has been a joyous occasion actually for me. It has been a way of voicing opinion...It has been actually a very positive and hopeful experience'

'No, because unless you get personal and intrusive, you are not going to get the answers you need, the real answers, not the plastered over ones. It is necessary'

'...Being directly asked for responses on certain areas can be a little bit upsetting, but it is necessary to be candid about the situation to enable other people to have some understanding'



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