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# USING PHOTOGRAPHS ~ ACTIVITIES AND ADAPTING THEM

The following pages offer a series of ten key activities to use with the photographs in this pack. Each activity features a section on:

- ◆ Preparation ~ outlining basic things needed and approximate timing;
- ◆ Briefing ~ outlining an example of using the activity;
- ◆ It is worth noting ~ which highlights some points we have found useful.

It is a bit like a recipe book. You can follow it carefully but after a bit it is best to see it more like an approach which you adapt to make the most of opportunities as they arise.

Additional information, preparation work exploring some of the issues or simply making use of a key question can change the nature of the activity.

Take, for example, the stickers activity. The focus of this activity could be changed by asking the question: *“Choose 3 photographs which for you raise important questions about citizenship”*. OR *“Choose 3 photographs which for you raise important questions about ‘identity’”*.

Such an activity could be adapted to introduce a theme to a group. The same activity could also be used to enable a group to synthesise what they have been learning at the end of a series of sessions.

A feature could be made of pairs using the same photographs to do activities such as *Questioning*, *Making Connections* or *Viewpoints* and sharing their different perspectives. Alternatively, by getting pairs to use different photographs, a wider range of issues can be covered when shared with the group.

Whichever approach you use, more potential will be realised if the group build up their skills in using photographs as a learning resource. Some simple observation games can also help.

## Simple games to develop observation skills

### Kim’s game ~

Lay all the photos out on a table [or the floor]. Ask everyone to look at them for one minute. All but one person closes their eyes. That person turns over one photo. Which photograph has been turned? The one who guesses correctly turns over a photo of their choice.

### Describing ~

Working in pairs. Each has a photograph to describe to his/her partner without them seeing it. When they see the photo ~ how is it different from what they expected?

### Cropping ~

Cut photographs up [or cover part of them up] and ask pairs to guess what is going on from the piece they can see. How is it different when they see the whole picture? What might be going on beyond the frame ... or behind the photographer?

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# Stickers

## ~ to select photos and share ideas

This activity is a good exercise to introduce a set of photographs. It enables participants to express their own interests for further enquiry. It provides the opportunity to share different perspectives.

It is also useful for introducing people in a new group to each other.

### Preparation

- ◆ Display the photographs on a flat surface.
- ◆ You will need three sticky labels or 'post its' for each participant.
- ◆ The activity will take about 20 minutes

### Briefing

Give each person in the group three sticky labels and ask them to write their first name on each label.

Ask everyone to choose three photographs that they like, for whatever reason. This wording allows everyone to decide how personally to take the exercise.

They should put their labels on the photographs chosen. Ask everyone to find another person in the group with whom they have at least one photograph in common.

The pairs should then select one photograph [not necessarily of their chosen ones] that they would like to talk about. They should discuss their photograph for about five minutes.

Call a plenary and ask each pair to present their photograph. Encourage questions and comments.

### It is worth noting

Photo activities can help people explore issues which may be very important to them but without being personal. It is important to use language in your instructions which encourages people to distance themselves from the photographs if they wish to. For this reason you should not ask people to choose photographs they identify with.

It may also be useful to look at the photographs that were not chosen, and discuss why. It is likely that people will reveal prejudices in such discussion. It is important to provide this opportunity and to enable individuals and the group to be aware of such prejudice. Activities such as *Labelling*, *Captions*, and *Telling a story*, are useful to enable groups to examine and question stereotypes in more depth.



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# Captions

## ~ do they change what we see?

This activity highlights the way in which we make quick judgements about visual information, on the basis of our existing ideas, values and experiences. It is a good introduction to the theme of stereotyping.

It can also be used to enable the group to consider their assumptions and attitudes.

### Preparation

- ◆ Mount the photographs on blank paper and display them either on a flat surface or on a board.
- ◆ Give participants 3 strips of scrap paper, and blu-tack.
- ◆ The activity will take about 35 to 40 minutes.

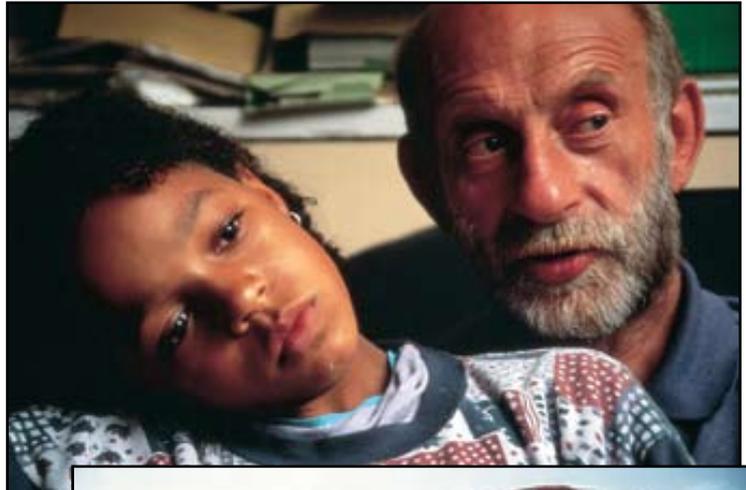
### Briefing

Ask participants to work in pairs. Ask each pair to select three [or more] photographs that they find interesting, for whatever reason. They should write short captions for these photographs and stick them on the mounting paper. It does not matter if participants all choose the same photographs.

Then ask participants to look at all the captions. Call a plenary and ask for comments:

- did people see different things in the same picture - why was this?
- did people make judgements on the basis of race or class? Was there any basis for these judgements in the photographs themselves?
- do different captions change how we see the photograph?

It is important to allow time to question and challenge people's perceptions. Allow at least 15 minutes for the plenary.



### It is worth noting

If the group are not familiar with captions, work on some examples together. Alternatively do an introductory activity using a collection of newspapers or magazines.

This activity is useful for exploring prejudices and stereotypes. The photographs themselves can be used as a challenge. It is very important that individuals should be free to express opinions, but also that others should be free to challenge them. It is important to allow enough time for discussion.

It is worth planning to follow up this activity with one of the 'enquiry' ideas such as *Questioning* or *Telling a story*. They both encourage people to rethink their initial impressions of a photograph.

# Labelling

## ~ to explore stereotypes

This activity is a way of highlighting different views about the collection of photographs, and enabling open discussion about people's stereotypes and images.

### Preparation

- ◆ Make two copies of the list of words, cut them up so that each word is separate, and put them in a box, or an envelope.
- ◆ Mount the photographs on blank paper and display them either on a flat surface or on a board.
- ◆ Give participants some blu-tack.
- ◆ The activity will take about 35 minutes.

### Briefing

Ask participants to work in pairs. Each pair should take six labels at random from the box. They should then place them on the photographs of their choice. If they cannot use a particular label on any photograph they should return it and take another.

They can use their labels for one or more photographs - if they feel all six describe one photograph that is acceptable, alternatively they may want to ascribe one label per photo. Create an atmosphere that encourages fairly spontaneous choices.

Then ask participants to look at all the photographs and the labels they have been given. Call a plenary and ask for comments:

- did some photographs have only negative words?
- did some have only positive ones?
- what was the basis for people's choice?
- does anyone disagree with the labels given?
- what evidence is there in the photographs to support the labels given?

### It is worth noting

The exercise encourages people to use stereotypes and possibly to expose their own. Allow plenty of time for a full discussion.

It may be useful to do this activity 'in role' asking participants to imagine the labels others might use. This may be less inhibiting and enable a more open discussion. The idea is to enable participants to work on their own stereotypes not to judge them.

*Telling a story* is a useful 'enquiry' exercise to follow up this activity by encouraging participants to question their initial impressions more fully.



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# Bias ~ yours and mine

This activity is a way of using photographs to explore representation of family lifestyles in the media. Magazines and newspapers tend to reflect certain images of family life, others are rarely portrayed. The activity is also about enabling us to recognise something of our own bias and to consider the implications.

## Preparation

- ◆ Provide groups with a pile of magazines ... and/or newspapers.
- ◆ Make sure scissors, poster paper and blu-tac or glue are available.
- ◆ Display photographs.
- ◆ The activity will take about 45 minutes.

## Briefing

This activity is best done in small groups. Ask each group to review the photographs in the magazines. Ask them to cut out photographs that feature families and build up a collection ~ like a photo-pack. Suggest that they sort them to ensure that there is a variety of images.

Ask each group to select photographs to make a display mounted on poster paper. It may be useful to limit the number to 10 images.

Call a plenary to review the displays and discuss the issue of bias:

- in what ways are the displays similar/different?
- what kind of images were most difficult to find?
- what does the activity suggest about bias in the magazines?
- what images from the pack could be added to the posters to make them more representative of the diverse nature of our society?
- what questions could we ask about our own bias?

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# Clusters

## to build an agenda

This activity is a way of using photographs to enable a group to share their ideas about key issues and themes. It also offers a process for groups to agree an agenda for further work and discussion.

### Preparation

- ◆ Mount clusters of 4 or 5 photographs on large sheets of poster paper.
- ◆ Put posters up on the wall or on tables in different parts of the room.
- ◆ Make sure felt pens are available.
- ◆ The activity will take about 45 minutes.

### Briefing

Explain that the idea of the activity is to help the group identify issues that could be discussed in future sessions.

Ask participants to work in pairs. Each pair should go round the room to look at the photographs in each of the clusters and discuss them. Create an atmosphere that encourages pairs to debate their ideas.

They should then write comments on the poster paper to share some of the things they discussed ... these might be immediate reactions, questions, things they are concerned about or ideas they have about future group discussion.

The next stage is to ask pairs to revisit the clusters, to read the different comments and to agree about four of these that they would choose to discuss. Ask them to put a star against each of the four they choose.

Call a plenary to review all the clusters:

- sample the range of comments ~ were some clusters more difficult to comment on than others?
- which are the comments that received the most stars?
- are there common themes?
- what ideas / issues do the group wish to investigate further?



### It is worth noting

Seeing photographs together encourages people to make connections between them and in a sense creates a new image. It may be useful to select clusters to feature particular themes. You can also sharpen the focus by adding photographs to the cluster from other sources such as magazines. Random clusters also work well.

An alternative approach is to ask people to star the photographs they think raise important issues and then to ask in a plenary what those issues are. This enables groups that are less confident about writing and reading to focus on the issues, many of which may be complex or of particular importance to them.

# Questioning

## ~ to take a closer look

This activity encourages participants to examine a photograph in depth and to discover how difficult it is to make assumptions about it which can be sustained.

## Preparation

- ◆ One photograph for each pair. This can be done by asking participants to work with the photograph they selected for the *Stickers* activity. Alternatively you can simply allocate them. Choose those that have detail or action.
- ◆ Mount the photographs on a large sheet of blank paper.
- ◆ The activity will take about 30 minutes

## Briefing

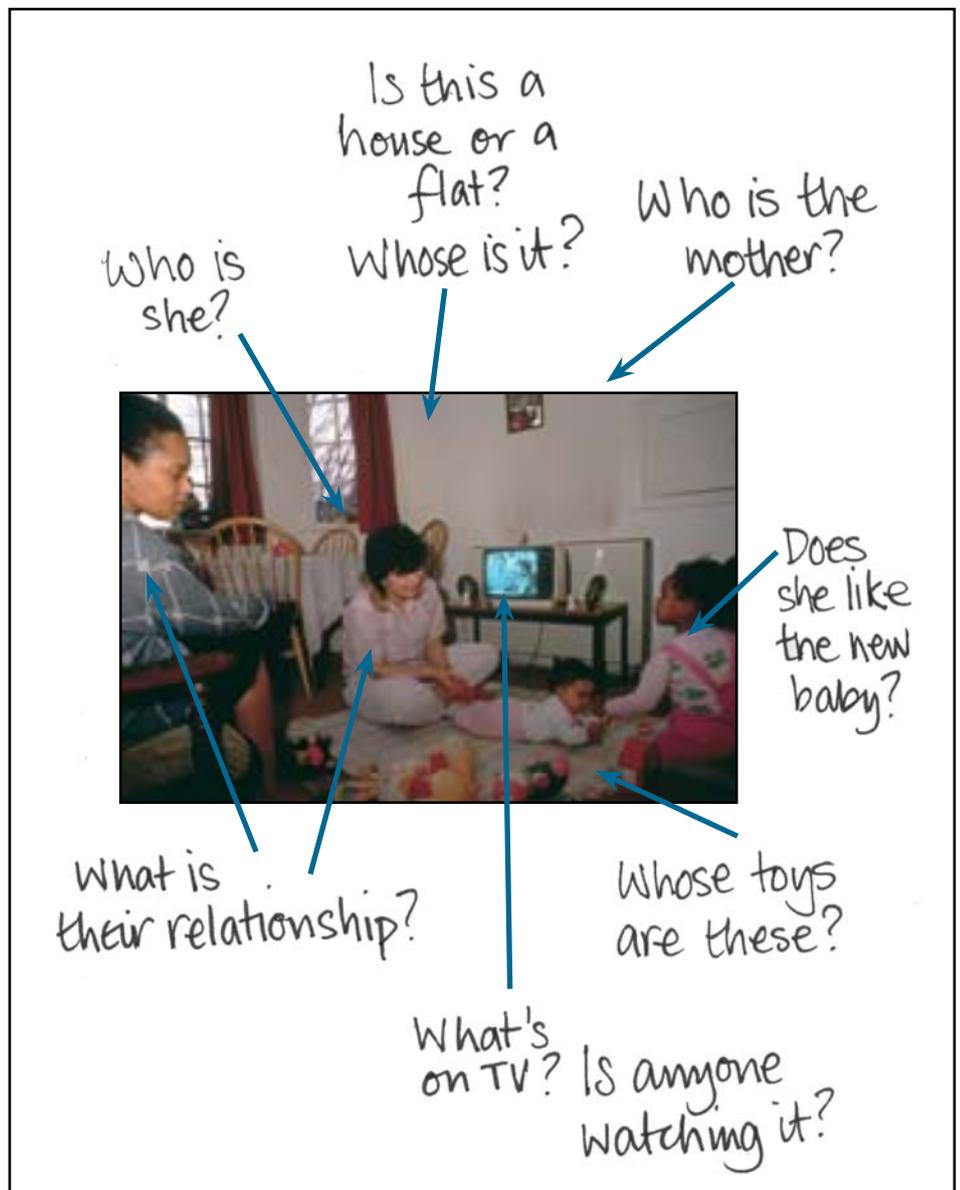
Ask participants to work in pairs. Each pair should write as many questions about their photographs as they can think of. The illustration opposite is an example of the approach.

When pairs have finished ask them to display their photographs around the room. Allow time for everyone to look at the display. Call a plenary and ask for comments:

- were they surprised at the number of questions they could ask?
- could any of the questions be answered? does it matter?
- did the questions make them re-assess their original view of the photograph?

## It is worth noting

The activity enables a close look at the detail and speculation about the context. It is important to encourage questions to which there are no 'right answers'.



# Making connections

## ~ the development compass rose

This activity provides a framework for asking more in-depth questions about the situations in the photographs and about the environmental, social, economic and political issues that might be of concern to the people featured in the photographs. It also provides a focus for discussing the commonality between what seem like very different situations.

### Preparation

- ◆ Provide copies of the development compass rose framework.
- ◆ Make a selection of photographs.
- ◆ The activity will take about 45 minutes.

### Briefing

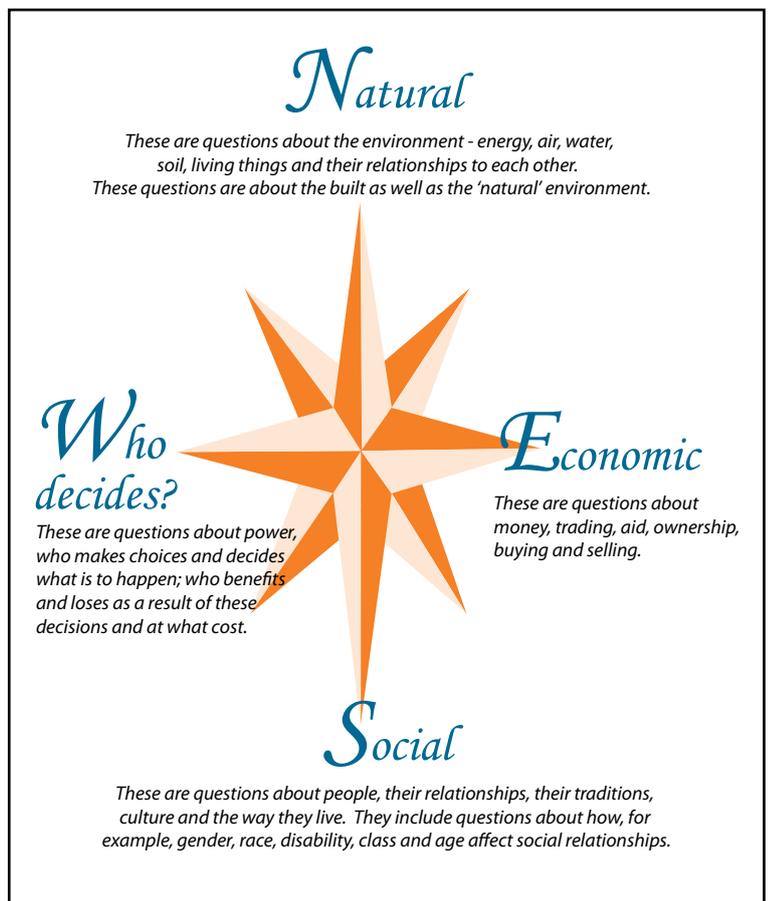
Explain the idea of the development compass rose as a framework for asking questions. It may be useful to introduce the idea by doing the activity with the whole group.

Ask participants to work in pairs. Each pair will need one photograph. It is best to mount it in the centre of a large sheet of paper. Ask pairs to draw on the N [Natural], E [Economic], S [Social] and W [Who decides?] compass points.

Ask them to write comments or questions on each compass point ... about the concerns people in the photograph might have about each dimension. It is useful to encourage people to consider NW, NE, SE etc as well as the main axis.

Call a plenary to share examples of questions from each dimension:

- are there questions in common?
- do some dimensions seem more important to particular people ~ why?
- which questions were most difficult to come up with ~ why?
- do we think the people in the photographs are aware of the range of things effecting them?



### It is worth noting

An understanding of commonality is valuable to discussing and valuing difference. This activity can be used to explore such aspects of experience.

The factors that shape our lives are increasingly global. The activity can be adapted to highlight global interdependence by asking pairs to feature questions about global issues in each domain that might be of concern to the people in the photograph.

*Questioning* is a useful 'enquiry' exercise to prepare for this activity.

Copies of the *Development Compass Rose* are available on this website.

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# Telling a story

## ~ every picture a thousand words

This activity is a good way of using photographs to develop a theme of study. It allows participants to look at the images in some depth and to explore different interpretations of the same photograph.

It also encourages participants to think about all the assumed information that they may make about the back-ground context for any one photograph.

### Preparation

- ◆ You need to know the particular themes that participants are interested in. These can be obtained as a result of doing the *Stickers* exercise.
- ◆ Participants should be grouped according to their interests; each group should be no larger than five people. Select between 6 to 10 photographs for each group, which are appropriate to their theme.
- ◆ The activity will take about 1 hour 20 minutes.

### Briefing

Ask each group to use their photographs in order to tell a story. This will involve ordering them, so that their story has a beginning, middle and an end. It will also involve a lot of discussion about what each photograph is about. You will need to allow at least 30 minutes for this, or longer if you want groups to write words to accompany the story.

Call a plenary. Ask each group to present their story. They can do this by a display, or by reading it, or by acting it out. Allocate about five to ten minutes for each group.

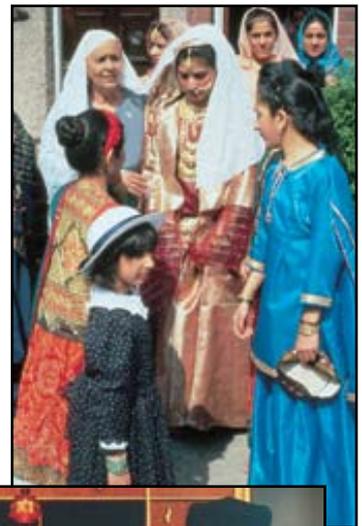
Then ask for comments about each of the stories. Allow around twenty minutes. This activity demands a high level of co-operation within the small groups. You may like to ask participants how they felt about this way of working.

### It is worth noting

This is a long activity. It may be better to have the groups develop their story in one session and share it in a plenary at the next.

If you have more than one set of photographs it is interesting to give two groups the same selection of photographs. The different interpretations bring an added stimulus to the group.

Much of the learning that takes place during this activity will occur in the small groups. You could ask participants to write up the main things they discussed while devising their stories.



# Viewpoints

## ~ seeing other points of view

This activity is designed to get participants to examine a photograph from the point of view of one of the characters in it.

It encourages exploration of different perspectives and values. It enables participants to reflect on their own experiences.

## Preparation

- ◆ Select a number of photographs which illustrate particular themes.
- ◆ Display the photographs so that everyone can see them.
- ◆ The activity will take about 40 minutes.

## Briefing

Ask participants to select a person from one of the photographs they would like to write about. Allow around 20 minutes.

Brainstorm a list of some key things that it may be useful to write about. For example:

- name
- date of birth
- place of birth
- parents' names
- where parents' from
- parents' occupation
- interests, hobbies and favourite activities
- activities dislike doing
- hopes for the future
- fears
- beliefs
- what thinking about situation [in the photograph]



## It is worth noting

It may be useful to offer a limited number of photographs to encourage several versions of the same characters. This will provide additional focus for the plenary.

Alternatively for some groups this would be a useful writing exercise ... display the writing next to the photographs. Allow time either at this session or the next to read everyone's contribution. Call a plenary and ask the group what insights they have gained as a result of the reading and writing.

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# Acting it out

## ~ bring the image to life

This activity encourages participants to explore further the situations in the photographs. It provides the opportunity to develop empathy with the people in the photographs, and to explore in more detail the assumptions they have made about them.

Role play is useful because it enables people to feel for themselves something of the situation they are observing.

### Preparation

- ◆ Participants will need to feel comfortable as a group and be familiar with using the photographs. It is best to build up to this activity by using *Stickers* and *Labelling*.
- ◆ Select one photograph for each group. Some photographs are more suitable than others, for example, those with several people interacting.
- ◆ Write the checklist opposite on a flipchart, or have a copy for each small group.
- ◆ This activity will take about 50 minutes to an hour.

### Briefing

Ask participants to form groups of 3 to 5 people. Alternatively you may want to group them yourself. Allocate each group a photograph.

Ask the groups to use their imaginations to develop a scene, which they will then be asked to act out. It may help to provide them with a checklist.

Each group will need to allocate everyone a role, and to decide how their play will start. They can choose either to act out the scene shown in the photograph, and/or to extend it to include events that led up to and followed this scene. Groups will need around 15 minutes for this. They may find it useful to act out small parts of the scene as a practice.

Call the groups together and ask each to present their scene. Allow comments and questions immediately afterwards.

After each group has had a turn, ask participants how they felt about the activity, and what they felt they had learnt. If people have become involved in their role, it is helpful to go round the circle of participants and ask each person who they were and how they felt. This helps people to come out of role. You will need to allow 5-10 minutes per group for acting out the scene, and an additional 15-20 minutes for the plenary discussion.

### It is useful to note

People are sometimes reluctant to create a role because it involves making a lot of decisions about what a person is like. You may need to encourage them. In debriefing it is worth asking people to share what they found easy and difficult.

#### For each photograph you will need to decide:

- *the names of everyone in the picture*
- *their relationship to each other*
- *whether any other characters are not included in the photograph*
- *how each person in the picture feels*
  - *what each person is doing*
  - *what they are saying*