

Research methods and theories related to Visual Explorer

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The main idea is that VE is a projective technique for assessment, evaluation, ethnography, and dialogue. Projective techniques have an honorable history via tools such as TAT, and Rorschach, going back to the work of Carl Jung. The [Taylor and Ladkin \(2009\) reference](#) is very good on the topic. Our assessment team at CCL refers to the use of VE in evaluation as visual ethnography. Our colleague Bob Barner has written about the use of VE in coaching, and refers to it as constructivist assessment. Many academics are keen on the idea of the social construction of reality, and this kind of reference may be useful. We have written about the use of VE in mediated dialogue. Our book *The Leader's Edge* is a description of leadership practices for navigating complex challenges in a turbulent world. *Visual Explorer* emerged from the *Leading Creatively* research project on which the book is based. A summary of the book is [Leading creatively: The art of making sense](#). See [Putting something in the middle: An approach to dialogue](#) (Palus & Drath, 2001, [Society for Organizational Learning](#)). Mediated dialogue is a key art for [developing leadership in an interdependent world](#).

See also:

- Constructivist assessment (Barner)
- Narrative coaching (Barner)
- Visible Thinking (David Perkins, Project Zero)
- Projective techniques for psychological assessment (e.g., Rorschach, TAT, Carl Jung, see Taylor and Ladkin)
- Visual ethnography (Schwartz)
- Photo elicitation (Harper)
- Visual sensemaking (Perkins; Karl Weick)
- Analogically (metaphorically) mediated inquiry (Nissley)

From a CCL conference presentation on the use of VE in evaluation of long term impact of developmental interventions:

Why use images?

Some of the benefits of using a pictorial approach include:

- Tapping into personal experiences and passions.
- Surfacing and engaging emotional undercurrents.

- People frame and illustrate their thoughts with each other.
- Surfacing individual and shared assumptions.
- Allows for self-disclosure and vulnerability in a safe context.
- Understanding multi-dimensional concepts.
- Images bridge differing context and cultures.

Researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership have developed an expansive set of tools to help groups engage in mediated dialogue. Recognizing that dialogue is a difficult skill to develop, the use of an artifact or identity object has been found to help facilitate a group in engaging in dialogue. The process of dialogue requires surfacing assumptions and understandings, displaying these publicly, and creating shared sense-making through inquiry (Palus & Drath, 2001). When an evaluation process has a need to uncover assumptions and create meaning, a mediate approach using images may be a fruitful process- not just collecting data, but also engaging participants and others in a developmental experience. Other researchers within the visual sociology, ethnography or anthropology field have found photography a valuable means of qualitative research (Schwartz, 1989; Weade & Ernst, 2001, Brace-Govan, 2007). According to Weade and Ernst (pg. 133), “they [metaphors] take us beyond the particular, the literal and the moment to moment details of everyday experience...language, then, provides ways of assigning meaning to what we encounter visually, and it enables us to extend or enhance our interpretations of what we see.”

Brace- Govan, J. (2007). Participant photography in visual ethnography. *International Journal of Market Research*, 49 (6), 735-750.

Palus, J. C., & Drath, W. H. (2001). Putting something in the middle: An approach to dialogue. *REFELCTIONS: The SoL Journal*, 3 (2), 28-39.

Schwartz, D. (1989). Visual ethnography: Using photography in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology* 12 (2), 119-154.

Ullman, M. (1996). *Appreciating dreams: A group approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Weade R., & Ernst, G. (2001). Pictures of life in classrooms, and the search for metaphors to frame them. *Theory Into Practice*, 29 (2), 133-140.

Visible Thinking / Cultures of Thinking. For a number of years, David Perkins and colleagues have conducted research on thinking dispositions, devising ways to transform classrooms into “cultures of thinking” that foster thinking skills and attitudes through the teaching of the disciplines in a thinking-centered way. A number of schools

are participating, with the current primary development site for new materials being Bialik College in Melbourne, Australia, an initiative called Cultures of Thinking. Harvard colleagues Ron Ritchhart and Shari Tishman have helped to lead this work.

From the Research Center for Leadership in Action at New York University's Wagner School:

“ *We've used VE to great effect with cooperative inquiry, which is in the family of participatory action research methodologies.*

<http://wagner.nyu.edu/leadership/publications/files/CILearningConnectedness0408.pdf>

We also have a practice note on the use of visual methods in facilitation:

<http://wagner.nyu.edu/leadership/reports/files/PracticeNoteVisualTools0508.pdf>