Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis: A Framework for Analysing Visual and Textual Data

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Abstract

As qualitative research has evolved, researchers now often combine interviews with the production of photographs, artefacts, collages, maps or drawings and the like. However, in practice, the artefacts produced are used to eliciting experiences and stimulating conversations rather than as data, per se, which is often due to the lack of guidelines for how to deal with the artefacts as data in a systematic analytical process. In this article, we present the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis, a framework developed to provide much-needed support for qualitative researchers in analysing artefacts in combination with interviews. Drawing on existing frameworks for visual and textual analysis the focus of this framework is to analyse visual and textual datasets separately and in conjunction with one another through several levels of interpretation from noticing descriptive elements and focussing on specific linguistic and artistic elements through to developing conceptual themes. Drawing on examples from our own research, we will demonstrate the practical application of the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis.

Keywords

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A Framework for Analysing Visual and Textual Data

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Keywords: arts-based research, qualitative methods, photo elicitation, artefacts, objects, metaphors, visual research

Introduction

Over the past decades, qualitative research has seen numerous developments, which have been identified as a linguistic and narrative turn (Atkinson, 1997), a participatory turn (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995), a reflexive turn (Foley, 2002), a creative turn (Kara, 2015) and an emphasis on the sensory and embodied (Pink, 2015). These developments are due to an increased need for researchers to develop their practices and demonstrate innovation as well as to speak to the discourses of participatory, egalitarian research that grants research participants the opportunity to take more control of and responsibility for how to communicate experiences and contribute data. As a result, researchers often combine some form of interviewing with the production of photographs, artefacts, collages, maps, drawings, and the like. In short, data from qualitative and mixed-methods research projects has become more varied than it used to be. In practice, in most of these research projects the artefacts produced are used as an approach to eliciting experiences and stimulating conversations for the interviews. The artefacts are a way into the conversation rather than data in themselves (Pink, 2013). "Ultimately, the output or creation is not used" (Brown, 2019a, p. 1). One reason for this may lie in a difference in philosophical outlook on what is and should be data. Another rather important factor lies in the lack of theoretical constructs and frameworks that can be used as guides for how to deal with the artefact as data in a systematic analytical process (Slater, 1998).

In this contribution, we present "Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis," a framework that accounts for visual and textual materials in an interconnected analytical process. As teacher, teacher educator, and social science researcher, I, Nicole, have always emphasized effective communication and different modes of expression. This is because from very early on I had realized the limitations of language (Scarry, 1985; Sontag, 2003), and had recognized the value of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and the arts as forms of intentional expression (Dewey, 2005). I, Jo, a coach, teacher, and qualitative researcher, was interested in how play and creative work encouraged the broadening and building of self-understanding (Frederickson, 2010), and the reframing of assumptions. Our collaborative work developed around the understanding that participants' modelling and drawing with tactile materials offered opportunities for reframing their existing interpretations (Gauntlett, 2018; James, 2014). As our work progressed over several research projects, we considered the role and position of artefacts in our work and in qualitative research, more generally. For us, the physical artefacts and material representations of experience were not merely a useful tool to initiate a meaningful conversation. They were powerful expressions in and of themselves. At first, we felt ill-equipped to analyse artefacts as objects of arts, as we were not artists and had not had the relevant training. Worse still, within our fields of studies in social sciences and education, we could not find guidelines for what to do with this data and how to analyse it systematically. Yet, not analysing that data was not an option for us, because this would have equated to ignoring parts of the communications with which we were entrusted. The more we engaged with object work, the clearer it became to us that analysing the artefacts was not radically different from analysing interview transcripts: it was an iterative sense-making process to generate common threads. The Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis presented here is the outcome of making that process systematic so it would meet the quality expected within qualitative research. With this framework we intend to provide much-needed support for qualitative researchers in analysing artefacts in combination with interviews.

Our article commences with an outline of the role of visual materials and specifically the arts as a communicative expression, before introducing an overview of existing frameworks for visual and textual analysis. We then explain the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis with its philosophical outlook and procedural implementation. To this end, we draw on a research project, in which we asked participants to build LEGO® models of their experiences. This presentation then leads into a critical discussion of our framework before we conclude with a summary of the rationale and key elements pertaining to Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis.

Role of the Visual Material in Research

Visual methodologies in research and research approaches using artefacts, objects, or photographs, for example, are not new. Disciplines, such as archaeology or anthropology have used objects and visual materials to make sense of cultural experiences (John & Malcolm, 1986; Mead, 1995; Montagu, 1960). The advent of technology has increased the use of film and photography and has enabled researchers in other disciplinary fields to also draw upon different media. At the same time, over the last three decades interest in visual methodologies, embodied and sensory research approaches within qualitative research has also intensified (Kara, 2015, 2020). Consequently, data collection through "creative," "visual," or "arts-based" methods has further increased (Leavy, 2014, 2017). This trend is best exemplified with the search details from the ProQuest Social Science Database. The search was carried out in July 2020 and sought to identify the numbers of dissertations and theses, conference papers and proceedings, and working papers and contributions in scholarly journals within two decades from 2000 to 2010 and 2010 to 2020 (July). The search terms in use were "photo voice," "art-based," and "creative data collection." The table (Figure 1) shows that for all these search terms

the numbers of publication rose drastically, doubled, or tripled, even though the period of the second decade had not been fully completed by the time of the search.

Figure 1
Number of Publications Indicating Trend Towards Visual Methods (July 2020)

Search term	Number of results for the period from 2000 to 2010	Number of results for the period from 2010 to July 2020
art-based	100	317
photo voice	4,399	8,177
creative data collection	7,423	17,492

Publishers are trying to keep abreast of these developments by increasing publications of analytical frameworks and methods textbooks in general, but also by including elements of material and object work or photovoice within their existing frameworks. Most notably, *Visual Methodologies* (Rose, 2016), *Doing Visual Ethnography* (Pink, 2013), and *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (Pink, 2015) have become introductory guides for social science researchers attempting to incorporate visual elements within their research design. These seminal texts are crucial in defining theoretical underpinnings and developing practical protocols for data collection. Yet, the element of analysis of the visual data remains somewhat underexplored. In the *The Handbook of Visual Analysis* (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001), the authors draw on media and communication studies, sociology, anthropology, education, psychoanalysis, and health studies in order to present and demonstrate the value of visual data and how the different theoretical frameworks may be applied to the analysis of visual materials, such as film footage, photography, newspaper images, cartoons, and drawings. More recently, Capous-Desyllas and Bromfield (2018) have sought to combine elements from sociological research with arts-based research frameworks to develop what they call an "arts-informed eclectic approach" to data analysis using photographs. Drawing on Shaffer (1983), Tinkler (2013), Hussey (2006), and Capous-Desyllas and Bromfield (2018) outline visual materials can and should be analysed as artefacts, and therefore, this analysis should draw on artistic values. However, the authors' own analytical emphasis lies with subject matter only and the visual material is again reduced to the role of starting or deepening a conversation about specific topics. Yet, in everyday human life visual materials and artefacts are more than conversation starters, they are the conversation in and of themselves.

Human communication is founded on three basic principles: (1) language is imprecise and insufficient to convey the totality of experience, (2) human understanding is inherently embodied, and as a result of the first two principles (3) communication and human understanding is intrinsically metaphorical (Brown, 2019b). Creations, artefacts, and objects of art therefore constitute language (Dewey, 2005). As such, their creation follows the

principles and patterns of meaningfully expressing an experience from an initial stimulus, or "impulsion" in Dewey's terms (2005), and the formulation and moulding of emotions into the physical act of manipulating materials to reach a harmonious, satisfying conclusion, or "consummation" (Dewey, 2005).

On the surface this process may appear spontaneous rather than planned in detail. In reality, the sum of a creator's previous experiences, knowledge, skills, and memories will have led them to that very point in time of creating, making and doing. As such, the creation itself, whether that is a sketch, an architectural building, a theatre play, a poem, or a piece of music, is the expressive object "present[ing] material passed through the alembic of personal experience" (Dewey, 2005, p. 86). Consequently, artefacts or objects of art need to be seen for what they are, a form of expression that is "recording, constructive, logical and communicative" (Dewey, 2005, p. 105). Artefacts indicate meaning that is individualised but is built upon and located in the "common things of the world [as they] are experienced in different cultures and different personalities" (Dewey, 2005, p. 115).

In summary, an artefact or object of art is the product of a purposeful act of expression created by a social individual for an audience, for language only exists if there is a receiver as well as a speaker. Where language involves expressive objects, the relationship is triadic with the object linking the creating speaker and the receiving audience. Therefore, the artefact and/or the meaning represented by the artefact can and should not be denied, dismissed, or ignored. Instead, the receiving audience, or the "perceiver," must have indirect and collateral channels of response prepared in advance as emotion that lacks proper motor lines of operation will be so undirected as to confuse and distort perception" (Dewey, 2005, p. 102). It is only through allowing the artefact to create an experience within us, that we are able to truly perceive and make sense of what it is in front of us. The process of perceiving a work of art then is nothing but the object working on and in us to connect our conscious and unconscious personal, individual recollections with the broader, generalised world experiences. The fact that these recollections and experiences are obscure and obscured in our memories makes the process of making sense of an artefact un-identifiable, ephemeral, and ethereal. So, where does this leave the researcher?

Analysing the Visual and the Textual

Analytical frameworks and guidebooks providing instructions on coding and the identification of themes with and through analysing visual materials and textual data exist in abundance. Some of these publications are explicitly for analysing visual artefacts (e.g., Chapman et al., 2017; Collier & Collier, 1986; Gleeson, 2011), others work on the premise that visual materials can be analysed like texts (see for example, Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2014), others still highlight the importance of analytical autonomy and freedom by concentrating on the specific contexts and methodologies of the individual project (Pink, 2013). Figure 2 provides a tabular overview of some of the key analytical frameworks currently in use:

Figure 2

Overview of Commonly Applied Analytical Frameworks

Gleeson (2011)	Look at images repeatedly and group into proto-themes (noting features). Build notes through additional evidence and write descriptions of proto themes	Revisit other images to see if proto-theme is recognisable anywhere else, pull in more evidence: can this be elevated to a theme?	Continue to identify themes until no more themes (relevant to your questions emerge. Consider the extent to which your themes are distinct. Do the themes cluster together in a way that suggests a higher order theme? Define higher order themes.
Ritchie et al. (2014)	1. Familiarization 2. Initial thematic framework	3. Indexing and sorting of data	4. Review data extracts 5. Data summary and display
Collier and Collier (1986)	"Open" and "unstructured viewing" and immersion in images/film (181)	Structured analysis, when you ask specific questions of the material	Microanalysis "repeated, careful examination" to perceive patterns (p. 182)
Braun and Clarke (2011)	1. Familiarization 2. Generating initial codes 3. Searching for themes	4. Reviewing themes (across whole data set)	5. Defining and naming themes
Chapman et al. (2017)	1. Data organization 2. Code creation	3. Coding photographs 4. Finding relationships	5. Interpretation

Although these frameworks vary in their origins, interpretations or implementation, there are commonalities across the frameworks that lead the researcher from an initial stage of noticing, "immersion" or "familiarization," through a follow-up stage of sorting, clustering, distinguishing, and beginning to describe themes to the final stage of refining, distilling, and conceptualising themes. Regardless of whether the coding is for visual or textual artefacts, each process involves "wander[ing] backwards and forwards" (Collier & Collier, 1986, p. 100) and (re)returning to the elements of analysis in light of continually building meaningful patterns and understandings of data.

A key stage in the process of analysis is comparing the textual and the visual, drawing together and combining meanings from the different fields of data. Unfortunately, bringing the textual and visual elements together is most often an implicit element within research reports. For Chapman et al. (2017, p. 810) "images can be data in and of themselves," and exploring how image-based and text-based data interact they use the software programme Atlas.ti to organise their data to support the coding of photographs. Although the authors emphasise the

importance of codes co-occurring, they do not explicitly explain how the textual and visual sources in the analytical process were connected and combined. Chapman et al. (2017) contend that the analysis of visual images is more likely to contain researcher bias, thus imply that language is more "transparent." An analysis of collaborative participant-produced graphic novels, uses frequency counts of images, "treating visual data as a kind of text" (Galman, 2009, p. 213) although "the use of contiguous text and image" presented challenges for participants, as well as for paradigms that would seek to search for "truth" or "authenticity" in data (Galman, 2009, p. 213). Here, the graphic novel as a multi-vocal text is emphasised, rather than the analytic steps to interpret the text. Glaw et al.'s (2017) study in autophotography, which also utilises photo elicitation, questionnaire data and written essays, provides eight detailed steps to coding photographs, including a consideration of "colour, image, shades, content, meaning, reasons why the photo was taken, and the differences between groups" (Glaw et al., 2017, p. 5). Themes were then counted and refined into a thematic analysis, that followed Shenton's (2004) strategies for "ensuring trustworthiness to demonstrate credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability" (Glaw et al., 2017, p. 5) In attempting to slot results into a post-positivist paradigm that seeks to underscore the replicability and generalisability of research, the consideration of visual and textual data systematically, and jointly together remains a hidden element. As has been shown visual methodologies have become increasingly prevalent in recent years, but these have been filtered through dominant paradigms that seek to "translate" images into words, to enable "objectivity" and generalisation, rather than space for the ambiguity and polysemy of visual imagery (Pink, 2013; Riessman, 2008).

The relationship of the textual to the visual is complex because text itself is both "the transcendent abstraction of disembodied language" as well as a material object (Jervis, 2018, p. 26). Furthermore, seemingly intangible visual images, when classified as data, risk being calcified into static objects, frozen in time. Consequently, the notion of the visual as capturing reality that underpins some approaches to visual methodology (Pink, 2013), is problematic. Regardless of whether images or objects are created by participants or researchers, seeing visual artefacts as a route to description and documentation assumes an unproblematic relation to between perception, composition and encapsulating that "reality." Indeed, the hand creating the art is not reducible to haptic perception, or indeed conscious or unconscious (artistic) intention more generally (Jervis, 2018). These complexities show that visual data does not give a direct record of "reality" (Becker, 1974). Examining textual and visual data together relationally provides "not a complete record of the research, but a set of different but interdependent strands of" (Pink, 2013, p. 144). In other words, rather than there being an equivalence between words and images, the two are interrelated, fundamentally complex and qualitatively different facets of data. With neither textuality or visuality reducible to the other, we need also to be aware that there will be elements of data that do not take shape, or indeed assimilate into the overall framework of data interpretation and conceptualisation that is built by the researcher. Instead, our focus is on levelling the importance of the visual and textual data and on exploring an artefact in relation to the textual transcript and vice versa. We propose a framework for how to examine the visual and the textual in conjunction with one another.

A New Framework: Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis

Having outlined the contextual background of and need for a new analytical framework, we are now turning to presenting the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis. The Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis provides guidance and support for researchers, who would like to use objects and artefacts alongside textual data.

The basic aim of the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis is to systematically connect visual and textual information and interpretation, whereby none of the modes of

communications are seen as superior to the other. Therefore, the interpretative and analytical process needs to account for both in equal measures. Consequently, it is the researcher's responsibility to account for the visual information, the textual information, and the visuo-textual information combined at an initial descriptive level as well as at the level of conceptualisation.

We describe this process as a weave between three elements and two levels. As we have shown, analysis is really a process that starts with noticing, goes on to focussing to then lead to conceptualising. At this stage, there are six different steps in this analytical process, in that two levels of analyses need to be combined with the three elements. Figure 3 outlines some key concerns and questions for each of the elements and levels:

Figure 3
Tabular Introduction to Levels and Elements of Interpretation Within the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis

	Element 1 **visual only**	**Element 2** **transcript only**	**Element 3** **visuo-textual combined**
Level 1 **noticing and describing**	artistic in visual work (use of perspective, colour, space, form, tone, light, composition)	linguistic in textual work (use of language, words, phrases, structure)	connecting the visual and the textual (structure, meanings, expressions)
Level 2 **conceptualising**	essential elements that unite artefacts	words/phrases that capture patterns/themes	connections between artefacts and themes

We have seen that irrespective of the detailed approach to qualitative analysis, typically there are certain steps researchers take in order to make sense of their data. Researchers start their analytical processes with identifying biases and noting overall impressions before reducing the data and coding it into relevant groups of themes or topics. Within those broad topics, they then search for patterns and interconnections in order to be able to map and build intricate themes, which enable them to build or verify theories and draw conclusions (O'Leary, n.d.). These features predominate in the above frameworks regardless of whether the data is visual or textual. However, with art works, interpretation, and initial attempts at description a focus on details of the object on hand, such as lines, shapes, colours, composition, materials, and subject matter. Once this descriptive stage has been completed, the viewer is asked to think and reflect on what they have seen to then make relevant connections (The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, n.d.). Rather than seeing this analytical process as a rigid framework to follow through step-by-step, we describe the process as a weave from one element and level to the next. The following Figure 4 is a visual representation of what such a weaving, iterative, and spiral analysis could look like, as the learnings and interpretations from one step are brought forward into the next:

Figure 4
Visual Representation of the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis

Despite there being six sections to cover according to Figure 3, the image in Figure 4 demonstrates, in effect, through iteration and revisiting, there are more sections and stages implicit. For example, after having undertaken Level 1 of visuo-textual combined analysis, the researcher will be required to revisit the textual only and visual only work to confirm, consider and reconsider the initial descriptive findings, before being able to move on to the conceptualisation level of analysis. Additionally, this process needs to be repeated for data from each individual participant in relation to the full data set from all participants.

The Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis in Practice

In the following we demonstrate how the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis can be applied. The data presented in this section draws on a research project that explored doctoral students' wellbeing and emotion work. The research project has been reported elsewhere (Brown & Collins, 2018; Collins & Brown, 2020), so suffice it to say here that the data collection and analysis applied within that project led to the formalisation of the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis, which Nicole first described in rudimentary foundations in previous work (Brown, 2018). The data set for this research consisted of LEGO® models, which the doctoral students built, and transcripts from Jo's interviews of the doctoral students.

The LEGO® model and the subsequent excerpt of the interview transcript presented in Figures 5 and 6 relate to Phueng (pseudonym), an international student of Thai origin:

Figure 5
Phueng's Lego® Model of the Ph.D. Journey

Figure 6
Excerpt of Interview with Phueng

> JC: So this was what you built in the workshop.
>
> P: I can't remember what I put. I think yeah I said that about a gift here I hope that it's going to be like really wonderful thing if I could finish my PhD and I think it's a long path to go and I remember saying that PhD is a lone path, I have to walk alone even though you have lots of people waiting, I mean lots of people on the way but it's your work so you know, you have to develop it by yourself. […] I did say something about like on the way there's going to be like obstacles, and how I should manage it, I don't know what's waiting but yeah.

Applying the weave between the visual, the textual, and the visuo-textual on both interpretative levels of noticing and describing as well as conceptualisation, we arrived at the following:

Figure 7
Application of Level 1 to the Case Study of Phueng's Model and Interview

	Element 1 visual only	Element 2 transcript only	Element 3 visuo-textual combined
Level 1 noticing and describing	Long, thin stretch with one person. Several figures, animals, and people at the beginning and near the stretch, but not on the stretch. There are bushes and trees near the stretch. There are two sections with height differences and the stretch ends with a present.	Lone path. Walk alone. Lots of people on the way, but by yourself. Obstacles and waiting. Intensive working. A wonderful thing to finish.	Path. Alone. Obstacles. Goal.

The following LEGO® model and subsequent interview extract (see Figures 8 and 9) are taken from the data relating to Angelo (pseudonym), who is an international student from Brazil:
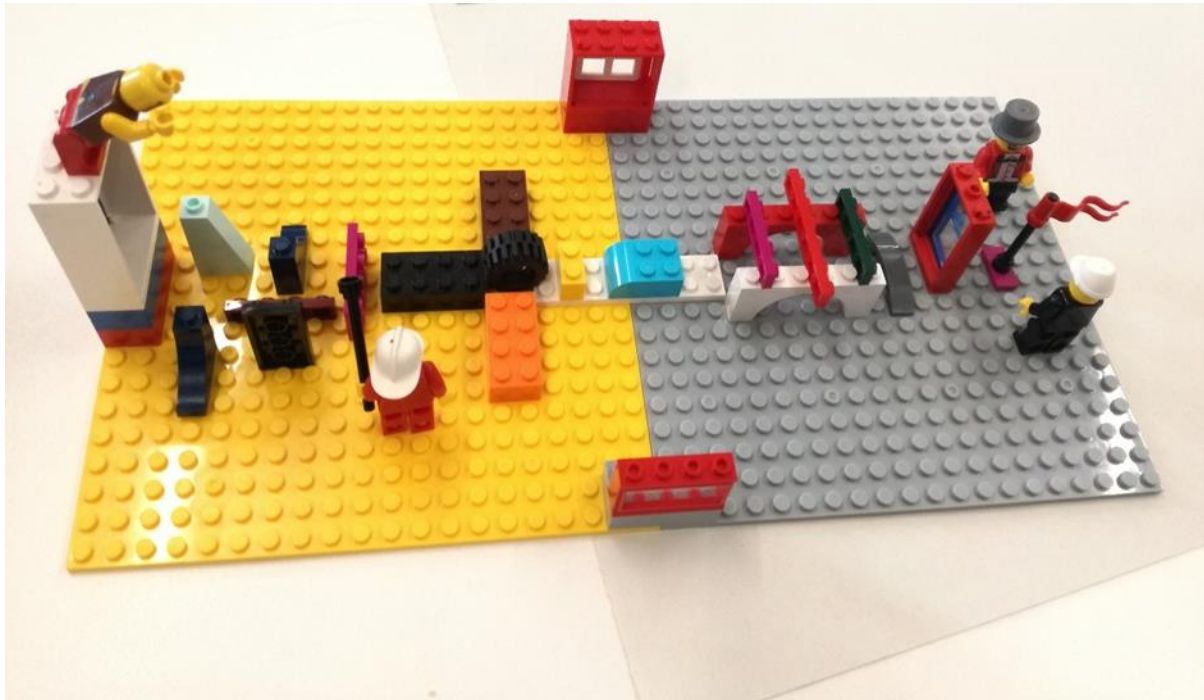
Figure 8
Angelo's Lego® Model of the Ph.D. Journey

Figure 9
Excerpt of Interview with Angelo

> A: It's lonely […] There are ups and downs. […] If the social stuff is good or bad it doesn't really make a big difference here. If you have a great support network obviously it's going to make your path easier but it's not you know the main thing. I would say it's like 10-20 percent.

Applying the weave between the visual, the textual, and the visuo-textual on both interpretative levels of noticing and describing as well as conceptualisation, we arrived at the following:

Figure 10
Application of Level 1 to the Case Study of Angelo's Model and Interview

	Element 1 visual only	Element 2 transcript only	Element 3 visuo-textual combined
Level 1 noticing and describing	Pieces of different heights. Figures facing in different directions to person on the journey. Doors and windows (closed) Flag as end point. Two separate bases of two colours.	Ph.D. path. Supervisors and "bad guys" encountered on Ph.D. journey. Ph.D.s are "ups and downs." "the guy who does his PhD 24 hours a day"	Path. Alone. Obstacles. Goal.

At this stage, the details developing from the Level 1 interpretations can slowly be moved forward to the Level 2 conceptualisation stage. Depending on the materials and media, as well as the complexity of the research focus, it may be that researchers need to move from noticing and describing to conceptualising with each individual artefact. In the case we present here, the links and the themes were so closely connected and straight forward, that we moved from individual Level 1 interpretations to a holistic Level 2, where the conceptualisation related to the aggregate of all artefacts (see Figure 11).

Figure 11
Application of Level 2 to the Case Study of Phueng's and Angelo's Models and Interviews

	Element 1 visual only essential elements that unite artefacts	Element 2 transcript only words/phrases that capture patterns/themes	Element 3 visuo-textual combined connections between artefacts and themes
Level 2 conceptualising	Stretch, path. People watching. Different obstacles, hurdles.	Ph.D. paths as individual, "lone". Internal narrative to constantly work.	Ph.D. as individual responsibility/duty also breeds an avoidance of a community which might provide support.

Once all the individual elements and both levels of interpretations have been combined, it becomes evident that there is a very coherent narrative of the doctoral journey being a lone endeavour, with difficulties that need to be overcome being reinforced by this isolation. The motivating factor in this journey is the ultimate achievement, the doctor title, at the end.

Critical Discussion and Reflection

We conceive the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis as a framework for how to do analysis rather than a philosophical or theoretical approach to making sense of data. This is not to say the framework is atheoretical, as it is bounded in the phenomenological, metaphorical, embodied understanding of human communication (Brown, 2019b). However, the framework does not require the application of a particular theoretical lens. Instead, the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis is a guide on how to systematically connect the visual with the textual. The actual interpretation of the data and development of conceptualisations or theories remain within the researcher's preferred or chosen theoretical frameworks.

In the above quoted example, the theoretical framework and philosophical lens applied throughout the analytical process were related to emotion work, emotional labour, and validation. Hence, we developed the themes of loneliness, difficulties, and the final goal. Had we decided to focus our research on gendered experiences within doctoral education and applied the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis from a critical feminist stance, the themes and findings would have been quite different.

With this premise then the researcher's "enormous interpretative control" (Riessman, 2008, p. 144) remains. Any framework that draws together the textual and the visual is therefore subject to the contingencies of the researcher's field, expertise, values; the context of data production (Rose, 2016), specifically the imbrication of data in particular practices or production and relationally to other kinds of productions and academic and scholarly practices through which knowledge is formulated and formalised (Pink, 2013). The Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis does not prescribe a particular interpretative lens but offers a guide for how to ensure that visual and textual data are accounted for within a project. For this accounting to be systematic there is one key element that must be considered and adhered to: iteration. In

many analytical frameworks and guidebooks there is an emphasis on an iterative, cyclical, or spiral approach to analysis, which enables researchers to delve deeper into the subject matter every time they work through their data sets. This is also the basic principle of the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis. The analytical process is iterative and dynamic in that it consistently weaves in and out of data sets, thereby linking the specific to the general, the idiographic to the nomothetic and the one mode of communication to the other.

Within the scope of this kind of work then, the researcher's attitude needs to be one of critical-reflexive openness. The critical-reflexive stance is needed to ensure that different, potentially opposing interpretations are not excluded within the analytical process due to one's own particular theoretical or philosophical outlook. Openness in this sense not only means to let those opposing interpretations occur but to accept the natural course the visual and textual data provide. Openness is a form of curiosity and the ability to follow what was not predicted or expected (Dahlberg et al., 2011). This open attitude is necessary within the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis because both data sets, visual and textual, are of equal importance, and because the different forms of communication may lead to differences, discrepancies, and contradictions. It is therefore the researcher's responsibility to make sense of and meaningfully connect the findings from the visual and textual data, thereby focussing on treating the two modes combined as one rather than as two individual modes.

As a consequence of this constant and consistent revisiting of data, the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis is certainly not for the faint-hearted, as it is a labour-intensive process. The danger with this framework therefore lies in the attempt to skip elements or levels to reduce the burden on the researcher. We argue that missing steps is indeed possible and would still make the analysis systematic but would reduce the quality of the analysis. This is probably best exemplified in the juxtaposition of a less robust weave (see Figure 12) against the original weave image (see Figure 4 above):

Figure 12:
Visual Representation of a Less Robust Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis, Due to Skipping Steps

As is evident in Figure 12, the weave leaves out elements, and thereby becomes less robust and strong, with the left-over thread ending up longer, too. In short, the best quality of the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis can only be guaranteed if all aspects are considered.

Throughout this article, we argue that within the context of the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis the visual and textual elements are to be considered of equal value. Yet, the name of the framework and the description of the elements suggest, we prioritise the visual over the textual. We would like to reiterate here we do not. If a researcher employs the framework starting out with the textual only as Element 1 before moving on to the visual, the framework is still intact and applicable. Similarly, the process may begin with considering all elements and both levels for each participant before finding the commonalities across data sets. We do not prescribe a particular way of working, we are merely suggesting that for the combined analysis to be systematic, all individual elements need to be considered.

Conclusion

Within the discourses of qualitative research, we can observe several important changes that have happened over the past two decades. Firstly, for a wide range of reasons, there is a clear trend towards creative methods as alternative or complementary approaches to traditional interview and observation studies. Secondly, there is a definitive recognition of the role of the researcher within the research process with the general narrative moving away from themes emerging towards an understanding of themes being constructed or created. However, despite these developments, researchers still hold on to and focus on the relevance of textual interpretations, often citing a lack of training regarding the interpretation of visual materials. Throughout this article we argue that the analysis of visual materials is not different from interpreting text and that therefore we merely need some guidance to make sure our work is systematic. The visuo-textual framework is premised on a more partial approach to knowledge construction, which enables richer apprehension of the interrelations of different ways of experiencing the world. As such it draws attention to the embodied nature of research, our bodily and emotional "emplacement" as researchers (Pink, 2015), and our "affective framing" (Maiese, 2011) in how we interpret the world. Knowledge is not formulated as a call to an objective retrievable truth, as whatever truth is, is itself constructed through different methods and disciplinary paradigms (Bridges, 1999). Instead, relationality is key, as the dataset does not simply have meaning through reference to itself, but also in light of available visual and textual resources in wider culture (Pink, 2013).

In this article, we presented the Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis drawing on our own research, and therefore exemplified the process of developing analytical conclusions in written form relating to our publications. However, in our research practices, we ourselves regularly experiment with visuals, form, shape, and media, and we have come to the conclusion that the analytical representation stemming from a Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis may well be a creative, arts-based output sitting alongside or instead of the conventional research report. This is because within the process of a Systematic Visuo-Textual Analysis not only is intertexuality important, so is "intervisuality" (Gleeson, 2011). What we hope to achieve with the framework is to enable researchers to gain confidence and trust in their analysis by formalising and systematising what may otherwise be conceived of an intuitive, messy process.

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