Reflections on a Photo-Production Study: Practical, Analytic and Epistemic Issues

Steven D. Brown (Nottingham Trent University)

Introduction

As indicated by the timely publication of this second edition of *Visual Methods in Psychology*, the place of qualitative methods within Psychology has changed enormously in the past two decades. What were once considered unsystematic and even 'unscientific' approaches are now properly recognised as viable strategies for data collection and analysis that are essential for the detailed study of relational psychological properties and phenomenon. Yet within this general movement, individual qualitative methods appear to be developing at slightly different rates. Discourse Analysis (DA), for example, has benefited from sustained dialogue within and beyond the discipline, from the appearance of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) classic text. And in seeking to develop an integrative rather than oppositional stance, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (e.g. Smith et al, 2009) has become one of most successful qualitative methodological exports from Psychology to other disciplines. Visual methods, however, appear to be on a slightly different trajectory. The level of agreement and proceduralisation around how to apply visual approaches is far looser compared to both DA and IPA. Moreover, the very existence of visual methods within Psychology sometimes goes unrecognised by authors in different social science and humanities fields. In this chapter, I want to reflect on the challenges of doing visual based research within Psychology and argue that this apparent lack if systematisation is indicative of tensions within the relationship between the visual and the discursive aspects of experience, and, furthermore that these tensions should be the central concern of analysis.

In her chapter, Paula Reavey points out that whilst the emergence of what we now call 'visual methods' is relatively recent, the visual has been a longstanding object of concern within psychological enquiry. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of this concern has traditionally been with the interpretative responses made by individual participants to standardized visual stimuli rather than with the sociocultural aspects of the visual. Where participants have been encouraged to create their own images, these have been treated as 'windows' onto cognitive-developmental processes rather than interactionally produced objects in their own right (in much the same way that 'talk' was traditionally considered – see Edwards, 1997). But within this it is nevertheless striking that some of the most well-known examples of visually-grounded research in psychology, such as the Thematic Apperception Test and the Rorschach Test – are structured around an ambiguity in interpretation, and that this ambiguity is considered a productive dimension of experience rather than an obstacle to enquiry. It is important to retain some sensitivity to the power of processes of ambiguity and ambivalence within visual methods. For example, looking back at the images and film clips from Kurt Lewin's 'leadership studies' (Lewin 1997), there seems to be a tension between what we see in the interactions of the young people and the overarching discourse of 'social climates' in the narrative voice-over. We cannot help but wonder about the relationship between the staging of the images, the dynamics around the participation of the young people and the absent, seemingly omniscient narrator.

Taking this notion of ambiguity forward, I want to describe three modes – practical, analytic and epistemic – in which a lack or an absence of clarity creates a productive tension within visual methods. The first mode (*practical*) concerns the procedures through which visual approaches are conducted. In comparison with interviewing or ethnographic observation, there is far less sense of what constitutes 'good practice' in terms of working with visual materials. Should we maintain a commitment to a 'co-production' model around the process of generating images with participants, or is systematisation critical to the data corpus? Are photographs preferable to drawing or other forms of visual material, and at what point do we need to consider the technical skills and visual literacy of participants as being relevant? Is it the images themselves that are the key object of focus, or is it the process of their constitution that is the real concern? The second mode (*analytic*) centres on what we do, as analysts, with the outcomes of visual research. How is the data corpus of visual materials to be organised and subsequently made available for interpretation? Is it possible to maintain an entirely inductive approach to images, or does theory inevitably enter into the process, and, if so, when and how? To what extent are frameworks from more established forms of visual analysis (i.e. photography, film studies, cultural theory) helpful to psychological enquiry? Finally, the third mode (*epistemic*) raises questions around the nature of the image itself and how it relates to sense-making practices organised through discourse and broader a-subjective aspects of experience. Here Michel Foucault's (1983) essay on René Magritte *This is not a pipe* serves as a guide to thinking through the tension between the visual and the discursive, and the question of what it is that we are doing when we recruit others into an account of the world that is partly accomplished through the use of visual materials.

Throughout the chapter I will be reflecting upon one particular study in which I have been involved. This was a piece of research jointly conducted with Ava Kanyeredzi, Laura McGrath, Paula Reavey and Ian Tucker, which involved the use of a photo-production method with service-users detained within a medium-secure forensic psychiatric unit (see Brown et al, 2019a; Brown et al, 2019b; Kanyeredzi et al, 2019; Reavey et al, 2019; Tucker et al, 2019). All images used in the paper are taken directly from the study. I will discuss each mode of concern in turn, before concluding with final considerations.

1st Mode – The practicalities of visual research

The study was framed by research questions around the relationship between the material space of unit and the experiences of mental health service users during their time detained there under a 'section' of the Mental Health Act. The medium-secure unit we gained access to formed part of the forensic care pathway within a hospital site in a large city in the south of the UK. Service users typically spend between 18 months to 3 years 'sectioned' within the unit. During the early part of this period, service users are restricted to locked wards, where they live in individual bedrooms. Over time, service users are able to make use of more facilities on the unit, including garden spaces and cafeteria, before eventually being allowed a small amount of ground leave, which is a precursor to moving to low-secure and community-based care. Given that service users spend such a long time in a comparatively small, enclosed environment, visual methods were both feasible, in that was a limited environment to potentially document, and analytically valuable, since the experience of

being detained created a relationship to the immediate space that was very particular and would difficult for researchers to access through other means.

The research team decided to use a photo-production method, based on previous experience with both this particular method and with researching locked psychiatric ward spaces (Brown et al, 2014; Kanyeredzi et al, 2014). The primary reason for adopting the method was based on a conceptual view that the experience of space involves a range of embodied and affective dimensions that are irreducible to discursive description. This is not to say that they cannot be verbally articulated, but rather that experience always over-spills such descriptions, and is grounded in ways of moving through the space itself. We wanted to enable participants to be able to show something of how they experienced the space by depicting it in photographs which they took of the ward and surrounding areas. But these photographs would also form the basis for interviews with researchers, where participants discussed the images, why they had taken them, what their significance was in relation to the experience of detention, and how the space impacted upon their emotions and their ways of making sense of their current circumstances and future prospects.

Crucial to the study was that all the service-user participants had lived experience of distress and had been diagnosed with one or more mental health issues. Most participants were also taking a variety of mental health medications, which had a number of effects on their mood, energy levels and general physical health. For example, excessive weight gain is a widely shared side effect of taking anti-psychotic medication, which in turn affects perceptions of self and body-image, and thus how service users relate to daily practices of eating, exercise and interactions with others (see McGrath et al, forthcoming). Since this was a forensic pathway, all of the service users who participated had an 'index offence' (i.e. a criminal conviction) and most had been transferred from the prison estate. Whilst the research project itself was not concerned with the nature of these index offences, we were nevertheless aware that the comparison between the secure unit and prison would be an issue for many participants. For example, in previous research, the freedom to smoke whilst in prison was cited by many participants as a reason for their dislike of hospital care (where smoking is formally banned) (see Brown and Reavey, 2016).

All research with patients in health-care settings in the UK is required to consider Patient Public Involvement in its design, sometime referred to as 'co-production' (see Beresford, 2019). The term was originally developed in service research to indicate the necessity of involving service users in setting both the agenda and the design of the research. There has been considerable debate about the extent to which co-production is meaningful with mental health research, and the extent to which service users feel they are genuinely heard and involved within the research process (Rose & Kalathil, 2019; Madden & Speed, 2017). The co-production element within this study was centred around the photo-production method, which we felt would give participants some degree of control in setting the agenda for the interviews. We also felt that the experience of taking photographs of the ward space might be both empowering and enjoyable for participants, given the repetitive nature of routine activities on wards of this kind. Many participants did indeed appear to enjoy participation, based on their requests to keep the photographs afterwards, but the extent to which co-production can be restricted to the use of a particular method inevitably remains debatable (see Reavey & Johnson, 2017).

We received considerable support and engagement from the staff on the unit, including senior gatekeepers, which resulted in less issues than might otherwise have been expected during the process of acquiring NHS ethical clearance. One key practical issue was how to provide service users with camera equipment. Locked wards have strict regulations on what items may brought on the ward space, and most electronic equipment is proscribed. The solution in this case was for a member of ward staff to accompany service users with the camera, and to assist them in taking the images of the unit over a fixed period of time. This did, however, raise the issue of the extent to which the images taken could be said to be the sole product of the participant. Some images, for example, contained the participant themselves, and were clearly jointly arranged with the member of staff rather than 'selfies'. In this respect, being able to discuss the images with participants rather than treating them as a corpus in themselves was important, in that the issues around their production could be explored. An unexpected bonus of the joint production process was that recruitment to the study increased as other service users saw the photographs being taken and were able to approach staff to express interest in the study.

The photographs were subsequently printed and arranged as booklets which served as the basis for interviews conducted within a week of the images being produced. We had designed a full interview schedule which aimed to systematically work through the photographs. In practice, however, the schedule proved to be of only limited use and the interviews were mostly grounded in reflections on the contents of the photographs themselves. Take, for example, the following image:

-Insert Fig.1 here with caption 'Fig.1 The Outside Space of the Ward'

The researcher here invited the participant to describe why they had taken this image, what was important about it and so on. The participant was, however, unable to offer any significant reasons for taking the photograph other than it being of a space where they spent some time on a daily basis. Further prompts were then made to elicit what they valued about that particular space, noting features such as the prominent flowers and shrubbery. These were again met with minimal responses. Finally, the conversation shifted to what kinds of activities the service user enjoyed doing in this space, to which the response was that there was nothing to do in the space, that it was, in fact, quite a boring place to be in, and so on. In this way the photograph does not really provide an immediate visual insight (although, once mentioned, it is indeed clear that there is nothing much to do here), but rather serves as a point of departure for a series of reflections on actual experiences of the space. This is important because interviews conducted with detained service users face a number of challenges. Participants are quite rightly suspicious of the motives of researchers, and of the purpose of the research, even with the knowledge provided by information sheets during the participant consent process. It can be difficult to properly distinguish the agenda of a social science interview from other kinds of interactions with visitors to the ward, resulting in minimal answers or an unwillingness to expand upon responses. Furthermore, mental health medication can lead to participants becoming tired by prolonged interaction or struggling with an extended conversation. Sticking to the details of the photographs can then provide both a coherent thread through the interview and act to reassure the participant that it is indeed their experiences that are of interest. These can

extend beyond the visual and move to more multi-modal aspects of experience. The discussion of the image above, for instance, opened out how the participant felt the temperature of the sun and wind on her skin whilst in the garden, and how this served as an unpleasant reminder that she was detained and did not have the freedom to move in outside space as she would like.

In the study we did not encounter any instances where participants were unable or unwilling to discuss the photographs they had taken (although this possibility should, in our experience, always be anticipated, especially if the visual component is created within the interview itself). However, putting the focus on the image itself can create some difficulties depending on construction of the photograph. The following image is rich in interpretative possibilities. Note the close framing of the plant at the centre of the image, which is turned at precisely the right angle to form a juxtaposition with the large metal window frame and the security fence below. In comparison with this, the plant looks fragile, perhaps even a little 'hesistant' as it is turned towards the sunlight streaming in. Now, whilst all of these interpretations may well follow from the artful construction of the image, demonstrating the creative skills of the participant, they may also just as well be the outcome of a fortuitous chance placement of the plant by the window, or something somewhere in-between. The interview itself did little to clarify this, although it did occasion some important reflections around the inside and outside spaces of the unit itself (see Tucker et al, 2019). We might then say that whilst the visual literacy of participants is meaningful to the production of images, it cannot of itself be taken as a cue for interpretation within the interview. Sticking closely to the details of what is *seeable in* rather than what is *sayable about* the image seems to offer a better interactional thread.

-Insert Fig.2 here with caption 'Fig.2 The Plant on the Window Sill'

2nd Mode – Analysis of the corpus

Across the 21 service-users who participated in the study (all names subsequently used are pseudonyms), 136 usable images were produced and discussed. The smallest number of photographs taken by a participant was 2, and the largest 13. As invited in the participant information, the majority of photographs depicted a particular area of the ward, with the most common being patient bedrooms, open communal spaces, kitchens and the central nurse's station on the ward. In the absence of a specific theoretical starting point – beyond our overall concerns with space and experience – coding the images proved difficult. For example, it was possible to group the images into public vs private spaces, but analytic value of doing so was very limited, given that this separation of space is in any case the most pertinent aspect of the ward, and would inevitably be depicted across the corpus. The photographs, by themselves, did not add greatly to our understanding of the meaning of this spatial division for participants. We also resisted the temptation to interpret either the number or the nature of the images taken by individual participants, since a whole range of contingent factors might have been in play during the joint production process, including whether it was interrupted by other activities or tiredness on the part of the service user etc.

This led us to consider heterogeneity within the corpus itself, including images of spaces that occurred rarely. One such image was of a public telephone on one ward. It might be expected that as one of the few means through which service users have contact with persons and communities beyond the walls and locked doors of the secure unit, the telephone might have been depicted more often across the corpus. However, in the interview where the image was discussed, the service user described his irritation at passing the phone when it was ringing (i.e. when an outside caller was dialling in to the public telephone). So rather than the telephone serving as a valued means to seek connection outside the unit, it was actually experienced as a disruptive incursion of the outside into the closed space of the ward. Now whilst there was little evidence across the interviews as a whole to suggest the public telephone was always experienced in this way by service users, this particular example did sensitise us to the potential reversibility between inside and outside. In other words, the aspects of space that we might take to be markers of inside and outside – walls, gardens, doors – might not have a clear semiotic valence. Both the location of the boundary marking the limits of detention, and its meaning, might be subject to ongoing shifts during the course of a section (we explore this further in Tucker et al, 2019).

Insert Fig.3 here with caption 'Fig 3. The Public Telephone on the Ward'

It was more often the case, however, that considering the images directly alongside the relevant sections of the interview was the most instructive analytic starting point. That is to say, comparing the image with the interview-based interaction which it afforded. Vincent, for example, had produced an image of himself sat in a chair placed in one the central areas. It is worth mentioning that in prior visits to the unit, we had noticed that Vincent was often to be found sat in this chair and were curious about his reasons for doing so. Whilst we did not directly communicate this to either Vincent or staff, it may be that our prior interest was a factor in his production of the image. The original image itself – before anonymisation – depicts Vincent as appearing relatively relaxed and sat low in the chair, although it is clearly specifically posed for the study.

-Insert Fig.4 here with caption 'Fig4. Vincent sat in a Chair on the Ward'

The corresponding section of the interview then runs as follows. Vincent is asked the usual prompt as to why he has taken this particular image, to which he responds:

Vincent: Well that armchair is next to the pool table. And people usually sit there. You sit there and watch people, watch each other play. So I take a turn and I get up and play pool and someone else sits there. When I finish, he gets up and goes and plays pool and then I sit down. It depends if I win. The winner stays on.

Int: Oh. So when you're sitting in this—

Vincent: Well you can sit down and watch the TV or – cause it's there – you can see who comes in and comes everything from outside and inside and down the corridor. Then they go in the office or they go in there, or it it's a doctor or a nurse or whoever.

We initially found it difficult to make sense of this extract, partly because we had not previously noticed the proximity to the pool table or been present when service users were playing on it. From a discursive perspective it also worth noting the formulation that 'people usually sit there', which constructs Vincent's specific reasons for doing so as less noteworthy. That this was not the answer we were expecting is perhaps hearable in the interviewers initial turn – 'Oh. So when you're sitting in this'. However Vincent's subsequent turn expands on his initial formulation to offer further reasons for occupying a position at the centre of the ward, where it is possible to observe comings and goings onto the ward. Now this latter formulation might offer an interpretative route to building an argument around surveillance on the unit. Staff routinely monitor and observe service users during both day and night, and this core aspect of detention in a secure unit is designed into the architectural design of the built environment, with its use of a cruciform design of wings and corridors, the maintenance of clear sightlines throughout, door viewers on patient bedrooms etc. On this basis, we might be tempted to see Vincent's daily routines as a kind of 'counter-surveillance' made in response. Whilst we have developed an argument along these lines about the 'reversibility' of surveillance on the unit (see Brown et al, 2019a), our concern there was mainly with sound rather than vision and did not use Vincent's comments.

The issue here is that of both wanting to stick closely to what Vincent says and the image he produced, whilst also seeking a way to make sense of his experience in a broader sense than is directly apparent in these two pieces of data. This, it seems to us, is one of the key challenges of visual research. A discursive approach, for example, would be tightly geared to either the interactional sequence of talk itself, or the subject positions implied therein, whilst a semiotic approach might restrict itself to what can be seen in the image of Vincent in the chair. But what we were concerned with was with not the immediate meaning of either piece of data, but rather how they together express something of the sense of being detained for Vincent. Sense is something that that slides between the sayable and seeable, without being reducible to either. To explore this further, we found it useful to invert the perspective of the image, to consider what it was that Vincent could see from his position on the chair. Fortuitously there were several other images within the corpus that provided this perspective, including the following:

-Insert Fig.5 here with the caption 'Fig.5 'The View of the Ward from the Chair'

In this image, we have an additional point of reference for Vincent's comments. We can see that it is indeed possible to monitor 'everything from outside and inside and down the corridor'. From our own observations, we can also confirm that a shift of one's glance to the left (where the nurses station is located) and to the right (where the television is positioned in a communal area) can provide an overview of much of what is happening in the public area of the ward at any given time. All of this then confirms the meaning of what Vincent says – that the chair puts you at the centre of things – and suggests reasons why that statement might have occurred in the interview, such as Vincent wanting to position himself as someone with informed experience, being in the know as to how ward routines operate and so on. But it does not necessarily tell us how these various meanings and references matter to Vincent. However, if we look again at the image, note the cleaner on the left-hand side, who is presumably working their way gradually through the unit. Now add to this

Vincent's description of taking note of each person who enters the ward and where they go. Finally, turn back to his description of waiting in turn to play on the pool table. In each case we have the constitution of a rhythm of activity that punctuates the day, creating its own micro-order that Vincent, from his position in the chair, can pick up and become regulated by. One of the major issues that came through in every interview (and in many of the studies we have done) is the boredom experienced by service users as they fill out their days on secure with few routine activities across the course of an indeterminate period of detention. What Vincent appears to have done is to find a way of sustaining himself by become attached to rhythms of activity that are disclosed to him by occupying a particular position within the ward (see Kanyeredzi et al, 2019). This, we argue, is the sense provided by the data, but arriving at requires a back and forth between the visual and the discursive and adding in additional reference points from across the corpus.

Sometimes these additional reference points may be so specific to the life space of the person concerned that they render interpretation problematic in their absence. Consider the following image taken by Derek of his bedroom:

-Insert Fig.6 here with caption 'Fig.6 Derek's Bedroom'

An initial reading of this image might focus on the relative confinement of the small room, with toiletries and possessions packed tightly into the small table and the bed pushed nearly back against the bathroom door. Or it might begin, instead with the relative comfort of the well-made bed, which is deliberately foregrounded with the (non-institutional) bed linen carefully arranged. Perhaps it is the juxtaposition of these two aspects of the bedroom that are important? Here is what Derek himself has to say about the image:

Derek: I like the pattern on the duvet cover … all the lines were pointing kind of out towards the window, but there was also like the bars, there were like bars on the – on the – the pattern on the bed sheets and there was – there was, you know, there's linear sort of pattern which kind of mirrored a little bit of what's going on – with the bars and the windows. But it was also like – for me it was also a directional, so it was like beyond what was the bars on the windows.

For Derek, it is the interplay between the repeating pattern on the duvet and the similar vertical arrangement of the bars forming the window which is of interest. What is crucial here is to acknowledge that since Derek is on a forensic section, he has experience of being incarcerated in the prison estate. The arrangement of bars is then relevant, as a marker of both where he is now and where he has come from. Although he is now in a hospital setting, he remains detained, and there are markers of that status throughout his bedroom (for example, the table is deliberately installed in the alcove formed by the bathroom to ensure there are no sharp corners which may be used to self-harm, and the windows cannot be opened further than a few centimeters). As the extract progresses, Derek both thematizes this detention, but also expresses its other side, a 'direction', that is pointed out in a kind of visual metonymy, where the pattern of the duvet cover points towards the bars on the window which in turn point to lines that lead outside the hospital detention.

3rd Mode – The epistemics of the 'unravelled calligram'

Most textbooks which describe methodological practices for jointly working with different kinds of datasets – i.e. mixed methods – work with the assumption that expanding the range of data gives the analyst 'more' of the world that they are attempting to study. For instance, the idea of 'triangulation' suggests that combining methods provides a mutual crosscheck, where there are several complementary routes to the same overall research objective, whilst notions of 'embedding' one dataset within another turn on the idea that it is possible to clarify or expand on the meaning one form of data when it is seen through the lens of the other (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) . However, as the present study demonstrates, it may well be the case the relationship between two datasets – here photographs and interview extracts – is not necessarily complementary, but may instead be either ambiguous or, in some cases, actually in tension.

The tension between the visual and the discursive, or the seeable and the sayable, is the central theme of Michel Foucault's essay on René Magritte entitled *This is not a pipe*. Foucault seeks to understand the conceptual operation that Magritte is undertaking in his most well-known work, where a conventional painting of a pipe is accompanied by the words 'ceci n'est pas une pipe'. This is at once a banal statement: of course this is not a pipe, it is painting or a depiction of the thing, not the thing itself! But Foucault sees a more elaborate game being played out here. He compares it to a calligram – a form of poetry popularized by Guillaume Appollinaire, amongst others, where the text is arranged to form a picture of the subject of the poem, such as the Eiffel Tower or a horse. In a calligram the seeable and the sayable are combined, but with the odd feature that it is difficult to perceive the image at the same time as reading the text. One has to perform something of a gestalt switch back and forth. Foucault argues that what Magritte does in the painting is to both construct and simultaneous 'unravel' a calligram. The viewer is then invited to consider the relationship between the words and the image. This can take numerous forms. It can be interpreted as 'this image here produced through painterly conventions is not the same kind of thing as what is usually meant when we speak of a 'pipe'', or perhaps 'this written statement here does not refer to a particular object known as a 'pipe' which can also be depicted as above', or even 'despite the combination of these words and this image, this still does not amount to the idea that comes to mind when you think of a 'pipe''. Finally, Foucault notes that in additional to all of this, we also have to consider the position of the implied interlocutor who is either demonstrating this lack of equivalence between image and text – i.e. the author of this lesson – or the subject to who being instructed.

The problem that Foucault is raising is that whilst we tend to think of experience as a holistic blend of multimodal and discursive aspects, these parts do not fit together cleanly and are continuously joining together and breaking apart in complex ways. To put this is methodological terms, we can say that the relationship between photographs and the words that are said around them involves both similarity and difference, in that whilst they are part of the same experiential world, they also diverge significantly. This also holds at the level of analysis, where what we say about image and text together is juxtaposed with this calligrammatic arrangement of data, and inevitably takes the form of instructing the reader/listener to our preferred way of managing the tensions between these mixed materials. Take the following example:

-Insert Fig.7 with caption 'Fig.7 Baking in the Kitchen'

This photograph of a loaf of bread was taken by Lisa, a service user, in one of the small kitchens that are positioned on most wards. Food is a huge issue in secure units (see McGrath et al, forthcoming). With very rare exceptions, most meals are cooked outside the ward. Service users choose from a limited range of options in advance, and a served at set time. Mealtimes are viewed by staff as a prime site of conflict, and there is an institutional tendency to treat mealtimes as a risky activity to managed and completed as quickly as possible, involving as little agency as possible on the part of service users, since choice often results in disagreement and disruption. The purpose of the kitchens is not to prepare routine meals, but rather as a therapeutic space in which service users can engage in cooking as an additional recreational activity. The photograph gave rise to the following comments in the interview, where Lisa describes her favourite thing to bake:

Lisa: The honey and ginger cake [...] Because my mum loves that one, so I bake
                 one of them – I do two. But as soon as I do them all, the staff, everybody
                 eats them and—
Interviewer: So everybody comes and shares with you.
Lisa: Yeah. I just have one bit to see how it tastes because watch the figure and
                 that and then give it all away.

On first reading, this seems to refer to a pleasurable activity. Lisa bakes a cake that reminds her of her mother and makes two at once so that both staff and fellow patients can share in enjoying these freshly prepared treats. Baking in the kitchen would then be a small relief from the daily routines of life in detention, and an opportunity for building relationships within the ward community. However, look again at the image. Notice how the small loaf of bread is framed against the relatively sterile looking worksurface. Something seems to be a little amiss here. If this is taken after a baking session, as the use of the cooling rack under the bread suggests, then why is everything so clean? Where is the mess, the washing up, the leftover ingredients? In fact, it became clear in both this interview and others that such sessions in the kitchen were irregular. Because of the need for close staff supervision, due to the use of sharp objects and other potential risks, the kitchens stood unused for the majority of the time (the only time we saw one unlocked was when one of the team conducted an interview in a kitchen space). There is then something in the image which diverges from the interview. And if we follow this further, it also becomes apparent that there is a tension with the extract itself. In her second turn, Lisa describes how despite the link between the recipe and her mother, she does not actually eat much of the cake. She formulates this as because of her need to 'watch the figure'. This is another complex issue on the ward. Antipsychotic medication can cause significant weight gain amongst service users, with resulting self-esteem issues. On this particular unit, staff had instituted a 'healthy eating' campaign, which appeared to have hit home with some patients (despite the fact that weight gain was often an involuntary side-effect). The note of pathos which becomes apparent as we look more closely at the photograph is here reiterated in the paradox of Lisa not being able to fully participate in what might otherwise be a highly meaningful and enjoyable process.

In presentations of the findings of the study, we have sometimes presented images outside of the context of the interviews themselves and have treated them as interpretative puzzles for the audience to reflect on the space of the ward. Consider the following image:

-Insert Fig.8 with caption 'Fig.8 Corridor on the Ward'

This is a photograph of a long corridor which is shot from roughly the centre of the ward where the four spurs meet in a cruciform design. One of the most noticeable aspects of the image is the interplay between light and dark. On the right-hand side sunlight streams in through large windows placed near the ceiling. But further back and central in the image is a locked fire door which provides central access to the ward. The image neatly captures a key tension in the design of the ward. The corridors are large and airy and allow a significant amount of natural light to enter. This is all a deliberate attempt to reduce the carceral appearance of ward, to make it feel less like a prison. However, the high ceilings also create a highly reverberate acoustic environment, where sounds echo and noises are amplified, especially at night. One of the key sounds is the slamming of the heavy fire door, which is used continuously through day and night. Patients who are resting in their bedrooms – the doors of which are visible up and down the corridor – are then exposed to a considerable degree of unwanted noise, particularly from staff carrying large bundles of key entering and exiting the ward (see Brown et al, 2019a).

This commentary is a little like the process of constructing a calligram. These are words that are wrapped around the photograph, which take on its shape, so to speak. But they are distinct from the image, they are our comments and interpretations rather than features directed extracted from the image as such. In this mode of analysis, the photographs do not so much serve as expressions of the experiences of service users, but rather provide a pedagogic opportunity to explore our relationships, as analysts and readers, with the affective dimensions of detainment in this specific environment of the unit. The photograph acts as an 'affective lure' for understanding (to use Whitehead's formulation). It is, however, important to emphasise that in treating the image in this way, we are departing from a strictly inductive stance on visual research and entering into a more dialogical relationship between analysis and materials.

This raises important issues about how we use visual materials in relation to broader conceptual ideas. We can extend the idea of a calligram to include the weaving together of the theoretical with the empirical. Clearly not all visual research seeks to explicitly deploy theory as part of analysis, but if we are to do so in a way that aspires to nevertheless remain close to the data itself (and by extension, the experiences of participants that are expressed in complex ways within the data), then it is crucial to avoid an interpretative leap where theoretical terms suddenly intervene in the argument and create a hitherto unprecedented level of abstraction. To avoid this, Paula Reavey and I have talked elsewhere of treating theory as the 'amplifier' of the data (Brown & Reavey, 2013). What we mean by this is using theory as a way of increasing and elaborating upon an interpretative 'signal' that inductively arises from the empirical materials. Theory is then a part of the process of connecting a situated experience with a broader conceptual account without losing the specificity of the original material. To return to the notion of the calligram, we might say that it involves

adding a further discursive layering to the entwined visible and sayable complex of elements.

This last image affords an example of this form of analysis. It begins with a photograph taken by James, a service user with an interest in art. We had hoped that he might explore his interests and tell us a little about some of the art pieces he had made within the interview. However in one publication (Brown et al, 2019b), we decided not to use interview extracts directly, but rather to paraphrase what he had told us and to situate that in a broader story about what we learned about James and how his work was treated within the unit. The long extract which follows constitutes our analysis.

-Insert Fig.9 with caption 'Fig.9 James' Fireplace'

> James has been a patient on the ward for some time. He has made a fireplace. Someone gave him some long strips of cardboard and the idea came to him. He painted some of the flames and made the others out of cardboard. The coal is made of screwed up black paper. In fact, this is his second fireplace. The first one looked so good that it was placed on display elsewhere in the hospital. James likes moving the fireplace around. Its difficult, because it is quite wide, but you can move it to different parts of the bedroom. It changes the feel of the place. One of us asks James if the fireplace makes his bedroom feel more homely. He's not having that. Some other people feel it does, he agrees. But me? It just makes me feel like I'm not in a hospital. The fireplace tinctures the bedroom. In fact it tinctures the whole hospital. Everyone seems to know about James and his fireplaces – you really need to have a look at what he's done. James does quite a lot of painting and art work. He seems very attached to all his pieces and likes to talk through them all. We imagine him as someone who is retuning the space, changing the feel of the hospital piece by piece. But there seems to be something else going on here. James enjoys talking about the reaction of patients and staff to his work. He thinks very carefully through the colours and the overall scale. The best of his work, he says, has a real 'wow factor'. So the point of his work is not just to retune the space, but also to retune social relations on the unit. The art plugs him into different kinds of relationship with other people. He talks about it as work, as a kind of job that he has here, as opposed to his leisure time, spend in his bedroom, moving his fireplace around. (Brown et al, 2019b: 20-21)

The analysis opens with the story of James' fireplace, which is more or less a direct paraphrasing of interview material (see Tucker et al, 2019 for some of the source material). It then moves to reflect some of the conversations we had a research team before the interview. We had thought that the fireplace might be an attempt to make his bedroom feel like 'home', something James subsequently rejected in the interview. The term 'tincturing' is then introduced, a conceptual term derived from the work of Böhme (2017), which refers to way that qualities of objects drift into the atmosphere of a space. Although this is a theoretical addition, it fits with the story we are progressively unfolding. James' work was a constant presence that was referred to on innumerable occasions by staff and patients during the course of the research. The extract then goes back to paraphrasing comments made by James, but fits them into the conceptual theme of 'tincturing', 'tuning'

and 'plugging' into broader social relations. The decision to use a plain prose style and a narrative style rather than juxtapose image and raw interview data then enables this weaving together of the conceptual and the empirical in a way which hopefully avoids the sense of different interpretative levels being in play.

Conclusion

The (re)turn to visual methods in psychology is part of the more general acknowledgement that the multimodal, embodied nature of knowledge and experience is central to psychological enquiry (see Stenner, 2018; Cromby, 2015; Brown & Reavey, 2015). In this respect is it interesting that ambiguity has been strongly thematised throughout the history of visual research within the discipline. Experience is not easily contained within any given aspect of our life space – it overflows and exceeds boundaries and simple locations. Thus whilst visual research arguably gives us 'more' of experience to work with, as analysts, it does not give us access to a 'whole'. If experience is characterised by tensions and ambivalences, such as between the seeable and the sayable, then inevitably these tensions will play out in complex and subtle ways and may even be exacerbated within the process of analysis and interpretation. In this respect, we should bear in mind the etymology of the term analysis, which includes 'dissection and dismantling' as well as, originally, 'unravelling' (see Serres, 2008)

The study I have been discussing used photo-production for a variety of practical as well as ethical reasons. As I hope to have demonstrated, the relationship between the photographs and the interview material was not at all straightforward. Like Foucault's 'unravelled calligram', images and texts appeared to challenge and contradict one another. They pointed to fault lines in experience that were as much disruptive as instructive for interpretation. In this sense, as Kanyeredzi et al (2014) argue, the visual can open fissures in narrative, that are ultimately productive in that they force close engagement with the experiences in question (difficult as these may be). The process of working with an 'unravelled caligram' then involves threading in further interpretative resources, including those derived from our particular standpoints as analysts. For example, in the current study, our own embodied experiences of being on the ward were crucial to our capacity to understand what seemed to slipping between the photographs and the interview material. The aim then is not to imagine how to return to a holistic notion of experience, but to better appreciate the ongoing process of its division.

References
Beresford, P. 2019. Public participation in health and social care: Exploring the co-production of knowledge. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 3:41: 1-12.
Böhme, G. 2017. *The aesthetics of atmosphere*. London: Routledge.
Brown, S.D. and P. Reavey 2013. Experience and memory. In *Research Methods in Memory Studies*, eds. E. Keightley and M. Pickering. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.45-59
Brown, S.D. & P. Reavey 2015. *Vital Memory and Affect: Living with a Difficult Past*. London: Routledge.
Brown, S.D. and P. Reavey 2016. Institutional forgetting/Forgetting institutions: Space and memory in secure forensic psychiatric care. In *Institutions Inc*, eds. E. Weik and P. Walgenbach. London: Palgrave, pp. 7-29.

Brown, S.D., P. Reavey, A. Kanyeredzi and R. Batty 2014. Transformations of self and sexuality: Psychologically modified experiences in the context of Forensic Mental health. *Health* 18(3): 240-260

Brown, S.D., Kanyeredzi, A., L. McGrath, P. Reavey and I. Tucker 2019a. Organizing the sensory: Earwork, panauralism and sonic agency on a forensic psychiatric unit. *Human Relations.*

Brown, S.D., Kanyeredzi, A., L. McGrath, P. Reavey and I. Tucker 2019b. Affect theory and the concept of atmosphere. *Distinktion*, 20(1): 5-24

Creswell, J.W. & V.L. Plano Clark 2017. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. 3rd Ed. London: Sage.

Cromby, J. 2015. *Feeling Bodies, Embodying Psychology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Edwards, D. 1997. *Discourse and Cognition*. London: Sage.

Foucault. M. 1983. *This Is Not A Pipe*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kanyeredzi, A., S.D. Brown, L. McGrath, P. Reavey and I. Tucker 2019. The atmosphere of the ward: Attunements and attachments of everyday life for patients on a medium-secure forensic psychiatric unit. *The Sociological Review*, 67(2): 444–466

Kanyeredzi, A., P. Reavey and S.D. Brown 2014. The role of the visual in narratives of violence: Co-creating fissures. In *The Entrepreneurial University: Engaging Publics, Intersecting Impacts*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 161-182.

Lewin, K. 1997. Experiments in social space. In *Resolving Social Conflicts and Field Theory in Social Science*. Washington DC: APA.

Madden, M. & Speed, E. 2017. Beware zombies and unicorns: Towards critical Patient and Public Involvement in health research in a neoliberal context. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 2:7: 1-6.

Reavey, P., S.D. Brown, A. Kanyeredzi, L. McGrath and I. Tucker 2019. Agents and spectres: Life space on a medium secure forensic psychiatric unit. *Social Science and Medicine*, 220: 273-282

Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. 1987. *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. London: Sage.

Rose, D. & Kalathil, J. 2019. Power, privilege and knowledge: The untenable co-production in mental 'health'. *Frontiers in Sociology* 4:57: 1-11.

Serres, M. 2008. *The Five Senses*. London: Continuum.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. & M. Larkin 2009. *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London: Sage.

Stenner, P. 2018. *Liminality and Experience: A Transdisciplinary Approach to the Psychosocial*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Tucker, I., S.D. Brown A. Kanyeredzi, L. McGrath, and P. Reavey 2019. Living 'in between' outside and inside: The forensic psychiatric unit as an impermanent assemblage. *Health and Place*, 55: 29-36