

The Self as Auteur:

An interpretative phenomenological
analysis of Self-reflective photography



Blind man with Rolleiflex © Rutherford 1993

The casual snapshots we make of those scenes to which our attention is intuitively attracted – but with which we have no personal connection – can sometimes present us with metaphorical picture postcards of our unconscious emotional terrain – or, like pictures of our own Dorian Gray, allegorical Self-portraits of the person we have become as a result of our efforts to navigate our way through it. This project explores this phenomenon.

A practice-led PhD

Rutherford
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Abstract

The Self as Auteur: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of *Self-reflective photographs*

In addition to our many snapshots of friends and family, holidays and special events, many of us also make photographs ...just because we liked the way something looked, often without considering why it attracted our attention. We might photograph two children playing in a park, an old house, or a bicycle lying on the grass – but we don't know those children, or the people who lived in that house, and that's not our bicycle.

While all of the details within our visual field are transmitted to the brain, we are conscious of only a small proportion of these, while others may be retained within the unconscious to serve as 'symbolic speech' in dreams (Krauss and Fryrear, 1983; Naumburg, 1958) as a way to express thoughts and emotions repressed from, or otherwise not accessible to conscious awareness (Gorman and Heller, 1964; Panagiotou and Sheikh, 1977; Williams, 2003).

This interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) project takes the position that when our attention is attracted to a scene with which we have no conscious connection, it may be because in the elements of the scene or in their juxtaposition, we intuitively recognised a symbolic description of an affective memory or belief to which our unconscious is trying to bring to our attention. These scenes might be allegorical descriptions of the way we perceive the world – or metaphorical Self-portraits of the person we have become in our efforts to navigate through it.

Like a flashbulb that briefly illuminates a dark street and reveals the goings-on in the shadows only when we see the resulting photographs, some of our photographs can bring to light the places within us we seldom see. This project investigates the ways in which we make sense of the insights found in our photographs of the scenes and tableaux to which our attention was intuitively attracted – and how we incorporate what we learn into our personal narratives.

This project serves as a capstone for my 40-year investigation into the practice of what I term *Self-reflective photography* which began with my *Shadow of the photographer* project in 1982.

If we are prepared to give up conscious, rational control over the composition of our photographs and allow our intuition to 'choose' the scenes, events and moments we record, we can sometimes find visual metaphors which describe those truths we 'know' – but which our conscious mind cannot or will not see (Rutherford, 2019 pp.233).

In this iteration, participants were offered a transformative lived experience in which they were supported in reflecting on insights into themselves or their situations, although some participants did not recognise (what appeared to be) potentially relevant symbols within their photographs.

The project's two main contributions to knowledge include:

- i. the 'phenomenological snapshots' of the participants' efforts to make meaning of the Self-reflective photographs they gave themselves permission to make, and
- ii. the delineation of the risks in overlooking the influence of the photographer's decisions on the content and appearance of photographs used in a photo therapeutic setting.

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Note to readers: many of the black & white photographs in this document have a rough black edge. This is the result of my practice of filing back the openings in my negative carriers (the plates which hold the negative in place in the enlarger). This permits the near-transparent area around the negative (the *rebate*) to expose the paper which then appears black in the final print. This practice demonstrates that the negative was not cropped in printing.



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Foreword

The topic caught my attention at once: the audacious notion that the photographs we take for our own amusement are messages about our deepest feelings. Rutherford, a brilliant photographer with the normal quota of demons and loneliness that steer most human behaviour, came to the discovery that he could understand himself if he looked, really looked, at what his camera had to show.

Rutherford's portfolio of insights is derived from the combination of a very good eye and instinct-driven impulse. He studies the pictures he takes of an empty road, or sunlight falling obliquely on a wall and applies what he calls "visual literacy", by which he means that he not only sees what he sees but he knows what he is seeing. His viewfinder finds his Jungian self from which comes seemingly spontaneous behaviour and those precious spurts of inexplicable, soul-deep peace.

The images he freezes on film are a code he has learned to read. He finds in his photographs the frozen fears he hides from himself, and unearthing them has helped him thaw.

He believes it is a trick anyone can learn. It is a good one.

June Callwood
Toronto, 1997

Journalist, author, broadcaster, social activist and humanitarian, [June Callwood \(1924 - 2007\)](#) was a Canadian living treasure. She wrote this foreword in 1997 for a book then in-progress.

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I Introduction

Almost everyone makes¹ photographs. While most of our photographs are made for reasons of which we are conscious (*This is the farm on which I lived as a teenager; This is our daughter posing as Buster Keaton, etc.*), some of us also make photographs of scenes and tableaux with which we have no personal connection, just because we liked the way something looked – often without pausing to consider why that scene had attracted our attention. For example, we might photograph children playing in a park, an old house, or a bicycle lying in the grass; but we don't know those children, or the people who lived in that house, and that's not our bicycle.

This study takes the position that, when our attention is attracted to a scene or tableau with which we have no conscious personal connection, this may be because, in the elements of the scene or the way in which they are juxtaposed, we have unconsciously recognised a visual metaphor for an affective memory or belief to which our mind wants to bring our attention.

This project is located in the space between photo therapies (which use photographs to identify and explore the emotional significance of scenes and events symbolised by or remembered through photographs) – and *l'automatisme* of Surrealism (which, like *automatic writing*, draws on the contents of the subconscious to create Art with a capital A). While sharing notions with both photo therapies and Surrealism, in its premise, its techniques, and its intentions, the practice of *Self-reflective photography* differs substantially from both. It differs from photo therapies by not beginning with the premise that there is a 'problem' to be treated or resolved, and it differs from Surrealism in that it does not set out to create Art.

A central challenge in this *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA) study was therefore to [bracket] the therapeutic bias in the literature. This bias is the result of the dominance of authors who see photographs through the prism of the assumptions of therapeutic practice. That:

- i. The reason to look at/interrogate someone's photographs is because there is a 'problem' or concern which warrants the intervention of a qualified therapist (Loewenthal, 2013 pp.9),
- ii. The therapist is an authoritative interpreter of the photographs ("the interpretation of images created for therapeutic purposes should be carried out by trained art therapists or licensed professionals" Stevens and Spears, 2009 pp.9), and
- iii. The theories and practices of photo therapy offer a reliable means to enhance patients' adjustment under the guidance of a trained health care professional (Saita & Tramontano, 2018, pp.9) and so bring about changes in human disorder(s) leading to favourable changes in personality (Dalley, 1984 pp.xi).

Less attention has therefore been paid to the use of photographs as a source of insight into minds not in distress. In taking this approach, this project borrows from Jung who distinguished his goal from that of Freud in attempting to avoid:

over-emphasizing the pathological aspect of life and for interpreting man too exclusively in the light of his defects [rather than a] healthy mind (Jung, 1933 pp.117).

This study was predicated on the following six axioms, developed inductively in forty years (1982-2024) of practice-based research. Their inter-relationship and implications for Self-awareness will be considered in the literature review and the sections on practice-led research.

¹ Throughout this text, photographs are described as 'made' rather than 'taken' for reasons explained in the essay [Rutherford, 2018](#). It is hoped that the reader does not find this to be excessively distracting.

Axioms on which the project is based

1. That a happy and fulfilling life requires the ability to make informed decisions – which in turn, require a degree of Self-awareness. This assumption is drawn from the researcher's commitment to the Socratic maxim that *the unexamined life is not worth living* (*The Apology of Socrates*, 38a) and its corollary: that the willingness to engage with the Self² can provide valuable insights and guidance from a source of significant and benevolent personal knowledge: one that knows us well – but which seems to like us anyway.
2. That our conception of – and our behaviour towards – ourselves and the world are both shaped and described by the 'mental pictures' within our imaginations.

What you see is who you are (Rorschach, cited by Fabrizio, 2018).

A person does what he does because he sees the world as he sees it (Korzybski, 1933).

3. That the reason our attention is sometimes attracted to scenes, events or tableaux with which we have no personal connection is because, in these, our unconscious may have recognised an allegorical depiction of something to which, with an intuitive 'tap on our shoulder', our unconscious is attempting to bring our attention (Rutherford et al., 2018).

If we notice something, it is because it has some kind of meaning for us (Weiser, 1999 pp.1).

4. That, while all forms of creative expression offer a means to establish a dialogue with our unconscious, with its ability to respond 'at the touch of a button' without the need for – or the interference of – conscious decisions, the camera offers us the means to record every salient particularity (Smith et.al., 2009 pp.14) of those scenes, juxtapositions and tableaux to which our attention may have been 'meaning-fully' intuitively attracted.

With a camera we can unconsciously select a specific moment in time when what we see through the camera, feels right, reflects and captures, through the visual metaphor, that which is stirring and resonating within us (Wolf, 2024 pp.120).

5. That, while we may be reluctant to acknowledge and confront the implications of certain insights when presented to us directly (because doing so may discomfort our sense of ourselves), the researcher's previous workshops have repeatedly demonstrated that, when presented to us allegorically, we are more likely to be able and willing to do so.

[D]efence mechanisms which may prevent the open expression of feelings can be challenged using photographs (Cronin, 1998 pp.63).

6. That, as a result of our repeated exposure to images – from famous paintings to professionally produced advertisements – many of us have internalised a set of assumptions about what constitutes a 'good' composition which will – unless we are very careful – exert a powerful influence over our decisions (what I term our 'compositional reflexes' Rutherford, 2014a) in the composition of images (Young and Wright, 1973). Further, the more experienced and culturally aware the photographer, the harder these may be to resist (or, as Picasso is said to have put it, to *unlearn their rules*).

This project also draws on the premise and practices of *l'automatisme* as employed by the Surrealists to produce irrationally conceived metaphoric images (Krauss, 1981 pp.7) as a means of externalising metaphoric reflections of practitioners' beliefs and assumptions.

² The word 'Self' is used in this project to refer to the holistic psychological entity (as distinct from the narrow portion of ourselves of which we are consciously aware) and so is capitalised as a proper noun.

Several of the researcher's previous projects have explored *l'automatisme* in the creation of photographs (Rutherford, 2002, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2018) and texts (Rutherford, 2019). The current project extends, and serves as a capstone for this research by considering the *Self* as the 'auteur' of a body of photographs and asks:



When the two most powerful influences over the content and appearance of our photographs (the conscious selection of the scenes or events to be recorded and the decisions made in the effort to produce pleasing images of these) are excluded and instead, the camera is put in the hands of the auteur within the unconscious mind (*entrusting to the hand to reveal what the head itself ignores*, Barthes, 1967) – how do we make sense of the resulting photographs – and what do we do with the sense we make?

A small group of participants were asked to *notice* when their attention was attracted to a scene with which they had no conscious personal connection – and to allow their intuition (defined by Jung [1959] as “perception via the unconscious”) to choose the scene, determine its elements, frame the image and choose the moment to press the button. This project gave the camera over to ‘the auteur within the unconscious mind’ and says: *Show us what you want us to consider*.

By creating the conditions in which a) the influence of their ‘compositional reflexes’ on the appearance of their photographs was significantly reduced and in which b) participants were prepared to consider (what appeared to be) an insight into their ‘orientations’, this study offered the possibility of a transformative lived experience and a means to establish an oneiric dialogue with a source of insight to which we do not normally have ready access.

Because the formation of the [photographic] image is naturally dependent and mechanical, it therefore bypasses the maker's cognition (Anscomb, 2017 pp.3).

This practice-led PhD research project attempted to identify, explore and explicate:

1. The challenges identified in using *Self-reflective photography* in pursuit of enhanced Self-awareness
2. The kinds of insights (if any) identified by participants using *Self-reflective photography*
3. How participants using *Self-reflective photography* ‘made sense of’ and/or integrated these insights into their life narratives.

This project investigates the ‘phenomenological snapshots’ of the participants’ efforts to make sense of the insights they encountered into their narratives about themselves and/or their situations as depicted in the photographs they gave themselves permission to make – and the researcher’s efforts to make sense of their sense-making (Finlay, 2014; Smith, 2009 pp.40).

In doing so, this project adds to the small body of knowledge exploring the use of photographs to enhance Self-awareness and understanding outside of a formal (or implied) therapeutic setting by adopting a perspective not dominated by the therapeutic discourse, its objectives and assumptions, but instead, to consider how individuals ‘made sense’ of their self-referential interpretations of their photographs – and how they integrated these into their life narratives.

II Background to the project

While working as a commercial photographer from 1982-93, I sought to pursue a parallel career as a fine art photographer. (I use the term ‘fine art’ to refer to works that encourage/enable the viewer to transcend his/her usual frame of reference and so **IMAGInE**³ the subject from a new perspective and are therefore esteemed for their imaginative, aesthetic or intellectual value.)

I reasoned that, to transcend my own usual frame of reference would require me to restrain the influence of the assumptions I had internalised during my undergraduate studies⁴ which shaped the way I thought of and practiced photography – assumptions which had then been reinforced by the art directors with whom I worked and who had probably contributed a few of their own. (*Okay, now, can you make it... I dunno... more ‘Renaissance-like’?*)

These assumptions included:

1. The kind of things considered to be ‘worth’ photographing and how they should appear,
2. The conception of a ‘good’ photograph (what it *is*, what it *has*, and what it *does*), and
3. The decisions made in pursuit of these ‘good’ photographs that determine the content and appearance of our photographs which are influenced by (among other factors), cultural biases as well as what I have elsewhere called ‘the rule of the tool’: the principle that our access to and proficiency in the use of certain tools or techniques encourages their use.

In this project, I refer to these assumptions and decisions as our ‘compositional reflexes’. To reduce their influence on my fine art projects, I resolved to allow my intuition (defined by Jung [1959] as “perception via the unconscious”) to determine:

- i. The scenes, events and tableaux to be photographed. These were selected on the basis of those which ‘reached up and tapped me on the shoulder’
- ii. The elements of the scene to be included and the framing or composition of the image
- iii. The moment at which I released the shutter based on when it ‘felt right’ to do so

I believed that by allowing my intuition to determine these would ensure a photomechanically accurate record of the scenes, events or tableaux to which my attention had been attracted – but one which was (largely) free of the influence of my ‘compositional reflexes’⁵.

One day in 1982, while ‘out and about’ with my Rolleiflex, my attention was drawn to the juxtaposition of the tree under which I was walking and a nearby high-rise apartment building. Without interrogating the reason my attention was attracted to this scene (which would have obliged me to change modes of thought, undermining my ability to draw on my intuition in composing the photograph), I opened the hood of my Rollei, set the lens to hyperfocal distance, and then swung and tilted the camera until the image in the ground glass ‘looked right’ – and released the shutter.



³ The typographical conceit **IMAGInE** reminds the reader that the root of the verb ‘to imagine’ is **IMAGE**.

⁴ The way a subject is taught shapes the conceptions of those who learn it (Rutherford & Cownie, 2020.)

⁵ Some compositional reflexes are harder to avoid than others. In an effort to further reduce their influence, after making the first few photographs, I decided that, when I felt this intuitive ‘tap on the shoulder’, I would not open the hood of my Rollei, but simply point the camera in the direction of the scene to which my attention had been attracted and allow ‘photomancy’ (my variation on *bibliomancy*, *cartomancy* or *automatic writing*) to determine the content and composition of the photograph.

The resulting photograph, *Building and Tree* (Figure 1), describes a large, dark and barren tree which appears to advance from (top) left to right across the frame towards a modern building.



Figure 1: *Building and Tree* © Rutherford 1982

It soon became apparent that there was something about the juxtaposition of the building and the tree that unsettled me. For weeks afterwards, I often found myself getting up from doing something else to go and look at it again. The master photographer Minor White suggests that the experience of “*remembering the image* [even when] *the photograph in question is not in sight*” is a common response to those photographs which “*arouse in him a special sense of correspondence to something that he knows about himself*” (White, 1963 pp.17). White referred to these instances as “Equivalences”.

In an effort to understand the hold this photograph had on my attention, I looked first to my training in visual art and the (western) conventions of representation and composition, and then to the sociological premise that photographs usually connote something *to* people *about* people (Rose, 2012), according to which, the referent of a photograph is always a social or human truth (Barthes, 1980) – but none of these theories adequately explained its hold on my attention.

Given its origins as the result of my *intuitive* rather than logical, rational choices – and aware that we consciously attend to only a portion of our visual environment (Boothe, 2006 pp.90) – it occurred to me that its hold on my imagination might be due to its symbolic significance rather than its artistic or aesthetic value. Considered instead as a fragment of a poem or a dream, the photograph depicts a dark organic form advancing menacingly from the left towards a logical and rational structure which appears to recoil in trepidation: a dark and unruly force of Nature threatening the bright, clean, linear and rational work of Man.

Reflecting on my associations with these notions, I intuited that the building at the right of the frame represented my rational ‘right thinking’ mind, while the tree advancing menacingly from the left represented the natural force of my ‘sinister’ unconscious. Reflecting on the relationship implied by the juxtaposition of the symbolic representation of the two, I recognised my rational mind’s fear of this ‘organic’ and unruly power I could neither understand nor control (inabilities attributable, I learned only many years later, to a form of autism) – and which, feeding on fears I had buried in the dungeon of my imagination, had long since grown to monstrous proportions.

In a remarkably similar photograph made a few days later using the same ‘intuitive’ selection of the scene and composition of the photograph, *la Femme Reculée* (Figure 2) describes a female figure superimposed on a building which – as in *Building and Tree* – recoils (*reculer*) from a dark and menacing form which – once again – advances from the top-left corner of the frame.



Figure 2: *La Femme Reculée* © Rutherford 1982

Interrogated in the same way, *la Femme Reculée* seemed to suggest (on the premise that, as in dreams, the protagonist represents an aspect of the dreamer – Rosen and Sutton, 2013 pp.1041) some aspect of my Self was, or felt itself to be, under attack from what it saw and described as a dark and hostile force, advancing once again from the ‘sinister’ left side of the frame.

As suggested by the similarity of the two compositions – and by the fact that the second photograph was made while I struggled to understand the first – it seemed that ‘that part of me which thinks in pictures’ was repeating the message – and was now offering a clue to its intention by superimposing a female human figure (as a symbol for my Anima⁶?) on the building.

In his book *Discover Your Self Through Photography*, Hattersley (1971) endorsed the idea – central to this project – that elements and juxtapositions intuitively included in our photographs can offer insights to enhance Self-knowledge.

An equally forbidding problem for most people is that they can't bring themselves to believe that any symbols at all are getting into their photographs. They see the contents of their pictures only as trees and buildings [and] nothing more (Hattersley, 1971 pp.151).

The Tree (and/or stands of trees) became a significant recurring motif in this series of photographs. In their various shapes and settings, they described my orientation to the non-rational lifeforce of my unconscious at the time the photograph was made.

⁶ Like Yin and Yang, the two opposites which, together, make a whole, the *Anima* is the (usually unacknowledged) feminine side of a man and the *Animus* the masculine side of a woman. Both are psychic images arising from archetypal structures and function within the unconscious and act as *Psychopompi*: guides of the soul with creative powers of expression (Samuels et al., 1986 pp.23).

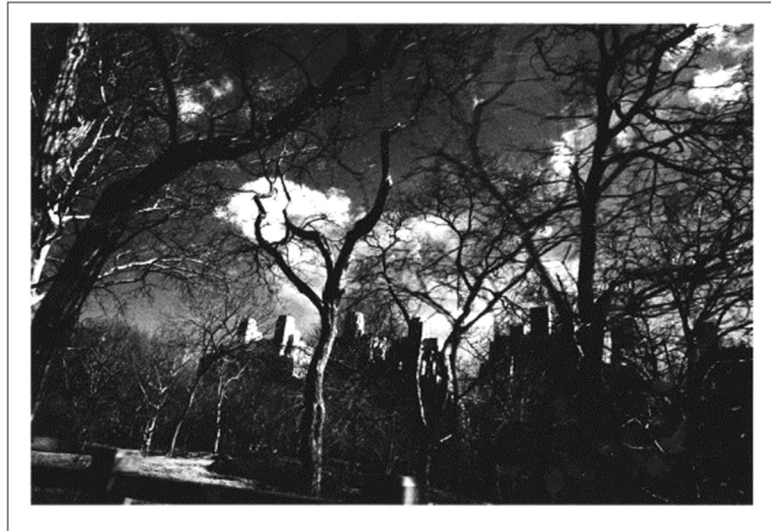


Figure 3: *Trees in Central Park, New York* © Rutherford 1980

Made two years before *Building and Tree*, *Trees in Central Park, New York* (Figure 3) depicts my unconscious as a menacing and impenetrable forest of thorns similar to that which surrounded the castle where Sleeping Beauty lay.

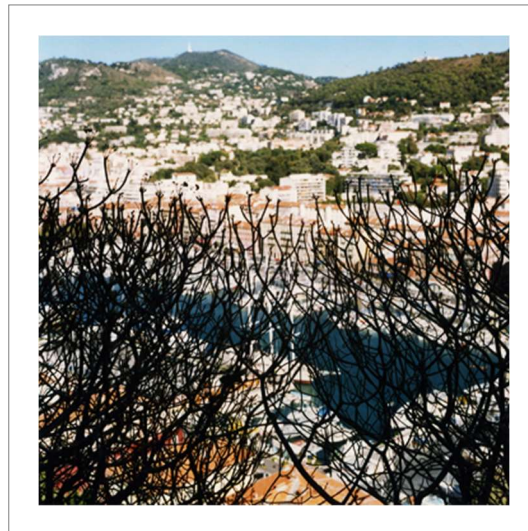


Figure 4: *All around the castle* © Rutherford 1997

17 years later, *All around the castle* (Figure 4) returns to the theme, but as a result of the dialogue that took place *through* these photographs and which is documented *in* them, I could see through the trees.

In my interpretation of these photographs – or, more accurately, in the meanings I ‘made’ of these – the insights I recognised offered more than just depictions of my shortcomings, but messages of hope and encouragement from a source that clearly knew me well – but seemed to like me anyway. This aligns with the findings of Dirx (1998) who observed that:

As we recognize, name, and work with the images which animate these aspects of our life, we move toward a deeper, more conscious connection with these aspects of our selves. We befriend that person or persons within our psyche (Dirx, 1998 unpaginated).



Figure 5: *Oubliette, Coucy* © Rutherford 1983

An oubliette was a hollow turret within the ramparts of medieval castles into which, through a trapdoor at the top, prisoners were cast to die and be forgotten (from the French *oublier*: 'to forget'). At the château of Coucy in Picardy, the wooden platform at the top had long since rotted away, affording me a view of the sky (Figure 5) as seen from (a symbol for) the dark dungeon in which I felt trapped.

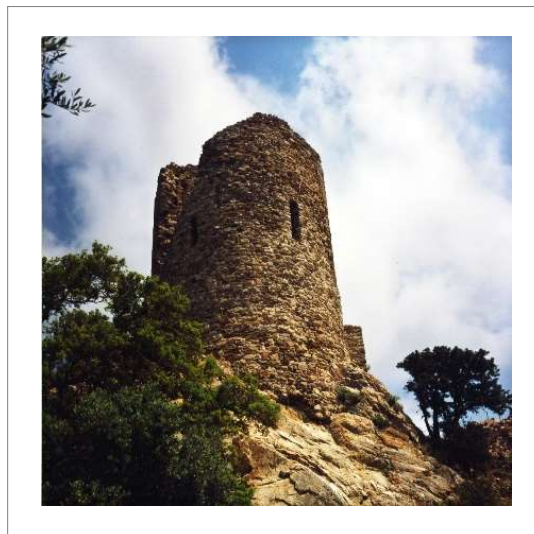


Figure 6: *La tour de Grimaud* © Rutherford 1998

15 years later, *La tour de Grimaud* (Figure 6) returns to the theme depicted in *Oubliette, Coucy*, but is now presented from the perspective of one liberated from the prison of the tower.

White explicitly credited the intervention of the cognisant source he called “Spirit” (and which I call the *Auteur*) for the insights he recognised in his photographs.

When I looked at things for what they are I was fool enough to persist in my folly and found that each photograph was a mirror of my Self (White, cited by Caponigro).

No matter how slow the film, Spirit always stands still long enough for the photographer It has chosen (White, 1969 pp.22).

Barthes (1980) introduced the notion of the *punctum*: the unintended or unexpected element, often unnoticed when the photograph was made, which ‘resonates’: (that *element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me* Barthes, 1980 pp.26). In this series of photographs, there were numerous instances in which such ‘puncta’ of ‘meaning-full’ and resonant details which were only later discovered within the frame (Figures 7, 8, 9) or alternatively, which ‘stood still long enough’ to be recorded (Figure 10).



Figure 7: *Montmartre* © Rutherford 1990



Figure 8: *Benediction* © Rutherford 1996



Figure 7a: *Montmartre* (detail)
© Rutherford 1990



Figure 8a: *Benediction* (detail)
© Rutherford 1996

Made halfway through the project, *Montmartre* (Figure 7) includes the figure of a photographer within a protective ring of trees (my symbol for the unconscious). Unnoticed in the original scene and so not included intentionally, I did not recognise what the figure was doing until I made the 10"x10" print.

In *Benediction* (Figure 8), a flight of birds creates an aureole around the heads of the two figures seated under the foliage of a healthy tree. The birds were both far too small to have been seen and were in motion at the moment at which the photograph was made; accordingly, they – and their serendipitous juxtaposition with the two human figures – could not have been included intentionally.



Figure 9: *The Spirit of Life as It walks among us largely unseen, blessing some and touching others*, Nice © Rutherford 1998

Due to the pace at which people walked past this 'living statue' on the *Promenade des Anglais*, I did not notice – and so could not have intentionally included – the 'meaning-full' juxtapositions between his hand gestures and the people passing by. It was only after collecting the print from the photolab that I recognised (what appeared to be) an image of *the Spirit of Life as It walks among us unseen, blessing some (left) and touching the minds of others (right)*. This presented me with a depiction of an aspect of my Self that (as per Heidegger's "something understood but still veiled", 1962), I had sensed – but had been unable to conceptualise until I saw it represented in this tableau.



Figure 10: *Nice wall #3 (hole & pipe)* © Rutherford 2002

Repair work on a local telephone exchange embedded in the wall of a building revealed a serendipitous alignment between the existing graffiti and the black polyethylene pipe containing the telephone wires which struck me as an apt symbol for an aspect of my Self that (as per Heidegger's "something understood but still veiled", 1962), I had sensed – but had been unable to conceptualise until I saw it represented in this tableau. For three weeks, I intended to photograph this, but repeatedly put off doing so. Consistent with White's adage that "*Spirit always stands still long enough for the photographer It has chosen*", the day after I made this photograph, workers filled in the hole.

At the beginning of (what became) *The Shadow of the photographer* project⁷, it was not my (conscious) intention to use photography to access, describe and engage with the contents of my unconscious, but to create a series of ‘fine art’ photographs to prompt and enable viewers to step outside their usual frame of reference. In attempting to devise a simple technique to restrain the influence of my ‘compositional reflexes’⁸, I inadvertently created the conditions for a quieter and more lyrical voice to be heard.

Craig (2009) endorses the capacity of photographs to:

promote self-expression, provide a vehicle for communication, and offer a means to structure thinking, to both support and record change. They provide a powerful tool for the processes of self-exploration and reflection that underpin personal growth (Craig, 2009 pp.14).

Engaging in this extraordinary dialogue and heeding the advice it appeared to offer – even when (or perhaps, especially when) its observations were ‘non-rational’ – changed everything. In learning to trust a voice whose source I did not understand, but whose knowledge and benevolence it would have been disingenuous to deny, I found the courage to face, to wrestle with – and eventually to embrace – the monsters under my bed.

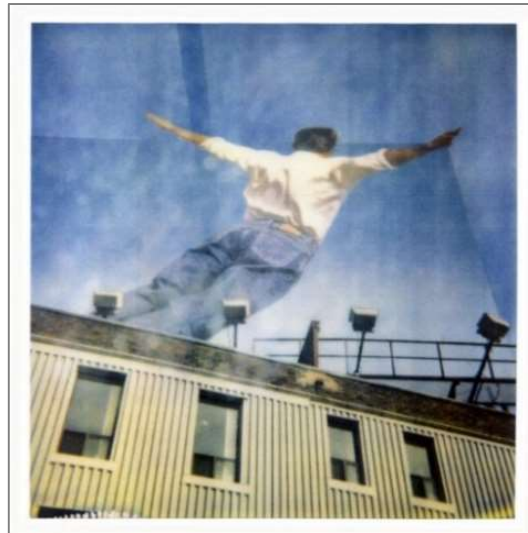


Figure 11: *First Flight* © Rutherford 1994

Celebratory and reverential, in *First Flight* (Figure 11), a figure who resembled me in both physique and dress leaps confidently (if perhaps naïvely and impetuously) off the top of a building (the symbol for my conscious, rational mind) and into the right (hemisphere?) of the Wild Blue Yonder.

⁷ <http://www.theshadowofthephotographer.co.uk/photographic-projects/the-shadow-of-the-photographer>

⁸ An alternative technique to reduce the influence of one’s compositional reflexes borrows from the Chinese idea of ‘passing from boredom into fascination’. When I taught photographic arts, I urged those who wanted to grapple seriously with the medium to choose a subject (chairs, clouds, broken things) and to photograph that – *and only that* – for six months. This will eventually burn away all such ‘compositional reflexes’ and confront the photographer with ‘*the thing as itself*’ but is a longer process.

III Literature Review

To provide a foundation for the critical interrogation of the premise and practice of intuitively made photographs to enhance Self-awareness, this chapter will explore the following notions:

1. That ‘meaning-making’ involves the combination and manipulation of images and symbols in the mind or imagination, and that these ‘mental pictures’ exert a powerful influence over how we see (IMAGiNE) ourselves and the world (Rorschach, cited by Fabrizio, 2018). This will be explored in *Mental images and conceptual thought*.
2. Throughout history, ‘supernatural’ sources of knowledge have been accessed and their messages conveyed in the mantic language of mytho-poetic images (Quispel, 1992). This will be explored in *The role of images in accessing divine knowledge and guidance*.
3. The creation of images is widely believed to give expression to non-rational forms of knowledge and insight to which the conscious mind does not have ready access (Jung, 1933). This will be explored in *The use of visual art to explore the unconscious*, and
4. The use of photographs in the exploration of the ideas, memories and emotional issues they evoke. This will be explored in the discussion of *Photo therapies, Photovoice, Photo elicitation* and *Auteur theory*.

Based on this foundation, this chapter will then introduce the researcher’s innovation of *Self-reflective photography*, its differences from the practices named above, and the ways in which this practice extends our understanding of the use of photographs to enhance Self-awareness.

1. Mental images, metaphors and their impact on conceptual thought

Like most mammals, our early humanoid ancestors relied primarily on their olfactory and auditory senses for vital information about the significance of phenomena in their environment. Then, between 6-4 million years ago, our ancestors rose up on two legs, significantly expanding the range over which they could detect the location of food and the presence of predators. Reinforced by its value in aiding our survival, sight gradually supplanted smell and hearing as our most valuable source of information about what is happening in our environment⁹. As a consequence, visual appearances became our primary way of knowing, not only what something ‘is’ (or, the category to which it belongs¹⁰) but what it *means* (connotes).

Ricoeur (1970) described the process of mentally manipulating visual images as the earliest form of human cognition. V. Gordon Childe, one of the most widely cited archaeologists of the 20th century, argued (1942) that thinking is mental operations with images (Childe, 1942 pp.13). Koestler (1964) argued that the combination and manipulation of images and symbols are both the precursor of conceptual thought (what Pylyshyn [1973] termed “prepositional” thought):

Thinking in pictures [also] dominates the manifestations of the unconscious — the dream, the hypnogogic half-dream, the psychotic's hallucinations, the artist's 'vision' (Koestler, 1964 pp.169).

⁹ While the hypothesis that the development of bipedalism was a response to our ancestors’ need to see over tall grass has been rejected (Wayman, 2012), it seems reasonable to infer that the dominance of our visual sense (Stokes and Biggs, 2015) was an indirect consequence of becoming bipedal.

¹⁰ Imagine that I hand you what appears to be a vanilla ice cream cone, but which turns out to be mashed potato. Until tasting it, you would have been fooled because we rely heavily on visual appearances to identify the ‘category’ to which we assume the thing belongs.



As Aristotle, Rorschach, Freud, Koestler and others have argued, ‘thinking in pictures’ is both the mechanism by which we attempt to ‘make sense of’ our experiences as well as the dominant mode by which we give expression to the contents of our unconscious mind. We not only respond more powerfully to images than to verbal language, but the unconscious also codifies our most significant beliefs in ‘mental pictures’ (Freud, 1973 pp.209). Internationally renowned neurologist Oliver Sacks has argued that the brain’s record of everything, including our experiences, is organised through mental images (Sacks, 1987 pp.148).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that, as expressions of our underlying conceptual and propositional structures, metaphors play a central role, not only in shaping our experiences but the ways we make sense of these, including “what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 pp.3). Gibbs argued that the human mind has a bred-in-the-bone impulse to think in allegorical ways which emerges from a fundamental human disposition (Gibbs, 2020 pp.14-17). Boulding (1956) argues that:

[A] person's behavior depends on their image of the world (Boulding, 1956).

Implicit in axiom #1 on which this study is predicated (that a fulfilling life demands a degree of Self-awareness) is the responsibility for identifying and considering critically the metaphors through which we make sense of and navigate our way in the world. Do we IMAGINE *Life* as ‘a path to be explored’, ‘a journey to be enjoyed’, ‘a ladder to be climbed’, or as ‘a competitive struggle against hostile forces to be won’? In this way, our metaphor for *Life* will not only determine our goals, but in our pursuit of the ‘evidence’ of their attainment, the life we will lead.

Watzlawick argued (1978) that our schematic representations or ‘mental pictures’ inform our understanding of our society and ourselves. It follows therefore that the person we have become is, in part, a response to the meanings we project onto what we see. The *Institute of General Semantics* summarised Korzybski’s position that “a person does what he does because he sees the world as he sees it” (Kodish, personal correspondence 2021). Or, as Rorschach put it:

What you see is who you are (Rorschach, cited by Fabrizio, 2018).

An illustration of this principle was provided in 2017 by a photograph (Figure 12) posted on the Facebook page of the Norwegian anti-immigrant group *Fedrelandet viktigst* (‘Fatherland first’) showing what they ‘saw’ as a busload of women in burqas, but which were empty bus seats.



Figure 12: From the Facebook page of the Norwegian anti-immigrant group *Fedrelandet viktigst* (‘Fatherland first’) 2017

The Local Norway, an English-language news site reported on 31 July 2017:

A user posted a photo of empty bus seats to the Facebook group Fedrelandet viktigst ('Fatherland first') with the question "what do people think about this?" They apparently thought they were seeing a bus full of burka-clad women and proof of the 'Islamification' of Norway. [...] One user wrote: "It looks really scary, should be banned. You can never know who is under there. Could be terrorists with weapons".

<https://www.thelocal.no/20170731/norwegian-anti-immigrant-facebook-groups-confuses-empty-bus-seats-with-terrorists/>

Accordingly, visual images such as dreams, artwork and photographs appear to speak to us directly through this primal, pre-verbal and often unconscious language (Wolf, 2024 pp.118). Although initially dismissive of the idea of 'little pictures, visible only to ourselves in an inner Cartesian theatre', in recent years, impressed by neuroscientific research suggesting that there are specific observable brain activities that may be imaging processes, the philosopher Daniel Dennett became more lenient towards the concept of mental imagery (O'Grady, 2024).

By externalising and reflecting on our associations with our mental images¹¹, we can begin to understand the way we see ourselves and our world. By giving us the ability to respond 'at the touch of a button' without the interference of conscious decisions, the camera offers us a means to record those scenes and juxtapositions in which we intuitively recognise 'the way we see things' as a first step in considering – and ultimately modifying – our orientations (Hall, 2010).

Of particular importance in the pursuit of Self-knowledge are those aspects of ourselves we hide from our conscious awareness. Jung referred to these aspects of ourselves as our 'Shadow' and suggested that they are liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness (Samuels et al., 1986 pp.138).



Figure 13: The Shadow of *Zennen Thomas* © Rutherford 2015

¹¹ In his study of mental imagery, Pylyshyn (1973) argues that the mental structures by which we 'know' that to which we do not have conscious access (and which is therefore prepositional in nature, rather than sensory or pictorial) are more accurately described as *symbols* than *images* (Pylyshyn, 1973 pp.1).

2. The role of images in accessing divine knowledge and guidance

The art and artefacts left by our pre-linguistic ancestors show that, since the dawn of human consciousness, we have revered the power of images. But despite our relatively recent escape from the magical world of dreams and superstitions, their legacy remains. Using the totemic power of skins and antler headdresses, the shamans of animist societies were seen to transform themselves into sacred animals and traverse the boundary between Earth-world and Spirit-world (Green, 2001). Two issues are relevant here: where we once conceived of the source of sacred knowledge and benevolent guidance as outside of ourselves, we now locate the source of such knowledge within the mind; and secondly, we have always drawn – and drawn on – images to bring the metaphysical knowledge and power of this sacred domain into the material world.



Figure 14: Mesolithic headdress or 'frontlet' made from the skull of a red deer, ca. 10,000 - 8000 BCE. Found at Star Carr, Yorkshire - British Museum



Figure 15: Member of Tokala Society of the Lakota Sioux Nation
<http://uwbodyadornment.pbworks.com/w/page/7147441/Lisa%20Simoneaux>

Although our earliest conception of such knowledge was as the gift of divine external forces, Freud and others led us to understand that such knowledge is both interior and intuitive. But whether IMAGIned to be external or internal, what has remained constant is that the knowledge and insights offered by what Dirkx calls the “message-bearer of the soul” and which I have termed ‘the auteur’ are expressed in the mantic language of ‘mytho-poetic images’ (Quispel, 1992; Dirkx, 1998; *The Gnostic Archive*). Jung agreed that there is a real correlation between unconscious and poetical thinking, since both deal in images (Demos, 1955 pp.82).

The approach taken in this project towards the insights offered by the auteur within the unconscious is informed by the work of C.G. Jung. Unlike the characterisation offered by Freud (for whom the unconscious was a repository of repressed fantasies and infantile desires), Jung considered the unconscious to be a rich source of wisdom and self-knowledge (Jung, 1933 pp.117). Jung not only endorsed the existence of this source of benevolent wisdom and guidance, but the use of creative expression (Osbeck and Held, 2014 pp.10) as a means to access it (Odorisio, 2015) by which it is possible to bring to light deep aspects of our inner life, including who we are and how we feel about our life experiences (Dirkx, 1998).

Transformation occurs when [we] begin to understand [our]selves and the world through mytho-poetic images (Mitchell et al. 2016 pp.99).

For Jung, the image is the sacred voice of the unconscious. By providing us with a mental canvas onto which we can project meaning, Jung argued that – as I discovered in my reactions to my photographs *Building and Tree* (Figure 1) and *la Femme Reculée* (Figure 2) – the images which resonate with us can prompt a dialogue with our unconscious through which we can transform our orientations towards ourselves and the world (Swan-Foster, 2018 pp.18).

3. The use of visual art to explore the unconscious

Reflecting the growing belief in the existence of an objective (positivist) external reality which could be measured and studied, the artists of the Renaissance developed tools and techniques (including the *camera obscura* and linear perspective) to accurately represent and celebrate the newfound (but God-given) human(ist) capacity to experience and appreciate the beauty of the natural world. Central to the human-centric view which arose in the Renaissance were the new artforms – the portrait and the novel – which were both the product of, as well as a valuable insight into, the creative abilities of the unique individual (Bailin, 2005).



Rejecting the increasingly mechanised world of the Industrial Revolution, the *Arts and Crafts* and the *Pre-Raphaelite* movements of the 19th century used art (and crafts) to return to (what was IMAGInED to be) the idealised relationship with the natural world of the Middle Ages. Consistent with this view, the new medium of photography was condemned as inherently inartistic because of its mechanical and chemical nature (Stemberger, 1997 pp.1). Ruskin dismissed the camera as an illegitimate medium of artistic expression (Rager, 2012 pp.322).

In reaction to the launch of the *Daguerreotype* at the *Académie des Sciences* in January 1839, painter Paul Delaroche is reported to have claimed that, ‘*From today, painting is dead*’ (Bann, 2014). Even if, as is widely assumed, Delaroche’s *crie de cœur* was apocryphal, the sentiment reflected the widely-shared contempt for photography which was believed to require neither rigorous training nor artistic sensitivity (Goldberg, 1981 pp.20). *Where*, Delaroche and his contemporaries might have asked, *is the dial for inspiration?*

Of course, photography did not kill painting, but instead liberated painters (even if against their will) from the discourses which held Art captive to the demand for realistic, and often idealistic, depictions of (the human perception of) the natural world. As a result, painters began to explore new ideas about what art (and painting) was ‘for’ and to consider a wider range of possible subjects (Rutherford, 2014b). This aligns with the importance of not confusing or conflating the elements within the frame with ‘the Subject’ – what the painting (or the photograph) is ‘about’. The painter Jasper Johns argued that ‘the painting is not about the elements’ (Hamlin, 2012)¹², and, discussing Monet’s *Water Lilies*, Fresia (2020, unpaginated) asserts:

The painting is not about water lilies. They are the prompt. It’s about the feelings that Monet newly realizes as he stands before nature in what he called a posture of ‘total self-surrender’ (Fresia, 2020).

Liberated from the requirement to represent nature in accordance with human perceptions, the ‘Subject’ of painting, sculpture and other visual Artforms thus began to shift away from realistic depictions and towards subjective ‘impressions’: imagery that drew on fantasy, dreams, and individual expression [...] of one’s particular consciousness (Gilmore, 2004 pp.294).

This re-imagining of both the Subject and the Purpose of art (Hibbitt, 2020) led some artists to return to the prehistoric use of visual representation in pursuit of sacred or esoteric knowledge. The *Impressionists*, the *Fauvists*, the *Cubists*, the *Surrealists* and others began to collect and produce images (Figures 17 and 18) whose forms resembled the artefacts (Figure 16) of the innocent and ‘unspoilt’ tribal societies they esteemed (van der Grijp, 2013 pp.133-135).

¹² In previous publications (Rutherford, 2018), I have argued that ‘the thing/s in front of the lens’ (the elements in the photograph) should not be confused with the Subject of the photograph (what the photograph is ‘about’).



Figure 16: *Venus of Willendorf*, Paleolithic (circa 28,000–25,000 BCE) found in Austria in 1908



Figure 17: *les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. version O)* Picasso 1907



Figure 18: *Woman's head*, Modigliani 1912

Returned to its ancient role, visual art once again provided a means to explore and express the non-rational – and to bring the insights from this ‘way of knowing’ into the external world.

At the same time, in the struggle for artistic legitimacy against the criticism that the camera produced ‘mere’ mechanical copies, early photographic masters such as Steichen, Stieglitz and Strand demonstrated that, rather than being a liability, the photo-mechanical nature of photography which records details without the need for – or the interference of – conscious decisions was in fact the source of its aesthetic value (Rutherford, 2014a; Rutherford, 2014b).

Prompted in part by the whimsical disregard for tradition fostered by *Dadaism* a decade earlier (Voorhies, 2004), *Surrealism* was also influenced by the theories and dream studies of Freud and his exploration of the unconscious (Nadeau, 1965). Inspired by free association and the rejection of control exercised by reason (Hibbitt, 2020), the Surrealists sought truth – not ‘out there’ in the world, but ‘in here’ – in their intuitive and symbolic responses to their experiences.

Although initially a literary movement, with its ability to tap into the creative powers of the unconscious, painters (Picasso, Duchamp, Ernst, Dalí, Miró, Magritte) and then photographers (Man Ray, Brassai, Halsman, Kertész and others) came to occupy a central role in the Surrealist movement through their use of the medium to explore an uninhibited mind (Voorhies, 2004) and evoke the union of dreams and reality in the pursuit of Surrealist objectives.

Taking from Freud the conviction that the unconscious can express itself only when conscious decision-making is suppressed (Hibbitt, 2020), Surrealists devised the practice of *l'automatisme corporel* (automatic writing or ‘automatism’) as a means to bypass the logical, critical faculties of the Left hemisphere and explore the contents of the unconscious by providing it with an unmediated means of expression via the visually literate Right hemisphere, hypothesized to be the source of insight (Fiore and Schooler, 1998). The *Expressionist* and *Surrealist* movements thus set the stage for the therapeutic use of art (Provencal and Gabora, 2007).

Jung endorsed both the principle and the objective of *Surrealism* whose adherents sought to deliberately force the unconscious to reveal itself by creating work that originates independently from the artist’s conscious intentions. Jung approvingly described *Surrealism* as an effort to “turn the beholder’s eyes away from the intelligible and enjoyable world of the senses and enforce a revelation of the unconscious” (van den Berk, 2012 pp.121).

Figure 19: *Dali Antomicus* © Philippe Halsman 1948Figure 20: *The Eternal Eye* © Grete Stern c.1950

Halsman's surrealist 'trick' exploits and subverts our faith in the objective 'truth' of photographs by allowing us to 'see through' his construction. Working with several assistants outside the frame, Halsman constructed a scene (Figure 19) that was both 'real' and surreal (Rutherford, 2014b pp.22).

Working for *Idilio*, an Argentinian magazine which encouraged readers to submit their dreams to be analysed by experts as an aid for readers to find self-knowledge and self-aid, Stern was commissioned to illustrate these dreams (Figure 20) using surrealist photomontage (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg)

3.i. Art therapy

First defined and developed as a distinct discipline in the 1940s, Art therapy is the therapeutic use of creative or plastic arts as a means for the client to facilitate self-expression and self-exploration by externalising feelings, memories and emotions which may not be readily accessible to conscious interrogation.

As defined by the American Art Therapy Association (June 2017):

Art Therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art Therapy [...] engages the mind, body, and spirit in ways that are distinct from verbal articulation alone [and] which can circumvent the limitations of language. Visual and symbolic expression gives voice to experience, and empowers individual, communal, and societal transformation. (<https://arttherapy.org/about-art-therapy/>)

Naumburg (1950) explains:

[I]n emphasizing the projection of the patient's inner experience into outward image, [art therapy follows] the universal process of communication validated by the unconscious projections of man throughout his existence; for always, in all aspects of ritual, dream, and artistic expression man continues to speak in nonverbal symbols that are more universal than words. (Naumburg, 1950 pp.35)

Jung's ideas were integral to the development of art therapy (Swan-Foster, 2018 pp.17). His most significant contribution to the field of art therapy was the concept of the *active imagination* which he described as a practice of introspection that allows – indeed, encourages – the capacity to engage with the images that arise from (or, in the case of scenes, events and tableaux 'out there' in the world around us, those that resonate with) the unconscious.

(The chapter **VII Research design** will explain how Jung's concept of the active imagination as well as Swan-Foster's (2018) application of the concept by urging practitioners not to 'grasp the image too tightly' was applied to the photographs made for this project.)

The use of art for therapeutic purposes developed in different directions in the UK and the US as a result of the different perspectives of its leading proponents in the two countries.

In the UK, Edward Adamson and Cunningham Dax – proponents of non-interventionist art therapy (Hogan, 2000 pp.268) – believed that the therapeutic value of art was *in the act of making* and encouraged patients in mental hospitals to create freely for the purpose of self-expression without comment, judgment or interpretation by clinicians (arttherapyjournal.org). Adamson disapproved of psychological interpretation, which he considered the therapist's projections of their own beliefs onto the work (O'Flynn, 2011 pp.53) and so argued that the work should be interpreted by the person who had made the image (Hogan, 2000 pp.268).

Adamson's and Dax's opposition to the primacy given to the clinician's interpretation aligns with the position taken in this project: that the bounded arena of shared expectations imposed by the therapeutic discourse limits or even determines the range of interpretations of the images produced (Sekula, 1982 pp.84). For Adamson and Dax, what mattered was the creativity afforded by the creation of images, and their interpretation by the patient (Hogan, 2000 pp.268).

In the US by contrast, art therapy pioneers psychologist Margaret Naumburg and artist Edith Kramer adapted Jung's view that, in creating art, patients might be able to rediscover hidden parts of themselves (Storr, 1989 pp.xi), and therefore the primary therapeutic value of the art created by clients is its encoded expression of the contents of their unconscious – the interpretation and analysis of which requires a qualified therapist (arttherapyjournal.org).

While some art therapists argue that the therapeutic value of art-making is in 'getting things out in the open' which can lead to a deeper understanding – for others, the client's art is 'symbolic speech' which is considered to be especially valuable when clients are reluctant or unable to describe their thinking processes openly, and so provides a means for the client's unconscious to communicate with the therapist (Case and Dalley, 2014 pp.1) over the head of the client (Storr, 1989 pp.xii).

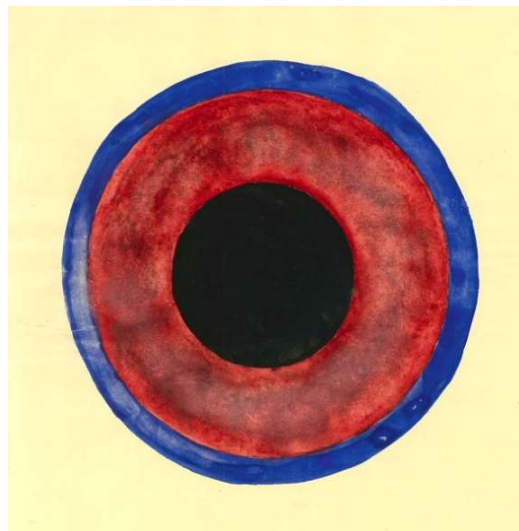


Figure 21: Client's symbolic Self-portrait in circles

The thin, blue outer layer represents a polished façade of culture and learning masking layers of anger and rage fed by fears and anxieties and a core of shame I dared not confront. (Client's interpretation)

Art therapist, psychologist and curator of the archive of the artwork produced by the patients of C.G. Jung, Edwards (1989) suggests that the differences between these views can be traced back to the differences between Classical and Romantic schools of thought: the ‘rational’ belief that a person’s state of mind could be inferred from a picture – versus the belief in the value of a subjective, inner experience and the natural healing capabilities of art.

Roger Sperry, Professor of Psychobiology at the California Institute of Technology and a leading researcher into the functional differences between the two hemispheres, writes:

There appear to be two modes of thinking, verbal and nonverbal, represented rather separately in [the] left and right hemispheres, respectively, and that our educational system, as well as science in general, tends to neglect the nonverbal form of intellect. What it comes down to is that modern society discriminates against the right hemisphere (Sperry, 1973 pp.209).

This discrimination reflects the West’s longstanding bias against the left. The English word ‘Right’ derives from the Anglo-Saxon *riht* meaning ‘straight’ or ‘just’; the word ‘Left’ derives from *lyft*, meaning ‘weak’ and ‘worthless’. This bias is also seen in ‘the right way’, *adroit* (from French) and *dexterity* (from Latin). The prejudice against the Left is reflected in the pejorative connotation of left-handed, as well as *gauche* (from French), and *sinister* (from Latin).

(This ‘discrimination against the right hemisphere’ and its way of knowing by our modern educational system identified by Sperry is briefly addressed in the chapter **VIII Findings and discussion** as a possible contributing factor in the difficulties experienced by participants in articulating the insights they recognised in their photographs to their own satisfaction.)

In her text exploring the complimentary functions of the two hemispheres of the brain *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, Edwards (1979) endorsed the position of Adamson and Dax of the UK art therapy tradition that, when interpreted by the creator of the image, works of visual art can offer valuable insights not readily accessible to the logical mind – but to which it can then bring its analytical powers, arguing that:

A drawing can let you see how you feel. Put another way, the right [hemisphere of the] brain, by means of a drawing, can show the left brain what the trouble is. The left brain [can then] use its own powerful skills – language and logical thought – to solve the problem. (Edwards, 1979 pp.67)

As each hemisphere of the brain controls the opposite side of the body, in order to exploit the creative and intuitive capabilities of the Right hemisphere, I encouraged participants to oblige themselves to use their left eye when making their photographs for this project.



Figure 22: 8/04/2019
ISO 1200 Magazine

3.ii. A brief digression: Tereska draws circles

In 1948, photographer David Seymour (known as *Chim* – pronounced *shim* – a colleague of Cartier-Bresson and Capa and a co-founder of *Magnum Photos*) travelled through post-war Europe to document the condition of children.

In the spring of 1948, Chim was sent by UNICEF as a special correspondent to report on children in five European countries. 13 million children of Europe had survived World War II. They were homeless and orphans, many of them physically wounded as well as mentally traumatized. (Naggar, 2017)

While in his home country of Poland, Chim photographed children in one of the few buildings still standing in war-ravaged Warsaw and which was then being used as a special-needs institute for traumatised children. Chim photographed a young girl, named Tereska, aged seven or eight years old, standing in front of a blackboard (Figure 23). As recorded in Chim’s contact sheets, the teacher’s assignment had been “*To just dom*” – ‘This is home’ (Naggar, 2017).



Figure 23: *Tereska is asked to 'draw Home', Warsaw*
© David 'Chim' Seymour 1948 Magnum Photos

First published in LIFE magazine (December 27, 1948), the original caption read in part:

Children's wounds are not all outward. Those made in the mind by years of sorrow will take years to heal. In Warsaw, at an institute which cares for some of Europe's thousands of "disturbed" children, a Polish girl named Tereska was asked to make a picture of her home. These terrible scratches are what she drew. (Theophanidis, 2013)

When reproduced in the *UNESCO Courier* in February of 1949, Chim's photograph of Tereska was accompanied by the following explanatory note:

[When] asked to draw her house and family, she produced this representation of her confused mind — wavering chicken-track lines crisscrossing each other. What is it that she sees when the teachers say "draw a house"? Is it the memory of terror and the fact of ruins? Are not chicken-track lines of this little child's drawing but the reflection of an uprooted life, the mirror of disorder and chaos which the war has strewn over Europe? (Theophanidis, 2013)

Chim's photograph has subsequently been featured on the cover of books on fear, trauma, and the Holocaust. A web post *What happened to the girl who grew up in Nazi concentration camp and drew some bizarre lines as home?*¹³ summarises the widely held beliefs that:

Terezka's experiences whilst growing up in a concentration camp had such an effect on her that the scribbles she's drawn are her depiction of 'home'. It isn't known what concentration camp she grew up in; it's assumed it was Auschwitz. It isn't even known if she was Polish, a Christian or of the Jewish faith, The latter is assumed (Quora 2016)¹⁴

¹³ <https://www.quora.com/What-happened-to-the-girl-who-grew-up-in-Nazi-concentration-camp-and-drew-some-bizarre-lines-as-home>

¹⁴ Subsequent research (by Patryk Grazewicz, Aneta Wawrzynczak, Carole Naggar and Matthew Murphy) revealed that Terezka had not been persecuted as a Jew but had come from a Catholic family. This does not however, mean that she did not experience trauma. During the occupation of Warsaw, her father was violently beaten by the Gestapo, her home was destroyed, her grandmother was shot by pro-German Ukrainian soldiers, and Tereska was struck by shrapnel that left her brain damaged. After the war, four-year-old Tereska and her 14-year-old sister walked 60km barefoot without food (Naggar, 2017). We can only hope that, in drawing her circles, Terezka found help in processing her trauma.

Chim's photograph may also have been significant for those who had lived through the War and the Shoah. Terezka's drawing as recorded in Chim's photograph may have provided a form of art therapy-by-proxy for an audience that needed a way to externalise and reflect on the trauma they had so recently endured. In Terezka's circles, this audience may have found a poignant symbolic representation of both the anguish suffered by countless children – and the reassurance that Terezka (and, it is hoped, the thousands of other traumatised children) received therapeutic treatment. It may be too that, by giving him a way to put his reactions to what he had seen into visual form, his photograph may also have had therapeutic value for Chim.

In September 1948, Chim arrived in Poland, his native country and the last he visited on his mission (after Italy, Greece, Austria and Hungary). He had found out that his parents and most of his family had been killed by the Nazis. After traveling to Otwock, 25 miles from the capital, where he summered as a child, he went back to Warsaw where he photographed the ruins of the Jewish ghetto and children [...] the only building that had not been razed during the Warsaw bombings. (Naggar, 2017)

Following his traumatic experiences in the Pacific theatre of WWII, photographer W. Eugene Smith (later famous for his remarkable photographs of the victims of mercury poisoning at *Minamata* in Japan) overcame a profound spiritual crisis thanks to an insight he recognised in the first photograph he made in two years. The text accompanying an exhibition of his work describes the circumstances leading to Smith's *The Walk to Paradise Garden* (Figure 24):

Wounded in the face and hand by mortar fragments on Okinawa, Smith returned to the United States in 1944 in a spiritual crisis. Two years and 30 operations later, he was still not sure he'd be able to use a camera again. "The day I again tried for the first time to make a photograph, I could barely load the roll of film into the camera. Yet I was determined that the first photograph would be a contrast to the war photographs and that it would speak an affirmation of life."



Figure 24: *The Walk to Paradise Garden* © W. Eugene Smith 1946

[A]s he watched his children ahead of him he "became acutely sensitive to the lines forming the scene and to the bright shower of light pouring into the opening and spilling down the path". Smith described the moment of epiphany that came with taking the image, "I suddenly realised that at this moment, in spite of everything, in spite of all the wars... I wanted to sing a sonnet to life and to find the courage to go on living it. (Huxley-Parlour, 2020) ¹⁵

¹⁵ The reader may note the visual and thematic similarities between Smith's *The Walk to Paradise Garden* (Figure 24) and my photograph *Oubliette, Coucy* (Figure 5) in that both were described by their creators as the first sign that a hopeful future was possible (a 'light at the end of the tunnel').

3.iii. Intuition

The concept of guidance from one's intuition can be traced back to the daimonion (δαίμόνιον) of Socrates which he described as an entity that infallibly warned him against doing something wrong or harmful to himself, but whose promptings had no logical basis (Uebersax, 2019). The goal of realising our full potential to which the soul drives us can be traced back to Aristotle's doctrine of *entelechy* (εντελεχεια). These two notions: the goal of realising our full potential and the trustworthy but non-rational source of guidance which aids in its achievement have been features of numerous religions, philosophies and spiritual practices (Friedman, 1976 pp.5).

Intuition has been defined as:

- “Perception via the unconscious” (Jung, 1959 [504])
- “An involuntary, difficult-to-articulate, affect-laden recognition or judgement, arrived at rapidly, through holistic associations without deliberative or conscious rational thought” (Sadler-Smith, 2008 pp.31)
- “The ability to understand immediately without conscious reasoning” (McCrea, 2010 pp.1)

Glöckner and Witteman (2010) describe intuition as based on automatic processes that rely on knowledge structures which operate at least partially without people's awareness and result in feelings, signals, or interpretations. In their comparison and interrogation of four overlapping categories of intuition, they describe *Constructive intuition* as ‘a way of knowing’ which:

are completely unconscious and only the result enters awareness. [...] We feel that we should choose this option without knowing why (Glöckner and Witteman, 2010 pp.11-12).

Almeida et al. (2013) established that the human brain allows emotionally significant stimuli to be processed rapidly and below the level of conscious awareness. In 2015, Lufityanto et al. tested participants' ability to utilise information of which participants were non-conscious in making conscious decisions. Their findings provided evidence that something resembling the general description of intuition does indeed exist (Lufityanto et al, 2016 pp.12). Further, they found that both the accuracy of decisions based on intuition as well as participants' confidence in their ability to use their intuition can be improved with time and practice.

The type of intuition relevant to this study is that which enables participants to ‘recognise’ those scenes and tableaux which, due to the nature and arrangement (juxtaposition) of their visual elements, serve as symbolic or allegorical representations of personally relevant issues to which, with an intuitive ‘tap on the shoulder’, our unconscious may be attempting to bring to our attention.



4. Photo therapies

The term *photo therapy* refers to two very different practices:

The use of certain wavelengths of light in the treatment of physical or mental illness, and

The use of photographs (and the ideas and memories they evoke) in the exploration of emotional and/or psychological issues.

In this project, the term *photo therapy* will be used in the second sense.

The use of photography as a means to Self-knowledge includes two distinct practices: *photo therapy*: the use of photography by trained professionals in their clinical work, and *therapeutic photography* in which individuals make and then reflect on the potential significance of their photographs for their own personal growth without the help of a therapist (Wolf, 2024 pp.118).

Based on their comprehensive review of the literature, Saita and Tramontano define photo therapy as the use of photography and personal snapshots during therapy (Saita and Tramontano, 2018 pp.2) in which, under the guidance of a trained therapist:

the use of photography or photographic materials [can] reduce or relieve painful psychological symptoms and facilitate psychological growth and therapeutic change (Stewart, 1979 pp.42).

While photo therapy is not the focus of this project, as it uses photographs to facilitate Self-awareness and personal growth, a critical review of its literature, principles, practices and guiding assumptions provide a useful theoretical foundation. The practice of photo therapy and its supporting literature are based on the central claims that:

With a camera we can unconsciously select a specific moment in time when what we see through the camera, feels right, reflects and captures, through the visual metaphor, that which is stirring and resonating within us (Wolf, 2024 pp.120).

Photographs are [...] private communications to and from the self (Weiser, 1999 pp.10).

Photographs make the internal Self observable (Stevens and Spears, 2009 pp.6)

Photographs can be seen as a route to an unconscious (Loewenthal, 2011 pp.9)

Photography enables the unconscious to express itself in a non-verbal manner (Halkola, 2009 pp.24)

Photo therapy is divided into three widely accepted practices known by the terms established by Weiser (Weiser, 2015; Saita and Tramontano, 2018):

PhotoTherapy (written with no space between the capitalised words): a therapist-directed process using photographs which document and describe the client's familial and social relations as a means to explore and interrogate the client's memories and feelings,

Photo-art Therapy: a therapist-directed form of art therapy in which the client creates and/or modifies photographs as a way to externalise impressions, emotions and memories, the interrogation of which is guided by a trained and qualified therapist, and

Therapeutic photography: the use of photography by individuals for their own personal growth and self-exploration outside of a formal therapeutic setting (Wolf, 2024 pp.118).

4.i. PhotoTherapy

Judy Weiser, Founder and Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre describes herself as “the world authority on the techniques of PhotoTherapy, Therapeutic Photography, Photo-Art-Therapy, VideoTherapy and related techniques” (<https://phototherapy-centre.com/>). Weiser defines *PhotoTherapy* as a set of techniques for qualified therapists (Weiser, 1999 pp.xv) which use:

personal snapshots, family albums, and pictures taken by others [...] as catalysts to deepen insight and enhance communication during therapy or counselling sessions conducted by trained mental health professionals. <https://phototherapy-centre.com/phototherapy-techniques/>

The types of photographs used in *PhotoTherapy* include:

Photographs *of the client made* (taken) *by others* which are interrogated for clues to the orientations and interpersonal relationships they record or symbolically depict

Photographs *made* (taken) *by the client* (distinct from those made as part of a Self-directed *Therapeutic photography* project to be discussed later)

Photographs selected or 'curated' from newspapers, magazines and other sources because of the issues they evoke (Malchiodi, 2012 pp.32)

Photographs (made by the client or others) that have been *modified by the client*

Photographs of the client made by others

Photographs of the client made by others may reveal unconscious and deeply-buried memories, thoughts and feelings (Weiser, 1999 pp.xiii) in symbolic communication such as nonverbal behaviours (facial expressions and body language) documented in the photographs.



Figure 25: *Boy threatens to 'Fill the lot of you full of lead', Christmas in Willowdale 1966*

A family snapshot which the young boy – later grown to an angry young man – saw as documentary ‘proof’ of his long-standing hostility towards his family. Might his belief (especially if endorsed by the family) be the product of a shared interpretation based on what the photograph appears to depict? (This issue is discussed on page 29)



Figure 26: *Ten cousins at Greenwood, 1966*

Grandmother bitterly resented my decision to search for my biological family and, following my reunion with my birth mother, accused me of “betraying the family”. When she died, her eulogy and obituary (both of which she had dictated) read “Lucy is survived by nine grandchildren”. A photograph made at a family gathering in 1966 (Figure 26) shows ten of us. Who was I to suppose had been excluded?

Photographs made by the client

Many of us use our cameras to share our thoughts, feelings and experiences with others (Craig, 2009 pp.13-14). Our photographs say, in effect: ‘*It looked like this ...and it made me feel this way*’. Such photographs can provide therapists with insights into their clients’ orientations.

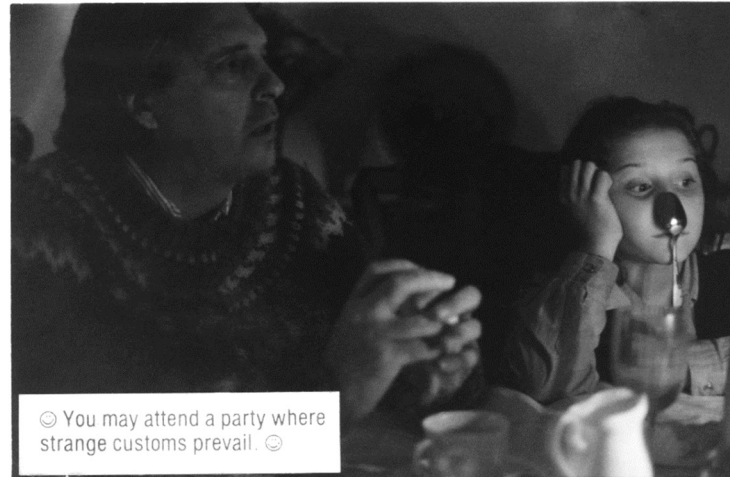


Figure 27: *A party at which strange customs prevail* © Rutherford 1997

Krauss and Fryrear (1983) describe such photographs as ‘symbolic speech’ whose insights into the client’s unconscious require the interpretation of a therapist (arttherapyjournal.org). Adamson warned that such ‘interpretations’ are often projections of the therapists’ own beliefs (O’Flynn, 2011 pp.53).

Photographs selected or ‘curated’ from other sources

Photographs selected (‘curated’) by the client from the family photo album, newspapers, magazines, catalogues or other source. Although the client may not necessarily appear in these, their value is in the feelings, thoughts, memories, fears and/or associations they evoke.

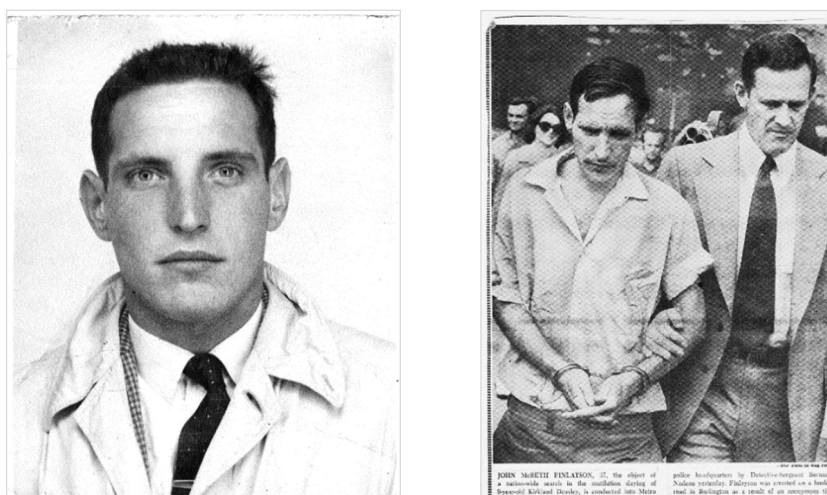


Figure 28: *Photographs of men I never knew* (photo at right © Reg Innell *Toronto Star* 1973)

Although I neither made nor appear in either of these photographs (and so they contain no information about me), they have great significance for me – not due to *whom, what* or *how* they record, nor to the photographers’ compositional reflexes on the resulting photographs – but to the issues they connote.

Photographs modified by the client

The decision to modify a photograph (for example, by adding or removing people) may indicate and provide details about significant emotional concerns.



Figure 29: *les Claviers à table, Soulac-sur-mer (avec Jean-Louis ajoutée)* © Rutherford 1996

An image of the deceased patriarch was added to a family photograph (Figure 29) in recognition of his continued presence for the members of the family. (This objective was unintentionally reinforced by the inclusion of the empty chair at the table – mine from which I had risen to make this group photograph).



Figure 30: *David John Harrison's 80th birthday*

An ex-wife was removed from this family photograph (Figure 30) to erase her from the record.

In both cases, the decision to modify the photograph may reflect a level of wish-fulfilment: another form of what Krauss and Fryrear (1983) termed 'symbolic speech'.

4.ii. Two caveats regarding the use of photographs in photo therapies

While acknowledging the value of photo therapies as a means to unearth valuable insights into the client's (sometimes unconscious) orientations, its confidence in photographs as sources of insight relies on two assumptions whose implications warrant critical consideration.

The insistence on the photo-mechanical objectivity of photographs

With its origins in the industrial revolution, the camera was originally regarded as a mechanical device (Kogan, 2015 pp.869) which – like the telescope and the microscope – provided an objective and truthful account of things as they really are (Fosdick and Fahmy, 2007 pp.1; Genoni, 2002 pp.137; Ross, 1982 pp.12). As with the social sciences, photo therapy treats photographs as factual recordings of events that have occurred (Stevens and Spears, 2009 pp.9) which document what was really there when the shutter snapped (Rose, 2012 pp.299).

PhotoTherapy provides considerably less subjective images [because photographs are] created by a mechanical device (Weiser 1999 pp.12). Thus, we feel certain that the camera did not, and could not, lie, because it obviously took a picture of what was really happening right there, right then, right in front of it (Weiser 1999 pp.4).

But Weiser is mistaken. The camera can – both by accident and design – lie or misrepresent ‘what was happening right there in front of it’. Despite this, the literature treats photographs as reliable depictions of scenes and events. Krauss (1983b, pp.65) describes photographs as “windows” and “mirrors”: metaphors which characterise photographs as accurate and objective records of what he termed the “who, what, where” of clients’ lives.



This misplaced confidence in the objective truthfulness of photographs allows – even prompts – the palimpsest of memory to revise and rewrite our recollection of events (Garry and Gerrie, 2005), often resulting in inaccurate but entrenched beliefs about what happened – and to whom.



Figure 31: Anthony Blunt © Snowdon 1963

Krauss (1983b, pp.65) and Wolf (2024, pp.120) both compare photographs to the inkblots of a Rorschach test onto which we project our unconscious interpretations and orientations.

For example, I have a very clear memory of being charged by a herd of cows as an infant while out for a walk with my mother in a pasture in rural Wales – a memory based on a tale repeatedly told at family events and evidenced by a photograph in the family album. Many years later, I learned that the two people in the photograph are not my mother and me, but a distant aunt and her daughter. The event I vividly ‘remembered’ never happened – but was the product of the story which had coalesced around the photograph. This ‘little misunderstanding’ was neither innocent nor harmless – because the resulting ‘memory’ inscribed in me a genuine fear of cattle.



Figure 32: *Awkward Christmas family photo*

Consider the following scenario: Many years after the photograph Figure 32 was made, the girl in the red plaid dress, now an adult, brings this photograph of her younger self with her siblings to a photo therapist, describing it as an accurate record of her clear childhood recollection that *My younger sister Blanche always kept herself apart from our brother and me.*

While such photographs may accurately depict our *orientations*, the value of photographs in therapy are not always as factual records of events, but as what Krauss calls *the client's map of reality* (Krauss, 1983a pp.42): useful illustrations of the client's beliefs, expectations and orientations – as refracted through their (possibly unconscious) *interpretations* of these events.

It is widely, if not universally, accepted that what we see [in photographs] is heavily conditioned by our beliefs and our expectations (Pylyshyn, 2003 pp.37).

It is possible that the (now-forgotten) reason that her sister remained inside the house, looking through the window was because she was ill, and so was kept away from others. Or perhaps, having watched a southern gothic horror film the night before, their father – the photographer – thought that this arrangement would make an amusing ‘spooky’ photograph. Regardless, over time, and endorsed by the belief that photographs accurately record “what was really happening right there, right then” (Weiser, 1999), the photograph may have given what Garry and Gerrie (2005 pp.321) term *the imprimatur of authenticity* to an interpretation of the event it depicts which subsequently ‘overwrote’ any memory of the reason for the children's poses. As a result, the photograph became *the source of* – rather than *the evidence for* – the client's recollection.

People trust photos [and] think they reliably capture the past. [...] While photographs can help people illustrate the stories of their lives, photographs can do more than illustrate these events; they can also distort our memory of them (Garry and Gerrie, 2005 pp.321).

The dismissal of the influence of the photographer's decisions on the content and appearance of the resulting photograph

When making photographs, we want to produce an attractive result. Our internalised 'compositional reflexes' about what makes a 'good' or interesting picture and the decisions we make to achieve this are informed by our exposure to everything from famous paintings and photographs to professionally produced advertisements (Young and Wright, 1973) – and of course, the more culturally literate we are, the more difficult it is to avoid their influence. More importantly however, the decisions which inform the appearance of our photographs will influence the accuracy with which the photograph depicts the scene or event – and therefore the therapist's interpretation of its significance.



Even when the photographer has neither the ability nor inclination to intentionally manipulate the result, the following factors will nevertheless influence the appearance of the photograph:

- The selection of the scenes and events deemed worthy of being recorded,
- The appearance and/or behaviour of the elements or people within the frame,
- The ambient or intentionally determined quality and angle of illumination,
- The photographer's intention or interpretation of the scene (what s/he wants to show the viewer, or that to which s/he wants the viewer to attend). This (consciously or otherwise) informs the framing of the elements and the potentially meaning-full relationships created or implied by their juxtaposition at the precise moment s/he pushes the button,
- The photographer's directions ("*Stand there...*") deployed in the effort to achieve this intention, or to get the picture to look the way s/he wanted it to,
- The photographer's spatial position relative to *the thing/s in front of the lens* which determines two significant aspects of the resulting photograph:
 - a. the vantage point from which the viewer will subsequently see and so 'make sense of' the scene and the spatial relationships between its constituent elements (For example, by adopting a low camera angle, the viewer will be obliged to 'look up to' the people and/or objects – while photographing from a higher position will oblige the viewer to 'look down on' these.)
 - b. The spatial juxtaposition of elements to one another which suggests the nature of their apparent relationship.
- The moment at which s/he pushes the button (which may be chosen consciously, or the result of his/her intuitive 'recognition' of the 'emotional accuracy' or 'truthfulness' of the moment in which '*Betty looked afraid*' or in which '*Dad scowled at Suzie*'),
- The photographer's expertise in the purposeful manipulation of the medium in both pre- and post-production (the choice of colour or black & white, the increase or decrease of exposure and/or contrast, the use of selective Depth of Field¹⁶, the use of long focal length or wide-angle lenses, the use of filters etc.) in pursuit of his/her intended result, and
- The framing of the photograph which, perhaps more than any other factor, shapes the meaning we 'make' about what is happening in the photograph (see Figure 33).



(Shipman, 1974; Feininger, 1975; Langford, 1979; Calder and Garrett, 1979)

¹⁶ *Depth of Field* refers to the linear distance before and behind the plane of focus (the two-dimensional plane on which the lens is focussed) that is also in focus. It is controlled by the aperture of the lens.

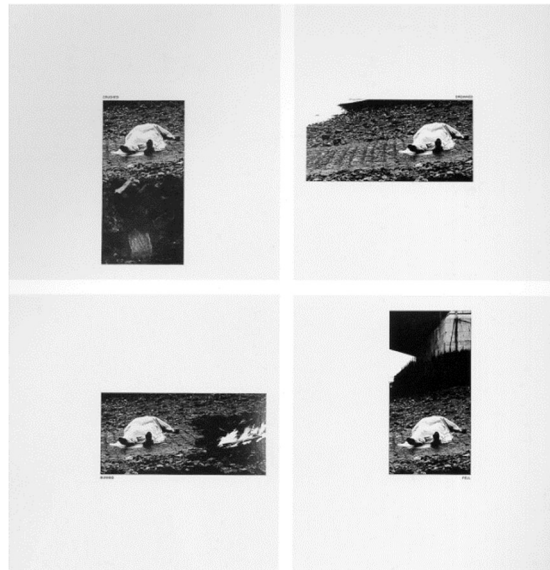


Figure 33: *Cause of Death* – annotated clockwise from top left *Crushed, Drowned, Burned, Fell* © John Hilliard 1974

Hilliard's *Cause of Death* (Figure 33) illustrates the capacity of the photographer's decisions in the selective use of framing and cropping to shape the meaning we make of the scene depicted.

In addition to the photographer's 'compositional reflexes', several social and cultural factors may also influence the content and appearance of family and group photographs:

- The identity of the family's 'designated photographer' and the one who decides if and when photographs are to be made, what (kinds of) scenes and events are deemed worthy of being recorded, which individuals are to be included in the photograph (and which are excluded), and how and where these individuals or elements are to be posed or arranged
- The preparations made for the photograph (for example, whether the background is usually organised or 'tidied up' before the photograph is made)
- How the knowledge that 'a photograph is about to be made' affects the decisions, behaviours and poses of those to be included (Azoulay, 2010; Burgess et al., 2000)

When subjected to the scrutiny and judgement of the camera (with its potential to expose us as awkward, unattractive and ordinary), the desire to appear confident or sophisticated prompts us to adopt certain poses and/or facial expressions. As a result, assumptions (interpretations) based on the appearance of those in the photograph may be misleading.

In the case of portraits made by professional photographers, Weiser asserts that "*Sometimes we arrange to have photos taken of us, for example, in portrait studios. These are like self-portraits because we keep most of the control over production of the image*" (Weiser, 1999 pp.187). Not so. A portrait photographer who allows the sitter to "keep most of the control" would be professionally remiss for not employing the specialist knowledge and skills for which s/he was engaged.



- The identity of the person who takes charge of assembling (editing/curating) the family album (who may not be the same as the 'designated photographer') whose preferences and decisions determine the content and appearance of the resulting familial record

Chalfen (1998 pp.191) adds that it is also important to recognise the power dynamics of social class, gender and age within the family or group which may influence these decisions.

Summary

Whether made by the client or by someone else, the photographs used in photo therapies – especially those which purport to record or describe emotionally significant scenes and events – are not objective records. Instead, their content and appearance are determined by the decisions – conscious or otherwise – of the photographer. Despite this however, the literature asserts that:

1. Even a basic knowledge of photography, including the way(s) in which factors such as exposure, contrast, and Depth of Field shape the result, is not necessary in photo therapy.

Because phototherapy is [not about] photography as art, no prior experience with cameras or photography is required for effective therapeutic use (Stevens and Spears, 2009 pp.7).

2. Knowledge of the photographer's intention and the ways in which this informed his/her decisions regarding the content and appearance of the photograph are not necessary in photo therapy, and so can be ignored in interpreting the depiction of the scene or event.

The creator of a photograph can be [...] readily detached from the image (Weiser 1999 pp.11).

3. And that, despite neither a basic knowledge of photography nor an awareness of the ways in which the photographer's decisions informed the content and appearance of the photograph, the therapist is considered the authority in what the photograph reveals.

The interpretation of images should be carried out by trained therapists or licensed professionals (Stevens and Spears, 2009 pp.9)

Instead, photo therapies share with social sciences the position that the value of photographs is in *what* is pictured, rather than *how it is pictured* (Rose, 2012 pp.30-31). Photo therapies fail to acknowledge and consider the significant difference between (what I term) 'External truths': those details which any photograph of the scene would document – and 'Lens truths': those which (as per Hilliard's example) are the result of the photographer's decisions (Figure 34).



Figure 34: 'External truths' vs 'Lens truths' © Rutherford 1996

The two photographs at left document what I term an 'External truth': that, in all of the photographs in which Stellar appeared, she never touched, or put her arm around, anyone.

In the photograph at right (*Boys will be Men*, Rutherford 1996), we confidently infer the orientation of the two young boys towards women. This inferred 'Lens truth' is a result of meaning we make from the photographer's juxtaposition of the four figures (how they are pictured) created by the position of the photographer relative to the figures at the moment the photograph was made.

4.iii. Photo-art therapy

While all forms of creative expression (painting, poetry, sculpture, dance) offer the means to establish a dialogue with the unconscious, with its ability to respond at the touch of a button without the need for – or the interference of – our conscious decisions, photography offers our unconscious mind a direct and unmediated mode of expression.

Pioneered by Corbit, Fryrear, and Landgarten in the 1990s (Weiser and Krauss, 2009 pp.95), *Photo-art therapy* refers to the creation and/or modification of photo-based works to externalise visual metaphors clients have seen in their ‘mind’s eye’. Produced under the guidance of a qualified therapist (Wolf, 2007 pp.125), such works are the product of both conscious and unconscious decisions (Fryrear and Corbit, 1992 pp.xv) and treated as ‘symbolic speech’ (Krauss and Fryrear, 1983) to be interpreted by the therapist. Art therapists define *Photo-art therapy* as a form of art therapy using photography; Weiser insists that it is a discipline of *PhotoTherapy* practiced by art therapists who have completed additional training in her *PhotoTherapy*.

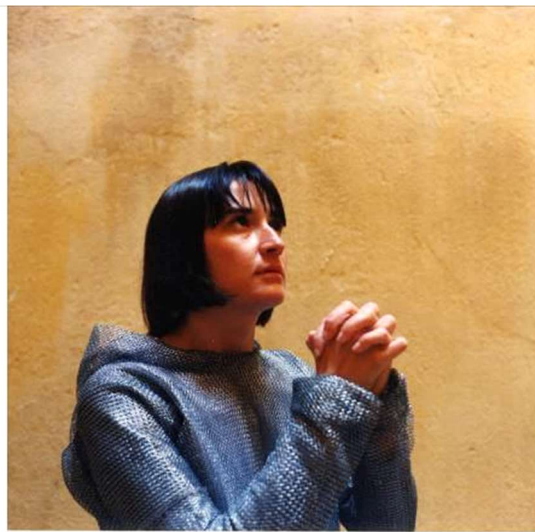


Figure 35: *La Païan, vieux Nice* © Rutherford 1998

Made on 10 May (a date I learned only later is the *fête de St. Jeanne d’Arc*), *La Païan* (Figure 35) was a conscious attempt to externalise my eidetic picture of *Jeanne d’Arc*. I recognised only afterwards that, by representing her at prayer rather than in battle, I had (intuitively) commemorated the personal truth that gave her the courage to confront and overcome enormous obstacles – and so change her world.

By providing a means to externalise feelings that may be only vaguely felt or understood (Barthes’s “entrusting to the hand to reveal what the head itself ignores” 1994), *Photo-art therapy* is intended to ‘get things out in the open’ as a way of confronting and ultimately, to come to terms with them. To ensure the emotional accuracy of such symbolic depictions of the visual metaphors client have seen only in their ‘mind’s eye’, Wolf encourages art therapists to:

[I]ntegrate creative darkroom procedures into their therapeutic work [including] Adobe Photoshop™ [as well as] traditional art materials to modify and elaborate the images [to enable] further integration of creative elements not possible with more traditional darkroom photography. (Wolf, 2007 pp.25-126)

Externalising the feelings and beliefs of which the client is conscious in ‘symbolic speech’ is a valuable way to explore their origins and implications. By providing a means to wish-fulfilment, consciously produced images can also offer a helpful release. Fromm warns however that such images may depict what we *think* we feel (or perhaps, *what our ego wants to believe that we feel*) and so can mask or ‘reframe’ (a form of the “considerable resistance” of which Jung [2012 pp.158] warned) the deeper meaning of consciously created images (Cortina, 2015 pp.392).

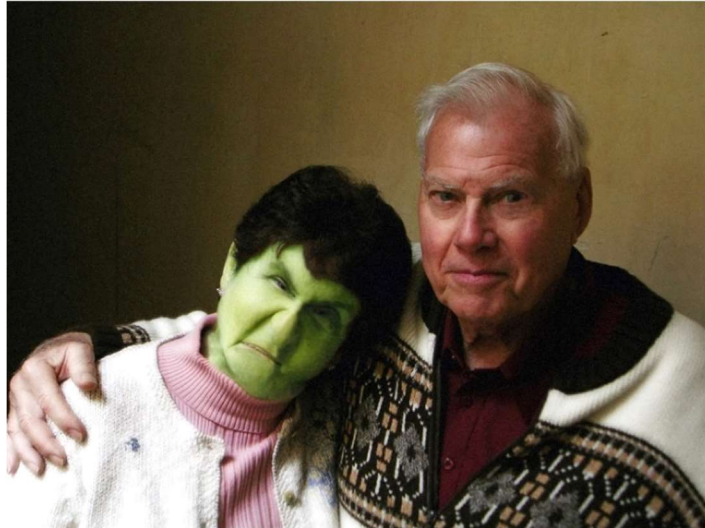


Figure 36: *Ken and the real #4* © Rutherford 2005

A manipulated image in which the photographer externalised his feelings towards his father's 4th wife (who, as he lay dying in the hospital from a brain tumour affecting his judgement, browbeat him into signing a new Will she had commissioned, under the terms of which his entire estate was left to her).

Sometimes, the truths or insights 'unveiled' by our modifications result in (what may appear to be) 'premonitions' – instances of what Jung's termed *synchronicity*: coincidences which seem especially meaningful to their experiencers (Jung, 1952). Suggesting (symbolically) a meaning that, while objective, is not fully knowable or accessible to consciousness (Main, 2007 pp.367), Jung's *synchronicity* is experienced similarly to Heidegger' (1962) "understood but still veiled". This experience – in which, as a result of our creation or modification of an image, we recognise a truth or insight that we 'knew' but had 'veiled' from our conscious awareness, can feel like a 'premonition': a phenomenon similar to *déjà vu*. Jung suggested that thoughts, ideas or experiences which have been forgotten or suppressed may be recalled from our personal unconscious under certain conditions, such as unresolved moral conflicts (Hong, 2024).



Figure 37: *Darkroom manipulated photograph*, Toronto May 1987 © Rutherford 1987

During a visit by the photographer's parents, it was noticed that they chose to sit far apart on a park bench: an aspect of the scene the photographer chose to exaggerate by manipulating the photograph in the darkroom. Days later, they surprised the family by announcing their intention to divorce.

4.iv. Therapeutic photography

As distinct from other photo therapy practices, *Therapeutic photography* is understood to refer to the taking/making of photographs for personal benefit outside of a formal therapeutic setting.

Despite its professed distance from formal therapeutic practices, as a consequence of being authored by trained therapists, much of the literature on *Therapeutic photography* is – like the tree whose form has been sculpted by the winds that blow from a single direction – shaped by the premise, assumptions and objectives of therapeutic practice defined on page 1: that photographs are a reliable way to identify and treat ‘problems’. So strong is this ‘therapeutic bias’ that, by excluding the involvement of a qualified therapist in the interpretation of the photographs, some authors deny the therapeutic value of *Therapeutic photography*.

While just taking photographs might be considered therapeutic by the photographer, it is not therapy (Stewart, 1979 pp.42).

In this way, like a man with a hammer, *Therapeutic photography*’s shared expectations with clinical therapy limits the meanings and interpretations which can be conceived.

[T]he notion of discourse is a notion of limits. That is, the overall discourse relation could be regarded as a limiting function, one that establishes a bounded area of shared expectations as to meaning. It is this limiting function that determines the very possibility of meaning (Sekula, 1982 pp.84).

Of the 15 chapters in Loewenthal’s *Phototherapy and Therapeutic Photography in a Digital Age* (2013), the only four not authored by trained therapists share the perspectives and priorities of the therapeutic premise: that the purpose of looking at and reflecting on the associations prompted by photographs is to facilitate ‘healing’ of an assumed ‘problem’ or ‘malady’.

Gibson too, agrees that the purpose of *Therapeutic photography* is therapeutic:

[P]hotography [is used] in a therapeutic manner with service users from social work and social care settings [with] those with mental health issues, substance use problems, caring responsibilities, autism, and criminal justice engagement (<https://therapeuticphotography.uk>).

And that its objective is to provide healing or treatment:

For a pastime or activity to be therapeutic there has to be an element of healing or treatment[...]. For an activity to merit the term ‘therapeutic’, there have to be clearly defined outcomes (Gibson, 2018 pp.15).

As a consequence, much less attention has been paid to – and even less has been written about – the use of photographs as a means for a healthy mind to pursue greater Self-knowledge.

Many photographers (amateur and professional) have used their cameras to document or record scenes and moment to which their attention was intuitively attracted as a means to Self-knowledge – but without what I have termed ‘the therapeutic premise’ that something is amiss which requires healing. Instead, in making photographs, these photographers have found a way to establish a constructive dialogue with the auteur within their unconscious mind:

[Y]ou can only see what mirrors your mind at that particular time (Tice, cited by Sontag, 1973).

[P]hotographs have the power to drag these notions from my subconscious out into the open (Kawauchi, 2020).

Sometimes – just sometimes – one photograph or a group of them can lure our senses into awareness. Photographs can summon enough emotion to be a catalyst to thought (Smith, 1974).

The ‘truthfulness’ of our photographs is not a measure of the precision with which they have recorded the things in front of the lens ‘out there’ – but the accuracy with which they describe our private myths about who we are ‘in here’ (Rutherford, 2002).

Among those who explored and demonstrated the value of self-directed photography in pursuit of Self-knowledge outside of a formal therapeutic setting, special mention should be made of the photographers Minor White, Ralph Hattersley and Jo Spence.

Minor White's 'Equivalence'

In his pursuit of 'equivalence', "White was really talking to himself, looking inward, through the pictures he took" (Stamberg, 2014). In his posthumously published photographs and excerpts from his diary and letters, White described his camera as a means of self-discovery and self-growth [and] photographs as mirrors of our innermost selves (Hall and Hoffman, 1978).



Figure 38: Golden Gate bridge, San Francisco © Minor White 1959

Although he did not use the term 'mytho-poetic' to describe his approach to photography, White considered this use of photography to be both *mythic*:

[T]he individual viewer realizes that for him what he sees in a picture corresponds to something within himself – that is, the photograph mirrors something in himself [...] At the next level, 'equivalence' relates to what goes on in the viewer's mind as he looks at a photograph that arouses in him a special sense of correspondence to something that he 'knows' about himself (White, 1963 pp.17).

And *poetic*:

In becoming a photographer, I am only changing medium. The essential core of both verse and photography is poetry. (Minor White)

Like many of his modernist contemporaries Joseph Stieglitz, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, White practiced *previsualization* (Cronan, 2019 pp.52) – an approach to photography in which, similar to *Photo-art Therapy*, the photographer IMAGInES or 'mentally pictures' the desired final image – and then makes the necessary decisions regarding composition, Depth of Field, exposure, development of the film, etc. to achieve his/her intended result. For this reason, White's *'Equivalences'* shares with *Photo-art Therapy* the intentional application of expertise in the creation and/or modification of images, including visual metaphors 'pictured in the mind's eye', rather than being the product of an intuitive recognition of the scene or event recorded without the interference of conscious decisions (Rutherford 2002, 2018).

Ralph Hattersley

Adopting an openly spiritual, philosophical, even mystical approach, photographer, lecturer and author of many books on photographic technique, Hattersley encouraged his reader to attempt a number of exercises as a means to engage with the Self, which he defined in a very similar way I have done here (See the footnote on page 2).

One of [my] main motives for making photographs is to project [my] Self onto photographic paper so that [I] can get a better look at it (Hattersley, 1971).

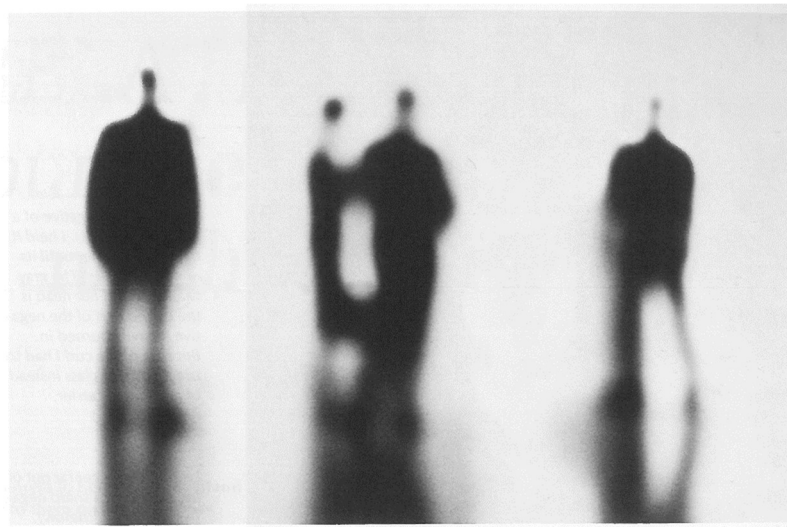


Figure 39: *Dark figures against a bright wall* © Ralph Hattersley (undated)

These dark figures (Figure 39) were photographed with the lens way out of focus. In black and white fuzzy pictures, the contrast between figures and background is very important. Too little contrast in black and white pictures turns everything into a morbid grayness (Hattersley, 1971 pp.49).

Like White with his *previsualization*, Hattersley encouraged his readers to extend and improve their aesthetic and technical mastery of the medium in order to be able to realise their visual ideas. In a review of Hattersley's approach, Pomeroy summarises Hattersley's belief that:

knowledge of the camera is basic to successfully discovering one's Self through photography. This implies the mastery of camera controls and functions to the degree of not having to think about them (Pomeroy, 2014).

While Pomeroy is assumed to be encouraging the ability to work intuitively, it is important to bear in mind that, when our mastery over the medium enables decisions about composition and execution to be made without "having to think about them", this can allow our 'compositional reflexes' and what I have termed (page 4) 'the rule of the tool' (the principle that our access to, and our proficiency in, the use of certain tools or techniques encourages their use) to determine the content and appearance of our photographs, and thereby possibly undermine the emotional accuracy of the result.

In an effort to minimise the influence of my mastery over the medium that, when attracted to a scene (when 'tapped on the shoulder'), I chose not to look in the ground glass of my Rollei, but simply pointed the camera in the direction of the scene and allowed 'photomancy' (my variation on automatic writing) to determine the content and composition of the photograph. I likewise discouraged participants from looking at the screens of their smartphones.

Jo Spence

Artist Jo Spence (1934–1992) used her camera to explore her experience with cancer.



Figure 40: *The Final Project: an exhibition of the work of Jo Spence (1934-1992) produced in the last two years of her life before her death from leukaemia*

Rejecting therapeutic approaches conducted by a trained/licensed professional, Spence believed in the value of ‘doing it yourself’ (Dennett, 2009 pp.16). Although she initially used the term ‘Camera Therapy’, Dennett – her archivist and collaborator – believes that, as her method used photography “therapeutically, as an integral part of her broader alternative and complementary cancer treatment program”, had she been aware of the term, Spence would have described her work as *Therapeutic Photography* (Dennett, 2009 pp.16).

Kate Imbach

In an innovative extension of this practice, Imbach (2017) interrogated/interpreted some of the 470 photographs tweeted by Melania Trump (wife of then-New York property developer Donald Trump) between 03 June 2012 and 11 June 2015 and which Melania appears to have made. Imbach examined these photographs (Figure 41) as a body of work which Imbach suggests (symbolically) describes Melania’s feelings about her situation and circumstances.



Three of the five photographs Melania posted of her husband and son together between February 16, 2014 and November 27, 2014.

Figure 41: *Fairytale Prisoner by Choice: The Photographic Eye of Melania Trump* curated by Kate Imbach 2017

Imbach (2017) writes:

Everyone has an eye, whether or not we see ourselves as photographers. What we choose to photograph and how we frame subjects always reveals a little about how we perceive the world. For someone like Melania, media-trained, controlled and cloistered, her collection of Twitter photography provides an otherwise unavailable view into the reality of her existence. Nowhere else — certainly not in interviews or public appearances — is her guard so far down.

What is that reality? Melania posted five photographs of Trump with their son. She took each photo from behind the two, sometimes literally from the backseat. Boys in front, girls in the back, the same arrangement we were all so appalled to see on inauguration day, is her norm. She lives in the background. She is Rapunzel with no prince and no hair, locked in a tower of her own volition, and delighted with the predictability and repetition of her own captivity. (Imbach, 2017).

And so, to the various forms and examples of *Therapeutic photography*, we can now add the category: ‘photo-diagnostics-at-a-distance’. While Imbach’s interpretations may correspond closely with our assumptions about Melania’s feelings towards her situation (publicly treated as a ‘trophy wife’ by her misogynist husband but who, when out of the public gaze, is relegated – both literally and metaphorically – to the back seat), it is important to bear in mind that, as with all forms of *Therapeutic photography*, without reliable corroboration, such interpretations of the photographer’s attitudes may be projections.

5. Photovoice

Photovoice is a research method used to elicit data that may enhance understanding of the lived experience of participants, volunteers and research subjects. Widely used in sociology and social anthropology to document and interrogate individuals’ interactions with and feelings towards their surroundings and/or communities as well as issues affecting their experience of healthcare, researchers using *Photovoice* typically ask respondents to:

take pictures of health resources and needs in their community [and then] discuss them in photo-sharing sessions with other individuals who are participating in the study (Plunkett, Leipert and Ray, 2013 pp.157).

A Google Scholar™ search using the search term “Photovoice” carried out on 02 May 2020 produced 22,000 results (Figure 42). The following terms appeared in the first two sentences of the abstracts of the top 100 returned articles and books as an indication of the primary focus of the studies, indicating that *Photovoice* is seen – and is used – primarily as a sociological tool, rather than a means to enhance the Self-knowledge of the photographer.

	community	public health	nursing	mental health	psychology	therapy
totals	51	50	7	8	5	2

Figure 42: Results of a Google Scholar™ search using the search term “Photovoice” (02 May 2020)

6. Photo elicitation

Developed by Collier in the 1950s, *Photo elicitation* has been used in visual sociology and visual anthropology as a research technique “to prod latent memory, to stimulate and release emotional statements about the informant’s life” (Collier 1957, cited by Harper 2002 pp.14). Due to their particular form of representation, it is argued that photographs are able to evoke information, feelings, and memories more effectively than words (Harper, 2002 pp.13).

Although there has recently been more emphasis on the use of the participants' own photographs (Croghan et al., 2008), as with *PhotoTherapy* and *Photo-art therapy*, *Photo elicitation* typically uses photographs made by others. As with the Rorschach test, the interpretation of the photograph is understood to be a *projection*; accordingly, *Photo elicitation* does not consider the possible significance to the client of *the way in which* the photographer may have (consciously or otherwise) arranged and juxtaposed the elements within the frame.

In her widely cited text (13,976 citations as of June 2024) on visual research methodologies including both *Photovoice* and *Photo elicitation*, Rose confirmed that the “significance of the photos is seen to rest on what is pictured, not how it is pictured” (Rose, 2012 pp.30-31).

7. Auteur theory

First articulated by François Truffaut in 1954 in the periodical *Cahiers du Cinema* (Staples, 1966), *Auteur theory* asserts that the director is the primary creative force behind the production of a film whose role can therefore be equated with the author of a novel or a play. Truffaut criticised psychological realist films for not “allowing [directors] to reveal themselves as they are, before our eyes” (Truffaut, 1954).

Auteur theory holds that the resulting work is, to a greater or lesser degree, a symbolic ‘self-portrait’ of the inner life of the director (Codell, 2006 pp.115; Portuges, 1993 pp.19) and that, within the films of some directors widely recognised as ‘auteurs’, scenes and images often derive from, and symbolically depict, aspects of their unconscious (Farmer, undated).

One example: Having survived a violently abusive childhood, the filmmaker ‘Buster’ Keaton often expressed his feelings symbolically in his films as a way of engaging with the emotions and psychological issues resulting from the fear and helplessness he repressed as a result of his difficulty in dealing with his memories of the parents’ behaviour and treatment (Hart, 2003).



Figure 43: animated .gif from *Steamboat Bill Jr.* Buster Keaton 1928

In *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1928), Keaton awakens to find himself alone in a world completely out of control and at the mercy of an overwhelming force. Frantically escaping from a series of surrealist situations, (including a disturbing sequence featuring a ventriloquist's dummy), he finds no one to help him. At one point – the most famous of the many instances in which Keaton courted death in his films – he stands confused and abandoned in the middle of a wind-blown street while the façade of a house falls around him (Figure 43). For those familiar with his life, the symbolism of the scene is not difficult to understand.

In this way, the auteur theory of filmmaking supports the conception of photography put forward by some of the masters of the medium on page 34.

In explaining Auteur theory, Sarris (2007 pp.6) draws on the writings of Bazin, Roud and Truffaut to argue that the auteur's contribution to the work manifests itself through:

- i. his/her *technical competence*,
- ii. his/her *distinguishable personality*, and
- iii. his/her *interior meaning*.

According to traditional Auteur theory, the 'auteur' establishes the narrative and all other essential expressions of meaning (Stoekl, 2008 pp.385). In the current project, the term 'auteur' does not refer to the conscious intent of the photographer, but to what I have called '*that part which thinks in pictures*' through whose choices and decisions the Self-referential *interior meaning* of the creator through which his/her *distinguishable personality* might be inferred.

In this project, *technical competence* refers, not to the rational application of method to medium or aesthetics to form, but to the photographer's ability to minimise the interference of his/her 'compositional reflexes' and so 'put the camera in the hands of the unconscious' to accurately record the personally salient elements (the forms in which the auteur has, perhaps intuitively, recognised what Look (2003) called 'meaningful projections') of the scene or tableaux.

8. Self-reflective photography

Over the course of 40 years, my practice-based research and numerous workshops with amateur photographers has shown that most people make two kinds of photographs: those in which we set out to document scenes and events with which we have a personal connection (*This is our daughter posing as Buster Keaton, etc.*), and the much smaller proportion we make of scenes and tableaux with which we have no personal connection, but which we made just because we liked the way something looked – usually without considering why it had attracted our attention. (Cronin makes a similar distinction between those which contain 'information' – and those which are prompted by an emotional reaction, Cronin, 1998 pp.61.)

While those which are the result of conscious and deliberate decisions may indeed provide valuable descriptions of, and/or significant insights into, our perceptions or memories, it is those scenes to which we responded intuitively which Dirx argues "arrive as angels or message-bearers from the psyche" and so reveal powerful emotional or spiritual issues and concerns which, in the mytho-poetic language of dreams, describe our orientation towards ourselves and the world (Dirx, 1998).

Accordingly, in place of the (misplaced) confidence of photo therapies in the photo-mechanical objectivity of photographs, most photographs¹⁷ are subjective and selective *interpretations* of the scene: depictions of what Krauss (1983a pp.42) calls the photographer's "map of reality". Lesy (1980) argues that such photographs are like "frozen dreams", whose manifest content (that which is actually visible) may be understood at a glance, but whose latent connotation (the meaning we 'make' of a photograph) is "enmeshed in unconscious associations" (Lesy, 1980 pp.xiv) – which is then 'appropriated' by our interpretation (Heidegger, 1962 pp.191).

[W]hen something is understood but is still veiled, it becomes unveiled [is interpreted] under the guidance of a point of view which fixes that with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted. In every case, interpretation is grounded in something we see in advance (Heidegger, 1962 pp.191).

¹⁷ Except, obviously, for those made for the purpose of objectively recording scientific phenomena.

Like a flashbulb that briefly illuminates a dark street and reveals the goings-on in the shadows only later when we see what we have recorded, our photographs of these scenes can sometimes bring to light (which they did for me literally as the images rose from the developer tray in the amber glow of the darkroom safelight) things within us that may otherwise be difficult to see.

In the lyric features of a pleasant landscape, we may recognise an allegory for the life we once dreamt of when our ‘mental picture’ of happiness did not depend on possessions and power. Our photograph of a busy city street may show us the path we chose instead, and may include a symbol for what we left behind. In the image of a figure surrounded by dark and foreboding shapes, we may find a clue to the forces which, ever since, have shaped our orientations. Our photograph of a mannequin may describe the circumstances in which we now feel trapped – or show us the mask which reveals the person we have come to believe *is* who we are underneath.



Figure 44: *The Shadow of the photographer* © Rutherford 1980

Made two years before *Building and Tree* and *La Femme Reculée*, but reconsidered only after recognising the insights they offered, I found that *The Shadow of the photographer* (Figure 44) had presaged the idea that symbolically described truths were ‘leaking’ into my photographs.

The composition includes an anonymous photographer and three sets of converging lines. The first set, (formed by the silver legs of the tripod), lead the eye upwards to the head of the photographer (the seat of logical, rational thought) which is clearly ‘out of the picture’. The two others are the rifle-scope crosshairs created by the gaps between the paving stones which have the (Jungian) shadow of the photographer ‘in their sights’ – and the arrow created by the shadow of the tripod which points to the fusion of the non-rational (headless) operator and the machine.

While the externalisation of our consciously held feelings and beliefs are a valuable means to explore their origins and implications, practitioners of *Self-reflective photography* must heed Fromm’s warning (Cortina, 2015 pp.392) that our consciously held beliefs about ourselves (or even ‘wishful thinking’) can lead us to mis-interpret the meaning we make of our photographs.

8.i. *Self-reflective photography* differs from automatic writing

Where the Dadaists and Surrealists employed automatic writing to subvert artistic and cognitive conventions (Laxton, 2003) and gain access to the psyche considered to be the ‘auteur’ of the works (Powrie, 1988), they often manipulated the results (Mühl, 1930) which were considered the raw material for their artworks. Here, participants’ photographs are not manipulated.

8.ii. *Self-reflective photography* differs from photo and art therapies

While sharing the position that photography enables the unconscious to express itself (Halkola, 2009 pp.24), *Self-reflective photography* does not begin with the assumption that there is a ‘problem’ which requires treatment by a qualified therapist (the therapeutic bias) and that the photographs – and their depiction of scenes, objects and events – should be interpreted through a “therapist-directed process” (Weiser, 2005b). In its interpretation of photographs, photo therapies do not acknowledge or consider the extent to which the content and appearance of photographs are influenced by the decisions (conscious or otherwise) of the photographer and which may inform the therapist’s interpretation of the scene or moment depicted.

The difference of opinion in traditional Art therapy (between those who hold that the work should be interpreted by a clinician – and those who believe that it should be interpreted by the person who made the image Hogan, 2000 pp.268) is also seen between *photo therapies* (which hold that photographs should be interpreted by trained professionals) and those who seek to avoid what I have termed the ‘therapeutic bias’ and “the therapist’s projections of their own beliefs onto the work” (O’Flynn, 2011 pp.53) by the practice of *Self-reflective photography*.

Self-reflective photography minimises the influence of our ‘compositional reflexes’ on the depiction of these scenes and moments to which our attention was intuitively attracted and excludes the influence of the authority figure in the interpretation of the photographs.

8.iii. *Self-reflective photography* differs from Therapeutic photography

While closer in approach to *Therapeutic photography* than to *photo therapies* in excluding the involvement and influence of a qualified therapist, *Self-reflective photography* does not begin with the premise that there is a ‘problem’ that needs to be ‘healed’ – as implied by the near ubiquity of the term ‘client’ in referring to the creators of the photographs in the literature.

In both *Self-reflective photography* and *Therapeutic photography* however, it is important to remain wary of the prospect that our beliefs about ourselves and ‘wishful thinking’ can lead us to ‘see what we want to see’ and so mis-interpret the significance of our photographs.

8.iv. *Self-reflective photography* differs from Minor White’s ‘Equivalence’

While this project shares White’s conviction that our photographs of the scenes and tableaux to which our attention was intuitively attracted may offer insights into our orientations, unlike White’s commitment to *previsualization*, in *Self-reflective photography*, the selection of the scene and the composition of the photograph are intuitive.

8.v. *Self-reflective photography* differs from Photovoice

As a research method in anthropology and sociology, *Photovoice* is used for (and is therefore ‘framed’ and presented to participants as) a means to explore and document the ‘objective reality’ of their social and/or physical environment, not their interior landscape. Accordingly, both the content (what has been photographed) and the appearance (the way in which it is depicted) of the photographs used in *Photovoice* are the product of conscious intent which minimises the contribution of intuition and therefore the value of the photographs as sources of insight into the photographer. Secondly, the photographs used in *Photovoice* are interpreted collaboratively (Lal et al., 2012; Baker and Wang, 2006) not individually (Plunkett et al., 2013).

8.vi. *Self-reflective photography* differs from *Photo elicitation*

As with *photo therapies*, *Photo elicitation* typically uses photographs made by others which, as discussed above, reflect the ‘maps’ of the reality of the photographer and/or the researcher who selected them. Secondly, as a practice used primarily in anthropology and sociology (Harper, 2002), the way in which photographs are presented (‘framed’) encourages participants to look, not *at* the photographs, but *through* them – as if through a portal (Rutherford, 2018 pp.8) and to consider *what* they depict, rather than *how* it is depicted. Secondly, as with Rorschach test, the meaning or significance of the photographs used in *Photo elicitation* is understood to be a *projection by the viewer*. While this does not negate their potential as a means to explore the orientation of the viewer (although not the purpose to which they are primarily or commonly put), such photographs are different than those which record those elements and juxtapositions of personal symbolic significance to the photographer used in this project.

IV Review of previous practice-led research

The Self-reflective photography project: *The Shadow of the photographer (1982-97)*

As explained in **II Background to the project**, intrigued by the goals and the practices of the Surrealists and by the remarkable *Sequences* of Michel Szulc Krzyzanowski¹⁸, the camera-in-motion photographs of Alex Neumann, and the rumour that Robert Frank had stopped looking in his viewfinder but ‘left his compositions to chance’ (Britannica.com), in pursuit of a parallel career in ‘fine art’, I devised a means to limit the influence of my ‘compositional reflexes’ and to allow my intuition to ‘choose’ the scene and the framing of the photograph.

At the beginning of this project, it was not my (conscious) intention to use the camera to access and describe the contents of my unconscious for the purpose of Self-knowledge. The discovery that, as a result of pushing my ‘compositional reflexes’ out of the way, I had provided a means for another voice to make itself heard was inductively reasoned from the resulting body of photographs which I came to regard as a means to:

[S]upport the fabrication of thought [and] as a medium for communication with oneself. It can also be seen as a virtual sparring partner for training and learning (Spierling, 2005 pp.10).

Reflecting on my associations with the symbolic significance of the scenes, tableaux and juxtapositions depicted in these aleatoric compositions, I recognised disturbingly accurate depictions of the perceptual reflexes through which I saw, made sense of and related to the world around me – expressed in the mytho-poetic language of the unconscious dreaming mind.

The results of this project were exhibited in an established art gallery in 1996 (Figure 45) and published in the *Canadian Art Therapy Association Journal* (Rutherford, 2002 pp.14-32).

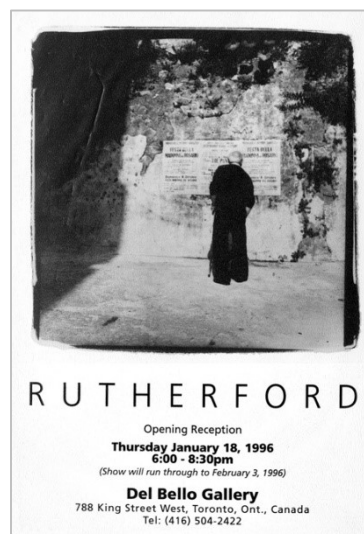


Figure 45: Del Bello gallery © Rutherford 1996

The knowledge gap left by this project:

Although the results proved to be valuable to the researcher, the project provided no evidence that this practice could be used by, or offer value or benefit to, others.

¹⁸ <http://www.szulc.info/workssequences.html>

The text-based automatism experiment (1996)

Having found accurate and valuable personal insights as a result of limiting the influence of my conscious decisions in the composition of photographs, I conducted an experiment to determine what would happen if similar restrictions were imposed in the creation of an aleatoric text.

Working with an early 2000-word text describing the results of the *Self-reflective photography project*, the text argued that, if we are prepared to give up conscious, rational control over the composition of our photographs and allow our intuition to ‘choose’ the scenes, events and moments to be recorded, we can sometimes find visual metaphors and parables which depict those truths we ‘know’ – but which our conscious mind cannot or will not see.

While this experiment shared superficial similarities with some of the forms of ‘automatic writing’ employed by the Dadaists and Surrealists to subvert artistic (the ‘rule of the tool’) and cognitive (‘compositional reflexes’) autonomy (Laxton, 2003), there are significant differences in both the aim of this experiment and the process used – and the *automatisme corporel* (Daumal, 1958) used by the Dadaists and the Surrealists:

Firstly, the free and unhindered expression of the unconscious used (and encouraged) by the Dadaists and Surrealists was replaced with objectively defined criteria by which the word-processing software was used to reconfigure the text.

Secondly, where the Surrealists often manipulated and reinterpreted the results (Mühl, 1930), the results of this experiment were not changed but were permitted to stand on their own. The collaborative text produced by this project is provided in **Appendix I**.

Despite having been comprehensively stripped of both sense and sequence, the resulting text retained not only an uncanny consistency with the meaning of the original (Rutherford, 2019), but in the juxtaposition of nouns, verbs and short phrases, the new text revealed, albeit in a non-rational (Delphic) form, insights which had only been latent within the original.

The knowledge gap left by this project:

The result appears to reinforce the findings of the *Self-reflective photography project*: that, by giving up conscious, rational control over the means of expression, we can (sometimes) create the conditions necessary for a constructive and often illuminating dialogue with our poetic unconscious – what Breton (1924) described as:

[P]ure psychic automatism, by which one intends to express verbally, in writing or by any other method, the real functioning of the mind. (Breton, 1924)

Although the results provided valuable evidence of the capacity of the medium to contribute to the production of intellectually stimulating results, the project provided no evidence that this practice could be used by, or offer value or benefit to, others.

V Review of prior Self-reflective photography workshops

Testing whether Self-reflective photography works for others (1)

Between 2000-02, the researcher designed and led a series of workshops with more than 200 French MBA students at CERAM: *École Supérieure de Commerce* in Sophia Antipolis (France) in an attempt to discover whether others would find benefit in reflecting on their associations with the contents of their intuitively made photographic snapshots.

In preparing the handbook for these workshops, the researcher consulted with Bruce C.S. Barnes of the Ontario (Canada) Association of Jungian Analysts.

I periodically consulted with Rutherford as he developed the process of using photography as a means to identify the contents of the unconscious. In this text, he has incorporated Jung's model of the psyche in relation to photography and demonstrates a thorough understanding of Jung's concepts and foundational ideas. He has also applied them in a way that enhances readers' understanding of Jungian psychology, while engaging them in a new perspective on photography (Barnes, 2002 personal correspondence).

Participants in these workshops were asked to carry a small camera with them wherever they went and be prepared to record those scenes with which they had no logical, conscious or personal connection but to which their attention was intuitively attracted. Participants were asked not to *think about* how to compose their photographs – but to allow their intuition to determine where to point the camera and the moment at which it ‘felt right’ to push the button.

After eight weeks, participants were asked to select four or five of their photographs at which, when leafing casually (‘absent-mindedly’) through the photographs they had made, they found that they regularly paused and to prepare a short text (500 words) in which they considered and reflected on the personal symbolic significance (if any) they found within each photograph.

The participants' permission for the researcher to use and reproduce their photographs and reflective texts was secured in the form of signed and dated permission forms.

The majority of the 200+ participants found valuable and constructive insights from reflecting on their associations with, and their interpretation of, the elements and juxtapositions they had ‘unthinkingly’ incorporated into their casual snapshots (Rutherford, 2002).

From the written report of two workshop participants:

These photographs taught me a way to find clues about myself and maybe these clues can help me to open the walls. H.A. (Rutherford, 2002 pp.15)

I must admit that, at the beginning, I was sceptical; I wasn't convinced that we could analyse our own pictures. Now I know it's possible. It has helped me to realise where my problems are [and] I've understood a lot of things. Now I'm sure it works: our pictures reflect our souls. I can't hide the fact that I've got tears in my eyes right now. I think that this must be the magic of photography. A.V. (Rutherford, 2002 pp.16)

The knowledge gap left by this project:

While the feedback indicated that this process provided the participants with valuable insights, no analysis was attempted of the participants' photographs and reflective texts. No attempt was made to determine whether or how participants integrated these insights into their lives.

Testing whether Self-reflective photography works for others (2)

In 2016-17, a second series of workshops was carried out under the auspices of the *Centre for General Practice (Dorset)* in which eight GP trainees who had completed 18 months of hospital rotations and were starting the final 18 months of their training in GP surgeries. The workshop was a collaboration between the researcher and Dr. Emer Ford, Programme Director of the Centre for General Practice (Dorset).

The GP trainees were asked to keep their smartphones with them at all times and be prepared to record those scenes with which they had no logical, conscious or personal connection but to which their attention was intuitively attracted. The GP trainees were asked not to *think about* how to compose their photographs – but to allow their intuition to determine where to point the camera and the moment at which it ‘felt right’ to push the button.

Based on the results of the previous series (2000-02) of workshops, the GP trainees were also directed not to look for scenes or events that *illustrated* an emotional response (for example, not to photograph an elderly person sitting on a bench as a depiction of ‘loneliness’), but instead, to record only those scenes or juxtapositions of elements that intuitively attracted their attention.

After six weeks, the GP trainees were asked to select four or five of their photographs at which, when leafing casually (‘absent-mindedly’) through the photographs they had made, they found that they regularly paused – and to considered and reflected on the personal symbolic significance (if any) they found within each. The GP trainees were then asked to prepare a self-reflective commentary of 500-1000 words explaining what they believe they had learned about themselves as a result of this project – and how the photographs led to this discovery.

An analysis carried out on the results of this workshop (the photographs and reflective texts submitted, and the evaluation questionnaire completed by the GP trainees) provided robust evidence that, as a result of identifying, reflecting on and decoding the narratives embedded in their casual photographic ‘snapshots’, the willingness, the competence and the commitment of the GP trainees to engage in personal reflection had been enhanced (Rutherford et al., 2018).

The GP trainees who took part in this project also acknowledged it to be beneficial for both their personal and professional development. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Participants’ responses to Self-reflective photography workshop for GPs

Question	Low value	Intermediate value	High value
How interesting did you find the photography workshops?	0 participants	1 participant	7 participants
Overall, how useful did you find the photography workshops for personal development?	0 participants	1 participant	7 participants
Overall, how useful did you find the photography workshops for training to be a GP?	0 participants	1 participant	7 participants
To what extent do you think the photography workshops assisted you in developing your skills in reflection?	0 participants	0 participants	8 participants
To what extent do you think the photography workshops assisted you in understanding yourself?	0 participants	1 participant	7 participants

(Rutherford et al. 2018)

A co-authored paper (Rutherford et al., 2018) describing the results of this workshop was published in *BMJ Humanities*.

Based on the results of the two sets of workshops (2000-02 and 2016-17), the researcher identified the following trends or patterns in the response of participants:

1. That participants often see what comforts and reassures them (see what they wish to see), resulting in an optimistic or encouraging interpretation of their photographs.
2. That, when interpreting the possible significance of their photographs, participants may be unaware of – and therefore may be unable to recognise and consider – visual patterns and symbols (such as universal archetypes) whose ‘constellation of associations’ are not based on their conscious personal histories. As a result, participants’ interpretations may overlook potentially significant insights expressed in visual mytho-poetic forms.
3. Aligned with 1. and 2. above, that participants are sometimes oblivious to, or unable or unwilling to recognise representations of discomfiting thoughts and feelings (what Jung termed their ‘Shadow’) as doing so “involves recognising the darker aspects of the personality as present and real [which] therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance” (Jung, 2012 pp.158). It has been the researcher’s experience that participants rarely confront themselves with issues they are unprepared to acknowledge.
4. That it is sometimes only when we are prompted to put ‘what we think we think’ into words that we become conscious of, and so able to consider critically the implications of our beliefs and assumptions (Rutherford, 2012) and that this opportunity for critical reflection is an invaluable aid to enhanced Self-awareness.

The knowledge gap left by this project:

While this workshop provided evidence that *Self-reflective photography* was able to:

- i. provide the GPs with a means to gain valuable insight into both the nature and origin of their emotions which impact on their clinical decision making, and
- ii. assist them in establishing a dialogue with their emotions which enabled them to find a healthier balance between the demands of their personal and professional lives,

the results did not indicate whether or how participants integrated these insights into their lives.

VI Methodology

As distinct from *Practice-based research* in which the basis of the contribution to knowledge is a creative artefact, *Practice-led research* is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. *Practice-led research* leads to new understandings of practice (Candy, 2006) in which practice is not just the medium of the output but is integral (Biggs and Buchler, 2008 pp.5) to the means by which practice contributes to new knowledge and understandings. This *practice-led* project extends the researcher's previous efforts (the workshops of 2000-02 and 2016-17) to evaluate whether *Self-reflective photography* can be made accessible to others as a means to enhance their Self-knowledge.

1. The Research philosophy

The research philosophy adopted for this study is *Interpretivist*. As a study of lived experience, the project assumes that humans ascribe meaning to things, that humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things, and that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society (Blumer, 1969).

2. The Research Methodology

The objective of this study was to identify the way(s) in which participants used their photographs to access their intuition as a means to enhanced Self-awareness.

The Research Methodology adopted for this study was *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA), also called 'double hermeneutic' (Finlay, 2014 pp.127). In this interpretivist paradigm, the study explores human lived experience and the meanings which people attribute to their experiences (Shinebourne, 2011 pp.18) at a level of detail which participants might be unwilling or unable to do themselves (Smith, 2007 pp.21). IPA provides the researcher with an effective way in which to capture, analyse and explicate participants' efforts to make sense of their photographs as a source of insight into their orientations which may shape their decisions and behaviours. Smith et al. (2009) argue that, as a research methodology, IPA:

...is geared to learning both about the person providing the account and the subject matter of that account (Smith et al., 2009 pp.37).

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) explain that:

IPA aims at giving evidence of the participants' making sense of phenomena under investigation and, at the same time, document the researcher's sense making. The researcher thus moves between the emic and etic perspectives (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014 pp.11).

Rather than Giorgi's scientifically driven descriptive phenomenology (Finlay, 2014), the use of IPA enabled the researcher to interrogate the ways in which participants 'made sense' of their photographs – and to make sense of the participants' sense-making. IPA also enabled the researcher to explore, examine and explicate the ways in which the participants used *Self-reflective photography* in making sense of, and draw insights from, their self-referential interpretations of photographs produced by the 'auteur within their unconscious mind' and how they integrate these interpretations into their life narratives. In doing so, the researcher was careful not to minimise participants' lived experience in favour of analytical theories and assumptions and to [bracket] his own preconceptions about the phenomenon under investigation (Wall et al., 2004). To this end, the researcher identified the axioms on which this study is predicated at the beginning of this paper.

IPA draws on *Phenomenology*, *Hermeneutics* and *Idiography*. *Phenomenology* as a means to identify, externalise, reflect on, interrogate, analyse and understand, subjective lived experience; *Hermeneutics* as a means to interpret the expression of ideas as a way to uncover ‘orientations’ that participants may have hidden from themselves; and *Idiography* as a means to identify subjective, individual meanings to provide a way to disclose (uncover) how we make sense of major life experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

2.i. Phenomenology

Heidegger argues that *the appearance of a phenomenon* can have “concealed or hidden meanings” and that phenomenology is concerned with “examining something which may be latent or disguised” (Smith et al., 2009 pp.23-4) by being depicted in symbolic or allegorical forms. That, by externalising – and thereby providing us with a means to recognise and ‘work out’ these latent or disguised meanings”, the act of interpretation allows what is concealed or hidden from conscious awareness to come explicitly into sight (Heidegger, 1962 pp.189).

By exploring and examining the ways in which participants identify and interrogate the significance of their associations with the scenes and events they ‘choose’ to photograph, the primacy given to their interpretation of their perceptions and the meaning they attribute to this in their personal narratives places this research squarely in the phenomenological tradition. Consistent with this focus on the individual and the ways in which s/he makes sense of his/her lived experience, this project assumed that the value of the scene or event recorded is encoded in the symbolic significance of its appearance (how it is depicted) to the photographer.

In the present study, participants were asked to reflect on and consider the possible personal significance of the depiction of the elements and juxtapositions they had intuitively recorded in their photographs. The analysis of their responses to the questions put to them in the semi-structured individual interviews must consider the possibilities that:

- i. The surface meaning of their responses may be different from those which may ‘appear’ from below the surface,
- ii. That the researcher might be misled by apparent resemblances between the participant’s responses and those of other participants, and
- iii. The need to remain attentive to the possibility that, as a result of the participant’s reflections on his/her photographs, they arrive at a new perspective which enables or prompts the participant to reconsider something previously ‘seen’ differently.

2.ii. Hermeneutics

According to Smith et al. (2009), hermeneutics endorses the use of intuition in the interpretation of texts (or, in this case, the participants’ reactions to their photographs and the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ reactions to their photographs) to uncover the intentions or orientations of which the participants may be unconscious (Schleiermacher, 1998 pp.266). Hermeneutics is central to the way in which these ‘texts’ (the participants’ reactions to their photographs and the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ reactions to their photographs) will be interpreted. Contrary to Giorgi’s descriptive phenomenological method which seeks findings that can be replicated, in the hermeneutic variant of IPA:

participants are seen to make sense of x while researchers make sense of the participants’ sense making. Researchers are then advised to explore the semantic content and language used at a number of levels: descriptive (taking explicit meanings at face value), linguistic (e.g., noting metaphors), and conceptual (taking a more analytic approach). (Finlay, 2014 pp.127)

As Heidegger argued, beyond, or beneath, what they appear to show, the depiction of scenes and objects can also imply meanings that are concealed from conscious awareness, but which, under certain conditions, can come forth and present themselves to us (Moran, 2000 pp.230, cited by Shinebourne, 2011 pp.19). The research was designed to facilitate these conditions.

The notion of *the hermeneutic circle* was an important feature of the way in which the results were interrogated. In the context of the interpretation of the participants' reactions to their photographs, the researcher was sensitive to the vital and dynamic relationship between a single word – and the sentence in which the word is embedded, and in the context of the analysis and presentation of the Findings, the researcher was sensitive to the vital and dynamic relationship between the single extract – and the complete text (Smith, 2007 pp.5). As explained by Smith et al (2009):

[T]he meaning of a word only becomes clear when seen in the context of the whole sentence. At the same time, the meaning of the sentence depends upon the cumulative meaning of the individual words (Smith et al, 2009 pp.28).

This is consistent with Billig's (1987) claim that:

One must understand words in relation to the contexts in which they are being used. Thus, the same word, or even sentence, may possess different meanings when applied in different contexts (Billig, 1987 pp.121).

Likewise, Fromm (1951) reminds us that:

The particular meaning of the symbol in any given place can only be determined from the whole context in which the symbol appears, and in terms of the predominant experiences of the person using the symbol (Fromm, 1951).

2.iii. Idiography

The third feature of IPA is its interest in the particular rather than the general. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) explain that:

Idiography [...] refers to an in-depth analysis of single cases and examining individual perspectives of study participants in their unique contexts (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014 pp.8).

Whereas the nomothetic approach attempts to draw out general principles of human behaviour, *the ideographic approach* seeks to describe the richness of individual human experience and gain insight into the unique way in which each individual makes sense of the world.

In reflecting on their photographs, participants chose words and grammatical constructions which, to the best of their ability, described their reactions to and/or their associations with the content and appearance of their intuitively made photographs, as well as the thoughts and feelings prompted by their reactions and associations.

Likewise, based on his cultural and educational background and life experiences, the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the participants' comments were informed by a different constellation of associations with the participants' chosen words and grammatical constructions. The researcher committed to the effort to identify and [bracket] his preconceptions as well as their influence on his interpretation of these texts.

VII Research design

This project extends the theme of the researcher's previous experiments with *l'automatisme* in the creation of both photographs (Rutherford, 2002; 2009; 2014a; 2014b; 2018) and texts (Rutherford, 2019) by considering the *Self* as the 'auteur' of a body of work. This project explored photographs as a means to open a dialogue with the source of benevolent insight available within the unconscious (Osbeck and Held, 2014 pp.10) as a means to enhanced Self-awareness, leading – it was hoped – to an improved ability to make informed life decisions.

For this project, a group of participants was asked to 'unthinkingly' photograph those scenes, tableaux and juxtapositions to which their attention was intuitively attracted – but with which they had no conscious or logical connection. Participants were then encouraged to reflect on the thoughts, feelings and associations evoked by the resulting photographs as a means to describe, explore and explicate participants' lived experience of Self-reflection.

Questions for primary research

This research attempted to identify, explore and explicate:

1. What are the challenges in using *Self-reflective photography* in pursuit of enhanced Self-awareness
2. What insights (if any) might be identified by participants when reflecting on the content and compositions of their intuitively made photographs?
3. How would participants 'make sense of' and/or integrate these insights into their life narratives?

The results/outcome of the project were assessed on:

- i. Whether *Self-reflective photography* provided the participants with useful and accessible insights which contributed to their Self-knowledge
- ii. Whether the participants signalled an interest in continuing to practice *Self-reflective photography*

This chapter is organised as follows:

1. How the research was carried out
2. Issues considered and addressed in project design including ethical approval
3. The selection of participants
4. The data collected
5. The analysis of the data
6. The responsibility to [bracket] assumptions and preconceptions

1. How the research was carried out

Based on the axioms on which this study was predicated (page 2), this project explored the associations and reactions of five participants to their photographs of the scenes, events and juxtapositions to which their attention was intuitively attracted. The participants were asked to describe, explain and explore their reactions. The researcher analysed their descriptions, explanations and associations with the content and appearance of their photographs to identify, explore and explicate how the participants make sense of their lived experience.

An important advantage in using photography for this research is that using a camera is less likely to intimidate participants. As found by Craig (2009), making photographs:

may feel less threatening than engaging in other creative ventures, such as painting [...] where the individual may feel less [...] confident in sharing the end results, particularly if these are then judged against a set of technical and aesthetic standards. [...] Taking a poor photograph does not seem to carry the same emotional baggage (Craig, 2009 pp.21).

1 i. Participants attended three sessions

In the first session, participants met as a group with the researcher who explained the premise and organisation of the project. Participants were introduced to the idea that, by allowing our intuition to determine the content and composition of our photographs, the results may provide opportunities to enhance self-awareness. In this first session, to establish trust and rapport with the participants (Nicholls et al., 2005), the researcher shared his experiences of discovering insights in his Self-directed photography project (*The Shadow of the photographer* 1982-1998). At the conclusion of the first session, participants were asked to begin to make photographs in accordance with the guidance provided to minimise the influence of ‘compositional reflexes’ to produce ‘good’ or ‘attractive’ photographs.

In advance of the second group session, participants submitted one of their intuitively made photographs for discussion within the group. To select this photograph, participants were asked to browse ‘absent-mindedly’ through the photographs they had made to date, and to notice – and select – the photograph at which they found that they regularly paused (or paused longest).

During the session, participants described their photograph, including the framing of the image, the elements within the frame, the way these elements appear to relate to one another, and to explain or describe their associations with these features. Following each participant’s presentation of their photograph, the other participants were encouraged to comment on the photographs made by the others.

The third session was a semi-structured individual interview.

1 ii. Participants were asked to make photographs

With a camera we can unconsciously select a specific moment in time when what we see through the camera, feels right, reflects and captures, through the visual metaphor, that which is stirring and resonating within us (Wolf, 2024 pp.120).

To reduce the influence of their assumptions about the kind of scene or event ‘worthy’ of being photographed, assumptions about the kind of photographs the researcher wanted or expected, and the participants’ natural desire to produce ‘good’ or attractive photographs of these, participants were provided with a simple means to reduce:

- the influence of their ‘compositional reflexes’ over their photographs, and
- their inclination to consider their photographs as having therapeutic value.

To achieve this, participants were instructed:

- To carry a camera, smartphone or tablet with them at all times, and to be prepared to *notice* and record those scenes, events, juxtapositions and tableaux to which they felt their attention intuitively attracted (those which ‘resonated’ with their imaginations). The instructions to *notice* these scenes was intended to engage their *active imagination*.
- Not to look for scenes which illustrate emotional issues about which they may be consciously concerned. (While such scenes can provide valuable insights, the researcher has found that it is very difficult to avoid the influence of our ‘compositional reflexes’ when making photographs for the purpose of depicting an intentional objective.
- Not to *think about* the composition of their photographs, but to allow their intuition to determine the contents and composition of their photographs as well as the moment at which it ‘felt right’ to push the button. If they found it difficult to avoid the influence of their ‘compositional reflexes’, participants were advised to point their cameras or smartphones in the direction of the scene or tableau – but not to look at the screen when pressing the button. If they found it difficult to decide when to release the shutter, participants were advised to pick a number between 1 and 10 (or, between 1 and 100) start counting, and release the shutter at the chosen integer.



The instructions not to *think about* the composition of their photographs was based on both the effort to reduce the influence of their ‘compositional reflexes’ on the content and appearance of the resulting photograph as well as Swan-Foster’s guidance for accurately recording the elements and appearance of the scenes and tableaux to which their attention was attracted without “grasping too tightly, yet not letting it fade” (Swan-Foster, 2018).

- Not to use any filters or ‘apps’ to modify the photograph or to subsequently alter the image by cropping/reframing or modifying it using ‘apps’.

As with *Surrealism*, these instructions were designed to produce photographs whose elements and compositions were not determined or constrained by conscious intention (‘compositional reflexes’). In this way, it was expected that the resulting photographs might provide a canvas onto which the participants project meaning, and so foster a dialogue through which they might transform their ‘orientations’ (Swan-Foster, 2018).

Participants were also instructed to date on which each photograph was made and to note any significant events in their professional and/or personal lives at the time each photograph was made. This was to “consider the positions which are being criticised” (Billig, 1987 pp.121).

1 iii. Participants were asked to reflect on their photographs in writing

Following the second group session, participants were asked to prepare a brief Reflective Text in which they described and considered one of their photographs in response to five ‘prompts’ (not necessarily the photograph they presented in the second group session).

As part of the structured assistance provided to participants in recognising possible insights into their narratives for themselves or their situations in their intuitively-made photographs, the Jungian concepts offered for their consideration included the *Persona* (the ‘mask’ through which we relate to the world), the *Shadow* (aspects of ourselves we are unable or unwilling to acknowledge which are kept from conscious awareness), *Synchronicity* (coincidences in which a dream or thought [or an intuitively-made photograph] anticipates an event in the world, and which seems especially meaningful to their experiencers), and *Archetypal Images* (inherited patterns of thought ‘hard-wired’ into the psyche of all members of the human race).

One of the archetypal images Jung identified is *The Alchemist*: the magician who searches for the philosopher's stone – through which one turns base metals into gold and possess the secret of eternal life. This is a particularly apt metaphor for the practice of *Self-reflective photography* put forward here: a process through which we can transform metallic silver (the chemical base of the photographic process) into the gold of Self-awareness and acceptance. Other archetypal images participants were encouraged to watch out for are the *Circle or Mandala* (the recurring cycles of day/night and the changing seasons), *Mother* (the source of Life, compassion and refuge as in our metaphor of 'Mother' Nature), the *Sun* (often associated with the Father and the source of Life, power and vitality), and *The Wise Old Man*, (the Wizard, Sage or the wise and kindly grandfather, associated with power over nature).

To provide guidance on the issues or topics they were asked to consider in their Reflective texts, participants were provided with five 'prompts' to which they were asked to respond:

1. *To identify and describe the main visual elements in the photograph*

Participants were reminded that these 'main' elements can be either concrete (that tree or the girl in the blue dress), or implied (the fact that no one is looking at the dog) or they can be relationships created between the different objects in the scene (the fact that everyone is walking or looking in the same direction). Consider which elements seem to be the 'main characters' in the story. Look for the place within the image where your eye comes to rest, for it is here that we will often find the most significant element(s) in the image, and (perhaps) a clue to the 'story' to which our attention is being drawn.

2. *To describe what is going on in the photograph*

Participants were reminded not to attempt to interpret the image, just describe what is happening. (For example: 'The man is looking up to the woman', 'The boy is chasing the bird' or 'The girl is walking away') Just as in our dreams, the meaning or significance of the composition (or of any particular element within it) can often be deduced from a literal explanation of its obvious purpose or function. In other words, things 'mean' what they 'are': a road is the route to another place, a wall or fence is a barrier or boundary, and a bridge is a way of getting across a chasm.

3. *To describe, in a single sentence, the 'story' suggested by each photograph*

Participants were reminded not to confuse *the things in front of the lens* (the elements in the scene) with The Subject of the Photograph (the idea, memory or 'story' being told). Participants were also reminded that the 'story' does not have to be logical. (For example: 'The tree is going for a walk', or 'The boys in yellow hats are going on an adventure')

4. *To describe the particular 'moment' of the story depicted in the photograph*

Participants were reminded that, unlike our experience of time, photographs extract a 'thin chronological slice' from what we normally experience as part of a continuum. Participants were asked to consider whether the 'moment' recorded or depicted in each photograph shows what is *about to happen*, what *is happening*, or what *has just happened* to the 'characters' at the moment the photograph was made.

5. *To describe their circumstances at the time the photographs was made*

Participants were asked to describe the most significant event(s) or circumstances in their professional and/or family life at the time the photographs was made – and any parallels between these and the content or appearance of the photographs they made at that time

Participants were advised that their Reflective Texts did not have to be written in one sitting and that they may find it easier to record their thoughts on audio and then transcribe them.

In reflecting on their photographs, participants were encouraged to consider them both *individually* (as descriptions of, or commentaries on, discrete issues), and *as part of a group* to which, perhaps as a result of sharing one or more significant features, participants felt or intuited that the photograph ‘belongs’. This is consistent with the core notion of *the hermeneutic circle* which describes the vital and dynamic relationship between the part and the whole “and between the interpreter and the object of interpretation” (Shinebourne, 2011 pp.21).

While it is easy to misinterpret a single image, by examining a group of photographs to which you respond, you may find valuable clues in their similarities and/or in their recurring themes and motifs. Likewise, clues found in the individual details of a particular image may prompt a re-evaluation of broader themes found throughout all of your photographs (Rutherford, 2018).

For example, participants were reminded of the change in the depiction of trees in my photographs – from a dark and unruly power which threatened me (Figure 1) – to a source of protection (Figures 7 and 8). As explained in an early session with participants, this gradual change in my attitude towards my unconscious (which was symbiotically *facilitated* by and *documented* by this project) was only recognised when *considering the photographs as a group*.

To reduce their inclination to view their photographs through the conceptual lens of the therapeutic paradigm (that they have a ‘problem’ which requires ‘healing’), in all conversations with participants, the researcher was careful not to:

- Reinforce the expectation (held by some participants at the start of the project) that it would be a therapy session,
- Imply that there is significance to every photographs, and that its significance can be recognised if the participant ‘looks hard enough’,
- Endorse (even implicitly) the idea that visual symbols have specific ‘meanings’, but encouraged participants to use their intuition in interpreting the significance of individual elements and their juxtapositions, or
- Suggest interpretations of the participants’ photographs but restricted his interventions to the conversational prompts to draw participants’ attention to certain elements and encourage them to consider what their possible personal significance (if any) might be.

1 iv. Participants took part in final semi-structured individual interviews

Participants took part in semi-structured individual interviews, acknowledged to be the most popular method to elicit rich, first-person accounts of their experiences. Semi-structured interviews also allow for a dialogue in real time and allow for unexpected issues to arise which can be investigated in more detail with further questions (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014).

Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the imperative to maintain physical distance, it was not possible to conduct these semi-structured individual interviews in face-to-face meetings. These were conducted instead by video conference, a fact which may have influenced participants’ responses to an unknowable extent. This, as well as the absence of body language clues made it more difficult to identify non-verbal indicators which might have provided greater context for participants’ responses.

In advance of the semi-structured individual interviews, participants were asked to choose which of their photographs they would like to discuss. To select this, participants were asked to use the same process as was used to select the photograph discussed in the second session: to browse ‘absent-mindedly’ through the photographs they had made to date, and to notice – and select one of – those photographs at which they regularly seemed to pause.

These semi-structured individual interviews were recorded in order to enable the transcription of the semi-structured individual interviews. The resulting recordings were made secure.

The success of these semi-structured individual interviews in which the participants would be asked to discuss sensitive, personal issues required the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and secure their trust (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). This had been done early in the research process in which the researcher shared his experiences in his own Self-reflective photography project, as well as some of the personal insights he derived from this.

At the start of the individual interviews, participants were reminded that (as explained in the *Participant Information Sheet*):

- There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers; I am simply interested in your experiences, thoughts and reactions, expressed in your own words, of reflecting on your photographs.
- I will say relatively little, because this interview is about your thoughts and reactions.
- Some of the questions may seem self-evident; this is because I want to understand how you see and make sense of your experiences.
- Please take your time in thinking about, and answering, or responding to these questions.
- You have the right not to answer particular questions [As the analysis of data had begun, the deadline for participants to exercise their right to withdraw from the study and withdraw their personal data had passed].
- The information you provide (in both the reflective text and in this interview) will be used only anonymously. All photographs and all commentaries will be anonymised.
- All information (all photographs submitted and all audio recordings) will be kept on an external drive in a password-protected folder.

As per the ‘rules of engagement’ devised in consultation with project supervisors, a schedule for the semi-structured individual interviews was prepared with the following 12 questions or prompts. The questions devised for these interviews were used to guide the interview, but not to constrain it. (The rationale for these questions is provided in **Appendix V**.)

1. If you hadn’t taken this photograph, but instead, saw it used to illustrate a story, what would you guess the story was ‘about’? (What kind of story is it?)
2. What is/are the main visual element/s that tell you what this story is ‘about’?
3. As we discussed, we usually experience ‘moments’ as having a beginning, a middle, and an end (or an aftermath). What has just happened, is happening, or is about to happen?
4. Who (or what) is the person or character to whom is the story is ‘happening’? (*Bear in mind that the protagonist might not take human form*)
5. How does looking at this photograph make you feel? Sometimes phrased as *What emotions do you experience when looking at the photograph?*
6. If someone who knows you really well sent you this photograph as a way of sending you a message, what do you think s/he might be trying to tell you?
7. When reflecting on this photograph (including *the appearance* of the protagonist, *the situation or circumstances* in which the protagonist is depicted, and *the associations the scene evokes in you*), did it offer you an insight, and if so, what was this insight?
8. What did you do with this new insight?

9. What difference did it make (if any)?
10. What do you think of the value of the insights (if any) you found in reflecting on the photographs you made during this project?
11. How confident are you in your ability to recognise and understand the insights (if any) you found in the photographs you made during this project?
12. What do you think of the process as a means to improve Self-awareness?

As discussed in the section on *Idiography*, the purpose of asking participants to address these questions was to gather the information necessary to understand, not just the participant's *interpretation* of the resulting photographs – but how they contextualised their interpretations through the perceptual filter of their lives, experiences and personal circumstances. As Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) recommend:

Questions suitable for an IPA study may concentrate on exploring sensory perceptions, mental phenomena (thoughts, memories, associations, fantasies) and, in particular, [participants'] individual interpretations (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014 pp.10).

The primary objective of these semi-structured individual interviews was (as urged by Smith et al., 2009 pp.58) to “engag[e] deeply with the participant and their concerns”. As recommended by Smith and Osborn (2003), in these individual semi-structured interviews, the researcher began with questions prepared in advance (including any of the five topics not fully addressed in their reflective texts) but remained attentive to indications of the respondents' interests or concerns in order to follow these, where appropriate, with more probing questions. As Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) explain:

This involves listening attentively, trying to understand what is being said, negotiating meaning when things seem unclear, ambiguous or abstract, and constructing appropriate questions which help explore what is being said (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014 pp.10).

Within the formulation of the research questions are assumptions as to what the data can tell us, and in IPA, this includes “something about people's involvement in and orientation towards the world” (Smith et al., 2009 pp.47) – or, in this case, about aspects of themselves.

The sequence of the questions was intended to lead the participants from an initially ‘objective’ and descriptive view of the photograph – and then gradually ‘spiral in towards’ a view of the photograph in which they consider and reflect on the photograph that is explicitly ‘about’ them.

Questions 1-4 position the significance of the photograph outside of the participant. Questions 5-7 ask the participant to connect with the photograph. Questions 8-11 ask the participant to explain/describe whether – and how – they integrated this insight into their lives. This approach is consistent with Smith et al. (2009 pp.68) who note that, as the interview progresses from the descriptive to the affective, it may be appropriate to return to an earlier topic if the researcher believes that the respondent is now ready to “go deeper into it”.

It was the researcher's intention (with which the supervisors agreed) that this strategy would enable the participants' responses to reveal how they ‘made sense of’ the appearance, contents and composition of their photographs in reference to their circumstances or situation, what insight/s (if any) they had gained from this project and what they have done with these insights.

In analysing the resulting interview transcripts, the researcher endeavoured to recognise – and avoid – the temptation to interpret the participants' comments and their descriptions of their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and reactions through the prism of his own biases.

2. Issues considered and addressed in project design including ethical approval

Ethical approval for this project was granted on 14 December 2019.

An ethical research study involving participants requires *autonomy*, *beneficence* and *justice*.

Autonomy requires that participants are regarded as autonomous agents rather than simply subjects. To enable their informed consent, an accurate description of the objective and explanation of what will be involved in the project was distributed to participants to explain the purpose and possible benefits of the research. This includes a statement that participants are free to withdraw at any time prior to data analysis for any reason.

Beneficence requires that the research should seek to maximise benefits to subjects while minimising harm and risk arising from the research or data gathering. Based on previous workshops with 200+ participants, the researcher was confident that the minds of participants are unlikely to confront the participant with emotional issues s/he is unprepared to process.

Justice requires that individuals do not bear a disproportionate risk of harm while others reap rewards. It is not expected that any participant will bear a disproportionate risk of harm.

In the unlikely event that reflecting on their photographs caused any of the participants distress, contact details for the following were provided:

- Samaritans Telephone: 116 123 or email: jo@samaritans.org (available 24 hours)
- NHS Mental health support helpline 0300 123 5440 (available 24 hours)
- Any of the other services listed on the [NHS mental health helplines](#)
- In addition, participants were encouraged to contact their GP

The *Participant Information Sheet* and the *Participant Agreement Form* were approved on 17 December 2019 by the BU Research Governance Adviser.

Participants were provided with a copy of the *Participant Information Sheet* which clearly explained the purpose of the project, how the project was to be carried out, what participants would be required to do, and confirmed their right to withdraw from the project for any reason prior to the commencement of data analysis (Smith et al., 2009 pp.54).

Informed consent was given by participants in signing the *Participant Agreement Form* in which they acknowledged that they:

- i. Have read and understood the description / explanation of the project,
- ii. Are willing to participate in the three sessions,
- iii. Understand that audio recordings will be made of the semi-structured individual interviews, and that these recordings will be made solely for the purposes of transcription, after which these recordings will be deleted,
- iv. Agree to allow the researcher to use anonymised transcriptions of these semi-structured individual interviews, anonymised versions of their photographs, anonymised versions of their reflective texts as well as the researcher's analysis of these for the purposes of this research and for the subsequent dissemination of the results of the project in, but not limited to exhibitions, publications, and public addresses.

As the project is not intended to terminate with the completion of the PhD, participants were informed that the data will be retained for subsequent use for the dissemination of the research results via publications, conferences, exhibitions etc., after which the data will be destroyed.

3. The selection of participants

It is acknowledged that those willing to participate in this research were likely to have a pre-existing belief in the value of improved Self-awareness, and so were self-selecting. It is further acknowledged that, as a result of recruiting participants by means of posters distributed on the Talbot campus of Bournemouth University, respondents were also likely to be familiar with (or even sympathetic to) the operation of academic research projects, and capable of a higher level of articulate written expression than the general population.

The following were excluded from participation:

- Those younger than 18
- Those with whom the researcher has an existing personal relationship
- Those over whom the researcher is in a position of power or influence
- Those unable to give informed consent
- Undergraduate students

3 i. Recruitment of participants for the Pilot phase of the study

For the Pilot, two participants were recruited who were prepared to commit to the duration of the project (2-3 months) and to the effort required. These two participants were recruited through posters (**Appendix VII**) put up around the Talbot campus of Bournemouth University in which the nature of the study was clearly indicated.

3 ii. Recruitment of participants for the Full study

As a consequence of the closure of the campus due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, it was not possible to recruit participants through posters on the Talbot campus of Bournemouth University. Instead, participants were recruited through:

- Two announcements on LinkedIn (the researcher does not use any other social media platform) which were 'shared' by the members of his professional network
- Two announcements on the BU staff home page
- An announcement on the BU Research blog
- An announcement on the PGR Peer Support page
- And via the social networks (snowball sampling) of those who expressed interest in participating in the study who were asked to disseminate information about the study.



The study was carried out with a total of five participants.

The use of a small number of participants is endorsed by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014):

samples in IPA studies are usually small, which enables a detailed and very time-consuming case-by-case analysis (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014 pp.9)

and by Smith et al. (2009):

[W]e would suggest that between three and six participants can be a reasonable sample size for a student project using IPA. Indeed many studies by experienced IPA researchers now have numbers in this range. This should provide sufficient cases for the development of meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants, but not so many that one is in danger of being overwhelmed by

the amount of data generated. In effect, it is more problematic to try and meet IPA's commitments with a sample size which is 'too large', than with one that is 'too small'. (Smith et al, 2009 pp.51)

Consistent with the advice for a “fairly homogenous” sample (Smith et al., 2009 pp.49), all five participants in this study were female. Two in their thirties, three in their fifties. Four were White European, one was Black African. All five were involved in higher education. Three were postgraduate research students (one in computer engineering, two in health care), one was a lecturer in the Humanities, and one worked in university administration.) One (also a White European middle-aged female who works in business) withdrew due to constraints on her time.

4. The data collected

The data included:

- the participants' photographs,
- their written reflections (the Reflective Texts), and
- the transcription of participants' responses during semi-structured individual interviews.

As argued by (Smith et al., 2009 pp.40), “[s]uccessful data collection strategies require *organization, flexibility and sensitivity*”.

To ensure *organisation*, the same three categories of data was provided by all participants and all participants were asked to respond to the same questions in preparing their reflective texts and the same questions or prompts in the semi-structured individual interviews.

To ensure *flexibility*, participants were free to choose both *what* they photographed and *how they 'framed' or composed their photographs*. In both the group discussions and the semi-structured individual interviews with participants, the researcher remained attentive to indications of the respondents' apparent interests or concerns and was prepared to pursue these issues arising from participants' comments.

To ensure *sensitivity*, the researcher endeavoured to recognise indications of anxiety arising from participants' comments or responses. This is also an important ethical consideration.

4.i. Data protection

All identifying information, all photographs created and submitted by participants and all audio recordings were kept on a password-protected drive.

On the completion of the project, anonymised research data will be stored on the BU Online Research Data Repository BORDaR. (Ethics checklist <https://ethics.bournemouth.ac.uk/Login>)

The researcher committed to pixilating recognisable faces in the photographs submitted by the participants. Among the photographs submitted by the participants, the only face turned to the camera is the man in the photograph by EF (page 138) who is unrecognisable. It was therefore not considered necessary to pixilate faces. The photographs will be retained for ten years for the purposes of publication and scholarly presentation, after which they will be destroyed.

In the Information Sheet distributed to all participants (**Appendix IX**), it was explained that:

- Participants have the right not to answer particular questions and the right to withdraw from this study and withdraw their personal data at any time up to the point at which data analysis has begun.
- The confidentiality of information supplied by participants will be respected. All participants' data (photographs and all commentaries) will be anonymised.

- All information (all photographs created and submitted by participants and all audio recordings) will be kept in a password-protected folder and will be deleted upon the completion of the project.

5. The analysis of the data

The analyses of the data (the participants' description of their efforts to identify and reflect on the possible significance of the scenes and events they had 'chosen' to photograph) moved through a series of levels. This began with an empathic annotation of the transcripts to capture the emotional and expressive dimension of participants' description and explanation of their associations with the content of their photographs, then to a more interpretative approach to the data, and finally to a more abstracted and conceptual analysis – while remaining grounded in the participants' own words (Smith, 2007 pp.22) to capture rich and detailed personal accounts (Smith et al., 2009 pp.40) of their lived experience of responding to their photographs.

The data (the transcripts of the semi-structured individual interviews) were analysed using In vivo coding (also known as *verbatim coding*, *literal coding*) in a manner that was both descriptive and empathic (Smith, 2007 pp.21).

Manning (2017) explains that:

In vivo coding is a form of qualitative data analysis that places emphasis on the actual spoken words of participants. This form of coding can be especially helpful when researchers interact with participants from a particular culture or microculture to help highlight how those participants use specific words or phrases in their interactions that might not otherwise be understood when using other forms of coding. In vivo coding is championed by many for its usefulness in highlighting the voices of participants and for its reliance on the participants themselves for giving meaning to the data (Manning, 2017 pp.1).

Based on Bradley and Simpson (2014 pp.9) and Smith et al. (2009 pp.79-80), the transcripts of the semi-structured individual interviews were analysed via the following iterative process:

- i. The researcher read (and re-read, and re-read) the transcripts of the semi-structured individual interviews to familiarise himself with the data, keeping an open mind about what was being expressed. The central concern in this initial analysis ('first pass') took things at face value and highlighted the objects which (appeared to) give structure to the participants' thoughts and experiences (Smith et al., 2009 pp.84).
- ii. Following these repeated readings, the researcher's initial thoughts and reactions to the data were recorded.
- iii. The researcher then noted what appeared to be the essential information from the interview transcripts and notes were made to summarise passages which contain interesting or potentially significant pieces of information.
- iv. The data were thematically coded to identify emergent patterns or themes and a Table of Superordinate and Subordinate themes (page 196) was produced.
- v. The researcher then conducted a cross-case analysis of the identified themes for each individual, interrogating these for convergence and divergence (Smith, 2004). Based on these themes, summaries of potentially significant information were used to develop a structural frame which illustrates the relationships between themes. These themes were then (in consultation with the supervisory team) arranged into clusters based on shared characteristics, and then grouped together to enable the identification of major themes used to select appropriately illustrative quotes from participants.
- vi. A narrative was devised to lead the reader through the themes identified in the analysis.

- vii. The researcher prepared a reflection on his own perceptions, conceptions and processes, and reflected on conclusions which either reinforced or contradicted his assumptions as informed by prior experience and expertise.

Following the analysis of the semi-structured interviews of the Pilot phase of the project and (as per Smith et al., 2009 pp.66) the questions asked, the sequence in which they were asked and the nature of the information offered by participants in response these questions were reviewed in consultation with the project supervisors. This led to minor revisions made to the questions posed, the language used and the sequence in which they were posed for the Full Study.

As recommended by Shaw (2010, as cited by Bradley and Simpson, 2014 pp.12), the researcher maintained a reflective diary throughout the duration of the study as a part of an audit trail. The diary was used by the researcher to reflect on his evolving understanding of the data and the IPA process, from initial data collection through to the final thematic structure.

6. The responsibility to [bracket] assumptions and preconceptions

According to Gibson (2018), both Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1989) emphasised that the researcher cannot help but approach research with existing preconceptions, values and attitudes. It is therefore necessary to be aware of these and their potential to shape the interpretation of the results (Gibson 2018, 91) and so lead the researcher away from the essence of the phenomenon (Smith et.al., 2009 pp.14).

Two sets of such assumptions and preconceptions were identified:

As noted previously, phenomenology and *idiography* both have strong roots in psychology and psychotherapy (Shinebourne, 2011). Accordingly, it is therefore important for the researcher to recognise, guard against and [bracket] the influence of the ‘therapeutic premise’ (that the photographs may offer an insight into a ‘problem’) on the nature of the research objectives, the collection and analysis of data, and the interpretation of the results.

As recommended by Smith (2007 pp.7), prior to undertaking the analysis of the data, the researcher identified those of his preconceptions of which he was aware. These are reflected in the six axioms listed on page 2. The researcher acknowledged that other preconceptions may become apparent only when engaging closely with the materials being analysed. Preconceptions and assumptions of which the researcher became aware when analysing the data are identified and discussed in **VIII Findings and discussion**.

VIII Findings and discussion

This chapter explores the themes that emerged from the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the transcripts of the five semi-structured individual interviews in which the participants made an effort to: make sense of what they had chosen to photograph, identify and reflect on the insights they drew from their interpretations of their photographs, and to explain how they integrated these insights into their understanding of their lives and experiences. The chapter also describes the researcher's efforts to make sense of these results.

According to Smith et al. (2009), implicit within the formulation of IPA research questions are assumptions about what the data can provide. In this study, in addition to insights into the participants' beliefs about the world around them (Smith et al., 2009 pp.47), it was assumed that the data (the transcripts of their efforts to make sense of their intuitively made photographs) might also offer insights into their orientations towards themselves of which they had been previously unaware. As explained by photographer Duane Michals:

I use photography to help me explain my experiences to myself. (Michals, 1977)

In advance of the interviews, participants were asked to choose one of their photographs as the focus for discussion. To select this photograph, they were asked to browse 'absent-mindedly' through the photographs they made during the project and to notice and select the photograph at which they found that they regularly paused (or paused longest). This was the same process employed in selecting the photographs discussed in the second group session (page 52).

The interview transcripts were interrogated for meaning in an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007) in much the same way as the researcher interrogated the photographs in the *Shadow...* project (1982-98) described previously. The researcher gave himself license to look, not for the literal meaning of participants' comments, but for what the participants' comments appeared to reveal about their associations with the elements and juxtapositions recorded in their photographs and the meanings (the 'mytho-poetic truths') they made of these associations.

The semi-structured individual interviews of the participants were held in August 2020 (AB and CD) and January 2022 (EF, IJ and KL). These dates are relevant because the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns affected the participants' emotional states.

This chapter is organised as follows:

1. The personal insights recognised and described by the participants, and the symbolic significance of the visual elements (the scenes, events and juxtapositions) identified by participants as the source of, or which provided the context for, these insights
2. The difficulties experienced by participants in recognising the personal insights suggested by the visual content/appearance of their photographs
3. The participants' reactions/responses to their insights
4. Whether the role of the researcher as a guide in the participants' process of Self-reflection contributed to their ability to recognise and draw insights from their photographs
5. The participants' comments on the project and its value in encouraging and assisting them in greater Self-knowledge
6. The researcher's reflections on the results of the project
7. Recommendations for future workshops

1. The personal insights recognised and described by participants

1 i. The theme of ‘escape’

Asked to identify what is going on in their intuitively-made photograph, all participants identified variations of ‘escape’ – either *escaping from*, *getting away to*, or, in one case, *disappearing from* – as central to their interpretations.

AB [That I’m] Stuck in time, like, you know, where you’re stuck or stuck, stuck in time, stuck in time.

(Throughout the interview, AB often used ‘you’ when it appeared that she was referring to herself or her situation.)

CD It’s sort of like, it might give me the impression of [...] going somewhere physically as well as metaphorically.

CD identified this destination as “somewhere that’s hot or a foreign country”. This sounds like ‘escape’ to a tropical idyll. CD also identified that “sunrise and sunset moments [...] reminds me of the constant change, constant change that we’re in [...] an absolutely beautiful thing that will be gone”. But she emphasised that their transience is “a positive thing”.

EF explained that the two figures in her photograph (which are proxies for her feelings and her situation) give her a sense of being ‘grounded’ while they also ‘dream of escape’.

EF I’m going to say ‘escape’... but I also feel quite grounded looking at it.

I’m looking at those people... They’re making me feel grounded and not unhappy, so not needing to escape from their situation particularly – but perhaps just *dreaming* [said with emphasis] of escape. I’m in my head, [...] I’m looking at it like ‘escape’. [W]ith the sea and the view in the background and the sunset and everything... It feels like it’s taking me away. It’s a story of real people and their story of life, I think [...] possibly interwoven with a certain element of escapism. [...] there’s loads of ways to escape from life, even if it’s just in your mind

KL suggested that the woman on the station platform is “fading [and] disappearing” (a form of escape).

KL The woman [...] is kind of fading into the poster [and] disappearing [...] in front of people to become part of the surroundings around her, but not being noticed,

I think the photograph is... [...] kind of lonely, but not necessarily sad. Kind of solitary. I guess it’s just a feeling, a little bit of a feeling of alienation [...] like you don’t belong in the situation you’re in.

(Throughout the interview, KL also used ‘you’ when referring to herself or her situation.)

Unlike the other participants, IJ’s interpretation of her photograph indicated that she and her family are headed *towards* – rather than *escaping from* – “chaos”.

IJ We’re going into the chaos. Towards that... erm... towards that... that... that unsettling sky, [I]n the photograph, it appears that we are going into it, we’re going towards it.

- 1 ii.** The visual symbols (the significant elements, scenes, events and juxtapositions) identified by participants as the source of, or context for these insights

In explaining how the visual elements led them to interpret the scenes and events as references to, or depictions of, ‘escape’, all participants identified symbols for modes of travel (paths, journeys, the sea, roads, train travel).

AB described the scene depicted in her photograph as a path.

- AB Well, again, like I said, obviously it’s a picture of a path and paths depicts a journey, you know, and it’s either ‘you’re going forward’, ‘you’re going backward’ or ‘you’re just stuck’.

AB also observed that, as the path is seen from above (looking straight down), this path did not offer any indication of a way forward.

And because this picture is not showing much more of going forward or backward, it’s so close to the ground, you know, like the way the picture was taken, it’s so close to the ground that you can’t see anything else other than that. So that’s what I interpreted to mean.

CD described the scene recorded in her photograph as a moment in a journey.

- CD To be honest, there’s something about a journey for me. [...] Yeah, yeah. Definitely the beginning of something with the sun rising and the beginning of something. I just see it as dawn. [...] There is something about ‘this is a moment in the journey’ rather than the final destination. [K]nowing that this is only here for a moment, that’s kind of a journey as well, isn’t it? That’s sort of the journey of life, the more metaphorical journey. So, this is one part of that bigger journey.

CD’s use of “just” (“I just see it as dawn”) suggests that her interpretation of the photograph as depicting a ‘beginning’ may be the only one her imagination will permit. She saw the sun as “rising”, and so a symbol for “the beginning of something”. She identified the palm trees as signifying “being somewhere hot or foreign” and so (despite the fact that there are palm trees here in Bournemouth) these are further references of travel as an ‘escape’.

And the fact that the little palm trees there as well. It’s sort of like, it might give me the impression of being somewhere that’s hot or a foreign country or going somewhere physically as well as metaphorically.

EF explained that her photograph has “two parts”¹⁹: the people who keep her (and her inclination to escape?) ‘grounded’ – and the sea which she felt was ‘taking her away’. In her repeated references to these two ‘sides’ of her photograph, EF gave the impression of being torn between the choices they represent: the comfort and security of being “grounded” in “real life” – and the prospect of escape offered by the open sea.

- EF I think it reflects two things to me [...] It’s almost like a picture of two parts, I think. I’m in my head, I feel like I’m looking at it like ‘escape’, but [...] the people keep me grounded in real... I’m going to say ‘real life’. And the sea. It feels like it’s taking me away.

EF revealed (perhaps unintentionally) that the two figures which keep her “grounded” are proxies for her and her feelings about her situation.

¹⁹ Bisecting the frame (whether vertically, horizontally or diagonally) into two equal parts suggests conflict or tension as the two parts compete for dominance.

EF They're both overweight – aren't we all?

Seeing others as proxies for ourselves onto whose appearance and actions we project our feelings and motives is a well-established feature of the mytho-poetic operation of the subconscious in dreams and fantasies:

The [...] proxy actually shows the behavior and emotions in question (Wangh, 1962 pp.468)

EF's reference to the weight of the proxies may also have significance for her (although she did not explicitly acknowledge this):

The character who represents the dreamer [...] usually possesses a body image [similar to that of the dreamer] (Revonsuo, 2005 pp.207)

EF The people in the picture look very normal but with life's burdens I think, so... it's like they're, they're content, almost with their lot but they could have been better. It's a story of real people [...] and their story of life [...] interwoven with a certain element of escapism. And the sea. It feels like it's taking me away.

In addition to the “two parts” of the photograph, EF also identified that there is a physical (and symbolic) barrier between these two parts.

EF And the other element, of course, is the people but that fence kind of draws... It's not the fence, whatever... maybe it is a fence... barrier, yeah that's kind of drawing... leading me to the people [who] kind of stand out [but] they're also quite separate. I don't know why.

EF did not appear to notice, and so did not acknowledge or consider either a) the choice implied by these “two parts” (which, her neatly bisected composition would imply holds equal attraction for her) or b) the significance of the barrier which separate the ‘real people’ who keep her grounded – from the sea which feels like it's ‘taking her away’.

IJ identified ‘the road’ as the “predominant” visual element and the means to go home.

IJ [T]he road in the photograph is so predominant. And so, therefore, [...] the road is going somewhere, I know for a fact that we were going home – back to where we came from, we are not going towards a new road [we're] going away from it.

Although IJ initially identified the road as the “predominant” element of her photograph, it quickly became apparent that the colours in the sky were the most significant feature in her effort to ‘make sense’ of what is going on in her photograph.

IJ The contrast [...] and the unusualness of the colours doesn't look like a sunset to me. It looks like, it looks like... erm... like... something really bad that's happening behind the clouds. [It] looks like there's a huge problem behind the clouds, like, there's an explosion.

IJ acknowledged that there must be a rational, scientific explanation for the colours in the photograph, but she also recognises that, in her “emotional mind”, these strong colours and strong contrasts have symbolic significance for her.

IJ I know that this is a picture, and I know that chances are that there's some kind of thing going on with the phone that has picked up these strong colours and the strong contrasts – but my emotional mind is looking at that and saying, ‘*There's something not quite right*’.

Throughout the interview, IJ repeatedly alternated the locus and meaning of the “explosion” in the sky between a) the danger posed to the Earth’s climate:

Because I have knowledge of a deteriorating planetary environment, I am concerned. [...] But we’re going in that direction and we’re going towards that bit, like the ‘Don’t look up’. [IJ refers to the 2021 apocalyptic political satire *Don’t Look Up* by Adam McKay]

And b) recent traumas in her personal/family life:

I know for a fact that we were going home [IJ refers to the direction in which the car was travelling]. And it just... symbolic that the sky where we are going home – in the direction [of] home – is on fire. It’s symbolic to me to see that we’re going into the chaos. Towards that... erm... towards that... that... that unsettling sky.

Asked to identify the protagonist in the story, IJ replied:

The [long pause] victim [long pause] is us. It’s me taking the picture [it’s] me, looking at the sky and not being able to effect change and actually... actually...

She then drew a parallel between the two interpretations:

I thought it was... I thought it was quite symbolic that we were going to go to chaos, go into chaos and we are, on a wider scheme, on a human’s, humanity scheme we are going in that direction, in any case, regardless that my family is going home. We as a species are also going towards the chaos and I think that’s one of the reasons why this picture, particularly spoke to me. [...] It could be the premise to something that’s *going* to happen in the future. That’s my thought.

KL’s photograph was made in a train station.

KL The picture shows people waiting to take a journey. While standing on a platform waiting for a train, a woman disappears into an advertisement while no one around her notices.

While KL considered the woman to be the central figure in ‘the story’ she sees in the photograph, the essential detail which led her to her interpretation is that no one around her seems to notice that she is disappearing, or fading, into the advertisement.

Okay, so I think, if you’re looking at this picture, your eyes are kind of drawn to [her] because she is... is the centre of... of the, erm, the photograph. However, I think, also, the way the other people in the photo are not looking at her, they don’t seem to see her at all. They’re all looking in different directions, so there’s not one person... well, I guess the guy with the backpack looks to be looking at our direction, but then [...] he’s looking down, so you get the sense he doesn’t see her either, so, I think this kind of gives the idea that, that she’s there being seen by you, as a viewer, but not by anybody else around her.

The disappearance of the woman while no one seems to notice is an example of what Barthes (1984) termed a *punctum*: a detail whose meaning is central to her interpretation of the photograph but which, due to the intuitive manner in which the scenes was ‘chosen’ and the photograph composed, was unlikely to have been noticed at the time the photograph was made.

In noting that ‘the guy with the backpack is looking in our direction’, KL revealed (perhaps unintentionally) that the female figure is a proxy for her and for her feelings about her situation.

KL suggested that, in addition to disappearing, the female figure (the proxy for KL) is also ‘losing her three-dimensionality’.

there is still [...] some definition of her as a 3D object, but [...] she seems to be halfway between becoming flattened and being three dimensional

Summary

Based on Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the descriptions above would appear to be conventional manifestations of the underlying conceptual metaphor of ‘life as a journey’ and give rise to a diverse set of image schemas which, according to Kövecses (2010) are:

structures with very little detail filled in. For example, the ‘motion’ schema [...] gets filled in with more detail [of the] journey: we may have a traveler, a point of departure, a means of travel (e.g., a car), a travel schedule, difficulties along the way, a destination, a guide, and so on (Kövecses, 2010 pp.44).

According to Gibbs (2020 pp.15), the metaphor of ‘life as a journey’ might be further individualised with the inclusion of any of the following ‘meaning-full’ symbolic elements, some of which feature in the participants’ interpretations of their photographs:

travellers	people leading a life
motion along the way	leading a life
destination(s)	purpose(s) of life
different paths to one’s destination(s)	different means of achieving one’s purpose(s)
distance covered along the way	progress made in life
locations along the way	stages in life
guides along the way	helpers or counsellors in life

As noted, the interviews were conducted during the period in which the country was dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and the widespread fear of contagion. Although detailed knowledge of the mental health issues experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic is still scarce, early research has established that “the Covid-19 pandemic has affected women more than men, both as frontline workers and at home” (Thibaut and van Wijngaarden-Cremers, 2020 pp.1).

This same study identified that fear (for one’s own health and that of those for whom they felt responsible) was a particular concern among women, leading to “physical exhaustion, fear, emotional disturbance, and sleep disorders”. Although it cannot be asserted with certainty, this may explain, or contribute to an explanation for, the recurring theme of ‘escape’ and the (subliminal?) urge or desire it may represent. The only participant to explicitly reference Covid-19 saw in her photograph a depiction of her inability to escape an impending catastrophe.

2. The difficulties experienced by participants in recognising the personal insights suggested by the visual content/appearance of their photographs

The participants experienced various difficulties with (what appeared to the researcher to be) the relevant personal insights suggested by the scenes, events, elements and/or juxtapositions they had ‘chosen’ to record in their photographs. These included:

- i. difficulties in accepting that their photograph might contain such an insight,
- ii. difficulties in recognising (noticing) or acknowledging (being willing to confront the implications of) this insight, and
- iii. difficulties in articulating this insight (explaining it in words) to their own satisfaction.

2 i. Participants' difficulty in accepting that their photograph might contain such an insight

At the start of the project, AB had been sceptical of the premise that intuitively made photographs could provide valuable insights. Although she followed the instructions to make photographs of scenes and moments with which she had no personal connection, she acknowledged her discomfort in having made photographs which she described as devoid of consciously chosen elements of personal relevance.

AB It's quite weird to me the fact that I could even take [this picture], if you're looking at the picture, [there] is really nothing about it.

When asked to consider the photograph as a message offered to her by someone who knows her well, AB admitted that, at the start of the project, she would have dismissed the prospect that such a photograph (one devoid of elements of personal relevance) could possibly offer (or, that the camera could be put in the service of the subconscious to offer) a personally relevant insight.

AB Well, I just would say if, before this whole project started, someone sends this, you know... [I would have asked them] '*Are you out of your mind or something?*'

Early in the interview, AB expressed surprise that photographs made intuitively ("without me knowing it") could describe symbolically something below the horizon of her conscious awareness to which her unconscious was trying to bring to her attention.

AB [T]his picture was one of the very first pictures, if not even the very first I took after the initial meeting, and [it] went without me knowing it, you know? Weeks later, stuff happened and I just realized things are not going as it should be, and looking back at the photo, I wish I'd known prior, you know, what kind of emotions pictures can communicate, you know, what kind of [...] experience or what you're really going through in your head.

AB's distress may be explained by Balter (1999) who argued that:

This artistically-generated reality is not hypothetical, or assumed for the moment. It is experiential: a reality felt to exist. The artistically constructed world has its own subjective validity for the beholder, even though he is aware that it is imaginary and not concretely real (Balter, 1999 pp.1296).

2 ii. Participants' difficulties in recognising (noticing) or acknowledging (being willing to confront the implications of) this insight

While CD acknowledged (or guessed?) that her photograph depicted a "metaphorical journey", her interpretations of the symbols in the photograph remained very superficial:

CD Possibly something to do with a metaphorical journey. [...] going somewhere physically as well as metaphorically. I'm not really sure. I think there's definitely something about the sun. Light in the dark, so it's the moment when things that have been dark have become light. There's definitely some hope in there for me – the light in the darkness.

Although CD's comment that the photograph depicts a metaphorical journey appears to be tentative ("Possibly something to do with..."), her recognition that ("There's definitely some hope in there for me") acknowledges that this is her journey.

Throughout the interview, CD's comments regularly described the elements of her photograph in terms of their literal – rather than their (possible) allegorical – nature.

- CD Possibly connected to the idea of the sunrise or the sunset, which is, of course, connected to the passage of time over the end of the day or the beginning of a day.

Having volunteered to take part in a project which proposed to identify and explore the personal significance of the scenes to which her attention was intuitively drawn, CD (a woman in her late 30s) was surprised and confused (which may indicate a degree of resistance to acknowledging and considering the implications of her interpretation) that a) her photograph led her to think about herself and b) that the ‘story’ in the photograph might be about a woman in her late 30s.

- CD I keep thinking about myself for some reason, maybe reflecting on it. So, yeah, maybe a woman in her late 30s. I don’t know, I don’t know. That’s a difficult one.

EF also hesitated to engage with the possible significance of the elements she had ‘chosen’ to include in her photograph. Throughout the project, it was clearly and repeatedly explained that, to gain insight into those aspects of themselves that remain hidden from conscious awareness, participants would be asked to ‘read into’ the content of their photographs. Despite this, EF initially claimed to be reluctant to “read too much into” her photograph.

- EF I could see lots of things, I think, but I don’t [know] whether I’d be trying to read too much into if I said further than that.

Efforts to draw out further information from EF about what she could see in her photograph elicited only the words “happy and and... acceptance. Hmm. Um...”

IJ initially hesitated (was initially unwilling or unable) to consider or to articulate the possibility that the scene depicted in her photograph might have any personal relevance, but repeatedly insisted that it referred only to external events (a natural catastrophe or the effect of mankind’s actions on the climate) – the nature and cause of which are being kept from the public.

(The theme of ‘conspiracies’: that ‘the truth is being kept from the public’ and which prevented humankind from ‘taking control’ over events became a recurring theme in IJ’s comments.)

- IJ I would imagine that the story is about the beginning of a nuclear holocaust.

Later in the interview however, IJ began, gradually and with difficulty, to concede that the “something not quite right” represented by the vivid colours in her photograph may have personal relevance.

Asked to explain the story depicted in her photograph, KL began by suggesting that there are two possible interpretations: as fiction and... but was unable to name this alternative interpretation. She made an initial effort to do so, but (to avoid using any term that would acknowledge its possible non-fiction personal significance?) stopped herself and insisted that the photograph should be seen solely as ‘fiction’.

- KL Well, actually, I could see two different ways of looking at it, erm; it could be, it could be fiction, but it also, you could also use this photograph I think for, erm... A... kind of a... yeah, I don’t know... [She laughed nervously] Okay, let’s just say it’s fiction.

It is widely acknowledged that fiction (especially in the form of metaphor) can invoke “an affective (as opposed to a cognitive) understanding” Rolfe (2002 pp.89) and therefore reveal a psychological truth (Mitchell, 1972). Foucault (1980 pp.193) argued that the ‘lies’ of fiction enable us to find a truth which resonates with our inner feelings. Picasso put it succinctly: “art is a lie that helps us see the truth” (Averett, 2012). As explained in the next section, the figure of the disappearing woman in KL’s photograph represented just such a psychological truth for her.

2 iii. Participants' difficulties in articulating this insight to their own satisfaction

The interview transcript documents IJ's struggle to make sense of the unusual appearance of the colours in the sky. She began by insisting that the vivid colours may be the result of some unknown mechanical operation of her smartphone. She then expresses (recognises and acknowledges) her dissatisfaction with this explanation ("I've taken pictures before and I've never seen this kind of picture outcome"). She then made her way – slowly and tentatively – to the acknowledgement that her "emotional mind" sees a "symbolic" significance to the image: that the sky in the direction of her "home is on fire".

IJ Logically speaking, [...] it could be... that... I mean... it could be that this is... erm... erm... a pictorial phenomenon through the through the telephone [referring to the smart phone with which she made the photograph] has picked up something, and [...] has transposed it in a different way. Well, you know. I... I've taken pictures before and I've never seen this kind of picture outcome.

Now... I know that this is a picture, and I know that chances are that there's some kind of thing going on with the phone that has picked up these strong colours and the strong contrasts... but, my emotional mind is looking at that and saying 'There's something not quite right' in the atmosphere for this picture to have been created, regardless of my iPhone. [...] And it is just... symbolic that the sky [...] in the direction that we are going home is on fire. It's symbolic to me to see that.

Summary

After several years in commercial industry exploiting – and then several years in academia exploring and explaining – the applications and implications of what Gibbs (2020) describes as mankind's "bred-in-the-bone impulse to think in allegorical ways" (Gibbs, 2020 pp.17), I had assumed that most thoughtful individuals – and especially those interested in Self-awareness – would be capable of recognising (noticing), acknowledging (confronting) and (to varying degrees of accuracy) articulating their associations with visual symbols. As a consequence, in the conception and design of this project, although I had recognised, I had not adequately bracketed, my foundational assumption that, in reflecting on the personal relevance of the visual metaphors they had 'chosen' to document, these educated individuals would be willing and able to interrogate their associations with these symbols, and to describe their responses to these.

During the individual interviews, it became apparent that some participants struggled to see past the most superficial interpretations of the visual symbols in their photographs and to recognise (notice) and acknowledge (confront) the implications of the insights they offer. This may be an example of the "considerable resistance" in acknowledging uncomfortable aspects of their personality identified by Jung (1976 pp.145), and so prevent them from seeing these aspects of themselves as depicted symbolically in their photographs.

Alternatively (or perhaps, additionally), this gap in some participants' ability to recognise (notice) what appeared (to me) to be potentially relevant symbolic tableaux and to interrogate these for potential meaning or significance points to a lack of 'visual literacy' skills provided in the UK educational system. Given the preponderance of images in the media (including social media) and their capacity to shape the perceptions and conceptions of audiences, this represents a serious concern I have explored in several publications.

i. Difficulties in accepting that their photograph might contain such an insight

In the design of this project, it was anticipated that some participants might be sceptical of the premise that intuitively made photographs could provide valuable insights – and so, to provide this assurance, in the initial meetings with the participants I shared my experiences of my Self-reflective photography project: *The Shadow of the photographer*.

ii. *Difficulties in recognising, or giving themselves permission to recognise, this insight*

The descriptions and comments above suggest two distinct potential difficulties experienced by participants but which are impossible to distinguish: a) the difficulty in recognising (or in giving themselves permission to recognise) the insight offered by the composition of their photographs and b) the difficulty in acknowledging and confronting the implications of this insight. Based on the data available, it is not possible to authoritatively distinguish between these two possibilities.

Several participants indicated that their capacity to recognise and interpret (to make meaning of) the symbolic elements within their photograph was aided by the questions and prompts offered by the researcher (the facilitated revelation). This will be considered in Section 4.

iii. *Difficulties in articulating this insight (to explain it in words) to their own satisfaction*

In the design of this project, it was also expected that some participants might have difficulty clearly articulating their insights (if any) to their own satisfaction.

The decision to use semi-structured individual interviews to identify the meaning/s that participants ‘made’ of their intuitively made photographs (and the insights into their personal circumstances to which these means led them) implicitly assumed that these ‘meanings’ can be expressed in language and in a form in which these ‘meanings’ can be accurately identified and reconstructed. Research into the relationship between language and cognitive processes identified by the researcher during this project reveals however, that some forms of reasoning (including some aspects of visual processing) are not based in language (Thompson, J. 2022) and so may not be accessible to accurate verbal expression.

Participants’ efforts to put their associations or interpretations into words may, therefore, like the effort to push a round peg into a square hole, have shaped their pre-verbalised understanding of the impressions they struggled to articulate. This influence was cited in the literature review in the critique of the discourse of *Therapeutic Photography* (Deleuze, 1989). In the design of this project however, it had not been considered that this factor may also influence the efforts by participants to describe their associations or interpretations.

When language gets hold of this material (and it necessarily does so), then it gives rise to utterances which come to dominate or even replace the images and signs, and which refer in turn to pertinent features of the language system [and its influence on the discourse] (Deleuze 1989 pp.29).

This may explain why – beyond the difficulties of some participants to recognise the symbolic significance of their photographs – some participants appeared to struggle to articulate their associations with, or their interpretations of, the scenes, moments or events recorded in their photographs. As Goldman-Eisler (1958) argued, concepts expressed in language:

carry with them meaning derived from a variety of sources [including] unconscious, developmental [and] historico-cultural [which,] under the impact of linguistic structure and sequential dependencies [...] also determine the choice of words. Utterance is not only an end product of the speech process but also a determinant in the construction of meaning and thinking itself (Goldman-Eisler, 1958 pp.60).

It was a noteworthy co-incidence that, as I began the semi-structured individual interviews with participants EF, IJ and KL, I was interviewed – first, by [a Guardian journalist](#), and then by the host of [a popular podcast](#), both of whom asked me to describe the effect on my narrative and my ‘sense of myself’ of the discovery that my biological father is a convicted child murderer. The challenges in being asked to share the powerful feelings evoked by the journalists’ questions on this very sensitive topic included:

- A lack of confidence that I was able to accurately understand – and therefore accurately describe and explain – the significance and implications of the fears and concerns associated with this discovery

- Being unsure how much detail I was prepared to share about these with a stranger
- Concerns about the judgements that would (or might) be made about me
- The expectation that I would be able to say something profound, or at least, interesting

Experiencing these difficulties for myself gave me valuable insight into the challenges faced by my participants in responding to the questions and prompts in the interviews.

Despite these possible influences on participants' comments, their efforts to describe and explain their associations with and interpretations of the scenes, moments or events recorded in their intuitively made photographs is nevertheless valuable because (as acknowledged by Argyris and Schön, 1978; Rutherford, 2012; Quinley, 2019), the effort to put *what we think we think* about an emotionally significant experience into words – and by listening attentively to ourselves while doing so – provides an invaluable opportunity to recognise and challenge inaccurate beliefs, to improve the clarity with which we understand our impressions and 'orientations', and to gain new insights into their origins and implications.

In her study of the therapeutic benefits of vocal expression, Quinley (2019) found that:

[I]t's not until I say it aloud that I can [...] make tangible what I have been attempting to understand. The process of putting into words what I am experiencing helps me to get a grip on the experience so I can look at it and know what to do with it. Expressing myself [...] through speaking [...] has facilitated this process of understanding and learning (Quinley, 2019 pp.99).



3. Participants' reactions/responses to their insights

3 i. Participants' preparedness to 'own' the insights resulting from the project

At the start of the project, AB had been sceptical of the premise that intuitively made photographs could provide valuable insights. By the conclusion, she acknowledged that the photographs she had made as part of this project offered her accurate allegorical depictions of her situation. When asked 'If someone who knows you well sent you this photograph as a way of sending you a message, what message do you think they're trying to send?'

AB Well, I just would say if, before this whole project started, someone [sent me] this, you know... [I would be inclined to ask them] '*Are you out of your mind or something?*' But right now, with, you know, the journey and the current knowledge of how pictures can tell a story that I know right now, if someone should send this to me, you know, I'm going to sit down and reflect on that.

AB did not recognise the insight (that she was “stuck”) in her photograph at the time she made it, but only afterwards, when she “realised things are not going as [they] should be”.

- AB Weeks later, stuff happened and I just realized things are not going as it should be, and looking back at the photo, I wish I’d known prior, you know, what kind of emotions pictures can communicate, you know, what kind of [...] experience or what you’re really going through in your head. If I had known I would have, you know, I’d have been able to pinpoint that.

AB’s reference to “looking back at the photo” suggests that her interpretation of the photograph – and its depiction of a path that isn’t going anywhere which led her to the insight that she feels “Stuck in time” – gave her a ‘hook’ or ‘handle’ around which her sense that “I just realised things are not going as it should be” could coalesce, providing her with a way to ‘make sense’ of her feelings about her situation. This experience is supported by White who argued that photographs can serve as symbols for concepts whose significance or meaning lies below the level of conscious awareness and which can be brought to light by reflecting on the photograph (White, 1963).

- AB It made me... Because when I started taking these pictures, I didn’t even know I’m going to be talking about myself. I didn’t know it’s going to be a picture capturing me – without me appearing in those photos.

- CD Just having the pictures to focus on allowed me to sort of safely, or within a boundary, sort of unpick a few things there and explore what it was that was either making me feel slightly uncomfortable or...

I was surprised at the strength of... of feeling and awareness and the sort of things that came through. I was delighted with it, to be honest. It was like a new tool for exploring what was going on in my world. In my head. Yeah.

- EF [This process] is quite nice because it actually is myself. I realised as I’m talking to you, I know it’s my thoughts, you know [it’s] quite useful to really know as I’m answering the question. I know it’s based around me the answers that I’m giving.

While acknowledging the mechanical source of the colours in her photograph, IJ recognised that this element of the photograph had significance for her “emotional mind”.

- IJ I know that this is a picture, and [...] that there’s [something] going on with the phone that has picked up these strong colours and the strong contrasts – but, my emotional mind is looking at that and saying ‘*There’s something not quite right*’. [...] It’s symbolic to me to see that. [...] When I started looking at the pictures that I’ve taken, it’s like, ‘*Oooh, there is a lot in there*’.

- KL I do think there is this kind of process and, well, [...] it never occurred to me that you could do that with pictures as well, but of course it makes sense doesn’t it? Particularly if you’re taking pictures of things that are not... of [any]thing in particular, I suppose. [Y]ou don’t just randomly take pictures of nothing in particular, for no reason so, erm, it’s an interesting way to kind of tap into how you’re feeling. I think it’s... I think it’s really quite compelling.

3 ii. How the participants integrated their insights into their lived experiences

AB explained that, upon recognising the message in her photograph (that she was “stuck” and unable to move forward), she was able to use this insight to improve her situation.

AB Looking back, you know, looking back at the picture, what it told me then was: ‘*Re-evaluate*’ [and so] I re-evaluated my life. So, this caused me to re-evaluate my priorities [...] ‘*Do you want to move forward. Do you want to go backwards?*’ which to be honest, it’s not, it’s not an option. ‘*Or, do you want to stay stuck?*’ And, of course, being stuck, is a place you don’t want to go, that I don’t want to go.

So, I knew the only way for me is to move forward. Then I had to sit down. ‘*What do you want to do?* [What] *are you going to go about this?*’ So, I had a candid discussion with myself about my own life. And I did. I did move forward. And right now I’m happier for it, to be honest.

Having previously insisted that her photograph depicted “the beginning of something”, CD began, unprompted, to see the image as a sunset and began to reflect on ‘endings’ and “the fact that everything always goes away”.

CD The sunrise and sunset moments for me [...] it’s almost like a little ritual. It’s a ritual that I do that reminds me of the constant change, constant change that we’re in. It’s an absolutely beautiful thing that will be gone. But that’s a positive thing. [...] I do that a lot [...] talk about my perception of change and how I embrace it. And I’m sort of resigned to the fact that everything always goes away.

[Talking] about change and knowing that this is only here for a moment, that’s kind of a journey as well, isn’t it? That’s sort of the journey of life, the more metaphorical journey. So, this is one part of that bigger journey.

CD’s admission that she is “sort of resigned to the fact” that everything always goes away suggests that she may not “embrace” this as enthusiastically as she may wish to believe.

Despite her (possibly inadvertent) admission that she saw the two figures as proxies for her, EF continued to describe them as objective elements in the photograph, without considering what their appearance or actions might reveal about her or her circumstances. In an effort to encourage her more considered reflection of the tension between the ‘real people’ who keep her grounded – and the sea which she feels is ‘taking her away’, EF was asked ‘*If someone who knows you well sent you this photograph as a way of sending you a message, what message do you think they would be trying to send you?*’

EF Hmm.

Um...

Get up go running. You know, ‘*Do more outdoor stuff*’. ‘*Get away from your computer [and] go see life*’. Yeah, I think it would, I think it would probably [be] ‘*Get out... get outdoors*’, you know, when you go for a good walk or you’re going to see... or do something. Maybe get a real good, energised feeling. I think it will be ‘*Get energized*’ I suppose, yeah.

Um...

IJ had explained that her father passed away in France in early June during the pandemic. Shortly afterwards, she was seriously injured when her car was struck by a driver who drove through a red light. Without prompting, she made the connection between the catastrophe she sees taking place in the sky and recent events in her life.

IJ Covid has blasted [and] thrown us all into chaos. Life goes on and, unfortunately, life is chaotic. And so... [she drew a deep breath before continuing] culminating... [long

pause] that that that that direction. That is where I'm going. This is [...] kind of like 'Ding ding ding ding...' [she imitated the sound of a warning bell] You know, it's still happening and [I'm] not paying attention.

Yes, interesting. 'Going backwards' as far as 'going home' is concerned. We're, we're going home – back to where we came from, we are not going towards [she makes sounds indicating hesitancy] a new road going away from it so, eh, so for my context, it was that we were going home; it wasn't that we were going to France where we could start a new life, or we can have a new move forward.

So, you know, it's going all in the wrong direction. It's going backwards. Backwards to there. Backwards, erm... to the non-effectiveness of people looking down instead of looking up. So, it is going backwards. Anything that's not going forwards is going backwards. Stagnating. Is just being... it is going backwards.

Throughout the interview, KL repeatedly insisted that, while her photograph of the woman disappearing into the advertisement depicted "a sense of being alone", the emotion she associates with 'being alone' is "not necessarily one of sadness".

KL I... I think you can be alone and lonely, a little bit lonely, without being desperately sad or depressed. I guess it's just a feeling, a little bit of a feeling of alienation, I would suppose. So, sometimes I don't necessarily think that feeling alienated is necessarily, um... negative, it just means that you feel like you don't belong in the situation you're in.

When asked '*If someone who knows you well sent you this photograph as a way of sending you a message, what message do you think they're trying to send?*', KL replied:

I wouldn't say it would make me happy to look at this, but I wouldn't say that it would make me sad [...], neither one nor the other, I suppose. I would feel like she was trying to sympathise with me or show me that she supports me because, um... she... understands how... um... I might feel. Somewhat alone. It would be, I guess, a form of encouragement [said with rising intonation, as if she was unsure] just to... to give me the impression that I wasn't alone. Not *truly*.

In addition to "fading" and "disappearing", KL also described (interpreted) the woman as 'losing her three-dimensional form'.

There is still [...] some definition of her as a 3D object, but [...] she seems to be halfway between becoming flattened and being three dimensional

KL spoke at length about her stepfather with whom she had a "conflicted relationship", and about whose recent death she felt "ambivalence". Based on her comments, there seemed to be some (undisclosed) trauma below the surface. While it was not the purpose of the interview to uncover – nor the purpose of this chapter to diagnose – this implied trauma, KL's interpretation of the figure of the woman as "fading", "disappearing" and 'losing her three-dimensionality' may symbolise the mytho-poetic truth of the effect or legacy of this relationship. Survivors of abuse often feel they are invisible (Terr, 2003).

KL did not however, appear to recognise or consider this possible interpretation.

I think possibly there's some kind of connection to a grieving process, um... [She sighed] And particularly in reference to my stepfather who just died in April, in that, um, I there's, there's some kind of ambivalence here and I, um... I feel sad and not sad, at the same time... Um... which is reflected in my kind of conflicted relationship that I had with him, so, I am thinking that, if I'm talking about this... [She hesitated] yeah,

feeling... Um... alone and isolated, but not necessarily set... upset or sad, then this is perhaps what I'm kind of getting at.

This, this idea that in, in some ways, well, I'm not going to say 'happy', but there, there is a bit of relief to have this person not in my life anymore. Um... I know that sounds bad, but... It's, it's not necessarily insight that I feel this way, that I feel this conflict, but I think it's a little bit of an insight that looking at this picture would make me think of that that kind of conflict within myself.

KL found it surprising to realise that “this picture kind of reflects that, in a way”.

It's not so much a realisation that I feel conflicted – I certainly have been aware that I've been conflicted the whole time – but, um, that, I guess it's the realisation that this, this picture kind of reflects that, in a way.

It also led to understand why she often photographed certain scenes.

I kind of understand a little bit better about, for instance, why I'm attracted to taking certain types of, photos, not just specific things, but this, this idea that I... I kind of, I'm very attracted to taking photos of things that are kind of 'barely there'. Erm... I like to take pictures of paintings on walls, you know, old advertisements that are fading away and they're, they're not there, I... really, really am fascinated by reflections um... things that you can see, but not see... Things that are, you know, you see what's behind you and not what, what's in front of you.

It was noted that, in describing her feelings, KL speaks in the first person, but (like AB), switched to second person when referring to her situation. It may be that the shift to speaking in second person is indicative of an attempt to put some distance between her and the difficult emotional experience she is describing.

This idea that you... you are, in what is a potentially kind of sad and lonely situation – but that, in some ways, you're not upset by it. So, maybe, this is...

In the Reflective text participants prepared earlier in the project, KL referred to three deaths which have affected her: the recent death of her stepfather, and the deaths (both in 2003) of her grandmother and her sister. Noting that she had thus far restricted her comments to her thoughts on the recent death of her stepfather, she was asked if there might be any significance in the fact that her photograph was of a disappearing *woman*.

I would say, even... even after all this time [my sister's death is] still really difficult for me to think about [her voice quavered] – but in the years immediately following her death, whenever I would travel, when I would be somewhere by myself going somewhere, I would often think about her, and I would... I would get quite emotional so... [her voice quavered] But the fact that, for some reason [her voice quavered] travelling alone makes me think about that kind of grief.

Due to her obvious sensitivity over the loss of her sister (“even after all this time [my sister's death is] still really difficult for me to think about”), it is perhaps not surprising that KL did not explicitly recognise and acknowledge the obvious (to the researcher) connection with a woman travelling alone in a train station.

I suppose that I don't feel quite the same way about my stepfather.

Of course, it could be quite symbolic anyway, because you were all on alone on this journey in life, anyway, so the people that are around you [her voice quavered] they

kind of fade into the background, as you get further and further away from... so...
[her voice quavered]

Neither is it surprising that she did not explicitly recognise and acknowledge the obvious (to the researcher) connection between her comments (“the people that are around you [her voice quavers] they kind of fade into the background”) and the image of a woman KL had described as “fading into the poster [and] disappearing.”

And I... I have to say, particularly right after my sister died, I found it really hard to look at pictures of her.

Asked whether her participation in this process has helped her to recognise something, or enhanced or extended in some way her knowledge of any aspect of herself, KL replied:

Ah, yeah, I suppose, in some ways it does, yes, because I have to really acknowledge the fact that I'm going through a grief period, whereas I would have, um... yeah, I have to acknowledge the fact that there is there is some grieving going on, and I think probably I have not been focusing on that. So, probably yes.

Asked whether the insight that came to her as a result of reflecting on this photograph had led her to do anything with it, KL replied:

I can't really think of anything, and I don't know if... I can't think of any kind of behaviour, behavioural change or... any kind of... A feeling about myself perhaps.

Um, I'm not sure I'm at that point yet. It's possible that I could be somewhere down the line Um... But I guess I wouldn't, I wouldn't be... I'm not entirely certain how, how to take the knowledge forward, I suppose. If that makes sense?

Summary

AB confirmed that, upon recognising the message in her photograph, she was able to use this insight to improve her situation.

Despite CD's admission that she is “sort of resigned to the fact” that everything always goes away, CD did not explicitly acknowledge that she may not “embrace” the transience of things as enthusiastically as she seems to want to believe.

Despite having acknowledged (perhaps unknowingly) that the two figures (including their appearance, their location, what she believed they were doing and their motives for doing it) are proxies for her, and despite the repeated suggestions that the appearance of the elements in her photographs might offer insights into her life, the ‘message’ EF's saw in her photograph (‘be more active – exercise’) echoed her earlier critical reference to the size of the figures – but without making reference to the figures who ‘keep her grounded in real life’, the prospect of escape offered by the sea, or the barrier that separates them. Based on the absence of indications that she was defending herself from the implications of these symbols and the denial they imply, it might be assumed that she did not see (notice) their possible significance, and so was unable (rather than unwilling) to consider how they might provide an insight into her lived experience.

IJ did not hesitate to recognise the photograph's implications for her and her situation: her inability ‘to fix anything’ and to effect change – and that ‘we're all going to that red hell’.

In her vision of the ‘fiery red hell’ to which she feels herself inexorably heading, IJ seems to be illustrating what Watzlawick (1978 pp.41) described as the suffering experienced as a result of

her image of the world which depicts “the unresolved contradiction between the way things appear to them and the way they should be according to their world images”.

The interview with IJ was substantially longer than that of the other participants. She spoke at length about things on her mind (stream-of-consciousness comments about some of her recent traumas, including the death of her father from Covid and a serious automobile collision caused by an inattentive driver, her significant emotional issues and her coping mechanisms for these, her struggles with her own PhD, etc., etc., etc.), which had no relevance to her photograph. While these comments could be framed as additional evidence of her capacity to reflect – as they were not apparently prompted by the photograph, it was decided not to explore them here. The full transcript of this and other interviews is included in **Appendix VI**.

Reflecting on her photograph led KL to understand why she is attracted to, and why she tends to photograph ‘things that are barely there’, things which are ‘fading away’ and things that ‘you can see, but not see’. Her comments suggest that, as a result, she is more aware of, and therefore perhaps more at ease with, these symbolic depictions of her feelings about these losses.

4. Whether the role of the researcher as a guide in the participants’ process of Self-reflection contributed to their ability to recognise and draw insights from their photographs

In preparation for the semi-structured individual interviews, the researcher reviewed the participants’ photographs and their reflective texts in the manner described by Smith (2007), but for two reasons, did not share his interpretations with the participants:

- i. The researcher was not sufficiently confident in the accuracy of the inferences for the participants he drew from the participants’ photographs, and
- ii. Given the participants’ deference to the experience and authority of the researcher in interpreting *Self-reflective photographs*, the researcher’s interpretations might have unduly influenced the participants’ interpretation of their photographs.

The researcher did not analyse or interpret participants’ photographs, however some visual patterns and symbols recognised by the researcher as potentially significant informed the questions put to participants in the interviews. Bringing these patterns and symbols to participants’ attention and prompting them to consider their possible significance assisted participants in identifying, reflecting on and understanding the meaning they made of their photographs. While it is unusual for the researcher to act as a guide (psychopomp²⁰) in an IPA study, as indicated by participants’ comments, the questions and prompts employed in the semi-structured individual interviews assisted the participants in recognising potentially relevant elements in their photographs, but without influencing their interpretations of these.

Asked whether, as a result of this project, they felt confident in their ability to recognise and understand the insights, if any, recorded in their photographs:

AB made no reference to the interview or to the role of the researcher as a source of her insights or as integral to her process of Self-reflection.

CD confirmed that she did feel confident in her ability to recognise and understand the insights she identified in her photographs but (apparently misunderstanding the question as a query whether her interpretation of her photograph will remain consistent through time) suggested that, in the future, she might not find the same insight in this photograph:

²⁰ Psychopomp (from the Greek ψυχοπομπός, psychopompós – literally ‘the guide of souls’ – whose responsibility is not to judge, but to guide)

CD This is an interesting question for me because, at the time I was writing and at the moment, I feel confident that it has... it has allowed me to look at who I am and how I think and what's going on with me, but I couldn't say that, in a year, if I did the same exercise, I would have the same results, because a lot can happen in a year and I might be, you know... Those boundaries might not be tight enough for me or... something might have happened to make it... that I find it really, really difficult. Do you see what I mean?

EF acknowledged that her insight (that she was simultaneously “dreaming of escape” but also feeling ‘grounded’) occurred to her during the interview.

EF At the beginning, I just yeah, I didn't... I didn't see that, as in, as in ‘inspirational’, but I have, I have, changed that idea actually now since we've been talking. [...] I think [that the insight came to me] during this conversation [...] because of the way your questions have... I'm going to say ‘helped’ because, if I just say ‘the way they led’ me isn't quite right actually... They did lead me to this point. It was very much driven by my thought, whereas you were asking me questions, so you are helping to direct my thoughts, which [was] a slightly different process [than] when I did the writing.

In her comments, EF indicated that a significant factor in the benefit she gained from the project was the result of the information brought out in response to the questions and prompts.

At the beginning, I just yeah, I didn't... I didn't see that, as in, as in ‘inspirational’, but I have, I have, changed that idea actually now since we've been talking.

(EF's reference to ‘the writing’ refers to the Reflective text participants were asked to prepare in an earlier state of the project.)

EF found value in the question ‘*If someone who knows you well sent you this photograph as a way of sending you a message, what message do you think they would be trying to send you?*’ which, she suggested, made the meaning of the photograph more accessible to her.

When you said about the friend, and then that sort of ‘turned it’. Even though I know it's coming from me, it kind of expanded a bit better.

IJ noted that there had been no attempt in the interview to impose an interpretation of the meaning of the photographs, that the researcher could not:

IJ give them the answers. So, if you know... it's like, ‘Okay, ‘What do you see here?’ and ‘Tell me what you see’ – as opposed to ‘Oh, I think there is here and there, and there’, you know? That makes a big difference.

KL's explanation of the benefit (Quinley, 2019) she found makes explicit reference to the value of her effort to put *what she thinks she thinks* into words.

KL In a certain way, [my photograph] kind of reflects this conflict and my way of describing it to you kind of also reflects this conflict because [she sighs] because this idea of ‘isolation’ or ‘being apart from someone’ is not being necessarily negative. The way I'm expressing that, I think, is... is really talking about that that kind of loss.

Summary

Several participants indicated that their ability to make meaning of their photograph was aided by the researcher's questions and prompts – which, without suggesting a particular meaning or

interpretation, enabled the participants to ‘get a grip on the experience’, to ‘put it into words’, and so ‘to know what to do with it’ (Quinley, 2019).

As noted above, having volunteered to take part in a project explicitly described as an attempt to explore Self-awareness through an examination of their photographs, the researcher assumed that participants would be capable of Self-directed exploration of the allegories recorded in their intuitively made photographs. This assumption should have been identified and bracketed.

The discovery that many participants struggled to recognise (notice), describe, acknowledge (confront) the insights offered by their intuitively made photographs and to be willing to consider their implications led to the recommendation that future iterations of these workshops should include introductory exercises to introduce participants to allegorical thinking, and for the need for the researcher or workshop leader to recognise that some may be unwilling, unready or unable to confront these.

Based on the comments of some participants who acknowledged the value of the questions and prompts in helping them to recognise and make meaning of their photograph, it appears that the guidance (facilitated revelation) provided by such questions and prompts is beneficial in *Self-reflective photography*.

5. Participants’ comments on the project and its value in encouraging and assisting them in greater Self-knowledge.

Participants reported that reflecting on their associations with both the elements and the juxtapositions of elements within their intuitively made photographs led to insights into their situations as well as into their assumptions about and their attitudes towards their situations which led to enhanced Self-awareness, allowing them to make more informed decisions.

AB acknowledged that she did not understand the objective and/or the process of the project, but that, as it became clearer to her what the project attempted to do, it engaged her interest. By the end of the project, she understood its objective and was rewarded for her participation.

AB In the very beginning [...] I was I was like, OK, so... so what now? What have I gotten myself into? Because I, I just do not understand. But, but subsequently, as the, as the journey began and yeah. I started having a clearer picture of, you know, what this is about. And it became interesting to me, to be honest.

The difference it made [is that] I knew the only way for me is to move forward. Then I had to sit down [and] re-evaluate my priorities, you know. ‘*What do you want to do. Are you going to go about this?*’ So, I had a candid discussion with myself about my own life. And I did. I did move forward. And right now, I’m happier for it, to be honest.

At the end of the day, the journey has made me know myself more – more than before. It made me come to, you know, real, fair discussion, real knowledge, real acknowledgement of, look: ‘*This is, this is who you are, you know*’, and all that. So, for me, it’s been an amazing journey. Yeah, it’s not destructive, but helpful to me.

CD also experienced the “resistance” identified by Jung (1976) but found the process to have been useful in enhancing her Self-awareness, and indicated that she would continue to use it.

CD I think it’s... I think it’s really good. I think it’s... I can imagine that it could make me feel extremely uncomfortable at times, depending on what came out, but I know that finding Self-awareness and keeping/retaining Self-awareness is a pretty uncomfortable business sometimes. So, it’s... yeah, it’s definitely a useful tool in the sort of ‘toolbox

of awareness and knowing yourself'... one that I hadn't... it hadn't even crossed my mind to look at what I'm taking photos of or what I'm taking videos or anything like that. So, it's something that I will continue to do, definitely.

As with AB (above), EF agreed that the project had been a useful way to 'think about stuff' and that it was unfortunate that more people had not taken the opportunity to participate in it.

EF I've been a bit up and down, whether I feel um... you know, interested to start with, and we've had [a] bit of a chat and I was like, Well... Okay, you know, I see where it goes and actually come into this point now, I'm back on and actually it's really quite an interesting perspective so, um, yeah.

I think it's a shame, I don't know how many people you've got, if it's just the guys that have been sitting our groups, I think that's a shame that more people haven't taken it up actually um... But I think it's a good... a good thing [undecipherable] and, if somebody said to me, '*Oh well, I'm going to chat to somebody and we're going to go through pictures*' [...] I would probably say '*Oh yeah, go for it, it's... it's quite interesting, and it's, you know, it's quite useful*'. Yeah, I'd say so. An interesting way of thinking about stuff.

IJ described the process as a helpful stepping stone for enhanced Self-awareness.

IJ I think it's a grand thing. For people that don't have a lot of Self-awareness, or [who] might be blinkered by, you know, the situations and the 'busyness' of their lives that they don't take that time and go '*Oh, wait a minute, yeah you're right*'.

I think [...] you know, repetitions and seeing maybe if there is a pattern there that people do come up with. However, if it's something [...] more obscure, I wonder if it can be teased out through a photograph? But it definitely would be a stepping stone, so I think that's a positive thing. I think it's a grand thing to do.

KL found that, as a result of the project, she now understands more clearly why she her attention) is attracted to images of "things that are kind of barely there" and "things that you can see, but not see". She has very aptly summarised the purpose of the project as helping us to "*see what's behind you and not what's in front of you*". She claims that her participation in the project has given her an insight into what she recognised as an overall theme of her life.

KL I kind of understand a little bit better about, for instance, why I'm attracted to taking certain types of photos – not just specific things, but that I'm very attracted to taking photos of things that are 'barely there'. Things that you can see, but not see... Things that are, you know... You see what's behind you and not what's in front of you.

No matter how real they [seem] at that moment, or how long they appear to have gone on before you arrived, or sustained after you left, actually, your whole idea of that kind of permanency is, um... I guess a bit of an illusion, because that's not how things are.

So, I, I think, I think, [she sniffled] it does give me insight into this. I guess it's an overall theme of my life, yeah. Anyway, whether or not that's going to help me cope with some of these feelings, later on, I don't know. Maybe.

[It's] been interesting because I think this does give an insight to me as to why I'm attracted to those things, it is this, this, well, I guess, this whole kind of journey of life, but also um... the whole transiency of it, and if I think about that, it's kind of been a reflection of my whole life. I've always felt that I can't hold on to things and that things sort of slip away from me [...] because I don't have control of them.

The experience of several participants who identified feeling a ‘loss of control’ in their lives aligns with the findings of Craig (2009) who, based on numerous workshops with individuals “who may not feel very much in control over what they do generally”, noted that the experience of “being in control can promote feelings of self-efficiency [and] enable the person to develop skills in decision-making so that over time this new-found confidence translates into other aspects of their life” (Craig, 2009 pp.22). Craig cites Frith and Harcourt (2007):

At a time when women feel that they lack control [...] it was important to give women control over what pictures to take, how many to take and when to take them (Frith and Harcourt, 2007 pp.1346).

Several participants commended the researcher’s efforts to create a ‘safe space’ in which they felt able to explore the possible meaning of their photographs.

CD A safe space. Just having the pictures to focus on allowed me to sort of safely, or within a boundary, sort of unpick a few things there and explore what it was that was either making me feel slightly uncomfortable

EF acknowledged that, during the interview, she felt a:

EF sort of, certain psychological safety and talking to you about it, then [I] will get the answer... We know ourselves best, don’t we? So, [I]’ll get the answers

IJ likewise acknowledged that:

IJ I think it is a very good medium to do this. It’s, not threatening. Here, it’s just about, you know, trying to get information from a photograph, and it’s non-invasive.

Summary

As previously noted, hermeneutics endorses the use of intuition (defined by Jung [1959] as perception via the unconscious) as a way to uncover thoughts and emotions of which the creator may be unconscious (Smith et al., 2009; Schleiermacher, 1998). As was also previously noted, the researcher’s previous projects repeatedly demonstrated that, by presenting these hidden thoughts and emotions to us allegorically, photographs can provide a less threatening means to bypass the ego’s defences and so enable us to recognise, acknowledge and/or confront these. In her examination of the relationship of psychology and photography, Cronin (1998) writes:

[D]efence mechanisms which may prevent the open expression of feelings can be challenged using photographs (Cronin, 1998 pp.63).

It was expected therefore that, in reflecting on their associations with the contents of their intuitively made photographs, participants might recognise and acknowledge thoughts and feelings which had previously eluded their awareness. Only AB confirmed that her photograph had made her aware of a significant factor of which she had previously been unaware.

All participants however, endorsed the project as a useful, “safe” and non-threatening means to enhance their Self-awareness and, to an extent, their Self-acceptance.

6. Researcher’s reflections on the results of the project

AB’s initial scepticism about the premise that intuitively made photographs may provide valuable insights was overcome when, reflecting on her associations with her photographs, she realised that they “can communicate the experience you’re going through”. (In this, AB identified the same experience the researcher described in **II Background to the project.**)

CD's superficial interpretations of the symbols in her photograph (that the sunrise represents a 'beginning'), her uncertainty (that her photograph 'might be about a woman in her late 30s') and her confusion as to why she 'kept thinking about herself for some reason' indicates a reluctance or inability to engage with the metaphorical content of her photograph. Accordingly, her ready acknowledgement offered at the start of the interview that her photograph suggests "a metaphorical journey" (a term used by the researcher in explaining the project) may have been an attempt to please the researcher. As noted by Doody and Noonan, 2012:

As a method of collecting data, interviews are susceptible to bias, which may include the participant's desire to please the researcher (Doody and Noonan, 2013 pp.29).

It was noted that EF also demonstrated a reluctance or inability to engage with the significance of the "two parts" of her composition to which she had made repeated reference (the figures who keep her "grounded" and whose appearance, actions and motives she acknowledged (perhaps unknowingly) are proxies for her – and the sea which 'feels like it is taking her away') – or the significance of the 'barrier' which separated them. Given the clear and repeated explanations about what was expected of participants, EF's stated hesitancy to "read too much" into her photograph was unlikely to have been the result of a misunderstanding about what was expected. Accordingly, her reluctance to engage with ('read into') the symbolic significance of the choice implied between 'being grounded in real life' – and the prospect of escape offered by the sea was perhaps an attempt to resist confronting the "lots of things" (meanings) she could see in the photograph.

The reluctance shown by CD and EF may be due to the challenge identified by Jung (1976):

[N]o one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance (Jung, 1976 pp.145).

As explained in the section on Research design (page 57), *beneficence* requires that the research should seek to minimise harm and risk. Confronted with evidence of this resistance or inability to recognise and reflect on the significance of the elements of their photographs, the researcher chose not to press either CD or EF further. He hopes however, that they will do so when they are ready. The resistance demonstrated by CD and EF does, however, validate the inference drawn from the researcher's previous workshops with 200+ participants that participants are unlikely to be confronted with emotional issues they are unprepared to process.

The discovery that some participants struggled to recognise the symbolic significance of their intuitively made photographs, and/or resist the opportunity to engage with the insights they may offer, brings to light an assumption that should have been bracketed: that participants who had elected to participate in this project would (to varying degrees) be both able to recognise and willing to reflect on/interrogate the symbolic significance of the elements and juxtapositions they had 'chosen' to include in their photographs. I now realise that this is clearly not the case.

It may be that the difficulties experienced/demonstrated by the participants in recognising (the significance of) the symbolic elements in their photographs are the inevitable 'birth pangs' of their ability to engage in the allegorical thinking required by this process.

An acknowledged weakness of the idiographic approach used in this project is that, while it allows the identification of themes shared across participants' experiences, its focus on the individual will not allow robust generalisations to be made (Lee and Tracey, 2005). Accordingly, it was not possible to draw or propose nomothetic results about the interpretation of the symbols of the depicted scenes and tableaux or their significance without significantly more data than was collected in this study. This was not a concern, as this project did not propose or attempt to identify or devise any such 'dictionary' of symbols.

7. Recommendations for future workshops

An important element of the findings of this research project is to establish a useful method for participants to self-reflect on photographs they have made.

1. Based on the difficulties participants experienced in recognising and/or articulating the symbols and allegories in their photographs, and their difficulty in recognising their relevance to their individual circumstances, future iterations of these workshops will include introductory exercises to introduce participants to allegorical thinking.

At the start of future interviews, participants will be asked to describe the photograph (name, identify and describe the appearance of the elements), identify/indicate their (the participants') associations with these elements, and describe the relationship/s (the juxtaposition) of these elements to other elements. This will provide material (data) to be interrogated in the interviews.

2. It is important however to recognise (as illustrated by CD and EF) that, despite agreeing to take part in a process intended to bring emotional material to conscious awareness, not all participants are able or prepared to recognise, acknowledge and engage with the insights offered by their intuitively made photographs. Accordingly, the guidance provided by carefully chosen questions may, in some cases, be necessary in *Self-reflective photography* to prompt the participant to recognise and draw insights from their photographs.

One participant (whose comments had already indicated a predisposition to feeling judged²¹) explained that she felt under pressure to “tak[e] the right photograph for you”, and suggested that, for future workshops, that consideration be given to what can be done to make taking a picture much easier. Despite the repeated reminders that participants are not expected to make ‘good’ photographs which conform to any aesthetic standards, it may be helpful to:

3. Reiterate (even more than is already done) that the photographs to be produced are not expected to meet any particular aesthetic standards and direct them to the simple strategies to reduce the influence of their ‘compositional reflexes’ in their compositions.
4. Include examples of photography by previous participants, and not just those produced by the researcher (which, despite having been made entirely intuitively), may be seen as of a higher quality than is necessary for the project.

²¹ In the mistaken belief that she was the last to be interviewed, this participant expressed her concern that she and her comments would be judged unfavourably compared to those of other participants. The reasons for and the significance of this concern were not explored as they were considered to be outside the scope of the present study.

IX Conclusions

This project is the culmination of my longstanding (since 1982) investigation of *Self-reflective photography*. While similar to *Therapeutic photography* and to Minor White's *Equivalences*, as explained in **II Background to the project**, my discovery that my intuitively composed photographs offered allegorical depictions of my orientations pre-dates my knowledge of both. Although previously tested in several informal studies, this project applied a more formal IPA methodology and gathered more fine-grained data to find out whether participants' intuitively made photographs would offer timely insights into their orientations – and in a form that could be relatively easily recognised and understood without the need for training in art therapy.

The results support the findings of my previous practice-based research:

- i. *The Shadow of the photographer* Self-reflective photography project (page 4 above and Rutherford, 2002)
- ii. The text-based automatism experiment (page 43 above and Rutherford, 2019)
- iii. Workshops in *Self-reflective Photography* with students at CERAM (page 45 above and Rutherford, 2002)
- iv. Workshops in *Self-reflective Photography* with trainee GPs (page 46 above and Rutherford et al., 2018)

These four projects all found that, as with automatic writing, giving up conscious control over the means of expression leads us in a straight line to the unconscious (Krauss, 1985 pp.28) and to what André Breton termed 'the direct presence of the artist's inner self' (Krauss, 1981).

This concluding chapter will draw on the reflections and experiences of the five participants to address the three research questions which were refined throughout the project:

1. What challenges were identified in the participants' use of *Self-reflective photography* in the pursuit of insights into their orientations?
2. What (kinds of) insights were identified by participants in their intuitively made photographs?
3. How did participants 'make sense of' or integrate these insights into their life narratives?

The chapter will then offer my thoughts on:

4. The evaluation of the project: Did it create the conditions in which the participants were offered timely insights into their orientations?
5. An unanticipated parallel between the results of this project and my arts practice
6. The way in which the project has informed my thoughts on *Self-reflective photography*
7. Recommendations for the use of photography as a source of insight
8. A recommendation for further research
9. Whether the project has informed my current photographic practice

RQ 1 The following challenges were identified in the participants' use of *Self-reflective photography* in an effort to create the conditions for insights into their orientations

- 1 i. That participants might not accept the premise (that, by giving up conscious, rational control over the selection and depiction of the scenes and events to which their attention was intuitively attracted, the resulting photographs might offer personally relevant insights) and therefore might not engage open-mindedly with the project

Four of the five participants accepted the premise without reservation.

1 ii. To restrain the influence of participants' conscious decisions and 'compositional reflexes' and instead, to 'put their camera into the hands of their intuition', participants were instructed:

- To record only those scenes, events and tableaux to which they felt their attention was intuitively attracted,
- Not to *think about* the composition of their photographs, but allow their intuition to determine the composition of their photographs, and
- Not to subsequently modify the photograph by cropping or using 'apps'.

To assist with their subsequent interpretation of their photographs, participants were also instructed to record the date and sequence of their photographs, and to note any significant events in their professional and/or family lives at the time each photograph was made.

1 iii. To minimise [bracket] the influence of the *premise*, the *assumptions* and the *objectives* of the therapeutic bias in the conception, design and execution of the project and in the participants' understanding of the project and how they think about their photographs

To minimise the influence of what I have termed the therapeutic bias (page 1 above) on the participants' understanding of the project, the researcher regularly discouraged the notions:

- That *Self-reflective photography* is a therapeutic practice, able – or intended – to identify and address 'problems' or 'disorders',
- That 'favourable changes' (Dalley, 1984 pp.xi) or 'improvements in facilitated outcomes' (Sekula, 1982) were expected outcomes of their participation in the project, and
- That an external authority (the researcher) was empowered to define what outcomes or changes were considered 'favourable' or desirable.

Participants were regularly reminded that the objective of the project was to determine whether *Self-reflective photography* would provide them with an accessible means to explore their lived experience and the meanings they made of these (Shinebourne, 2011 pp.18).

1 iv. The difficulty of some participants to recognise (what the researcher considered to be) obvious visual symbols in their photographs – which, in turn, precluded their ability to consider their possible personal relevance or implications for their lives or circumstances

Despite having observed that her photograph was made up of "two parts" (the overweight couple who were proxies for her who 'dream of escaping from the burdens of real life that could have been better' – and the sea which offered a means of escape), EF did not consider or reflect on the significance of the "barrier" which prevented her from being able to escape.

As a result of the clear explanation on the poster used to recruit participants (**Appendix VII**):

This project explores the possibility that, when our attention is attracted to scenes with which we have no logical or personal connection, it may be because something about the scene or the elements within it was intuitively recognised by our mind as an allegorical description of the way we see the world – or perhaps an allegorical self-portrait of the person we have become as a result.

...the researcher had assumed that those attracted to the project had an interest in, and a rudimentary understanding of, the role of visual symbols – and so would be able to recognise and prepared to interrogate the more obvious visual symbols that appeared in their photographs. While most participants were able and willing to do so, the difficulty of some participants to recognise obvious symbols and/or consider their possible significance had not been anticipated.

It is important to acknowledge however, that it is not possible to distinguish definitively a participant's *inability* to recognise a particular symbol from their *reluctance* (conscious or otherwise) to consider its possible significance (such as the barrier in EF's photograph above). As noted previously, the researcher's prior workshops indicated that participants are unlikely to recognise issues which they are not prepared to confront.

- 1 v. Closely related to the above is the difficulty of some participants who, while able to identify potentially significant symbols in their photographs, struggled to understand and articulate their possible meaning or significance to their own satisfaction

For example, IJ struggled to provide an explanation with which she was satisfied for the source (and therefore the significance) of the vivid colours in the sky in her photograph which were central to the meaning she made of the image. After initially insisting that these colours could be the product of the mechanical operation of her smartphone, she admitted that her "emotional mind" believes that the vivid colours in the sky have a "symbolic" significance for her, but one which she struggled to identify.

This difficulty too, was unanticipated in the conception and design of the project. The researcher had assumed that:

- As educated members of a university community, participants would be capable of articulating their impressions, associations and (where possible) their emotional reactions.
- The "emotional defence mechanisms which may prevent the open expression of feelings can be challenged using photographs" (Cronin, 1998 pp.63).

While these assumptions too, were unsupported by the results, some participants found that their difficulty in identifying and articulating the implications of the insights they recognised within their compositions was significantly reduced by the use of the questions and prompts to which participants were invited to respond (pages 55-6 above).

RQ2 The (kinds of) insights identified by participants in their intuitively made photographs

Despite the challenges noted above, all participants agreed that *Self-reflective photography* had assisted them in gaining greater Self-awareness. In reflecting on their interpretations of their photographs' depictions of the scenes, tableaux and juxtapositions to which their attention had been intuitively attracted, all participants identified a personally relevant insight, and further, all insights related to the theme of 'escape' which may, perhaps, have been a response to their anxieties provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic:

AB recognised that she felt "stuck", unable to move forward or backward.

CD recognised the destination of a "metaphorical journey" which represented an escape to somewhere "hot and foreign".

EF recognised that she felt pulled in two different directions: to remain "grounded in real life" – or to escape over the sea which offered to 'take her away'.

IJ recognised that she was unable to escape, but was returning to a 'home that was on fire'.

KL recognised that she was disappearing – fading into the background – while no one around her seemed to notice.

RQ3 How participants ‘made sense of’ and/or integrated these insights into their life narratives

In acknowledging the accuracy of their insights, the participants supported the results reported by the 200+ participants in my previous workshops (2000-02 and 2016-17): that *Self-reflective photography* provides participants with accurate and useful insights into their orientations. By confronting these insights in turn, the participants had the means (as per the first axiom on which this project is based) to take the decisions necessary to address their circumstances.

To the extent that they were able (emotionally prepared) to recognise the meaning and implications of the insights offered within their intuitively made photographs, all participants acknowledged a benefit from their involvement in the project.

- AB The journey has made me know myself more – more than before.
- CD It [made] me feel extremely uncomfortable at times, depending what came out, but I know that Self-awareness is a pretty uncomfortable business sometimes.
- EF It’s quite interesting, and [...] quite useful.
- IJ It’s a grand thing. For people that don’t have a lot of Self-awareness.
- KL This [did] give [me] an insight to me as to why I’ve always felt that I can’t hold on to things and that things sort of slip away from me.

4. The evaluation of the project

This project set out to test whether, by offering participants a means to allow their intuition to determine the content and the composition of their photographs, it was possible to create the conditions in which the *Self as Auteur* offered timely insights to the participants into their orientations – and in a form that could be relatively easily decoded.

Accordingly, its results were assessed on the basis of two objectives:

- i. Did the participants agree that *Self-reflective photography* provided them with useful and accessible insights which contributed to their Self-knowledge? and
- ii. Did the participants find *Self-reflective photography* sufficiently easy-to-use and beneficial/helpful that they will continue to use it?

Notwithstanding the difficulty of some participants in *articulating* their insights, all agreed that they gained useful and accessible insights from the project which contributed to their Self-knowledge. Several indicated that they will continue to practice *Self-reflective photography*:

- AB At the end of the day, the journey has made me know myself more.
- CD It’s definitely a useful tool in the sort of ‘toolbox of awareness and knowing yourself’. It’s something that I will continue to do, definitely.
- EF It [has been] quite useful.
- IJ I think that’s a positive thing.
- KL I think I understand a little bit better [...] why I’m attracted to [...] taking photos of things that are kind of ‘barely there’.

5. An unanticipated parallel between the results of this project and my arts practice

Several of my fine arts projects begin with the premise that, if I am prepared to give up conscious control over the process, it might be possible to enable the active (or, the *act of*) collaboration by forces and factors I do not pretend to understand. Dubbed the '*Give agency to the medium, stand back and see what happens*' projects, I have now been dancing with this collaborator for years.

In *The Shadow of the photographer* project, I established a set of parameters which allowed my intuition to determine both the content and appearance of my photographs. The results confronted me with insights into my orientations towards myself and the world outside.

In the portraits in the *Masks of Men* project, my giving them no directions, I deprived my sitters (all professional men) of the usual reassurance I would use my expertise to ensure they 'looked good'. This heightened their discomfort and vulnerability. Feeling exposed as awkward and ordinary, they took refuge behind their idealised masks, some of which I recognised as my own.

In the *text-based automatism experiment* (Rutherford, 2019), I established a set of parameters by which word-processing software comprehensively reconfigured a text. Stripped of both sense and sequence, the result not only retained an uncanny degree of consistency with the meaning of the original text, but also revealed insights which had been only latent within the original.

In the current research project, I likewise established a set of parameters (pages 52-3 above) intended to create the conditions for the active contribution of the participants' intuition. In this case, I exerted no control over what the participants photographed, or how it appeared within their photographs. Although I directed their attention to certain questions and prompts, I had no control over the meaning they would make of their associations with, or reactions to, the results. Just as my fine art projects offered unexpected allegorical insights into my orientations, I was astonished to find that, once again, my situation was reflected in the 'output' of this project: in this case, the insights recognised by the participants. In the semi-structured individual interview with AB (August 2020), she explained that she felt "stuck" and unable to make progress.

Prior to the semi-structured individual interview with AB, I had written in my Reflective diary:

Although I had intended to begin the analysis of the data (the interview transcripts), the stress of the previous six months (incl. the stress resulting from a major medical issue and the resulting need to avoid contact with the Coronavirus as well as the stress resulting from an intolerable situation at work) overwhelmed me and I suffered a nervous exhaustion and a clinical depression. As a result, I was unable to make any progress on the data analysis. I felt stuck.

In the semi-structured individual interview with CD (also in August 2020), she interpreted the palm trees as a reference to "being somewhere that's hot or a foreign country, going somewhere physically as well as metaphorically".

At the time of CD's semi-structured individual interview, I wrote in my Reflective diary:

For the past several months, I have been feeling overwhelmed and – having decided that it was our (my wife's and my) intention to return to Nice when I retire – I came very close to 'throwing in the towel' to escape what often felt like intolerable stress and pressure resulting from the demands of my job.

In reading through the transcript of the interview with CD, I recognised my vision of Nice with its palm trees by the sea (Figure 46) – and that as a symbol for 'escape', mine too was likewise both 'physical as well as metaphorical'. (This parallel continued with EF's description of the scene in her photograph which she described as representing an "escape" with the sea which was 'taking her away'.)



Figure 46: *le vieux Nice du château* © Rutherford 2010

I have never ceased to be both astonished and moved by the benevolence of the source of these messages, which, like cryptic picture postcards pinned to trees and left for me to find, have helped me to recognise those truths I ‘know’, but which my conscious mind may not readily see.

6. The way in which the project has informed my thoughts on *Self-reflective photography*

I began this project in the expectation of expanding the body of evidence that *Self-reflective photography* (or ‘photomancy’: my variation on bibliomancy, cartomancy or automatic writing) can provide valuable insights from what I have called the *Self as Auteur*.

The results reaffirmed my belief that some individuals are better able (or possibly, more willing) than others to engage with the visual allegorical symbols in which these insights are expressed. As anticipated (page 47 above), some participants resisted confronting issues they may be unprepared to process. For example, EF resisted the implications of the “two parts” of her photograph which suggested the choice between staying “grounded” in “real life” or ‘escaping across the sea’.

Following the participants’ affirmation that they found the questions and prompts used in the semi-structured individual interviews to be helpful, it appears that (as suggested in the discussion of the benefits of vocal expression page 72 above), their capacity and willingness to confront the possible significance of the visual symbols intuitively incorporated into their photographs was enhanced by the opportunity to put their thoughts and associations into words within what many described as a “safe space”. Such a dialogue, however, invites the risk (previously discussed) of ‘problematism’ implicit in a therapeutic dynamic.

In developing this practice as an alternative to *Therapeutic photography* – and in organising sessions to test and improve its efficacy – it has been my hope to provide participants with an accessible means to open a dialogue with the *Self as Auteur*: a trustworthy and compassionate companion on their journey to explore their own lived experience. By encouraging participants to be more attentive to the scenes that attract their attention, and to reflect on and interrogate their associations with the way in which ‘that part which thinks in pictures’ depicts these, it has been my hope to encourage them to listen, to reflect, and eventually to trust what it has to say.

Consistent with the findings of my previous practice-based research, the participants' responses to their *Self-reflective photographs* are the products of an extraordinary dialogue and reflect the participants' private, rather than public realities: their mythic rather than mundane narratives.

7. Recommendations for the use of photography as a source of insight

Given the potential for the photographer's decisions (conscious or otherwise) to influence the content and appearance of photographs, all those intending to use photography as a means of gaining insights – whether into themselves (photographers), into others (therapists), or those who train others in its practice are urged to remember that, contrary to Weiser's assurance:

the camera did not, and could not, lie, because it obviously took a picture of what was really happening right there, right then, right in front of it (Weiser 1999 pp.4).

photographs are not accurate and objective records of “what was really happening right there, right then”, but are always an *interpretation* of the scene, the depiction or appearance of which can be influenced by these decisions, including our ‘compositional reflexes’.

Those who use photographs in a clinical therapeutic practice are urged to reconsider the assumptions widely found in the literature, that:

1. A basic knowledge of how photography renders scenes is unnecessary,
2. Knowledge of the photographer's intention and the ways in which this informed the content and appearance of the photograph can be confidently ignored, and
3. Even without knowledge of photography or the decisions made by the photographer, the therapist is the authority on what the photograph reveals.

Those intending to interrogate or reflect on their own photographs as sources of insight into themselves (the practice elsewhere termed *Therapeutic photography*) are therefore urged to develop ways in which to minimise the influence of these decisions on the content and appearance of their photographs. This can be done by allowing their intuition (‘that part which thinks in pictures’) to determine the content and appearance of their photographs.

To this end, it may be that both groups of practitioners (therapists and photographers) would benefit from a written guide or handbook to explain, among others:

- Some of the ways in which the photographer's decisions (conscious or otherwise) can influence the resulting depiction of the scene or event
- Some of the ways in which the nature of the photographic medium (by compressing what we perceive as a three-dimensional world into a two-dimensional plane, and by extracting a thin chronological ‘slice’ from what we perceive as a chronological continuum) can influence the resulting depiction of the scene or event
- How participants can reduce the influence of their ‘compositional reflexes’ in recording or documenting those scenes and events to which their attention is intuitively attracted
- The importance of minimising the influence of what I have termed the therapeutic bias and its ‘problematism’ of our orientations in the use of *Self-reflective photography*
- How to recognise and reflect on some of the more common visual symbols which may appear in their photographs, and
- Suggestions as to the formulation of questions and prompts to which participants can be invited to respond as a way to put our associations into words

8. A recommendation for further research

As this project was carried out among a small number of participants (as recommended by Smith et al. 2009; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014), greater understanding of the differences between *Self-reflective photography* and *Therapeutic photography* would be gained by a larger scale study, or (consistent with the recommendations for small sample sizes for IPA studies), several small studies among diverse demographic groups. (In the current study, all five participants were female and were involved in UK higher education.)

In addition, there may be sufficient material available from the published reflections of those using photography as a source of insights to enable a meta-study.

9. Has the project informed my current photographic practice?

My current series (*Technical Images of Flux* – part of my ‘Give agency to the medium, stand back and see what happens’ project) shares with *Self-reflective photography* the contribution of the unanticipable in the content and appearance of my photographs²². It is therefore appropriate to ask whether the results might also reveal something of which I was not consciously aware.



Figure 47: *Technical Images of Flux* © Rutherford 2017-23

I have considered this question, but concluded that I am not the Subject of these photographs.

Unlike *The Shadow of the photographer* in which I was prompted to record a visual metaphor I had intuitively recognised in the scenes or tableaux to which my attention was attracted, these tableaux were not recognised and ‘chosen’ by my unconscious. Instead, in this series:

- i. I am unable to ‘choose’ the scenes because the camera is held below the surface of the sea, pointing upwards towards constantly changing elements and juxtapositions, and
- ii. The basic digital camera used to make these photographs has a slight delay between the moment I push the button and the release of the shutter, meaning that it is impossible to anticipate (and therefore ‘choose’) the scenes or tableaux to be recorded.

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²² The results of this project are all ‘straight’ photographs. In some cases, I have increased brightness, contrast, or colour saturation and ‘spotted out’ bubbles. In a small number of cases, I have cropped the images, but I have not otherwise manipulated or Photoshopped™ the results.

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Appendix I: The text-based automatism experiment

The design of the experiment

Working with an early 1800-word draught of my article (Rutherford, 2002) describing the results of the *Self-reflective photography project*, I wanted to find out whether the same kind of conditions might be created – and similarly insights achieved – with another medium: word processing software.

While this experiment shared obvious superficial similarities with some of the forms of automatic writing employed by the Dadaists and Surrealists to subvert artistic and cognitive autonomy (Laxton, 2003) as a means to access and give unhindered expression of the unconscious, the intuitive process employed in the selection of material for the *Self-reflective photography project* was replaced with objectively defined criteria or parameters by which the software was used to reconfigure the text. Secondly, where the Surrealists often manipulated and reinterpreted the results (Mühl, 1930), the results of this experiment were not changed but were permitted to stand on their own.

To reconfigure the text as a means to reduce the prospect for artistic and cognitive decisions, I used the word-processing software WordPerfect 5.1™ (which, unlike MSWord) treats hard returns (¶) as typographical characters subject to commands to <Search> and <Replace>.



To take one parameter as an example, I gave the command to <Replace> ‘e•’ (all instances of a lowercase letter ‘e’ followed by a space) with ‘e•¶’ which inserted a hard return following the space after all words ending in ‘e’. This ‘ran the text through a blender’, breaking the article into several hundred fragments (some of which were only one single word in length), each of which now began with the word which had previously followed those ending in ‘e’.

For example, if applied to the previous sentence, this would produce the following:

This ‘ran the text through a blender’, breaking the ¶
 article ¶
 into several hundred short lines (some ¶
 of which were ¶
 only one ¶
 single ¶
 word in length), each of which now began with the ¶
 word which had previously followed those ¶
 ending in ‘e’¶

I then gave the command to <Sort> these lines alphabetically. If applied to the previous sequence, would produce the following:

article ¶
 ending in ‘e’¶
 into several hundred short lines (some ¶
 of which were ¶
 only one ¶
 single ¶
 This ‘ran the text through a blender’, breaking the ¶
 word in length), each of which now began with the ¶
 word which had previously followed those ¶

I then gave the command to <Replace> ‘¶’ with ‘•’ (a space) which, by removing the hard returns, rendered the text into a single, 1,800-word paragraph. If applied to the previous sequence, would produce the following:

article ending in ‘e’ into several hundred short lines (some of which were only one single
 This ‘ran the text through a blender’, breaking the word in length), each of which now
 began with the word which had previously followed those

I then repeated the process (inserting hard returns in accordance with the twelve (the first decision) most common typographical features identified by a quantitative analysis of the text, sorted the results alphabetically, and then removed all hard returns) using the eleven other parameters in a sequence determined by alphabetical order.

The decision (one of three made in the process) to use the twelve – as opposed to seven, or seventeen – most common typographical features was made because, well... some number had to be selected and, while no number can be chosen entirely at random, free of influence, twelve was believed to be adequate to produce a sufficient disruption of the text to enable the conditions for the ‘agency’ of the medium to manifest itself.

Following the final <Sort>, the remaining hard returns were not removed. This (the second ‘decision’) and the insertion of additional hard returns (the third decision) between – not within – the resulting short lines were added in order to present the result in the visual form of ‘poetic stanzas’ – rather than as a single, unbroken sequence.

The result was the creation of new and unanticipated (and wholly unanticipable) relationships between the individual words and those they now preceded and followed in which the original text was rendered as a long chain of words and (where the parameters had not broken these apart) short phrases, the sequence and structure of which had been thoroughly reconfigured, but – unlike the techniques and strategies employed by the Surrealists – through a process from which unconscious influence was (to the extent it had been possible to do so) excluded rather than invited. The result is also fundamentally different from Oulipian S+ 7 texts (in which one noun is substituted for another) because, as a result of the re-juxtaposition of the words and phrases, the original syntactic structure of the source text has not been retained.

Except for the deletion of dozens of now-orphaned articles, prepositions and punctuation marks and the spit-and-cuff-polishing of a few verb tenses to improve the flow and consistency of the text, (minor changes which do not constitute a reassertion of human agency, as even the [Lazarus Corporation’s Text Mixing Desk](#) tool includes the explicit encouragement to “add[...] punctuation and delet[e] the occasional word to produce the finished results”), I have not otherwise altered the resulting text (Rutherford, 2019).

Collaborative text from the automatism experiment

A picture at which I had pointed
my camera
'the something' between the face of some image I had seen
and some part of me

Always phrases and desires
but in my failure, somewhere secrets
communicating, losing their thoughts
looking carefully at the Idea
and certain opinions I have chosen

Self-portraits describe my thoughts
and details catch my emotional choices
they express and describe this Passion Play

Fact and fiction, favourite filters, difficult impressions
expose and acknowledge – for I have photographs

Forever fragments
form and native outlines
the goings-on behind beliefs
and hiding from somewhere

A thorough search of my Self
hint at or explain their surface
Have you ever owned a camera?
Parlez-vous Photographie ?

I have a box of photographs
and in them I recognise the stories
the tales told in shadow

If language illuminate the me
I – from the unconscious
reveals the contents and implies the elusive
the one that failed

Impressions, pause and move
In the conscious decisions, contents
In conversation with my photographs
In action my photographs reveal
the real moment of confrontation

In the viewfinder (I hope) my Itself
In most cases, in time and chance
In a dark room, in occasionally prompted places
In my attention, I discover them
my way of looking

And include some thing
Insights there: more than any other
throw them out and risk instead
the closed doors

Even with friends, intuitive response, dreaming mind
my interpretation of the irrational something
Once I was
like anyone who has merits mind

Like scenes from a fleeting learned world around me
Me and my own moral code

No mere accidents
my aesthetics of conscious begun from some Medium
Intuitive visual events occasionally yield up language
and glimpse unconscious elements

my decision: my photograph drifted unexpectedly
Here, photograph this
Photography can not

Places, poets, private me
rational mind, conscious mind
re-examine what I believe

Record and describe
Record resonance, a spontaneous relationship
Reveal anyone

Sifting secrets
describe scenes and metaphors I sense before me
Some pale reflection of what had caught my attention
and show where I keep the secrets

These are my ghosts – sometimes arising, scenes and subjects
In the meaning of me the fault lay
in the language of the picture
in the medium of ‘before put into words’
and the Shadow cast across the gesture

Indeed, the picture depended on
the whole truth and often more
this real subject of my landscape, a description, a truth
my photographs: a record of my fears

Uniquely valuable clues
to understand the reasons for
Visual metaphors
up from the developer

Appendix II: Changes to the Research plan based on the Pilot

The following observations and considerations are based on the contents of the reflective diary the researcher maintained throughout the duration of the study as a part of an audit trail.

Changes to the Research plan based on the results of the Pilot

As a result of the difficulties in recruiting participants for the Full study, following conversation with the supervisor CM, it was decided to withdraw the exclusion criteria of ‘prior training or expertise in photography, psychology/psychotherapy’. This was deemed ‘due diligence’ by supervisor. To address the researcher’s concerns that participants with such training may find it difficult to avoid the influence of such training (if any), in the Introductory session (and throughout subsequent meetings/contact with the participants) they were reminded and counselled to be wary of such influences and to try to minimise their effect on their decisions.

In consultation with supervisor CM, it was agreed that, if, in addition to the transcripts of the semi-structured individual interviews, an analysis of the reflective texts prepared by all participants was attempted, the resulting volume of data would be unmanageable.

Although video recording of these semi-structured individual interviews had initially been considered as a means to capture and then analyse participants’ body language, gestures, facial expressions, etc., in consultation with supervisor CM, it was agreed that attempting to do so would result in an unmanageable volume of data for analysis and because the researcher lacks the ability to accurately interpret such signals.

Changes to the instructions/guidance provided to participants based on the results of the Pilot

In the Introductory session with the participants of the Full study (01 October 2021), there seemed to be some hesitancy among participants that they could recognise those scenes and juxtapositions to which their attention is intuitively attracted, the researcher suggested that, for the next few days (following the Introductory session), they should not make photographs for this project, but simply try to notice those scenes to which their attention is intuitively attracted.

For the full study, participants will be asked to keep a diary so that more accurate data can be collected about their thoughts and feelings on the day that each of their photographs were made.

Changes to the Participant Information Sheet based on the results of the Pilot

In the Pilot phase, no guidance was provided as to the expected length of the reflective texts. The reflective text submitted by AB was very brief and provided minimal information in responses to the questions (in the *Participant Information Sheet*) and some questions were not answered. For the full study, participants will be provided with a template or pro forma to prompt them to provide a more complete response to each of the questions:

1. What is the ‘story’ depicted in each photograph?
2. What element (the house, the bicycle, the tree, etc.) is, in your opinion, the protagonist or the ‘subject’ of this story?
3. What is happening (or has just happened, or is about to happen) in this story?
4. What is/are the important visual symbol/s that led you to recognise the ‘story’?
5. What emotions do you experience when looking at the photograph?
6. What do you believe each photograph is trying to tell you – and why do you think so?

What do these emotions feel like, remind you of? What other times have you felt this way, or experienced these emotions? What was going on then? From Dirkx (1998)

In addition, participants will also be asked to reflect on the following four issues:

7. Tell me about a photograph that led you to see something (about you or your present situation) in a new or unexpected way?
8. What did you do with this new perspective?
9. What difference did it make (if any)?

Following further research into the concept of ‘mytho-poems’, the researcher came across the work of Dirx who wrote (2000):

Research and theory in depth psychology provides us with some ideas about how to work with the images that might arise within educational contexts (Sells 2000; Ulanov 1999). This process, referred to as the “imaginal method”, reflects a general collection of strategies useful in fostering learners’ insight into those aspects of themselves and their worlds that remain hidden from conscious awareness, yet serve to influence and shape their sense of self, interpretations of their external world, and their day-to-day actions. The specific steps of this process vary but generally involve (1) describing the image as clearly as we can; (2) associating the image with other aspects of our lives; (3) amplifying the image through use of stories, poetry, fairy tales, or myths that present us with similar images; and (4) animating the image by allowing it to talk or interact further with us through additional fantasy, or imaging work.

from *Transformative Learning and the Journey of Individuation* by Dirx (2000)

Participants will also be asked to provide approximately 500 words on 1) their reflections on each of their photographs and on 2) their images as a group.

Instructions/guidance given to participants in the Pilot phase in preparing these 500 words?

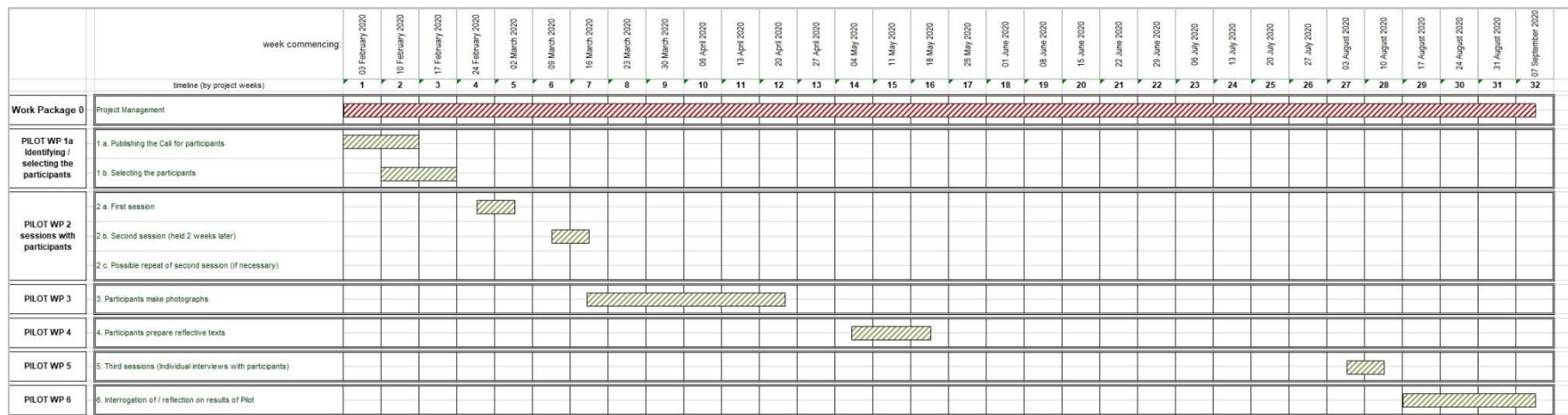
Participants in the Pilot were asked (in the original *Participant Information Sheet*) to note the most significant event(s) or circumstances in their lives (including their professional or family life) at the time that each photograph was taken. To enable participants to consider these links more fully, in the revised *Participant Information Sheet*, participants will be requested to make notes of their thoughts / feelings / mood on the day that each of photographs were taken.

Changes to the conduct of the semi-structured interviews based on the results of the Pilot

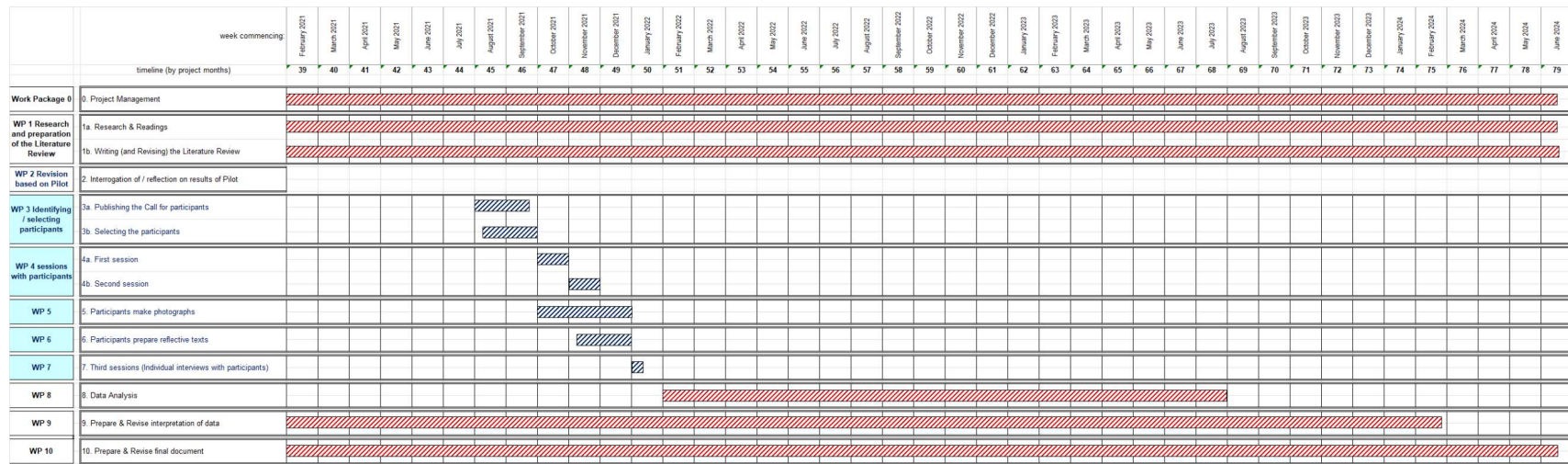
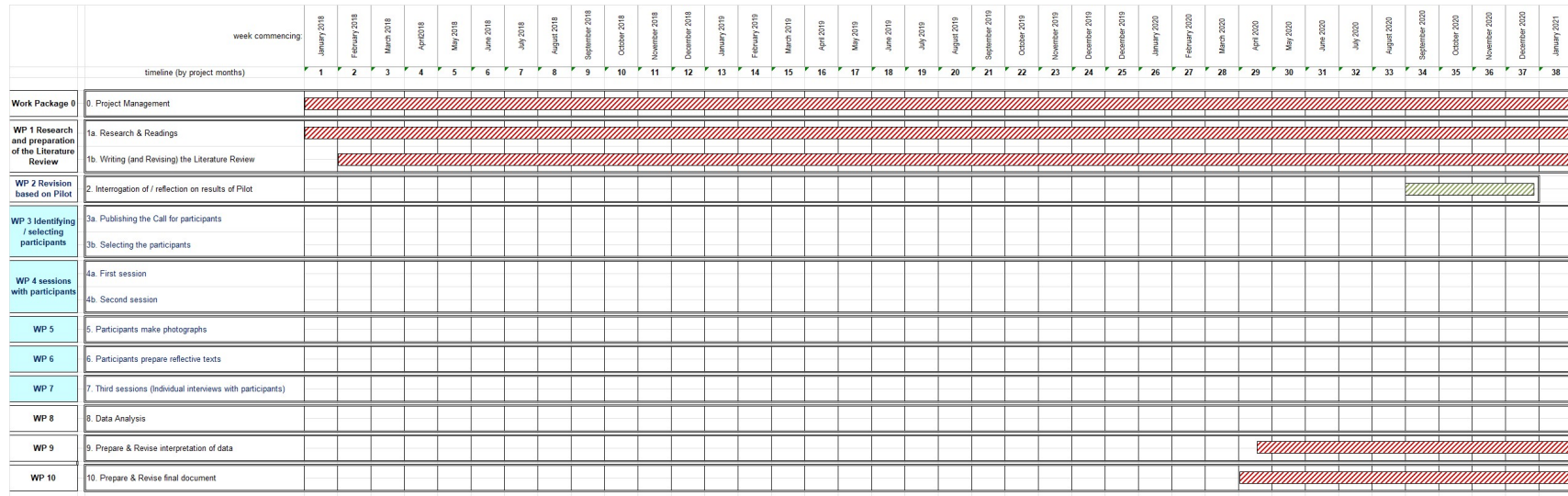
In listening to the audio recordings, I also noted that, at the beginning of the interviews, when the participant hesitated for longer than ten or fifteen seconds, I sometimes interjected too promptly to rephrase the question. While I managed to refrain from doing this as the interviews progressed (and am confident that this did not affect the participants’ responses), in the full study I must:

- Be prepared for, and allow for, long, seemingly rambling answers;
- To allow for pauses, reflections without rushing in to rephrase the question;

Appendix III: Gantt chart (Pilot)



Appendix IV: Gantt chart (Full study)



Appendix V: Rationale for the questions and prompts used in the semi-structured individual interviews

Although I want the participants to have given some preliminary thought to certain aspects of their photographs, I do not want them to prepare and rehearse answers in advance to the more focused questions I will pose during the semi-structured individual interviews.

1. Please identify and describe the main visual elements in their photographs

Participants will be reminded that these 'main' elements can be either *concrete*: (that tree or the girl in the blue dress) – or *implied* (the fact that no one is looking at the dog.)

1. If you saw this photograph used to illustrate a story, what would you guess the story was 'about'?
2. Who (or what) is the protagonist in this story? To whom is the story 'happening'? Bear in mind that the protagonist might not take human form

Intention: On the understanding that, as in dreams, the protagonist who experiences the events usually represents an aspect of the dreamer (Rosen and Sutton, 2013 pp.1041), the purpose of this question is to determine whether the participant consciously:

- i. identifies with the protagonist (*So, I guess the car represents me...*)
- ii. identifies with the situation of the protagonist (*I guess this suggests that I must feel trapped in some way...*)
- iii. identifies with the nature or form of the protagonist (for example, if the protagonist is a non-human or inanimate object)

(If the participant does not explicitly acknowledge these 'resonances', I will not draw them to her conscious attention at this point, but may revisit these later in the interview)

4. Please describe what is happening (or has just happened, or is about to happen) to the 'characters' at the moment the photograph was made
5. Please describe the most significant event(s) or circumstances in your professional and/or family lives at the time that each of the photographs was taken – and consider whether there are any parallels between these events/ circumstances and the content/appearance of the photographs made at that time

Is something *about to* happen, is something *happening*, or has something *just happened*?

6. How does looking at this photograph make you feel? (What emotions do you experience when looking at the photograph?)

Intention: To encourage the participant to identify her emotional response to the situation or circumstances in which the protagonist is depicted

(I have learned from experience that the emotion experienced by the photographer when looking at these kinds of photographs is not always what one might expect. For example, an ostensibly 'happy' scene such as a birthday party may evoke / be associated with sadness or anger.)

7. If someone who knows you really, really well made this photograph and gave it to you as a way of sending you a message, what do you think they might be trying to tell you?

Intention: To encourage the participant to consider her perceived meaning of the photograph – but in a manner that permits the message to be considered at the emotional safety of 'one remove' (*Someone else thinks this about me...*)

8. When reflecting on this photograph (including *the nature or form* of the protagonist, *the situation or circumstances* in which the protagonist is depicted, and *the emotions it evokes in you*), do you consider that it offered you an insight, and if so, what was this insight?

Intention: To encourage the participant to put the 'meaning' of the photograph into words

In my experience, there is potential for valuable insight from 'putting things into words for the first time')

9. What did you do with this new insight?

Intention: To encourage the participant to explain how they integrated this insight into their personal narrative (A primary research objective)

10. What difference did it make (if any)?

Intention: To encourage the participant to explain how this insight has been integrated into her personal narrative (A primary research objective)

11. What do you think of the value of the insights (if any) you found in reflecting on the photographs you made during this project?

Intention: To encourage the participant to explain/describe the benefits (if any) of their participation in this project (I would be grateful for comments on the way in which I have sought to elicit this information)

12. How confident are you in your ability to recognise and understand the insights (if any) you found in the photographs you made during this project?

Intention: To encourage the participant to comment on the accessibility of this process

13. What do you think of the process we have just gone through as a means to improve Self-awareness?

Intention: To provide the participant to offer any other comments on the project not otherwise addressed/invited

To encourage participants to elaborate on potentially interesting comments, where appropriate, I will prompt participants to "Tell me more about that" and/or to explain "How did that make you feel?" (Smith et al., 2009 pp.65).

Appendix VI: Transcripts from semi-structured individual interviews

AB 06 August 2020



Rutherford

Q1 If you saw this photograph used to illustrate a story, what would you imagine the story is about?

AB

[Long pause]

Stuck in time. I'm sorry, stopping time – stuck in time, like, you know, where you're stuck or stuck, stuck in time, stuck in time. Yeah, yeah.

Rutherford

Are there any other details that that occurred to you about the nature of the story, such as who is stuck in time or why they're stuck in time?

AB

Yeah, because as I said and the notes I've written about this first picture. It's quite weird to me the fact that I could even take [this picture], if you're looking at the picture, [there] is really nothing about it.

It's like you're seeing the ground, a path, but a path that is much closer to you, so it doesn't depict movement. You know, it doesn't depict I'm going forward, it doesn't depict I'm going backwards.

It's just stuck. You know? Obviously, there's a bit of nuances and there are, like, you know, all the spots and all that. Yeah, but at the same time, you're looking at it, it's like: You're stuck, you know, [in?] this moment in time. This is how.

Rutherford

Q3 Is there any clue in the photograph as to why we're stuck?

AB

Yeah, yeah, yeah, like I said, it's not depicting any forward movement or backward movement, it's not showing any curves or anything. It's just so close to the ground. Yeah, that's what I get.

Rutherford

Q2 If someone who knows you made this photograph as a way of sending you a message, what do you think the message they're trying to send you might be?

AB

Well, I just would say if, before this whole project started, someone sends this, you know... [I would be inclined to ask them] Are you out of your mind or something?

But right now, with, you know, the journey and the current knowledge of how pictures can tell a story that I know right now, if someone should send this to me, you know, I'm going to sit down and reflect on that. "What are you saying? Like, this is me right now? So, what are you saying? Are you saying I'm stuck? You know, are you saying I'm not moving forward? I'm not going backward? Am I confused?" You know? Is that what? You know? That's what my train of thoughts will be about.

Rutherford

Q3 What is it about the appearance of the photograph that leads you to see that it's about 'being stuck in time'? When you look at the photograph, what is it about the photograph that tells you that this is about 'being stuck in time'?

AB

Well, again, like I said, obviously it's a picture of a path and path depicts a journey, you know, and it's either you're going forward, you're going backward or you're just stuck.

And because this picture is not showing much more of going forward or backward, it's so close to the ground, you know, like the way the picture was taken, it's so close to the ground that you can't see anything else other than that. So that's what I interpreted to mean.

Rutherford

So, the answer to the question then really is the camera angle? [That it is the perspective from which the picture was taken that tells you that this is about 'being stuck in time'?]

AB

Yes. Yes.

Rutherford

And the fact that [the photograph] is limited to what is immediately in front of us.

AB
Exactly.

Rutherford
That it's not pointing some other way? OK, so it's the camera angle?

Q4 Do you see a hero or a heroine in the story?

AB
No

Rutherford
Q5 In any photograph, we're capturing a particular moment – and that moment might be before something happened, it might be while something is happening, or it might be a photograph made after something has happened. What is the moment that is recorded in this particular photograph?

AB
The moment in time, not before, not after.

Rutherford
Q6 How does looking at this photograph make you feel? What emotions do you experience when you look at this photograph?

AB
Well, a lot of emotions, but the one that stands out the most is more of anxiety, you know.

Rutherford
OK. Any others you want to name? You said that there are several emotions, but the main one is anxiety. Are there any other emotions that you would like to name?

AB
Yeah. Confusion.

Rutherford
OK.

AB
Yeah. Yeah, that's it.

Rutherford
Q7 Do you consider that this photograph offered you any kind of an insight? In other words, as a result of looking at this photograph and thinking about your associations with the photograph and reflecting on what the photograph makes you think of, did this lead you to any kind of insights or knowledge that you didn't have before?

AB
Yes, it does. Like I said, this picture was one of the very first pictures, if not even the very first I took after the initial meeting, and I was going through a lot in my head that time. It went without me knowing it, you know?

Weeks later, stuff happened and I just realized things are not going as it should be, and looking back at the photo, I wish I'd known prior, you know, what kind of emotions pictures can communicate, you know, what kind of [...] experience or what you're really going through in

your head. If I had known I would have, you know, I'd have been able to pinpoint that. I would, like, "OK, wait a minute..." You know, sit back and figure things out. However...

Let me just go straight to the question. Looking back, you know, looking back at the picture, what it told me then was: "Re-evaluate".

Rutherford

Q8 What did you do with this new perspective? Or this new understanding or this new insight?

AB

I re-evaluated my life.

Rutherford

All of it?

AB

[She laughs] Yeah, mostly all of it, but particularly my academics, yes,

Rutherford

OK,

AB

Yes. Because that was the immediate, you know, experience as of that time, you know, I had just started... Well, it was my first semester. I was just... in my first semester of my Master's program, you know, so that was the most important aspect of my life, you know, as of that time.

So, this, this caused me to re-evaluate my priorities, you know,

Rutherford

Q9 What difference or change came about as a result of you re-evaluating your priorities? In other words, what difference does it make?

AB

Yeah, the difference it made, according to the story, is that "Do you want to move forward. Do you want to go backwards?" which to be honest, it's not, it's not an option. "Or do you want to stay stuck?" And, of course, being stuck, is a place you don't want to go, that I don't want to go.

So, I knew the only way for me is to move forward. Then I had to sit down. "What do you want to do. Are you going to go about this?" So I had a candid discussion with myself about my own life. And I did. I did move forward. And right now I'm happier for it, to be honest.

Rutherford

Well, I'm very happy I'm very pleased to hear it.

Now, because we're looking just at this one photograph, not another photograph, this might be an inappropriate question, but I'm just curious to know if this photograph and your reflections on this photograph prompted this realization or this recognition, which in turn led you to take certain actions. Did any of the subsequent photographs provide any additional information or encouragement or assistance? Did any of the any of the subsequent photographs contribute to the thing that this first photograph started?

AB

Yes. Yes. There are several other photographs that, that just document the journey to my place now – to the happy place that I just said, yeah, yeah.

Rutherford

Thank you very much. The last three questions are about the project in general rather than this particular photograph.

Q10 What do you think of the value of the insights (if any), that you found as a result of reflecting on the photographs that you made in this project?

AB

The value? Can you [explain]?

Rutherford

Q10 In what way were the insights that you found as a result of reflecting on the photographs you made in this project... In what way were these insights: helpful? valuable?... Distracting?... Destructive? How would you describe or categorize the value, the significance, the 'worthwhileness' of the insights that you gained as a result of reflecting on your photographs in this project?

AB

OK, to be candid, it made me know myself better.

It made me... Because when I started taking these pictures, I didn't even know I'm going to be talking about myself. I didn't know it's going to be a picture capturing me – without me appearing in those photos, So, at the end of the day, the journey has made me know myself more – more than before. It made me come to, you know, real, fair discussion, real knowledge, real acknowledgement of, look: This is, this is who you are, you know, and all that. So, for me, it's been, it's been an amazing journey. Yeah, it's not destructive, but helpful to me.

Rutherford

Well, I'm very pleased to hear that.

Q11 How confident are you in your ability to recognize and understand the insights that come to you through these photographs? Just for clarity? Let me ask the same question, just in different words. You will have recognized by now as a result of looking at your photographs, that we all seem to have a kind of 'symbolic code' – that we use this code – or our intuition or our unconscious uses this code – in communicating with us through the photographs. My question is, how confident are you in the development [...] of your ability to recognize and to accurately read your own symbolic code?

Do you understand the question?

AB

Yeah, yeah, very confident, very confident. Because even through this journey, because, as a result of this journey, I was able to look at one of my friend's pictures because she loves taking pictures. And I was like, look, this is what you're going through, you know, and all that. And she goes, "How do you know that?"

Rutherford

It's like you 'read her [tarot] cards'.

AB

[She laughs] It's like, "Look, it's not magical anything, trust me. It's as a result of a project I've been involved with lately and I'm able to understand, you know, one or two things about pictures". So did there are cues, you know, that I could just, you know 'grasp' and say, "OK, it seems that is what this person is going through", so I'm very confident in my own pictures now in interpreting, you know, to a certain extent.

Rutherford

And obviously, you will be aware that symbols and juxtapositions which have certain possible significance for us – when those same things appear in the photographs made by other people, it is entirely possible that those symbols mean something different to them than they do to us. As we talked in the workshop, there are different categories of symbols and some of them have more or less the same set of associations with all human beings. And some of them tend to be culturally specific and some of them tend to be unique to us. And it takes some [practice] to be able to recognize the difference between them.

Q12 What do you think of the process that you've just been through as a result of this this project? What do you think of this thing that you've just been doing?

AB

It's been eye opening. It's been interesting. Yeah.

Rutherford

'Interesting' is such a safe word

AB

[She laughs] And 'eye opening' I said.

Rutherford

OK. because I do recall at the outset – perfectly naturally, perfectly normally, perfectly understandably – I think you were a little bit sceptical.

AB

In the very beginning?

Rutherford

Yes.

AB

Yeah, I was I was like, OK, so... so what now? What have I gotten myself into? Because I, I just do not understand. But, but subsequently, as the, as the journey began and yeah. I started having a clearer picture of, you know, what this is about. And it became interesting to me, to be honest.

Rutherford

I'm very pleased to hear it.

Finally then, the 12 questions were things that I wanted to put to you. I wanted to hear what you had to say about things that I'd chosen to talk about. But before we stop the recording, I wonder if there's anything that you would like to say, to add to the data, that will be used in order to evaluate this project. Is there anything you'd like to say?

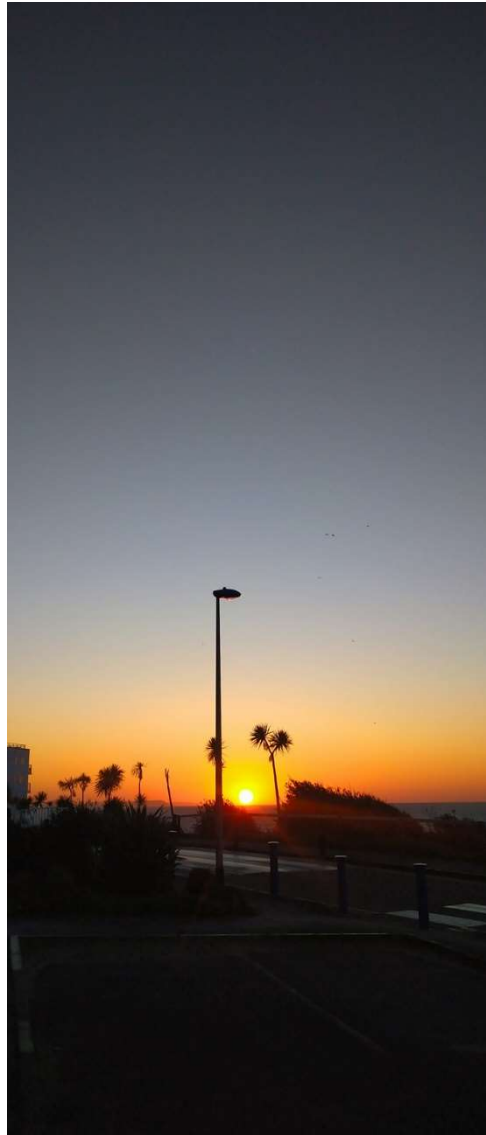
AB

It's not [a matter] of what I like to say, but what I'd like to hear, to listen [to]. I've been talking about me from my perspective. So I would like to, in the spirit of a picture, [which] you know, can be interpreted in different ways, you know, depending on who the recipient is or who's looking at it. So, I've said it from my perspective. But if this picture were to be sent to you, what do you think about it?

Rutherford

I hesitate to interpret somebody else's picture. I'm going to stop the recording because I'm very happy to share with you my impressions, but not as part of the dataset.

CD 06 August 2020



Rutherford

So, you have, I assume, selected a photograph based on browsing casually through your your six photographs and identifying one (or possibly more than one) at which you find that you naturally seem to pause longer than others.

Rutherford

Which number is it? Number two.

Rutherford

You will have seen the reassurance in the text that there are no right or wrong answers. I'm simply interested in your experience as expressed in your own words. I will say relatively little during this interview, because this is primarily about your thoughts and your reactions. Some of the questions I may put may seem self-evident. This is because I want to understand how you see your experiences. There will be questions about your thoughts and your photographs based on your notes and observations. Please take time and thinking about and answering or responding to the questions. Sometimes, as you know very well, sometimes the best answer is

the one that comes most immediately to us. But where possible and where appropriate. I would be grateful if you would think and reflect on your answers. You have the right not to answer any particular questions. The information that you provided in both your reflective text and in your responses to this interview will be used only anonymously.

Rutherford

The photographs and the commentaries will also be anonymized, and all of the information, including the photographs and the audio recordings, will be kept on an external drive in a password protected folder. And finally, I may occasionally ask you to elaborate on some of your comments simply by asking you to please tell me more about that.

Rutherford

We both have the photograph open on our respective monitors. And so, the first question, speaking of questions, I need to point out, there are 12 questions, not 10. (I miscounted.)

Rutherford

So, if you're ready to begin: If you saw this photograph used to illustrate a story, what would you guess the story was about?

CD

Um. Possibly something to do with a metaphorical journey. It looks a little bit like the sort of picture you might see on a sort of holiday rage [beach?] in a summer holiday.

CD

To be honest, there's something about a journey for me. Possibly connected to the idea of the sunrise or the sunset, which is, of course, connected to the passage of time over the end of the day or the beginning of a day?

Rutherford

Is that – the sun – is that where you see that?

CD

Yeah, yeah. Definitely the beginning of something with the sun rising and the beginning of something and the fact that the little palm trees there as well. It's sort of like, it might give me the impression of being somewhere that's hot or a foreign country or going somewhere physically as well as metaphorically.

Rutherford

OK, so the story obviously is about travel or going somewhere. Do you have a sense of (and I don't want to put words in your mouth), but you have a sense of any of the other details of the story?

CD

There's definitely some hope in there for me – the light in the darkness, because it's dark at the top and dark at the bottom and the light in the middle of it. So, it's a positive thing, something hopeful, looking forward.

Rutherford

But you have no sense of any of the other details of the story, such as, for instance, whether it's set in the past or the future, who the story might be about or any of the events that that may either have led up to this moment or that may still be in the future?

Rutherford

I'm just trying to tease out what your imagination offers you about this picture.

CD

I keep thinking about myself for some reason, maybe reflecting on it. So, yeah, maybe a woman in her late 30s. I don't know, I don't know. That's a difficult one.

Rutherford

Okay, if nothing comes to mind, that's fine, I'm just opening all the little boxes to see where we might find something.

Rutherford

OK, the second question then, if someone who knows you made this photograph as a way of sending you a message or telling you something, what do you think – based on this this photograph – what do you think that that message might be

CD

I think it would be saying "I'm nearby and I'm doing something that I know you like doing and I know you'd like to say, I know this would make you feel good, so I'm sending it to you". So it would be a very positive. A little gift, in fact, I see, is a little gift I get when I get such pictures.

Rutherford

Is that because you appreciate the knowledge of the person who sent it to you, that the two of you share an interest in this – and therefore "I knew that you would like to see this, too, therefore, I'm sharing it with you"? Or is it because perhaps it meant that the person was thinking of you even though you weren't present yet?

CD

Probably both, actually, both things. And also the sunrise and sunset moments for me and my friends that know me very well know that it's almost like a little ritual. It's a ritual that I do that reminds me of the constant change, constant change that we're in. It's an absolutely beautiful thing that will be gone. But that's a positive thing.

Rutherford

Do you feel comfortable telling me about the ritual?

CD

It's just being able to go and watch Sunrises and Sunsets. I do that a lot. So people that are very close to me know that I do that because I always kind of drag them with me or I'll send photos not dissimilar to this one, or I have them on the social media or that sort of thing, and talk about my perception of change and how I embrace it.

Rutherford

There was a second part to that question, but I think you just answered that in the second part is: 'What is it about the appearance of this photograph that leads you to believe that this is the message'?

CD

Yeah, because of the content, I guess, the community, the conversations I would have had with people or the fact that they would have been there with me doing it or. Yeah, yeah.

Rutherford

OK, question number three: What is it about the appearance of the photograph that leads you to see the particular story? Because you said that this is a story about a journey. So, what is it about the appearance of the photograph that tells you that this is a journey story?

CD

I think yeah, I think it's probably as much to do with the tree as anything the silhouette of the tree

Rutherford

How do the trees lead you or incline you to see the story of a journey?

CD

Because they're not necessarily stereotypical sort of British trees, they remind me of other places when I look at them.

Rutherford

Is it possible that part of the journey is the journey involved in getting to where those trees are?

CD

Yeah, yeah. Maybe this is the destination, actually rather than the starting point

Rutherford

Or is it part of the journey, but it's not the very beginning of the journey [but] a stage in the journey?

CD

Yes.

Rutherford

That some part of the journey has already passed and we are where we are in the journey?

CD

Yes.

Yeah, and yet now you've said that there is something about 'this is a moment in the journey' rather than the final destination.

Rutherford

Mm hmm.

Rutherford

And so, it's primarily the trees that lead you to see this as a journey picture?

CD

Yeah, that although I think going back to the conversation, the discussion we were just having about change and knowing that this is only here for a moment, that's kind of a journey as well isn't it? That's sort of the journey of life, the more metaphorical journey. So this is one part of that bigger journey. And sunrises really do have that for me.

Rutherford

OK, the next question. Is there a hero or heroine in the story?

CD

I don't think so. Although I did, I just think for a moment there.

Rutherford

Now, of course, the hero or the heroine doesn't have to appear in the picture in human form. It could be, you know, it could be a tree or it could be a house or something. So is there a hero in this story?

CD

Maybe it's the sun. Maybe the sun is the main event here. And it's something, yeah...

Rutherford

Because the heroine is the person to whom the story is happening. This is what I meant earlier about sometimes asking obvious questions, because at the outset I asked if you could identify what intuitively you saw was the story. And now, in a way, I'm approaching the same question from a different from a different angle in identifying the protagonist, because if we can identify the protagonist, then we might be able to figure out who this is happening to.

Rutherford

So it's a journey you've already said.

CD

Yeah.

Rutherford

Whose journey is it?

CD

Yeah, I still I still feel like it's mine, which, I don't know, is that...

Rutherford

Well, you don't have to be in the picture

CD

No... no...

Rutherford

So, you're the heroine.

CD

Yeah, maybe I am, maybe I am I. I can't... I can't... I almost can't depersonalize it if that makes sense [undecipherable].

CD

Yeah, it feels like, it reflects my understanding of what life is and what journeys are rather than... Maybe I should never write a book.

Rutherford

So, you say it reflects your idea of what a journey looks like.

CD

Yeah, and the change affects the metaphorical journey.

Rutherford

So, what is similarity or the overlap then, between your idea of what a journey looks like and the idea, the set of associations that this photograph offers? Because if you recognize in this photograph some aspects of 'your way of picturing what a journey looks like' (and that's why you see a journey there) what are the things in the picture that say to you that 'I am about a journey'? If you don't know, you can't say, so just say, 'I don't know' or 'I can't say'.

CD

I'm not really sure. I think there's definitely something about the sun.

CD

But I'm not sure I can put it into OK, sensible English.

Rutherford

That that's fine. That's a big part of what I meant about there being no right or wrong answers, because sometimes we just don't know why we have the impression that we do.

Rutherford

So, we spoke a few minutes ago about this possibly being one stage on a longer journey, you know, a snapshot, a picture postcard, if you want, of a particular moment as part of a longer journey. What is the central event? What is the thing that's happening in this particular story, which is a touchstone on the bigger journey?

CD

Light in the dark, so it's the moment when things that have been dark have become light.

Rutherford

Yeah, illuminated. OK, thank you. And how does looking at this photograph make you feel?

CD

Excited for more opportunities to see the sun. Hopeful, like I said before. Contented in how I live and what I choose to do with my time.

CD

And I'm sort of resigned to the fact that everything always goes away.

Rutherford

Everything ends?

CD

Yes, yeah.

Rutherford

Do you see this picture simultaneously? (This isn't one of the 12 questions it just occurred to me...) Do you see this picture simultaneously as a dawn AND as a sunset, or do you see it sometimes as a dawn and sometimes as a sunset? Or do you just see it as one or the other and never the other?

CD

I just see it as dawn.

Rutherford

Just as dawn. OK.

Rutherford

And do you consider that, reflecting on this photograph, looking at this photograph, trying to identify your associations with this photograph, did looking at this photograph lead you to any kind of an insight? Did you know something as a result of reflecting on this photograph that you didn't know or realize before?

CD

At the time when I did the writing and what have you?

Rutherford

Even subsequently, it might be that that something occurred to you about this photograph last night when you were looking at it that didn't occur to you when you were writing the text.

Rutherford

I was wondering if reflecting on this photograph and your associations with this photograph ever at any point...

CD

Oh. You've broken up. I've lost you... Hello. Hello. I can still hear you, but obviously you had lost me, so thank you for not hanging up. I could still hear you, but I didn't know where to get it right.

Rutherford

So, where were we?

CD

You're asking about...

Rutherford

Oh yes, whether reflecting on this photograph led you to any new understanding or any insight.

CD

Yeah, I think. Definitely the whole experience of reviewing photographs as a whole has made me recognize this, well, it's concretized, something that I thought was the case. But, my recognition of change and being content with change and finding excitement in change, and there's definitely a link with the sun, with sunup and sundown. And that is definitely one of the things that when [...] I looked at my photos again. When I was looking at this one, I was definitely drawn to it because, I think, since (was it May when we were last chatting?), it has come through even stronger, this sort of recognition of the light and the dark and the sun and change and that sort of stuff. Definitely.

Rutherford

So, would it be reasonable or accurate to say that, although it didn't necessarily provide a new understanding, it made you more aware of something that was floating around in there – just to help you, to use your word, concretize it?

CD

Yeah,

Rutherford

OK.

CD

Yeah, absolutely.

Rutherford

Thank you very much.

Rutherford

What did you do with this new perspective or this new insight or understanding?

CD

Well, I certainly I certainly reflected on it when I was at the beach again. So, it must have been Tuesday that I looked at the photo. I've been this last couple of weeks when I haven't had my daughter, I've been going down very early in the morning and having a swim in the sea and watching the sun come up. So I was definitely it was definitely on my mind more. And I was thinking about the habits that I have in terms of being connected with the outdoors and how I feel content with the change that's happening in the natural world and in my own life. So, it definitely added to my thought processes when I was out doing the things that I do habitually.

CD

And it probably... I sometimes get quite emotional with nature. Sunrise, sunset forests and stuff like that. And I think it definitely added to the emotion of that experience in the last couple of days.

CD

It was very rainy this morning, so I didn't actually see the sun. But that was an experience as well that was nice. It was very soft.

Rutherford

The next question is similar to the previous. But we'll just see if it opens up into any new information. I'd like to ask, what difference does it make? Because I asked you a moment ago what you did with this new perspective. Now, what difference did this new perspective make in any way?

CD

Yeah. Maybe it brought it more to the fore and made it easier to be in that moment thinking about the change in the sand and stuff rather than thinking about what I need to do to make dinner, and what if I got on work and stuff? So maybe it brought me more into the moment. More mindful.

Rutherford

Thank you. The last three questions aren't about this particular photograph, but are about the process that we've been through.

CD

Yeah sure.

Rutherford

Number one, what do you think of the value of the insights, if any, you found in reflecting on the photographs that you made during this project?

CD

I was quite overwhelmed, actually, when I did the writing part of the exercise. Just how... just how strong the feelings and thoughts were when I started actually writing. I'd given it quite a lot of thought before and I thought that I knew where my mind was at with it. But when I started, I did it pen and paper (I'm quite old fashioned like that). So I wrote out pen and paper to start with. And that process really brought some things through for me that I was... I was surprised at the strength of... of feeling and awareness and the sort of things that came through. I was delighted with it, to be honest. It was like a new tool for exploring what was going on in my world. In my head. Yeah.

Rutherford

Are there any of those insights that you'd feel comfortable sharing?

CD

I think there were... there were a couple of photos that I'd taken since we were in lockdown, when we were in early lockdown, and I hadn't really given myself time or space or maybe just permission to explore how I felt about the way that I was communicating with some of my friends and family and stuff and... Just having the pictures to focus on allowed me to sort of safely, or within a boundary, sort of unpick a few things there and explore what it was that was either making me feel slightly uncomfortable or...

Rutherford

When you refer to this “boundary”, are you suggesting a sense of a safe space or a sense of security? I don’t want to put words in your mouth, but I’m just wondering if that’s what you mean?

CD

A safe space. And sometimes when, if I’m reflecting, just ruminating or writing, journaling, there’s no there’s no end to it. So you could go off in all sorts of directions. And that’s slightly overwhelming sometimes to the point that I don’t do it. I’d prefer not to think about it because I don’t know where I’m going to go. Whereas, with the images, it gave me quite a clear sort of ‘This is what I’m focusing on and I’m going to pull this apart’. Do you see what I mean?

Rutherford

It has a frame?

CD

Yes. Yeah exactly.

Rutherford

It has, it has boundaries. It has a place where it ends.

CD

Yeah.

Rutherford

OK, how confident are you in your ability to recognize and understand the insights, if any, that you found in the photographs that you made during this project? How confident are you that, when you look at the photographs, that the thing that you’re finding, the thing that you’re recognizing is an accurate indication of something that is of relevance for you?

CD

This is an interesting question for me, because, at the time I was writing and at the moment I feel confident that it has... it has allowed me to look at who I am and how I think and what’s going on with me, but I couldn’t say that in a year if I did the same exercise, I would have the same results, because a lot can happen in a year and I might be you know... Those boundaries might not be tight enough for me or... something might have happened to make it that I find it really, really difficult. Do you see what I mean?

Rutherford

What I was after with that question was whether there is a sense of any improvements, enhancements, development of an awareness of your own personal mythological language or poetic language or symbolic language, the ability to recognize that there are certain features in my metaphorical landscape that show up in the pictures and that as a result of spending some time with them, [you can now say] ‘I’ve developed an initial sense of confidence that I can start to read this code’. That’s in essence what the question is.

Rutherford

How confident are you in your ability to begin to learn to read your own code?

CD

Yes. Yeah, I think I’m confident in learning... I’m confident in my learning of my code. What I would not necessarily be as competent in is sharing it with other people. So, the understanding of some of the symbolic references might be more personal or subjective than a social construct or understanding.

Rutherford
Sure

CD

It might be that other people might be like, 'What are you talking about?' That's not what I see at all or whatever, you know?

Rutherford

Absolutely. But the question goes exactly to this point: that you feel confident in your ability to look at the photograph and say, I think this is what's going on here regardless... And you're absolutely right... regardless of whether anybody else would recognize that or agree with that. I have no interest in anybody else's view of your photographs. But I'm interested in how confident you believe that you are becoming in being able to recognize and respond to your own symbolic code.

CD

Yes, I am definitely. And I think going through this exercise has made me even more aware in the days afterwards. So between when I gave you the photos and now.

Rutherford

And the final question is: What do you think of the process that we've just gone through? (And the we is just polite because it's you that through it.). But what do you think of the process you've just gone through as a means to improve self-awareness?

CD

I think it's... I think it's really good. I think it's... I can imagine that it could make me feel extremely uncomfortable at times, depending on what came out, but I know that finding self-awareness and keeping/retaining self-awareness is a pretty uncomfortable business sometimes. So it's... yeah, it's definitely a useful tool in the sort of 'tool box of awareness and knowing yourself'... one that I hadn't... it hadn't even crossed my mind to look at what I'm taking photos of or what I'm taking videos or anything like that. So it's something that I will continue to do, definitely.

Rutherford

OK, thank you very much. I'm just looking for a quote from Jung for you that speaks exactly that point. Just a minute. And he likes the dark stuff. Yes, well, actually, one of the one of the important significant differences between Freud and Jung is that Freud, according to Jung, studied illness as a way to understand mental illness, whereas Jung said that if you want to understand a healthy psyche, study healthy psyches and not disturbed psyches.

Rutherford

But in reference to the notion of the shadow, I found the quote: Jung says that "Learning to develop enhanced self-awareness involves recognizing the darker aspects of the personality as present and real, and thus, therefore, as a rule, tends to meet with considerable resistance." And so, it's not at all surprising that sometimes we resist being confronted with or if we're confronted with it, acknowledging the significance of some things that someone who genuinely does have our best interests at heart sometimes wants to tap us on the shoulder and say, really, you know, you should be paying more attention to that.

CD

Yeah. Yeah. What is that?

Rutherford

Well, it's a really... it's become interesting, it's become an interesting little subsection of the entire Ph.D., because if I'm going to establish both the existence of this voice and the legitimacy of this voice in terms of its wisdom and its benevolence, then I need to do a little bit more

research into this. And so, the literature review, which started off just all about photography and self-awareness, has now wandered into spiritualism and other things.

Rutherford

And one day maybe I'll let you read it

CD

I'd like that we can have more chats about it.

Rutherford

Well, firstly, I'd like to firstly, most importantly, I'd like to thank you very, very much for all of your time and effort and perseverance through all of this project. And just before I close the recording, I wonder, it occurs to me that I put 12 questions to you; is there anything that you would either like to say or like to ask as part of the transcript that will be part of the data?

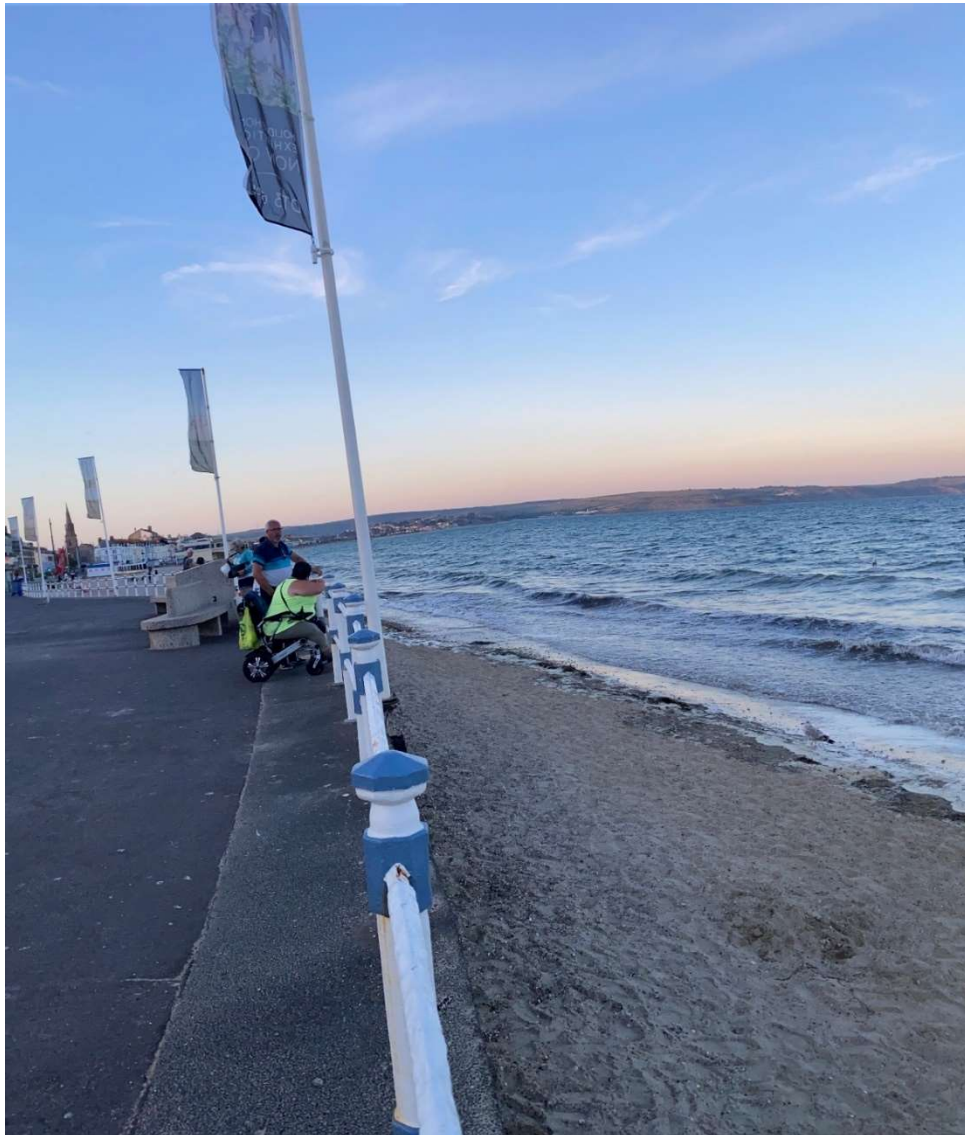
CD

I don't think so.

Rutherford

Thank you very, very much. And I'll keep I'll keep you up to date with how it progresses.

EF 07 January 2022



Rutherford: So, this is now recording and as explained as soon as I download all of the recorded files, I will immediately drop or delete or dump the video file, I have no interest in the video file, I just want the audio file as the basis for the transcript so I'm also going to hit live transcript.

EF: That's fine.

Rutherford: Enable auto transcription. I think that's the feature that I want. Right, okay.

EF: I've got live transcription closed captioning is that right has been enabled is that okay.

Rutherford: I'm just doing 'belt and braces' because I don't want to find out after the fact that, although I've recorded the audio if I wanted a transcription, I had to record them at the same time, rather than after the fact, so I'm just...

Rutherford: Just insurance, because, if I have to transcribe this by hand it's more than my sanity is worth. I don't know how much transcription you've ever done before, but it's not a lot of fun.

Rutherford: Right, so we are now recording and you have confirmed that you agree to be recorded, so let me just start with the preliminary admin stuff.

Rutherford: I'd like to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers; I'm simply interested in your experience expressed in your own words of reflecting on your photographs.

Rutherford: Secondly, I will say relatively little during this interview, because this interview is about your thoughts and your reactions.

Rutherford: I will occasionally prompt you perhaps to 'tell me a little bit more about that' or to reflect on the possible associations of something else that comes up, but I will be leaving most of the talking to you, so it's not really a conversation so much as an interview.

Rutherford: Some of the questions may seem self-evident in terms of 'why are you asking me that?'; 'the answer that question is obvious'.

Rutherford: And that's because I want to understand how you see and how you make sense of your experiences and so I'm interested in the way in which you put things into words.

Rutherford: Please take your time in thinking about and in answering or responding to the questions. It is generally true that the first idea that comes to you is more often the most accurate or truthful response.

Rutherford: But do feel free to take time to reflect on the questions before you answer don't feel obliged to respond immediately. You do have the right to refuse to answer any particular questions, although at this point, now that the collection of data has begun, you have passed the point at which you have the right to withdraw from the study and to withdraw all of your personal data. That's too late now.

Rutherford: The information that you provide in both the reflective text and your responses in this interview will be used only anonymously.

Rutherford: All photographs and commentaries will be anonymised. And finally, all information, including the photographs and the audio recordings and the transcriptions will be kept on an external password-protected external drive.

Rutherford: So, are you happy with all of that to begin?

Rutherford: Right okay now the fun part. I have, I have 12 questions.

Rutherford: Some of them are very different than others that's obvious and probably self-evident. but I hope that the sequence and the structure of these questions will enable us to have.

Rutherford: an overview [of] the way in which you approach and made sense of the photographs that you've made. So, the first question is:

Rutherford: If you have not taken this photograph but instead saw this photograph used to illustrate a story, what would you guess the story was about?

EF: Can I get the picture up or not?.

Rutherford: Absolutely yeah absolutely.

EF: Sorry.

EF: Where is it, have you got it handy, or...?

Rutherford: I have it handy in the.

Rutherford: In the margins of a file, but it might be easiest for you, if you simply open it up on your computer.

EF: Sorry.

Rutherford: That's alright. Not a problem at all.

EF: Okay.

EF: Righty-hotey. Would you mind awfully asking me the question again?

Rutherford: If you have not taken this picture, but the first time you encountered this picture was as an illustration, or perhaps the cover to a book about a story, so if your if your very first encounter with this photograph was disconnected with your experience of standing in the place in which it was made... If the first time you encountered this photograph was as an illustration of a story, what would you assume or imagine that the story would be about?

Long pause

EF: I think...

EF: I'm going to say 'escape'... but I also feel quite grounded looking at it. Like not...

EF: I think, because the sea is kind of drawing me... away....

EF: And I'm looking at those people... They're making me feel grounded and not unhappy so not needing to... not needing to escape from their situation, particularly but, but perhaps just *dreaming* of escape.

Rutherford: Do... would you think, for instance, that it's um... it's a holiday romance novel or is it a nonfiction text what's the story that is being illustrated or typified are represented by this picture?

EF: I don't think, um...

EF: I don't think 'holiday', I think something grounded in real... I'm going to say 'real life' well, holiday is real life, but...

EF: Because the people in the picture look very normal but with.

EF: ...life's...

EF: burdens I think so it's like they're, they're content, almost with their lot but they could have been better, I think, possibly.

EF: It's a story of real people.

EF: Real people and their their story of life, I think [garbled] really.

EF: interesting and possibly interwoven with a certain element of escapism. I'm not a very good story writer, as you could probably tell... But [emphasised].

EF: I think it reflects two things to me, that picture really it's almost like a picture of two parts, I think.

EF: I'm in my head, I feel like I'm looking at it like escape, but those things... that sort of Promenade and the people keep grounded... *grounded* me, so I think it has to have some sort of realism, so it's... it's real...

EF: nonfiction and fiction, but....

EF: Based on on real life, not on fantasy.

Rutherford: Okay. Happy story? Sad story? Horror story?

EF: I think.

EF: Not horror. I think it'll have...

EF: Some sadness, I think.

EF: I think it will probably show... that...

EF: Real...

EF: Definitely sadness, I think, but with some real good bits. Kind of uplifting.

EF: And I'm a one for a happy ending... not a fan of unhappy endings.

EF: And, actually, although that lady looks like she's needing some sort of assistance with mobility and they're both overweight (aren't we all) but I...

EF: I think they seem quite content, so I you know that's probably gets me to the sort of happy ending in a way. [Laughs nervously]

Rutherford: So, you think that the reader of the story, once they come to the end of the story, which is accurately typified or represented or illustrated by this photograph, they would find it ultimately uplifting?

EF: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. I think so and, although this picture could be... It's not really it's not the *start* of the story, but I don't think it's also the end.

Rutherford: Okay.

Rutherford: It's an interesting point that may come up in response to one of the other questions.

EF: Okay cool.

Rutherford: The second question, then, is: What is (or are) the main visual elements? When you look at this photograph, what are the main visual elements that help you to know.

Rutherford: What this story is 'about'? And so, in response to the first question, you were thinking about the kinds of events that they would likely...

Rutherford: that these people would likely encounter, or the kinds of circumstances in which they would find themselves? What is it about the visual elements of the photograph that give you a clue about the kind of story it is?

EF: Um, I think the big things that I'm looking at to start with are the...

EF: I know I've said 'grounded' now a few times and therefore I'm going to say 'tarmac', but that's really a heavy sort of...

EF: grounding element I think that's really drawing my eye... And the sea.

EF: I think if you... If we think 'escape', there's loads of ways to escape from life, even if it's just in your mind but...

EF: It's going overseas and... they're all traveling or something like that and that's representative there and it's quite...

EF: Although there's lots going on in that side of the picture, with the sea and the view in the background and the sunset and everything... It's actually the quieter side of the picture.

EF: And the more...

EF: Yeah sort of taken... It feels like it's taking me away.

EF: And the other element of course is the people but that fence kind of draws... It's not the fence, whatever Maybe it is a fence...

EF: Barrier, yeah that's kind of drawing...

EF: kind of drawing my eye, but it's also leading me to the people, but the people kind of stand out.

EF: Um as well.

EF: And the other part, is because... is... how they... how they both are and I described them a few times with her.

EF: On some sort of mobility thing.

EF: And also...

EF: That they are...

EF: Both... large.

EF: Okay.

Rutherford: Yeah... It's their...

Rutherford: it's their position or it's their state or their condition. Let's call it their 'condition'.

Rutherford: Yeah, the fact that they're on the ground, those... Do I understand correctly, those, for you, those are the two main elements that give you a clue as to what his story is about?

EF: Sort of... it's also how their, how their body positions are, and not just what they look like and everything.

EF: Obviously... because she's kind of sat down and therefore is leaning forward on the barrier, it gives that sort of slightly relaxed – not slumped in a bad way, but just slumped forward and he is kind of stood next to her, slightly...

EF: They're not looking at each other, they're kind of facing each other, though, so it looks like a certain contentment with one another, that they don't have to be totally engaged with each other all the time, but they're... they're together. I think they seem together.

EF: But, looking off in their, looking off in their own... and also in their own world.

EF: Yeah. [Quietly]

Rutherford: As we discussed in the second workshop, one of the interesting differences between the way that we as people encounter and experience and make sense of events in our world, and the way that the *camera* does, is that, for us, because we live through time, we tend to experience moments as having a beginning, that is to say, a point at which the thing that is going to happen has not yet happened, or has not yet begun to happen, and then it starts to happen, and then it happens.

Rutherford: And then there's sort of an ending of it or an aftermath of it. But of course, cameras don't do that. Cameras take these really discreet 'slices' out of time. So, when you look at this photograph...

Rutherford: the moment that is happening here... Is it something that the photograph has yet to record, that is to say, is it a moment that that you've captured just before it happened, or have you captured the moment that is happening, or have you captured a moment after it has happened?

Rutherford: Does that make sense to you?

EF: Yeah.

EF: Sort of.

EF: I could answer in two ways, relating back to what I said earlier. It's that.

EF: This is...this is to me an 'in the moment picture', so it's... it's now.

EF: But if it was relating to this story there's more to come. So, if I was telling a story, so yeah it's a... it's a... it's in the present.

EF: picture.

EF: And there's yeah there's still... there's still stuff to happen, I think this is possibly a pause.

EF: Yeah and a reflection point, just because I suppose that they're leading me to that and I know the time of day it was that sort of thing, but I think that how they are... it's a point of reflection, it definitely isn't the end.

Rutherford: Okay, but the... the 'mini moment'.

Rutherford: has already happened [when] this photograph was made. Do I understand you correctly?

EF: The 'mini moment'?

Rutherford: Then the moment that this photograph refers to, describes, alludes to...

Rutherford: This is a photograph, if I understood you correctly, this photograph was made *after* this moment or in the *middle* of this moment, because you said it's also in the present so this... this thing that's happening.

Rutherford: You have recorded it happening, rather than recording...

Rutherford: what happened *after* it happened. Do you understand what I'm saying?

EF: Yes, yeah yeah.

EF: Okay yeah.

Rutherford: I'm just trying to confirm that that the way that you make sense of this photograph is that this is a...

Rutherford: document of the moment *happening*, rather than the moment *about* to happen, rather than the moment *having* happened.

EF: Yes, happening.

Rutherford: Yes, right Okay, and that moment, is how would you describe what that moment? The thing that is happening?

EF: I think it's, it is definitely a.

EF: quiet thing. Whatever's happening. It's not um...

EF: It... There... Yeah... It's... a... It's a quiet pause. But in, a in a sense, that's also quite an active thing. Just because they're they're not jumping about or doing anything... I think it's still an important part of whatever story, this is telling.

Rutherford: Just for example, and I certainly don't want to either put words in your mouth or ideas in your head...

Rutherford: But the kind of thing that I'm after, the kind of thing that I'm trying to find out is if what you're seeing.

Rutherford: that the two of them are... they're not very physically active at the moment but they're having an intense conversation about whether or not to... [for example] 'buy that new house'.

Rutherford: Or whether or not to get a divorce... or whether or not to sell uncle Edwin's gold coins... and so you're... If I understood you correctly, you see this image as *the moment happening*. Now, the thing that's happening, obviously, is very discreet because it doesn't involve people jumping up and down.

Rutherford: So, I'm just trying to get a sense of what you think is the thing that's happening, even though it's very discreet and doesn't have any obvious outward, signs or indications.

Rutherford: But what is it that's happening between these people?

EF: I think I think.

EF: I don't... I think, whatever that I just described what I think it's probably happening anyway, so I think they are...

EF: talking every now and then. They're not having an engrossed conversation at all. They might have been, but I don't think they are. I think they're just, even then...every now and then... I could imagine they're just sort of like, [undecipherable] laying her head on her arm and just going: "Yeah...."

EF: yeah and, and likewise...

EF: I think he's.

EF: I think he's probably saying more than she is, actually. I don't know why. I think he's probably every... you know just saying the odd sentence here and there, and she's doing her "Yes" and "Nos", but I think they're very much.

EF: In their own moment. I don't I don't think...

EF: They're connected by life and being together. That certain contentment that people have together after being together a long time um but whether they're...

EF: they're just... I think they're enjoying their time on their own.

EF: I think he's... Although I feel he's probably the one talking.

EF: And I just think they're also quite separate. I don't know why.

EF: I think they're...

Rutherford: I'm sorry: "They're quite separate"?

EF: Yeah... They're together because he's facing... slightly facing her, in the way that his outer arm and so it's making him lean towards her and she's facing him, although I think they're both looking at different points they're literally looking at opposite.

EF: points, and so there, but their body language I feel is making the connection, as opposed to the.

EF: Total emotional connection, perhaps.

EF: At this point, you know, and I think they... they're very much within their own thoughts at this point, thinking about life or whatever they're thinking about.

EF: Um... They're not they're not having the same conversation, so they're... yeah. So he might be saying like... I've got no idea... He might be saying "It's a nice evening" and she'll go... But in actual fact, they've got other stuff going on in their brains. [She laughs.]

Rutherford: Okay, thank you very much.

Rutherford: Next question then.

Rutherford: Who or what is the protagonist of the story? To whom is this thing happening?

Rutherford: And again, I don't want to prejudice you but you, you could see them as a couple, so it could be happening to them as a unit, or it could be happening to either him or to her. So this... this activity that's going on, who is it about?

EF: If I was gonna write a story, it would, it would have probably chapters on [undecipherable] both of them separately and also, then it has to come together with their lives into twice I don't think you can separate the two of them just by how they're facing each other.

EF: But it would have to include... very much their own.

EF: path of the things that happened to them... Their own.

EF: life, you know. They're not... they're obviously not together all the time, and that will be normal in life, but I do feel that it would have to very much include two.

EF: [undecipherable] chapters, you know something that's happening to her and then something that's happened to him or potentially how they come back and deal with that together – or not even.

EF: You know how just that... life just goes on and just get through.

EF: yeah.

EF: Yeah and they've kind of made sense of it somehow together.

EF: But I don't... I think they are enjoying where they are, and at that sort of point now.

Rutherford: Thank you very much.

Rutherford: Okay now for the next couple of questions, I hope to be able to encourage you or lead you to see the picture a little bit differently. So, what I'd like to ask you to do just for five seconds is just to close your eyes and just try and get rid of the picture that's in your mind at the moment.

Rutherford: Obviously we're going to continue to talk about the same picture, but if I can just kind of shake the previous questions loose in your head and have you look afresh at the same picture.

EF: Right. Do you want me to do that now?

Rutherford: Yes, yeah.

Rutherford: For... for however long you think it's necessary just to clean, the image out of your eyes.

EF: Okay.

Rutherford: Okay now again just looking at the picture.

Rutherford: What is the emotional response that you find that you have in reaction to the picture? How does it make you feel when you look at the picture? How do you feel?

[Long pause]

EF: Happy, but you know, not 'ecstatic happy'; not like 'Yay' but just.

EF: A certain kind of a smile, you know as opposed to like laughter and cheering. Just a...

EF: Just pleasant really, which is really boring... But actually, it's just um...

Rutherford: pleasure isn't boring.

EF: No, no, no that's true enough. [She laughs]

[Long pause]

EF: Ah... it's not inspiring or anything like that.

EF: It just feels a certain... Um...

EF: Normalness. It's not a.

EF: happy.

EF: Ah probably... I could see lots of things, I think, but I don't whether I'd be trying to read too much into if I said further than that.

Rutherford: But on the on the surface what's your what's your emotional reaction to the image?

EF: Yeah...

Rutherford: I think we started off with 'happy'.

EF: Yeah... yeah. Yeah.

EF: I think 'happy' and and...

EF: Acceptance I think as well.

EF: Well...

Rutherford: Okay, thank you very much.

Rutherford: The next question then is: If someone who knows you really well and really, really well sent you this photograph as a way of trying to send you a message, but they didn't include any words.

Rutherford: They just sent you this image, but you're confident that they're trying to tell you something.

Rutherford: What, what do you think somebody who knows you really, really well.

Rutherford: would mean by sending you this image in the expectation that you will see it as a message from them?

EF: Hmm.

EF: Um...

EF: My brother's New Year's goals; get up go running. You know, 'Do more outdoor stuff'.

EF: 'Go see life.'

EF: 'Get away from your computer.'

EF: Yeah, I think it would, I think it would probably...

EF: I'm just gonna say 'stuff' because there's loads of things to do, but I think exercise will be one of them.

EF: and 'Get out... get outdoors', but you know when you go for good walk or you're going to see... or do something. Maybe 'Get a real good energized feeling.' I think it will be 'Get energized' I suppose yeah.

Rutherford: "Get energized"?

EF: Yeah Um... 'Outdoors'. I think that's probably because, with the same sat in front of the computer so... That just makes me want to go outside.

Rutherford: Okay, and the next question is: When reflecting on this photograph – which includes both the elements *within* the photograph...

Rutherford: the *composition*, the things that your eye or your attention are drawn to, and all of the other things that we've been talking about including, you know, the *moment* and *what's happening*...

Rutherford: Having gone through this process of unpacking your associations with this photograph, Do you believe that this photograph offers you any kind of an insight that is relevant or useful or appropriate for you?

EF: Um...

EF: But yeah [undecipherable] discussion. I think it probably does yeah how you how we've got to this point, and what I've said to you... Um.

EF: Like, if I was flicking through and I... I analyzed it.

EF: Well, I am.

[She laughs]

EF: Yeah, I would probably cover the same things, but I do, I do think it probably it does it does yeah yeah. Yeah, I would say that.

Rutherford: And what would that insight be?

EF: Um... I think your your last question about what would my you know friend who knew me well, what would the pitch [picture] be saying.

EF: Cup...

EF: Coupled with... with how I got there.

EF: Um... it probably would would say... would be saying those things are you know, possibly say to ourselves, but not... not everybody.

EF: To...

[Long pause]

EF: To not let... let life pass you by whilst, you know, doing certain pursuits.

EF: ‘Get in there and then enjoy everything that life has to offer’, but it’s really hard to make the time for that. Is that what you asked? [She laughs]

Rutherford: Yeah, I’m I’ve worked my way very gently and tentatively.

Rutherford: I don’t know if you notice, but, at the beginning, the questions.

Rutherford: Looked at the photograph as quite an objective thing and with each question I’m bringing you I hope closer and closer to.

Rutherford: A ‘preparedness’ to consider that this photograph in terms of both the elements that it includes and the arrangements or the juxtapositions of those elements.

Rutherford: Are some sort of effort to send an idea. (I don’t want to say ‘a message’ – that.

Rutherford: that’s too presumptuous), but.

Rutherford: An idea, and impression, a thought [such as] ‘Have you considered this from one part of your mind to the other’ and I’m just trying to understand: A) whether you think that that happens.

Rutherford: And... because it seems that it did; that you do seem to acknowledge that there is, there is an idea, a suggestion, a notion, to consider that you, if I understood you correctly, considered to be relevant or appropriate for you.

EF: Yeah... I think I think that would be.

EF: would be fair, I think, generally.

EF: I’m quite content and all that sort of stuff I’m quite happy.

EF: But all the... all the things I’ve said to you, yes I probably could relate, and I think ‘Yeah, that’s.

EF: That would be me also yeah yeah for sure.

Rutherford: So, in encountering this interpretation of the photograph, would you acknowledge has some relevance or connection or appropriateness to do you and your situation?

Rutherford: Do you believe that the nature of the insight that this has offered is timely and valuable for you?

[Long pause]

EF: Valuable...?

EF: Yes, I I yeah I do, I do think so because it’s it’s really important to take stock, sometimes, and I think really sort of *think*.

EF: And having the picture there to talk about is quite useful as opposed to just ‘think stuff’ and keeps you focused, I guess, with questions as well, and having the image to focus on can help give that insight, I think, even if...

EF: Almost... Could it be, I was thinking just while you’re saying that... if it was *any* picture... Now I know you showed one of your pictures of a building and stuff.

EF: Would I come to the same kind of conclusion? you know from me? Who... who... who knows? Possibly, possibly because I've got that and I'm... I'm *me*, so I'm interpreting that way and.

EF: So yeah valuable.

EF: I'm thinking about 'Timely'...

EF: I think 'timely' to me sugg.. kind of suggests like, the... the 'now ish moment' like very just happened, just about to happen or or in the present but actually timely.

EF: [If you] expand that time a little bit more, and then I'd say 'yes, timely', you know if you go over the next... over the last year and the forthcoming years, that's the two periods... Yes, I think that that is timely yeah.

EF: Yes.

Rutherford: that it was not only appropriate for you to get, or to have that notion offered to you, but to have that notion offered to you at this point in your life?

Rutherford: that's what I mean by 'timely'?

EF: Yeah, yeah I think that's fair, yeah, I do.

Rutherford: Can I ask what, if anything, you did with this new insight?

EF: When? *Now*?

Rutherford: Well, I assume, and maybe I'm mistaken; if I'm mistaken, please correct me, but I assume that the insight about what this photograph seems to be offering for your consideration was, as I think we agreed a few minutes ago, an insight. I'm assuming that the insight came to you, prior to this conversation this afternoon – that on some level, you are aware of what this photograph was offering for your consideration.

Rutherford: Or is it actually the case that that insight came to you during this conversation?

EF: I think more so during this conversation.

EF: More because of the way your questions have... I'm going to say 'helped' because, if I just say the way they [the questions] led me isn't quite right actually... They did lead me to this point.

EF: they've also helped in getting a different perspective or really reflecting more on me, otherwise I think, 'I'm looking at myself', and when I did the writing...

EF: I was telling you, and it was very much driven by my thought, whereas you were asking my question, so you are helping to direct my thoughts, which actually was different... a slightly different process.

EF: and, possibly, but very similar conclusions I think if you... I can't even... if you read what I wrote I think sort of similar ideas and the same sort of um... ambience to the picture if you know what I mean. Um...

EF: I hadn't looked at it in... I hadn't *felt* it in quite the same way as this conversation, so I look today I analyzed it, as in the questions that you've set for us in the writing.

EF: And I did it as a task, rather than now I'm doing it more as a.

EF: As a... [she laughs] therapy. [She laughs]

EF: Yeah it's a really sort of insightful time and I did the last one, more as a task. I think, like I say, I think it's got me to the same point, sort of.

EF: But this has more meaning.

EF: talking to you than me doing it as a task. Does that.

EF: Does that make sense?

Rutherford: Yeah it does. Let me then take the opportunity to just jump backwards for a moment, now, because now that you are responding to.

Rutherford: What I'm going to call 'this insight'... This knowledge that's has been offered to you by your reflection on this photograph.

Rutherford: Does this in any way change your emotional response when looking at the photograph?

Rutherford: So, let me just re-ask the same question. Now that we've been through this process of recognizing and identifying an insight, does that change, (maybe it does, maybe it doesn't I don't know) I just think that it's a worthwhile question to ask.

Rutherford: Does it change your emotional response to the photograph?

EF: Yeah, I think so probably probably a bit actually because what I said, probably near the top of when we were talking, I think I think I said 'It's not very inspiring', but actually now I think it's quite inspiring to 'get up and do'.

EF: So I do, I do think it's actually.

EF: Quite inspirational in that respect. Is it inspiration or aspiration? Inspiration. You know, it's inspiring me to think, actually, [she addresses herself by name] 'You get up and do stuff and and whatever' as opposed to.

EF: At the beginning, I just yeah, I didn't... I didn't see that, as in, as in 'inspirational', but I have, I have, changed that idea actually now since we've been talking.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you very much.

EF: So, it's not an aspirational picture...

EF: It's... it's.

EF: More it's more *inspirational*. [She laughs]

Rutherford: It is it is largely how we see it.

EF: Yeah.

Rutherford: Alright, so, then let me rephrase my last question when I asked you: What did you do with this insight? because it seems apparent that the insight is fairly fresh.

Rutherford: and new, what do you think you are liable to do with this insight? In what way will this insight change anything?

EF: Um... I think.

EF: I don't know about *massively* change anything, but I think all these little things come to us and create change, so I think this is like a.

EF: Another little push in the... in the right direction. I think um... and that's really useful um...in lots of ways, you know, like.

EF: Get... Because it's topical I suppose at the moment... New Year... You know 'I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that'. I haven't really made any resolutions or anything like that, um...

EF: But throughout the time, you know, I look for things to.

EF: Give me a kick up the bum to do stuff or whatever and actually I do think.

EF: it... it's useful for that, I know... I think I will.

EF: Think about it in in different ways, you know, potentially put it as a screenshot you know, or something like that to remind me of this conversation and what I thought.

EF: And why I thought that. So, you know how you can put things up on the fridge and that sort of stuff... I haven't got magnetic fridge things, so I can't do that, but you know actually yeah.

EF: It's a little...

EF: Another little booster in the right... right direction.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you very much.

Rutherford: What do you think generally – so we're now in the in the third and final series of questions... What do you think generally of the value of the insights that you found as a result of reflecting on the photographs that you made in this project? Is there... are there any characterization or description, comments, oversights [I meant to say 'overviews'] that you could offer about the nature or the value of the insights that you found through this project?

EF: So, I don't quite know what you mean.

EF: You mean, I understand your English, but I don't quite...

EF: I'm not....

Rutherford: Not quite connecting with the question.

Rutherford: Some sometimes I speak in a, you know.

Rutherford: highfalutin, discombobulated way.

Rutherford: What I mean is, What do you think of the value of the insights that you gained as a result of being part of this project.

EF: As in...?

EF: [She asks herself] What do I think of the value....

EF: Of the insights.

EF: I think *any* insight into.

EF: oneself, to be able to look slightly differently.

EF: It's always from our own perspective, because it's coming from ourself, but when you bring in another 'something', another tool, so in this instance, I've never looked at a picture really in this way... It just helps to.

EF: create another pattern in your brain or or, you know, do another... illuminate another point in your brain. Um...

EF: And I think that is.

EF: Valuable in itself, because it can either.

EF: make you change direction or, you know, boost you on the direction you're on, you know, whatever.

EF: And so I think.

EF: It... it...

EF: Have I answered the question? That's... I think...

Rutherford: More or less. What I'm after really is a sense of 'What do you think of this particular process as a way of seeking out or availing ourselves of insights into ourselves as opposed to, for instance meditation or drugs... or other ways of knowing'?

EF: Um... yeah, yeah, okay, um...

EF: No, I think, I think.

EF: I've got a cat at the window now...

EF: I did find it interesting... I have to let the cat out... [She holds the cat up to the webcam]

Rutherford: Hello cat.

EF: You know, you're thinking a lot about the photographs and things like that... I just thought, 'Oh, that... that sounds interesting, you know, I've not done that before and so, all that sounds um...

EF: I guess the therapeutic side of it, whether it... I don't even know whether you said that at the beginning... I don't think you did... it was... it just felt sort of nice... I don't... By the way, I don't feel like I've been in therapy... but I think everybody could do with therapy. [She laughs]

EF: If you know what I mean.

Rutherford: I've been very careful, or at least I've *tried* to be very careful throughout this project.

Rutherford: To avoid any explicit references to therapeutic outcomes because, firstly and most obviously, I'm not qualified as a therapist to take you through a therapeutic project. Secondly, one of the.

Rutherford: structural elements of this entire PhD.

Rutherford: is pointing out some of the.

Rutherford: risks or dangers or shortcomings in a therapeutic approach, because of the bias, that is implicit in the discourse so, for instance, if the two of us agreed to participate in any kind of.

Rutherford: Even quasi-therapeutic process, there is an implicit assumption that: A) the one of us has a 'problem' that needs to be healed and B) that the other is in possession of some sort of system or strategy.

Rutherford: Which is designed or intended to lead to a positive outcome, and neither of those.

Rutherford: Are the case in this project, I don't assume that.

Rutherford: That anybody has a problem.

Rutherford: And I'm not offering this.

Rutherford: As a as a means of achieving certain definable outcomes. I just want to see what happens.

EF: Yup, and I, and I, I hear you on that. I think any...

EF: As humans, I think it, you know, we talk, we interact and all that sort of stuff, in which case any.

EF: situation which.

EF: gives a positive meaning I don't necessarily mean, you know, it could feel difficult but... or not, but anything that gives gives a positive outcome it's it's therapeutic. You know, it does, even if it's just chatting with a woman in Tesco or wherever.

EF: So, by the interaction that we've had in there, I think it's been useful in the sense that in that therapeutic thing as you've just said is 'one person's got a problem and person is kind of helping you heal that', in actual fact, using the photograph.

EF: is quite nice because it actually is myself. I realized as I'm talking to you, I know it's *my* thoughts, you know, even though you're posing the question you know, I know it's not um...

EF: A covert... I know that you're not asking the questions in a covert manner to try and see or watch you [one] thinking, I know that's what was happening and that's quite useful to really *know* as I'm answering the question I *know*.

EF: it's based around me the answers that I'm giving.

EF: So, providing [that] the questions are.

EF: good enough that you know you feel sort of.

EF: A certain psychological safety and talking to you about it, then you will get the answer... We know ourselves best, don't we? So, we'll get the answers about...

EF: That that we *want* to a certain extent, even if it's just to provide a good insight, you know, so it just did provide me with a different perspective, so I knew it was coming from me, so therefore I generated it.

EF: But it allowed me just to. [She laughs]

Rutherford: Just to.

EF: allowed me to come to that, um to give myself a different perspective. Yeah, and that was, I think that was... that was... beneficial actually yeah, yeah. I do Because anything... If it was going to be changed it, I have to provide the answers not you, and in any therapy, I think... [She laughs]

Rutherford: Absolutely.

Rutherford: Two

Two final questions.

Rutherford: Firstly, how confident are you in your ability to recognize and understand any future insights that may appear in some of your photographs? How confident are you that you will be able to continue to use this tool?

EF: I think, to a certain extent, yes, confident? I'm not confident, I remember all the good pertinent questions to say, I think I probably... I probably think 'What's the story?' um.

EF: Yeah, I think I would need to start with prompts, even if the questions were written down and... yeah, just the prompts to think about it. It's quite nice to talk about it *with* someone just because, that's laziness, isn't it? Having to read it yourself.

EF: But...

EF: Even though it's exactly kind of, I know what you done with a little bit of a push even there, um...

EF: But yeah, I don't... I don't... I haven't... It's not been a *difficult* process, to be able to do it, I don't think, but confidence is just in the *remembering* what, because you know, you remember only so much that you've taken away in a in an hour, so I, yeah, confidence to a certain extent.

Rutherford: Finally, final question: What do you think of this process we've just been through – and I don't just mean this interview but, but this whole project? I'm just interested in your thoughts generally about this project.

EF: And yeah, no, um...

EF: I've been a bit up and down, whether I feel um... you know, interested to start with, and we've had the.

EF: The bit of a chat and I was like.

EF: Well... Okay, you know I see where it goes and actually come into *this* point now, I'm back on and actually it's really quite an interesting.

EF: perspective so, um, yeah. I think it's a shame, I don't know how many people you've got if it's just the guys that have been sitting our groups, I think that's a shame that more people haven't taken it up actually um.

EF: But I think it's a good... a good thing [undecipherable], and if somebody said to me, 'Oh well, I'm going to chat to somebody and we're going to go through pictures and about what.

EF: I'd think, 'Oh that's interesting', but now I would probably say 'Oh yeah go for it, it's... it's quite interesting, and it's, you know, it's quite...'

EF: Useful. I don't know how you want to take it forward more so, to make it more powerful and to maintain the impetus of now, because when I.

EF: Was chatting to you and you'll probably hear at some point that there was a bit of a real realization where it was, but it was like, 'Oh that.

EF: When you said about the friend, and then that sort of 'turned it'. Even though I know it's coming from me, it kind of expanded a bit better, and it would be maintaining *that* that I would want out of that picture – How do you maintain that.

EF: Energy, I suppose.

EF: Yeah but... Yeah, I'd say so. An interesting way of thinking about stuff.

Rutherford: Thank you very much, before I.

Rutherford: Before I close off the interview, is there anything that you'd like to ask.

EF: Erm... [Long pause] No, no, I don't think, so I think that's perfect.

Rutherford: Well, thank you very, very much. I certainly hope that the audio file and the transcription file are intact, because if we have to go through this again, will never be able to recreate it so.

EF: If we do it quickly I won't be too bad, but it's more than a couple of weeks, you've had it..

Rutherford: Well [EF], thank you very, very, very sincerely for your participation and contribution to the project.

EF: You're welcome; most welcome.

Rutherford: Hello cat.

EF: Yeah, not so welcome.

Rutherford: So, I am now going to stop the recording.

IJ 07 January 2022



Rutherford: So, we are now recording this session and.

Rutherford: enable live transcript.

Rutherford: Right enable yep.

Rutherford: There we go. Okay, so that's now functioning, so the first question is:

Rutherford: Looking at this one photograph (this is your photograph number two).

Rutherford: If you had not taken this photograph; if you'd never seen this photograph before, but instead saw it used to illustrate a story, or perhaps as the cover of a novel or something, based only on the photograph.

Rutherford: What kind of a story, do you think is implied by this image, and what would you guess that the story is about?

IJ: Um...

IJ: Is there any way that I can look at the photograph, or is it.

IJ: from memory?

Rutherford: Absolutely. You can bring it up on your monitor if you wish. Absolutely; you don't need to see me, you can just look at the photograph.

IJ: Okay.

IJ: I don't have it here right now, but, um.

IJ: What do I... If I...

Rutherford: If I can screenshare it if that would help.

IJ: Oh yeah, that'd be grand. Yes please.

Rutherford: Okay, hang on a second, let me find the screen share button.

Rutherford: screen share, actually, just a minute, it means that I need to open up the photograph so, just bear with me a moment.

IJ: So yeah... So, the first question is, if I hadn't taken the picture.

IJ: Then.

IJ: If I hadn't taken the picture, then.

IJ: Then, then, then *what?* [She laughs]

Rutherford: If you hadn't taken the picture and you encountered it either as a... as a poster for a story or the cover of a novel, but you saw it.

Rutherford: connected with or implied with a story, that this is an illustration of a story, what would you think that the story would be about?

IJ: Okay, without knowing the story, and my imagination *of* a story because, obviously, if I was... if it was linked to a story then I would need to...

IJ: to adhere to the story and then.

Rutherford: Right.

Rutherford: You have no idea what the story is about...

Rutherford: Okay, so.

Rutherford: hang on just a second I'm still trying to get it up on screen.

IJ: I actually found it on my phone.

Okay.

IJ: So, as far as I'm concerned, I would think that.

IJ: Well, it could be...

IJ: some kind of natural phenomenon that looks like.

IJ: there's a huge problem behind the clouds, like, there's an explosion.

IJ: And that would be...

IJ: Like... 'Oh my gosh, what's going on? What's happening?'

IJ: 'What's happening in the sky that I don't know about?'

IJ: Yeah, so that would um...

IJ: That would be something...

IJ: You know, okay, fair enough, let's say this is within the context of a story, then.

IJ: I would imagine that the story is about.

IJ: The beginning of a nuclear holocaust.

Rutherford: Okay.

Rutherford: And what do you think will, will *happen* in this story? Do you think that it will resolve itself well?

Rutherford: Or do you think it will be a catastrophe? What will happen in the story?

IJ: It would be a catastrophe; it would be a catastrophe. It could be the beginnings of...

IJ: Um, let's see um... If, if it's a picture and I'm looking at the picture, it means that there hasn't *been* a catastrophe, obviously.

IJ: So then, in that case, if I'm looking at this picture and I'm, you know, from something from the past and now I'm commenting on the present there might have been some kind of chemical reaction in the sky that made that...

IJ: You know, at that time.

IJ: There's something ignited and therefore...

IJ: And we don't know anything about it, you see.

IJ: If there's no story attached to it and I just came across that, I'd be like, well, 'What... what's happened?'

IJ: What's happened that we don't know about?

IJ: That the public...

IJ: Punters, you know, the populace doesn't know about.

IJ: Yeah.

Rutherford: Okay. Thank you very much.

IJ: More of a conspiracy. [She laughs nervously]

IJ: Catastrophizing conspiracy. Um...

IJ: Because of the fact that.

IJ: We're still here. I'm not sick. Nobody else's sick. There's nothing to do with Covid, so therefore *something* happened.

IJ: that we don't know about, and it looks.

IJ: It doesn't look *too* bad, given the fact that we're still alive.

IJ: But it could be the premise to something that's *going* to happen in the future. That's my thought.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you. So, you, you see this as being linked to a non-fiction account of some event, rather than a science fiction novel, or some fantasy. or.

IJ: Oh yeah. [emphatic affirmation]

Rutherford: A work of fiction.

IJ: Yeah.

IJ: Definitely.

Rutherford: And what is or what are the main visual elements that tell you that this is what the story is about?

IJ: The contrast between the... um...

IJ: the clouds.

IJ: And the intensity of what is *behind* the clouds and the unusualness of the colours. It doesn't look like a sunset to me. It looks like.

IJ: It looks like... erm... like...

IJ: Something really *bad* that's happening behind the clouds – because of the intensity of the colours.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you. Now, as we discussed at some point in one of the sessions, we human beings experience events as having a beginning, and a middle and an end or sometimes the end we might think of it as an aftermath.

Rutherford: So, because we tend to experience or perceive or assume that events have this continuity through time – that they progress through time – based on this one photograph and based on the moment that is recorded in this photograph.

Rutherford: What is the event that has either just happened.

Rutherford: (if this photograph is made after the event), or, alternatively, what is the event that *is happening*, (if the photograph is made *while* the event is happening) or is... what is the event that is *about* to happen (if the photograph is documenting something that's about to happen)?

IJ: Oh, my goodness. Okay...

IJ: So... Um... If it was in the past, if it's a past event.

Rutherford: Sorry, let me, let me just stop here for a moment.

Rutherford: I'm assuming that, when you look at the picture you get a sense of whether it shows an event that has just happened, whether it's an event that is currently happening at the moment, or whether it's an event that is just about to unfold.

Rutherford: So rather than asking you to respond to all three, I'm asking you to tell me which of the three do you think it is.

IJ: Logically speaking, it's got to be...

IJ: something that happened in the past.

IJ: Because again, this isn't the fantasy.

IJ: it's a photograph.

IJ: of something that *happened*, so therefore.

[Long pause]

IJ: Therefore... it's, um...

IJ: There's probably something that's not right.

IJ: In the atmosphere.

IJ: OR... [said with emphasis, as if the thought has just occurred to her]

IJ: It could be...

IJ: That...

IJ: I mean... it could be that this is... erm... erm...

IJ: A pictorial phenomenon through the through the telephone [referring to the smart phone with which she made the photograph] that has picked up something, and that has transposed it in a different way.

IJ: Well, you know. I... I've taken pictures before and I've never seen this kind of picture outcome.

IJ: So therefore there's definitely something in the sky. There's something in the air or whatever atmosphere that has made.

IJ: The colours go crazy.

IJ: Now...

IJ: I know that this is a picture, and I know that chances are that there's some kind of thing going on with the phone that has picked up these strong colours and the strong contrasts – but, my *emotional* mind is looking at that and saying 'There's something not quite right'.

IJ: In the atmosphere for this picture to have been created, regardless of my iPhone.

IJ: So therefore.

IJ: There is something.

IJ: in the atmosphere that has caused this, and because it's *unusual*.

IJ: And because I have knowledge of a deteriorating.

IJ: planetary environment.

IJ: I am concerned, and therefore think that.

IJ: There is something... Hmmm...

IJ: there's something that we're not being told.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you. I'd now like to pick up on a couple of the points that you raised in your reflective text just to try and unpack this a little bit further. In your reflective text, you wrote that "This is a story of going back home, where the sky is on fire and exploding".

Rutherford: I'm curious to know.

Rutherford: I'm interested to know, what is it about the photograph that leads you to conclude or to assume or to see that the sky is on fire and exploding *back home*?

IJ: Yeah, because, because we're *driving*.

IJ: We're driving towards home. [She is referring to her knowledge of the direction in which she is travelling]

IJ: And I thought, then that's one of the things that, you know, the road in the photograph is so predominant.

IJ: And so, therefore, it is going.

IJ: somewhere, the road is going somewhere, I know for a fact that we were *going home*.

IJ: And it just... is symbolic that the sky, *where* we are going home, in the *direction* that we are going home.

IJ: is on fire.

IJ: It's symbolic to *me* to see that.

IJ: we're going *into* the chaos.

IJ: Towards that... erm...

IJ: *towards* that... that... that unsettling sky, even though – obviously – it isn't a drape and therefore we are going to go *into* it, but in the *photograph*, it appears that we are going *into* it, we're going *towards* it.

IJ: Obviously, the world is the Earth is round so therefore I'm not a flat earth person. [She laughs]

IJ: Not that bad.

IJ: But it's just... it's just... I thought it was... I thought it was.

IJ: Quite symbolic.

IJ: that we were going to go to chaos, go *into* chaos and we *are*, on a wider scheme, on a human's, *humanity* scheme we *are* going in that direction, in any case, regardless that my family is going home.

IJ: We as a as a *species*.

IJ: are also going towards the chaos and I think that's one of the reasons why *this* picture, particularly spoke to me because.

IJ: The road is.

IJ: The road, is... is what is, it's not... it's not, erm...

IJ: it's erm... it's not that it's ineffective, it's... there's nothing interesting about the road. Erm...

IJ: But we're going in that direction and we're going *towards* that bit, like the look up, or don't look up. [I assume that she is referring to the recent film *Don't Look Up*]

IJ: That's... that's... I think that... that.

IJ: That has had a bearing on on my view of the photograph, But having said that, when I first took the photograph I, my first.

IJ: Consideration was: 'What the *hell* is *that*?'

IJ: And hell is a perfect perfect it's perfect it *fits* that *red, fiery*.

IJ: sky.

IJ: So yeah, that's what, erm...

IJ: that's what um... that's... that's, in the context, and also personally, I think that.

IJ: In this... in this... in this... period.

IJ: of my life and our family's life.

IJ: It is quite chaotic.

IJ: It's *unusually* chaotic. My dad died in June. [Her father passed away in France in early June during the pandemic]

IJ: followed by.

IJ: A.

IJ: person that ran through a red light in that hit us full belt. [She was then seriously injured in a car accident when struck by another driver]

IJ: And... my PhD that is *literally*.

IJ: I mean, I should be, I should not be where I am today, I should be writing my thesis.

IJ: I should be sending my administrator the date which I am going to, erm...

IJ: submit.

IJ: Eh eh eh... [sounds of hesitancy] I am two years *away from it*, because of Covid.

IJ: Covid has *blasted*.

IJ: And and and and thrown us all into chaos.

IJ: And life goes on and, unfortunately, life *is* chaotic.

IJ: And so... [draws a deep breath before continuing]

IJ: That culminating...

[Long pause]

IJ: That that that that *direction*.

IJ: That is.

IJ: Where I'm going.

IJ: Well, it's uncertain, but we know that everything is uncertain, but this is just a little like a little kind of like '*Ding ding ding ding...*' [imitates the sound of a warning bell] You know, it's still happening and you're not *paying attention*.

IJ: Until you need to be even more stressed out.

Rutherford: Thank you. Just to follow up on the same point: in the same comment in your reflective text, you referred to this image depicting 'a story of chaos' and that you wrote: "This chaos is to come by going backwards".

IJ: Yeah, yeah.

Rutherford: What did you mean about 'going backwards'?

IJ: Yes, interesting. 'Going backwards' as far as 'going home' is concerned.

IJ: we're, we're going home – back to where we came from, we are not going *towards*.

IJ: Eh eh... [sounds of hesitancy] a new... a new road going *away* from it so, eh, so.

IJ: For.

IJ: *My* context, it was that we were going home; it wasn't that we were going to France.

IJ: where we could start a new life, or we can have a new.

IJ: move forward. 'Going home' means the PhD, it means dealing with my siblings, it means, you know, the the the... [sounds of hesitancy] horrible situation.

IJ: From... from... from... the wake of my father's death, you know, it's all [She makes a sound of disgust].

IJ: And it's not... we're not in the springtime. It's not sunrise, this is a sunset as well.

IJ: So, you know, it's going all in the wrong direction. It's going *backwards*.

IJ: Backwards to *there*.

IJ: Backwards, erm...

IJ: To the non-*effectiveness* of.

IJ: People *looking down* instead of looking *up*.

IJ: So, it *is* going backwards.

IJ: Anything that's not going forwards.

IJ: is going backwards. Stagnating.

IJ: is just *being*. It is going backwards.

Rutherford: Thank you.

Rutherford: Now, thinking about the story that you identified in response to my very first question: is there, in this photograph.

Rutherford: A protagonist? Is there an indication, a depiction, a representation of the person or the object to whom the story is happening? And bearing in mind, of course, that the protagonist does not have to be depicted in human form, Is there a protagonist depicted in the photograph?

[Long pause]

IJ: The.

[Long pause]

IJ: There *is* a protagonist.

IJ: There's a protagonist.

IJ: of people.

IJ: in power.

IJ: That are not doing what they're supposed to be doing.

IJ: The.

[Long pause]

IJ: victim.

[Long pause]

IJ: Is us. Is me taking the picture. There's me, looking at the sky and not being able to.

IJ: effect change and actually... actually... Yes, I'm going backwards as well, because I'm going *towards* it.

IJ: Which means *I'm* not doing anything.

IJ: to fix anything. I'm in my little world, squirreling, squirreling, my, my little life.

IJ: And there's a bigger, a bigger importance, and that is...

IJ: Unfortunately.

IJ: Very, erm... erm...

IJ: It's not...

IJ: I don't know if it is about the *intent* that individuals have to make change.

IJ: But that it is.

IJ: their inability to *individually* make change against.

IJ: Such a raging sky. Because, for me, the sky *is* where we're going.

IJ: That red hell.

IJ: I don't know if I answered that question.

Rutherford: That... Again, there are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in understanding how you make sense of the things that are suggested, by implied by.

Rutherford: Or, that you're reminded of by.

Rutherford: the images in the photograph. Okay, I'd like you now just to briefly close your eyes. What I'm trying to do is kind of wipe the current.

Rutherford: image and interpretation of the photograph from your conscious awareness. So, I'd just like you to keep your eyes closed for a few seconds, and then open them again and see the picture – to the extent that you can – as if, for the first time. See it freshly.

Rutherford: So, whenever you feel inclined, open your eyes again and look at the photograph and just tell me: How does looking at this photograph make you feel? What are the emotions that you experience when you look at this photograph?

IJ: It's amazing.

IJ: It's just... it's... it's incredible. It's amazing. It's beautiful.

IJ: It's so intense.

IJ: It is so intense. I seem to remember that, when I took the photograph, I was, I was looking at the clouds.

IJ: But it's not the clouds that came out. They're just... they just look blobby.

IJ: But yeah, no, I think it's a... it's a... it's... Eh eh eh... [sounds of hesitancy]

IJ: You know the the the frame of the picture is.

IJ: I don't like the, the road. I think the road is ugly; it's neither here nor there, it's just [sound of disgust] the colours of the sides.

IJ: You can't even see anything anyway.

IJ: Now it's, it's just the intensity of the sky that is just very compelling.

Rutherford: Is there an.

Rutherford: emotion that you would identify that.

Rutherford: that would describe your reaction to looking at the photograph?

IJ: mm hmm.

IJ: Emotion... [long pause] What emotion would that be? [She asks herself] umm...

[Long pause]

IJ: It's not disgust...

[Long pause]

IJ: It's not... it's not anger because, again, this is new, this is, with a new eyes...

[Long pause]

IJ: I think it is in the category of 'love'...

IJ: But I'm not exactly sure what... erm...

IJ: What word, it would be. Um...

IJ: Yeah, I mean it's not, it's not 'fear'... If I'm looking at it afresh.

IJ: It's just, ah... it's *amazing*.

[Long pause]

IJ: Yeah, I don't know what...

Rutherford: Here's an unanticipated question, and it's prompted just by the conversation that we've been having.

Rutherford: I'm interested to note that your initial observations, descriptions, comments about the photograph and what it seemed to suggest to you were all very negative and cataclysmic.

Rutherford: And now that you're looking at it, as it were, with fresh eyes.

Rutherford: A lot of the adjectives and the terms that you use to describe the photograph are, in many ways, very positive. I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts on this difference in the way in which you're now looking at the photograph.

IJ: Well, I mean, you know, when I grew up.

IJ: Sunsets were beautiful, were amazing were... just that that nature saying 'hello', nature, being able to show its its.

IJ: Its its its its.

IJ: Its wonderfulness.

IJ: Unfortunately, as I've grown up and as I've learned in this life that [the] more the sky is beautiful.

IJ: [the] more it means.

IJ: That our atmosphere is polluted.

IJ: So, it has transformed. When I was younger, as 'Oh look at that beautiful sky, let's sit down, let's watch the sunset and enjoy this wonderful moment' it's more like, 'Oh my gosh, look at how red that sky is... Oh, my goodness, the fumes, the levels of.

IJ: CO² in the air and the pollution is.

IJ: so high that 'Look at this!' and it doesn't look pretty.

IJ: I'm afraid to say, it's just, it's not nice, it's not nice to see... to *think* that it's beautiful, but actually.

IJ: It just shows its its.

IJ: sickness.

IJ: So, you know, How do you, how do you enjoy a beautiful sight when you know that it's it's born out of sickness?

IJ: So yeah.

IJ: If it *wasn't*, if I didn't know.

IJ: That it was... Um...

IJ: Not that I didn't know that it *was* sick, then I would say that is an *amazing* colour. We don't see those colours during the day, we don't see them in the morning, we don't see them.

IJ: During the day, the day is, you know, you have a blue sky, you have a sun, you have a moon.

IJ: And then you have this... um....

IJ: It's an unusual moment during the day that you can, that you can look at and say 'Wow!'

IJ: That's nature.

IJ: And unfortunately, at this point, we can't say that anymore. I look at the... I look at a sunset and I'm sad because.

IJ: Because it's... it's full of it's full of *crap*.

IJ: Which is sad, I think, I think, it's sad. I would love... hence the reason why I'd rather watch um... um... you know.

IJ: Watch, um...

IJ: A leaf.

IJ: At spring.

IJ: Popping out, That, to me is... that's still nature speaking.

IJ: But, unfortunately.

IJ: An an an... inflamed sunset like that is just not predictive of... of...

IJ: positivity. Unfortunately.

Rutherford: Thank you very much. Now,

Rutherford: A few minutes ago, or at the beginning of the questions, I asked you to pretend, as it were, that you hadn't made the photograph but that you saw it in a different context.

Rutherford: I'd like to do something similar now and ask you: If someone who knows you really, really well sent you this photograph as a way of sending you a message.

Rutherford: What do you think.

Rutherford: the message would be that someone who knows you really well would be trying to send you, if they were to send you this photograph with no comments?

IJ: Okay, so that would depend on the person that will need to send it. I know somebody.

IJ: Who, if if if they sent it to me.

IJ: I would be reading in *really, really*... I'd be like, 'Okay it's time to start... um...

IJ: start planning.

IJ: If it was one of my peers, or one of my, you know, one of the girls.

Rutherford: Who knows you really, really well.

IJ: There... I have a pallet of people that know me, really, really well that are in different aspects of society, and therefore the meaning would be very different. So, if I find know somebody that I'm thinking about I would be.

IJ: Like, 'Oh Jesus, why?'

IJ: Or, 'Oh no.'

IJ: And if it was somebody else, you know, from Bournemouth University, you know, one of my peer midwives, who sent me that, it would be like, 'Oh, what a nice, what a nice sunset' Erm... 'Where are you going?'

IJ: 'Where are you going?' [She laughs] 'I want to know where you're going.'

IJ: It wouldn't definitely... The connotations will be completely different, depending on the individual.

IJ: I can't...

IJ: I cannot.

IJ: I cannot separate... If it was, if it was, you know.

IJ: My 17 year old son, I would say,

IJ: 'Wow! That's a great picture, That's a fabulous picture Shane'.

IJ: If it was [EF], let's say, 'Wow! Where did you get that that amazing sky from?'

IJ: If it was Jerry I would say,

IJ: 'What's wrong?'

IJ: Yeah, I would say 'What's wrong?' because I would immediately look.

IJ: I'd be like 'Where are you going? Are you going into a bunker?'

IJ: Yeah? So it really depends on who's sending this to me, that...

IJ: Because.

IJ: You know, as an abstract.

IJ: You can think, 'Oh, is this a picture for a painting project?'

IJ: You know, it could be so many different things.

IJ: Depending on the person.

IJ: I wouldn't be able to tell you.

IJ: If you if you told me it was Jerry, I would say.

IJ: I... I... we're... Okay...

IJ: [undecipherable].

IJ: I don't, I don't need to finish my PhD anymore. [She laughs darkly]

IJ: All the pressure is gone and just 'Be'. 'Okay, here we go.'

IJ: 'How long do we have?' [She laughs darkly]

Rutherford: Thank you.

Rutherford: Do you believe that you found a personally relevant insight, some insight, into yourself or your situation or something.

Rutherford: as a result of reflecting on your associations with this photograph?

IJ: Do I... Do I... So...

Rutherford: What did you do you believe.

Rutherford: That you that you found an insight into some aspect of yourself as the result of.

Rutherford: reflecting on and putting into words, your thoughts and associations and interpretations of this photograph? Did spending time with this photograph and trying to unpack what its significance was for you, did this lead you to any sort of insight about yourself?

IJ: Yeah, I think that I'm probably much higher on the general anxiety scale that I actually thought I was. [She laughs] I thought I had...

IJ: I had, I had some good skills going on, but I think that, at the end of the day, it...

IJ: it's something inevitable, I think that I'm also very anxious these days on much higher.

IJ: anxious for so many *different* reasons.

IJ: It is, unfortunately, that I did watch that '*Don't Look Up*' film and, unlike a lot of people that were watching it with me, I was feeling like I was jumping out of my skin. It was very uncomfortable, Erm... erm...

IJ: Moment to watch. It was, I just felt like, I was like... [She struggles for words]

IJ: I normally love to watch films. I normally, you know, relax into it. I'm not the kind of person that's like, 'Oooooh [she makes frightened sound] What's going next? What's going next?' I'm very calm person and this one was like having a panic attack. It's just *so* uncomfortable and so obviously.

IJ: It isn't something that *triggered* me, it was, it was... It has *revealed* to me the madness and obviously with the Covid madness, I mean I I.

IJ: I'm very close to.

IJ: The French news information and I'm constant looking at what's going on in France and.

IJ: This world has... is *mad*.

IJ: There's something dreadfully *wrong* going on here. I've tried to make sense of what's going on in this Covid world and what...

IJ: making sense of *everything*, I just find it, like... it doesn't compute you know, you know, when when when somebody passes, you have a tendency of thinking.

IJ: [is it] Just me? It's not making sense, it doesn't.

IJ: it's like there's a... there's information *missing*.

IJ: Yeah, then all of a sudden, he's there and then he's *not* there and it's like, there's a part that's *missing* here, it's not computing. So this whole Covid thing, there's something that's missing, it's not computing it's not...

IJ: People... You know, there's something that I always found very interesting is that, when I was young, I always looked up to the people.

IJ: around me and I always thought, 'Oh my gosh, they're so intelligent; I can't wait to be grown up to be intelligent like them.'

IJ: And then, when I got closer and closer it's like, 'Oh, it's because they're more... they're older than me, I've still got long ways to go'. Well, I'm getting to the point where I'm the same age, and now I'm realizing.

IJ: 'You're much younger than me; what the hell is wrong with you? Are you stupid?' You know there's a, there's a, it's like...

IJ: I've waited all my life to get to 'being smart', like everybody else, and now I'm thinking.

IJ: 'You're too old.

IJ: And you're *still* saying stupid things. What's going *on* with you?' It's like, I've missed something, there's something wrong here, and I think that this Covid thing has really exacerbated this, erm...

IJ: It's not a... it's, not even a disconnection, it's, it's an 'incomprehensiveness'.

IJ: of the world around me.

IJ: and the wider world and the fact of not being in control, not being able to control. Now, you know, that's a grand thing to say 'Oh, I want to be in control' [said with mock-pomposity], we know, you know.

IJ: rationally, you're never in control as long as you're alive, you don't get to control. [She laughs]

IJ: You do the best you can and that's all you can do; *that's* the control you've got.

IJ: And so, therefore.

IJ: With all of that, um...

IJ: I have definitely.

IJ: I don't even know if it's the PhD. I do find it incomprehensible sometimes during the PhD process.

IJ: I don't under... I'm a, I'm a, I'm a Cartesian.

IJ: Yeah? Things have to *be*.

IJ: There's no wasting time, there's no, there's no, you know 'Oh, let me look on YouTube to see how I can enter my SPSS data in there, because no one at my university has the time to

teach me this' [Said in a mock-innocent voice] You know, it's like, 'What am I doing here?' Sometimes it becomes completely.

IJ: bizarre.

IJ: And so, it merges with the *bizarre* things going on with Covid with the *bizarreness* of.

IJ: of life itself, generally speaking. You can adapt to it.

IJ: But when your exterior environment.

IJ: is *so* chaotic it bounces you off of it, and even though you've had a sense of of control in the chaos.

IJ: it's like, 'Oh my gosh, what is this all about?'

IJ: And then, of course, *my* mind, because I am naturally curious.

IJ: starts trying to look for patterns.

IJ: That's my only way to be able to make sense of things that I don't know about, is to look for patterns.

IJ: And, umm, yeah.

IJ: Patterns.

Rutherford: You find a.

Rutherford: Did you find a pattern between the way that you responded to the photograph and the things that you did you knew, or suspected, or intuited about yourself? Is that where this insight came from? In investigating these patterns?

IJ: Yeah I think that...

IJ: That... Um, um...

IJ: Amalgamating all of the problems.

IJ: of my, of my immediate life and a *wider* life, or the *intermediate* wider life, and then THE large larger life, not the *ultimate* life, but the larger *human* life.

IJ: It *has* made me *look* at that photograph.

IJ: most definitely.

IJ: *tainted* my way of looking at that photograph.

IJ: In a *catastrophe*.

IJ: As opposed to 'what a beautiful sunset', 'what an amazing colours', what, you know, just being happy to see such an *amazing* thing happening in front of my eyes. No! Now, I have grown up and developed into.

IJ: *Warning*.

IJ: Seeing warning signs.

IJ: And unfortunately, that's the way it is, that I get... And I don't think it's just myself, I think it's everybody, but to a certain degree. Some people like to just close their eyes and just pretend that nothing's happening and.

IJ: You know, I know... I know from France, France and the problems that they're having with the vax [those who are vaccinated] and the non-vax [those who are not vaccinated] and the people that are faced with major problems have a tendency of putting the blame.

IJ: On people that don't think like them.

IJ: So the.

IJ: The Non vax, I'm not going to say the 'anti vax', the non-vax are getting the blame for everything.

IJ: That is Covid, yeah, just because, generally, you know, bourgeoisie have a tendency of saying 'Oh well, if you don't follow the rules, then it's your fault that I'm sick', you know, well, Okay, could I say that, am I doing that to this photograph? My *blaming*.

IJ: And I *am* blaming.

IJ: I'm definitely blaming *somebody* for the the the photograph and the and the representation of that photograph. Um...

IJ: But, am I doing the same thing as the bourgeoisie against the the people that don't want to be vaccinated? Am I am I saying that 'It's your fault that the world has gotten so much CO2 in it, and that you know we're going to.

IJ: we're going to suffocate one day?

IJ: Is it?

IJ: I'm happy to take on that that that that blame.

IJ: But somewhere, somewhere, you were asking for an emotion somewhere, *there is* a negative emotion, *there is* anger.

IJ: Against a *few*.

IJ: But those few represent much *more* than just.

IJ: The populace.

IJ: The few who are *so* powerful and who make.

IJ: This world turn the way it does.

IJ: Otherwise.

IJ: Are we just amongst the blind leading the blind? Are we just that *stupid*, all of us?

IJ: So then, in that case, if I were in their position would *I* make changes?

IJ: I think I *would*.

IJ: I really do think I *would*, I think that other people that are not in there, in that.

IJ: That that that narcissistic.

IJ: *greedy* world.

IJ: Yeah, maybe we need to do profiling.

IJ: to choose leaders of the world.

IJ: have to do a [unclear, I think she said 'DICS' – Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Compliance?] or something like that.

Rutherford: Thank you.

Rutherford: Can you tell me what, if anything, you did with the insights that you identified which, (at the beginning, just to remind you said) seemed to bring to your attention that you were feeling more anxious than you thought you were?

Rutherford: Is there anything that you did, is there any change that you made, is there anything any action that you took, based on that insight?

IJ: Um, I think that I need, I always need to monitor my levels of anxiety.

IJ: And although.

IJ: I'm a naturally anxious person.

IJ: In general, general anxiety is more, more to the point. I know that.

IJ: My current.

IJ: My current epoque.

IJ: In my *recent* epoque if I, if I can say it that way, is, um...

IJ: Has a... you know, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm carrying.

IJ: carrying a little crap on my back [She laughs] Just because I, you know, how do you, how do you mourn for.

IJ: For.

IJ: There's so many things that my father's passing has made.

IJ: And so, therefore, and you know, like, I had to run back, and, you know, get my my study doing.

IJ: You know I needed to be launched, otherwise I was going to miss the train I was going to miss the train of my whole PhD and it's like, 'I don't have time for this'. I know, I am aware enough to know that I can't, just, you know.

IJ: pack it, pack it in.

IJ: I know that, and I have been mindful *for* that, but I know that.

IJ: The amount of.

IJ: tension.

IJ: residual and *accumulated*.

IJ: is high and so therefore I know that, you know, [she expresses exasperation] The thing is that, *emotively* looking at that.

IJ: You can't rationally look at that picture without, you can't unlearn what you've learned.

IJ: And so, therefore, that picture... I would love to say what an amazing picture, but every time I look at it, it fills me with dread.

IJ: Because of the.

[I foolishly interrupt her]

Rutherford: Is there anything that you *did*.

Rutherford: As a result of that insight around a change that you made, an action that you took, a decision that you took?

IJ: I think that the the... No. There's no action or decision per se, there is an underlining awareness that I'm.

IJ: needing to be.

IJ: Mindful of my stress levels.

Rutherford: Thank you.

Rutherford: Can you tell me what difference, if any, becoming more mindful of your stress levels.

Rutherford: What difference, if any, that's made?

IJ: It's just.

IJ: It's a, it's an internal self-care.

IJ: That I need to monitor so, for example.

IJ: Instead of.

IJ: Instead of locking myself in to my PhD and the shit – sorry – Is it okay if I swear?
[Researcher nods] Okay, so.

IJ: You know, I normally, I normally have very little boundaries, they always merge, this is normal for everybody, I... you understand that.

IJ: However, I have made sure.

IJ: Recently, that.

IJ: I take time during the weekend.

IJ: To, erm...

IJ: Take care of my rabbits.

IJ: Because my rabbits, my spinning, my my... not my knitting right now, is not hitting the mark *at all*.

IJ: it's not hitting the mark at all, but they're different, you know.

IJ: Cerebral, erm...

IJ: agitation.

IJ: can be, can be, can be, um... addressed by tactile sensations and so, therefore, my Angora rabbits, you know, if I *pet* them, if I *brush* them, if I *imagine*, or just *look* at their, at their.

IJ: Their coats.

IJ: And then I *imagine* spinning projects, so I spin their fibre right? so it's not, not.

IJ: elliptical stuff or anything like that, so um... *That* to me is... I get. I, I can't think of the PhD.

IJ: Yeah, there's nothing to do with what I'm doing there with the PhD, so therefore – and it has nothing to do with my dad or anything else, it's just the rabbits, it's just being in the moment and spinning.

IJ: spinning is my mindful practice.

IJ: Because when spin, spinning, because my mind is so, um... um....

IJ: It *can* be chaotic.

IJ: There is a, there is a technique to have consistent... Yeah this isn't about fantasizing or fantasy yarns, you know, where you're just, you know, allowing that that, that inner artist of yours to come out. No, I spin for *perfection*, for *control*. I get my control *at that point*.

IJ: and actually.

IJ: That control.

IJ: is actually very liberating because it just lets, just allows that. So, this photograph has instigated in me that I have to.

IJ: You know, it's like 'Okay...

IJ: I say to my family 'I'm doing this right now', you know, and they know, they know.

IJ: They know that if I *don't* do it, I will be more susceptible to.

IJ: being more stressed.

IJ: But my 'stressedness' isn't overt, it's covert and so, you know, it comes out with.

IJ: feeling tired all the time, or sneezing, or, you know, aches and pains. It's all, it's all, it's all *covert*, it's not overt. I'm not the kind of person that starts screaming at people because I'm stressed. I don't do that.

Rutherford: Thank you very much. Those first nine questions have obviously all been about the photograph and you; the remaining three questions [are] about this process that we've been through this research project,. So, the first is.

Rutherford: I'd like to know, what you think about the value of the insights, if any, that you found as a result of reflecting on the photographs that you made during this project?

IJ: I think it is very valuable. I had never thought of looking into photographs.

IJ: Before.

IJ: And the whole process was, because I.

IJ: Because I like control, I like to do things mindfully, it's very difficult to kind of like, just.

IJ: 'Unmindfully' take a picture. It was very difficult and I knew I was going to have difficulty, so I took I took time, yeah? to to look at things around me.

IJ: And then, and then I started looking for things around me to take a picture and that that was like oh my gosh it was... it wasn't easy *at all*.

IJ: And then, when I started looking at the pictures that I've taken, it's like, 'Oooh, there is a lot in there'.

IJ: Oooh, I can read a lot of things in here, you know? The other photographs, I mean, you know, the... Most of the girls have taken pictures of... of, you know, sceneries.

IJ: Sceneries don't speak to me. All... obviously because I'm in England and I don't go *out*.

IJ: I don't walk around. There's nothing to see here – apart from houses and cars and roads.

IJ: So, I wasn't, I'm not inspired to do scenery. So, when I... when I picked those, those, those, those photographs, [She is referring to the initial six photographs the participants were asked to select from all of those they had made] I started thinking what, what's, what's *wrong* with this photograph and actually.

IJ: It's interesting. A lot, I mean, you know, it's a bit like a *painting*.

IJ: You can see a lot into painting, you know, it's it's it's not only what the artist takes but it's also what you *read into it* so it's, um.

IJ: Yeah, it's interesting. I am, I feel that that this is a medium.

IJ: By which you *could*.

IJ: develop a process, you know, maybe somebody who who does have.

IJ: Some some emotional.

IJ: quirks, shall we say.

IJ: And and and, you know, they take pictures and then it's like, 'Well what, what, what would you think about that picture?' It might be just this ability to.

IJ: Yeah.

IJ: To read into.

IJ: A medium.

IJ: Of a photograph.

IJ: to instigate some kind of.

IJ: development.

IJ: Yeah.

Rutherford: Thank you.

Rutherford: Secondly, how confident are you in your ability to recognize and understand.

Rutherford: Any of the insights that you may find in your photographs? In other words, has this process assisted you in developing what we might broadly call your own symbolic literacy?

[IJ looked confused.]

Rutherford: To put the same question a different way.

Rutherford: Do you think that you are more, or less, or unchanged in terms of your ability to look at the photographs that you make, and to recognize any potential insights that your mind might be offering you in terms of what it is that you chose to photograph?

IJ: Well, I chose the photograph.

IJ: mostly for you.

Rutherford: Yup.

IJ: At the same time, I chose the photographs that spoke to me.

Rutherford: But what I'm asking is: at the end of this process, do you feel any more capable of accurately recognizing insights that appear in your photographs, compared to.

Rutherford: your ability to do so at the beginning?

IJ: I think so. I think so, because, again, I've not, I've not ever.

IJ: considered photographs.

IJ: Certainly not photographs that *I've* taken. Certainly not. *Other people's* photographs, yes, definitely but not, not photographs that *I* would take because I'm not.

IJ: I'm not that way, or erm....

Rutherford: I'm just curious to know whether you feel.

Rutherford: More or less able to confidently.

Rutherford: identify or recognize the stuff that comes up in your photographs.

IJ: So for me it's it's it's a... erm... it's instinctual if I can use that word, it's.

IJ: it's a gut feeling.

IJ: and

IJ: I'm pretty, I'm pretty close to my gut feelings.

IJ: Because I have.

IJ: I have a different way of.

IJ: making sense of the world that isn't what.

IJ: usual people have a way of saying, I'm not saying that I'm unique, I'm just not.

IJ: As.

IJ: As a typical.

IJ: As other people and. so therefore I have a different sensory process.

IJ: which, you know,

IJ: makes it that I look at patterns. I look at.

IJ: I listen to my gut feeling and I assess a situation with the knowledge that I have. I try to get broad knowledge of information.

IJ: In order to make a judgment.

IJ: I'm always open to changing judgments because it's only what information you have that you can make a judgment. Any change of information is going to obviously.

IJ: alter your judgment, so you know, in this instance, I know that there's shit in the air.

IJ: And hence the reason why it's it's it's *bleeding* like that. So, that judgment is not going to change. I wish it could [She laughs darkly] I really wish, I really wish I had the judgment of my childhood that, you know.

IJ: Just was enjoying the beautiful sky. I know, also from history, that, you know, volcanoes can make a red sky, you know, it's not just about human... human stuff, but I cannot *deny*.

IJ: That we are... the clock is, you know,

IJ: What's it? Is it minus 30 seconds now or something like that? You know you can't.

IJ: You can't look at things without knowing.

IJ: The information and so therefore I can't, not.

IJ: 'unsee' that.

IJ: Which is a bit sad but.

IJ: You know, life makes things very busy. So, although you are.

IJ: *I* may...

IJ: have very negative... I'm a 'half full' person, not, what's it?

IJ: half full.

Half.

IJ: empty.

IJ: Yes, I'm 'half empty' I'm okay, you know, I can enjoy things.

IJ: I can enjoy things.

IJ: But it's, you know, it's um.

IJ: It's Okay, you can get used to seeing things...

IJ: dark. You just get used to it, you can see the light in the darkness. Right now, I don't see much, but it's a beautiful day, the sun's out, and in this moment. I *do* see light.

Rutherford: Thank you. And the final question.

Rutherford: What do you think of the process that we've just been through as a means to improve self awareness?

IJ: I think it's a grand thing. For people that don't have a lot of self-awareness, or indeed, you know, might be.

IJ: blinkered by, you know, the situations and the the the 'busyness' of their lives that they don't take that time and go 'Oh, wait a minute, yeah you're right'. I think it is a very good medium to do this. I think it's it's not not not threatening.

IJ: Because obviously, you're going... and not only that, but from the person who is looking *into* somebody else's needs, yeah? Is...

IJ: *cannot* interpret, I mean, can interpret from the information, but cannot *make* interpretations and then.

IJ: *Give them* the answers. So, if you know... it's like, 'Okay, what do you see here and tell me what you see' as opposed to 'Oh, I think there is here and there, and there', you know? That makes a big difference.

IJ: Especially in therapy, you always have a tendency of saying 'Yeah, but what do you think of that and that and that?' and so you're *interfering* in that process. Here, it's just about.

IJ: You know, trying to get information.

IJ: from a photograph, and it *is* non...

IJ: it's it's *non-invasive*.

IJ: Because I think, I'm not sure, because obviously you, you will see this through, you know, repetitions and seeing maybe if there is a pattern there that people do come up with.

IJ: Is it the thing that bugs them the most? I mean, I know for myself, I have insight enough to know that I *have* a problem with anxiety and so therefore I *know* that that is going to be at the foremost, especially in times of stress that I'm going to look for stress in things that are beautiful. [She laughs]

IJ: However, if it's something that is going to be.

IJ: more obscure.

IJ: I wonder if it can be teased out through a photograph? But it definitely would be a stepping stone, so I think that's a positive thing. I think it's a grand thing to do.

Rutherford: Thank you very, very much. That's the end of all my questions, it remains only for me to offer you the opportunity to.

Rutherford: To make any other comments or observation either about the process or the way in which I've conducted it. Is there anything else that you would like to feed into the data?

IJ: I think that it's just about.

IJ: The process of taking pictures. I think through, through the the whole the whole participation, I think that part was.

IJ: more difficult.

IJ: There might have been also there is the explanation, because I didn't notice, and I was sensitive to.

IJ: Another participant who felt.

IJ: who had a tendency of being overwhelmed. Now, in the context of me, I can tell you that there was a moment, where I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I don't think I can do this' and it's only because of taking the right photograph for you.

IJ: So, possibly if there was a way to approach taking a photograph in less...

IJ: I don't know how, I don't know how you would do that, but if just taking photographs wasn't a problem.

IJ: I wouldn't have been the last one being interviewed.

Rutherford: You're not [the last one being interviewed]

IJ: Okay, okay, so so what I'm saying is that, I know that there is one that did find it difficult and it just seems that we might be the two last ones.

IJ: That we found it difficult, so if I were to, if I were to to consider as a as a consider if I were *you* to look into 'What, what can I do to make taking a picture much easier?'

IJ: Much less cerebral.

IJ: Because that was the cerebral-ness and the attention that I could.

IJ: Give that cerebral moment was very.

IJ: difficult for me.

IJ: And so.

IJ: I think that, that's the part that that you could you could consider. I mean, I don't know how you could... you were very, very meticulous at every step, and I can tell that, but I could also tell... I... at the time, where I saw another person being overwhelmed, I wasn't overwhelmed.

IJ: But she had obviously taken more time to make the right picture.

IJ: And is it about taking the right picture. [Phrased as an interrogative, but spoken without rising intonation. Was this a question?]

Rutherford: I genuinely appreciate this feedback because it is,

Rutherford: you won't be surprised to hear, something I've been struggling with for a number of years; trying to, on one hand, make the nature of the photograph that I...

Rutherford: ...to make the nature of the *kinds* of photographs that I want you to make sufficiently clear, but at the same time, not making it too difficult, so I.

Rutherford: I, it is something I've struggled with, and I do.

Rutherford: very sincerely appreciate both your acknowledgement of it, secondly, my efforts to mitigate that and, thirdly, your suggestions about how to perhaps minimize the difficulty for participants in the future.

IJ: Yeah, I just think that, because I think you're onto a good thing here and, and, I think that that that that part is.

IJ: It shouldn't be, it shouldn't be too difficult to scare people. I know I know I, I feel, so there was part of me that said, 'I am going to do this, whether I literally lose the plot'.

IJ: Because I'm in the same boat as you: trying to get my participants to actually get their butts in gear is like, 'Oh my gosh...' and here I am: 'No Rutherford, I don't think I have time for this right now', and I don't. [She laughs]

Rutherford: Well, I did.

Rutherford: I did one of the four interviews 10 days ago. I'm doing two today.

Rutherford: And a fourth is yet to be scheduled OK.

IJ: OK, so my group... don't tell me I'm the first. [She laughs enthusiastically]

Rutherford: Of the four, you are the second to have the interview.

Rutherford: As I said, I have another one this afternoon.

IJ: I thought I was.

IJ: I thought I was the last one.

IJ: No, no, actually, I could.

IJ: could have said, probably second to last. [She laughs] I know one who could be the last, but I mean, it is a shame. It's a shame.

IJ: Because.

IJ: You just need to, you just need to find a way to approach that photograph, or maybe try to...

IJ: Try one of your your your your 'phases'.

IJ: of a new study.

IJ: bless you, and that would just say just take any photographs, but do not take.

IJ: Do not take a group photograph, or maybe, yeah, just take any photograph and see if there is any way... Does that make a change is there a difference in the quality of what's kind of come out with. Because, chances are, in the future if you were to apply this in therapy.

IJ: You know, people would just come up with a picture and and and it would be.

IJ: Very very eclectic.

Rutherford: As you may be well aware, there is a well-established school of therapeutic practice involved in what's called photo therapy and, for reasons that I have not explained in this.

Rutherford: in these sessions with the participants, I am quite intentionally steering clear of an explicitly therapeutic context for reasons that that are very interesting and very well argued and I'll let you read the book.

IJ: Oh, okay well, I didn't I didn't know anything about photographic therapy.

Rutherford: Of course.

Rutherford: Yeah.

Rutherford: I quite intentionally didn't tell the.

IJ: Participants.

Rutherford: What the backstory was.

Rutherford: But I'd like to thank you very, very much.

Rutherford: For your participation and contribution to the project.

Rutherford: And if you're interested in a summary of the findings once I finally finish this thing and then please don't hesitate to stay in touch.

IJ: I will do rather Rutherford. Thank you very much, and all the best for your, for the future, I will be looking forward to reading your study most definitely.

Rutherford: Okay, [IJ] Thank you very, very much.

KL 17 January 2022



KL: Sorry zoom wants to stay on top.

KL: I got it [the photograph under discussion] open.

Rutherford: Okay, so do you see it?

KL: Yes, I do.

Rutherford: Okay, so there'll be 12 questions about the photograph unless something else occurs to me to ask, in addition.

Rutherford: So, to begin with, if you had not taken this photograph, but instead, saw it used to illustrate a story, perhaps either the cover of a novel, or the poster of a theatrical production... so, if you had no personal connection with this photograph but saw it used to illustrate a story.

Rutherford: Firstly, what kind of a story do you think it would be, and what do you think the story would be about?

KL: Okay, so um... Erm...

KL: Erm... So, you want just a genre sort of thing?

Rutherford: Well, we could start with that.

KL: Okay.

KL: Well, actually, I could see two different ways of looking at it, erm,

KL: It could be, it could be fiction, but it also, you could also use this photograph I think for, erm...

KL: A... kind of a... yeah, I don't know... [She laughs]

KL: Okay, let's just say it's fiction.

KL: And I think when I wrote in my my.

KL: Questionnaire, yeah, your reflective text, I did say something about the, the, thought of... the woman, that is kind of fading into the poster there, about her 'disappearing', so let's just say it's kind of it could be some, some kind of science fiction sort of, erm...

KL: story, I think it could illustrate about about this, this idea of of 'someone disappearing' in front of people to become part of the surroundings around her, but not being noticed, I suppose.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you very much. What is or what are the main visual elements in the photograph that lead you to come to that conclusion that this is what the story is about?

Rutherford: This is probably the first of one of those really obvious self-evident questions, but still...

KL: Okay, so I think, if you're looking at this picture, you your eyes are kind of drawn to because she is is the Center of of the, erm.

KL: The photograph so that's, I mean, I think that's where your line of sight would would naturally go.

KL: However, I think.

KL: Also, the way the other people in the photo are not looking at her they don't seem to see her at all; they're all looking in different directions, so there's, there's not one person... well, I guess the guy with the backpack.

KL: looks to be looking at our direction, but then he looks, he's he's looking down, so you get the sense he doesn't see her either, so, I think this kind of gives the idea that, that she's there being seen by you, as a viewer, but not by anybody else around her.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you. Now, as you may recall, in one of the sessions that we had as a group.

Rutherford: I mentioned that, as human beings, we tend to experience events as having a continuum, that they have a beginning, they have a middle and they have an end.

Rutherford: And therefore, because photographs are, by definition, discrete 'slices of time', they often tend to be a 'slice' from the beginning, or a 'slice' from the middle, or a 'slice' from the end – or, alternatively, the 'aftermath' – which is the end after the end it's what's happened after the end based on the particular moment that is recorded in your photograph.

Rutherford: What *is* the event that has either *just* happened, *is* happening or is *about* to happen, and again, this is based on what you already explained, this is probably a fairly obvious question but still I want to ask it to hear the way that you articulate.

Rutherford: The moment.

KL: Okay, so I guess, I would say, in some ways, this is the beginning, this is the beginning of of of her I guess 'disappearing', becoming part of the background. So, I would say 'it's that at that moment when it happens'.

KL: Does that.

Rutherford: Yeah, yeah, That that's the answer to the question I'm after.

Rutherford: A supplementary question would be then: How do you know this is the beginning, rather than the middle, or perhaps the end? What is it about the image that tells you that this is the *beginning* of this process or this moment of her disappearing?

KL: Hmm...

KL: Um... I guess I guess it, it's the way in which.

KL: She seems to be still somewhat... there is still somewhat... some definition of her as a 3D object, but that, it, is she seems to be halfway between becoming flattened and and being three dimensional. Does that make sense?

Rutherford: Yes, yes, it does.

Rutherford: Okay, and the next question then is, once again because of the particular.

Rutherford: interpretation or narrative that you've given me about this story, this question too will seem probably self-evident, but here we go:

Rutherford: So, based on the story that you see happening in this picture, who or what is the protagonist in the story? To whom is the story happening?

KL: Why, it's the woman of course. Yeah.

Rutherford: Okay, I asked only because it is possible that the protagonist in the story is is the guy with the backpack who's watching this happen, so it might also all be a story about.

Rutherford: People in his life disappearing all the time around him and how he reacts to that, so it would have been possible, that someone else was the protagonist here.

Rutherford: Yes, I was just asking you.

KL: Yep, I can see that, yep.

Rutherford: But for you. it's *her*.

KL: Yeah, for me it's *her*.

Rutherford: Okay. Right. Now, I'd like you to close your eyes and I'm just going to hope that by keeping your eyes closed for a few moments, and then asking you to open them again, that you'll be able to 'reset' your view of this photograph, to be able to see it a little bit more freshly.

Rutherford: Okay, whenever, whenever you feel that that you can, you can look at the photograph with fresh eyes just open them.

KL: Okay.

Rutherford: Okay, looking at the photograph, how does it make you feel? What emotion do you notice experiencing when you look at this photograph?

KL: Well, I think the photograph.

KL: Is...

KL: I mean, it's kind of lonely, but not necessarily sad. How is that?

Rutherford: Erm, okay.

KL: Kind of.

KL: solitary.

KL: I guess a sense of *being* alone, so that is... the emotion you feel when you're alone, but not necessarily.

KL: one of sadness. If that makes any sense.

Rutherford: Can you elaborate a little?

KL: Um yeah, I mean, I I think you can be alone and lonely, a little bit lonely, without without being desperately sad or depressed, I think...

KL: I guess it's just a feeling, a little bit of a feeling of alienation, I would suppose. So, sometimes I don't necessarily think that feeling alienated is necessarily, um...

KL: Negative, it just means that you feel like you don't belong in the situation you're in.

KL: Um, but that doesn't have to be sad, just...

KL: I really don't know how to explain that, without... it's a bit convoluted isn't it?

Rutherford: Just do your best.

KL: Okay, um... Yeah, I think you can feel apart from something, outside of something, and that can be a bit, a bit lonely in a way. You feel like you're on your own, but doesn't necessarily mean you feel sad and desperate and depressed, it's just that, you're kind of alone with yourself.

KL: If that makes sense, so it's this kind of feeling of isolation, I suppose. [Ends with rising intonation, as if she is not sure]

KL: But not, not necessarily sadness.

Rutherford: Okay.

Rutherford: Is it a generally *positive*, *negative* or *neutral* emotional response, do you find?

KL: I think it's kind of neutral.

KL: I wouldn't say it would make me happy to look at this, but I wouldn't say that it would make me sad. it just would make me feel in this kind of place where I'm feeling neither one nor the other, I suppose.

Rutherford: Okay.

KL: Hmm.

Rutherford: The next question, then, If someone who knows you really, really well sent you this photograph without any comment or without any text, if someone who knows you really, really

well sent you this photograph as a way of sending you a message, what do you think is the message they might be trying to send you?

KL: Hmm.

[Long pause]

KL: Gosh. I don't know. Um, it's really hard to say.

[Long pause]

KL: I don't know, maybe perhaps one of.

[Long pause]

KL: That it would be kind of a message of... erm... *solidarity maybe* [Said with rising intonation, as if she is not sure] saying 'I understand how you feel' [Also said with rising intonation, as if she is not sure].

KL: Um...

[Long pause]

KL: 'We kind of share these...' I don't know, I would think that...

KL: If I thought about a friend of mine that would, that I could think about of a friend of a good friend of mine that knows me really well, if she sent me this, I would feel like she was trying to sympathize with me or show me that she supports me because, um...

KL: She... understands how... um...

KL: I might feel.

KL: Somewhat alone.

KL: That... Yeah.

Rutherford: Is there anything more you want to say about that? There seems to be...

Rutherford: There seems to be something else here. I'm not, I'm, I'm just guessing. Maybe it's just intuition, but.

KL: Erm... Okay um...

KL: I guess... I'm not, I'm not sure. What do *you* think? [She laughs nervously]

Rutherford: I'm just, I'm just reading the.

Rutherford: The clues from.

Rutherford: from some of the comments that you've made that there seems to be the the the potential for recognizing what somebody who knows you and cares for you deeply.

Rutherford: would want you to *know* or to *hear* from them.

Rutherford: and sympathy, fellow feeling, is.

Rutherford: I think a really.

Rutherford: Reasonable response to this. ('Reasonable' seems like the wrong word), but.

Rutherford: I just have the impression that there's.

Rutherford: there's more in your response to that, than.

KL: Perhaps that they're, they're, trying to give me some comfort, as opposed to... if that's the direction.

KL: Yeah.

KL: Yeah, I suppose. It would be as a way, I guess.

KL: A form of encouragement [Said with rising intonation, as if she is not sure] just to to give me the impression that I *wasn't* alone, I suppose. Not *truly*.

Rutherford: Thank you very much.

Rutherford: The next couple of questions are less about this particular photograph than about this process.

Rutherford: Oh sorry, there's one more question, one more question about the photograph.

Rutherford: When reflecting on the photograph, including both the form of the protagonist, the situation in which the protagonist is depicted.

Rutherford: And the emotions that this image evokes in you – Considering all those things together, do you believe, do you consider that this photograph offered you an insight into yourself and, if so, what was it?

KL: Okay. Yeah, in some ways, I think, if I think about it, if I think about some of the things I I put on your reflective text.

KL: I, I, you know, I did mention that, that, that I think possibly there's there's some kind of connection to a grieving process, um...

[She sighs]

KL: And particularly in reference to my stepfather who just died in April.

KL: Um... In in that, um, I there's, there's some kind of ambivalence here and I, um...

KL: I feel sad and not sad, at the same time.

KL: Um... which is reflected in my kind of conflicted relationship that I had with him, so.

KL: I don't know if I'm really answering the right question here, um but.

Rutherford: don't worry, don't worry about.

Rutherford: 'right' answers or 'wrong' answers I, I just want to know what what you would say in response to these questions. There is no right or wrong answer.

KL: Yeah I think, I think, yes, well, we were talking about it, this was the thought I had, is that, is that um... I'm I am thinking that, if I'm talking about this from from being, [She hesitates].

KL: Yeah, feeling.

KL: Um... alone and isolated, but not necessarily set... upset or sad, then this is perhaps what I'm kind of getting at.

KL: Is that this idea that you, you are, in what is a potentially kind of sad and lonely situation.

KL: But that, in some ways, you're not upset by it.

KL: So, maybe, this is.

KL: I don't really think I'm articulating this in the right way, um...

Rutherford: It's often a challenge to put into words for the very first time, an idea that's just starting to formulate, especially if the idea comes to you visually, because there are cerebral issues between the left and right hemisphere, in terms of translating what is known visually into what can be articulated through language, there is an acknowledged challenge there.

Rutherford: But is that an insight?

KL: Well yeah, in in some ways, yeah. Well, um...

KL: It's, it's not necessarily insight that I feel this way, that I feel this conflict, but I think it's a little bit of an insight that looking at this picture would make me think of that that kind of conflict within myself.

KL: This conflict with being, um...

KL: With grieving, but also. Hmm...

KL: This, this idea that in, in some ways, well, I'm not going to say 'happy', but there, there is a bit of relief to have this person not in my life anymore. Um...

KL: But, I know that sounds bad, but.

Rutherford: No, it doesn't.

KL: Um... Perhaps, and it is, it is something I've been thinking about, well, I suppose I've been thinking about a lot, especially since I spent time with my mother over Christmas.

KL: Um... Because I, you know, I would think that she feels differently about losing her husband, than, than I feel about him 'cause he's a stepfather so um.

KL: Erm... I feel like... I've had to make sure I don't say.

KL: Anything *overly* negative to her and be sensitive to her feelings. Um...

KL: Just realizing she, she doesn't necessarily share them with me, so, anyway...

KL: Yeah, she doesn't share the same feelings that I do, but maybe she does, maybe it doesn't, but we all just never talked about it. [She laughs nervously]

Rutherford: Did I understand you correctly, that the insight, as you as you described it was the realisation that you thought what you thought, or that you felt what you felt?

KL: Hmm... I, I guess it's not so much a realisation that I feel conflicted – I certainly have been aware of that I've been conflicted the whole time – but, um, that, I guess it's the realization that this, that this picture kind of reflects that, in a way.

KL: In in a in a certain way it kind of reflects this conflict and my way of describing it to you kind of also reflects this conflict because.

[She sighs]

KL: Because this idea of isolation or being apart from someone not being necessarily negative. The way I'm expressing that, I think, is really talking about that that kind of loss but, um...

KL: Yeah.

Rutherford: Okay, let me, let me try and put the same question a slightly different way.

Rutherford: As a result of looking at this photograph, reflecting on this photograph, not necessarily *thinking* about the photograph, we're just *looking* at it and allowing some of the associations and the memories and the and the notions that are associated with that photograph kind of wash over you, you're just simply being *aware of* how you're responding to the image. As a result of that process, which obviously you went through in preparing the reflective text...

Rutherford: Do you understand something, or do you know something, or do you recognize something about yourself as a result of going through that process with this photograph that, either you didn't know previously or didn't see in the same way or didn't understand in the same way? Has the process of reflecting on this photograph added something, or extended in some way, your knowledge of any aspect of yourself?

KL: Ah, yeah, I suppose, in some ways it it, it does, yes, do that because I have to really acknowledge the fact that I'm going through a grief period, whereas I would have, um...

KL: Yeah, I have to acknowledge the fact that there is there is some grieving going on, and I think probably I have not been focusing on that.

KL: So, probably yes.

Rutherford: Okay.

Rutherford: Now I noticed in your reflective text that you referred to three losses your stepfather your sister and your grandmother.

Rutherford: And I wonder and please don't assume that I'm implying or suggesting anything here I'm just asking a question.

Rutherford: I wonder whether there is some value or some significance in the fact that this image of a disappearing *woman* prompted you initially to think about a *man who has disappeared*, rather than these two women who've also disappeared. Now, it may simply be chronological proximity that his loss was the most recent, and therefore, in a way, you know, the freshest in your mind in a way, and therefore this symbolic suggestion of someone who is being taken away or is fading away might reasonably link to the most chronologically recent loss, but I was just wondering if you if you have any thoughts about the possible implications of your interpretation of this image, with the loss of either your sister you or your grandmother rather than your stepfather?

KL: Oh yeah, I can see that, too, and I would say it probably is proximity, of course, um.. erm...

KL: Why, I wrote it that way, because well, of course, when you, when you go through one experience of grief, no, no two experiences are the same um...

KL: So, it does make you think of ones that you have gone through before, and certainly since my my sister and my grandmother died quite close to each other, but in 2003.

KL: That is some time ago and, certainly, I had a different kind of reaction to, particularly, losing my sister, um... which, I mean, stayed with me much... what I mean, the grief itself was quite intense and, um...

KL: I would say, even, even after all this time, it's still really difficult for me to think about, [Her voice quavers] but in the.

KL: In the years immediately following following her death.

KL: When I would travel, when I would be somewhere by myself going somewhere, I would often think about her, and I would I would get quite quite emotional so. [Her voice quavers]

KL: I suppose that I don't feel quite the same way about my stepfather. [Her voice quavers]

KL: But the fact that, for some reason, traveling alone makes me think about that kind of grief, of course, it could be quite symbolic anyway, because you were all on alone on this journey in life, anyway, so the people that are around you. [Her voice quavers]

KL: I guess, as you say this, they kind of fade into the background, as you get further and further away from... so. [Her voice quavers]

KL: And I.

KL: I have to say, particularly right after my sister died, I found it really hard to look at pictures of her.

KL: or pictures of other people, I really cared about. I didn't want to have any photographs in the House of people, and I think I was reminded of the fact that I didn't want to have, I didn't want that to be all I had left of her, so. [Her voice quavers]

KL: Sorry. [She tries to stop herself from weeping]

Rutherford: No, please, please don't apologize for feeling what you feel.

Rutherford: There's, there's nothing to be shameful in feeling what you feel.

KL: Okay. [Her voice quavers]

[At this point, I paused the recording and asked if she would like to stop the interview. She agreed to carry on and I restarted the recording.]

Rutherford: Well, I'd like to move on now from.

Rutherford: The photograph.

Rutherford: to where this this photograph and this process is taking you.

Rutherford: Is there anything that you can think of that you have done with the insight that came to you as a result of reflecting on this photograph? Has the insight led to.

Rutherford: led you to do something with it?

[Long pause]

KL: Hmm.

KL: You mean take some kind of action?

Rutherford: Yes, I mean that that would be the most obvious example of, you know, starting to do something, or stopping to do something, or doing something differently?

Rutherford: But it it, it could take any form that, 'As a result of having glimpsed this thing about myself that I now see slightly more clearly that I might have before'

Rutherford: 'It has had the following effect'

KL: I see. I can't really think of anything, and I don't know if.

KL: I can't think of any kind of behaviour, behavioural change or... any kind of, of, of... a feeling about myself perhaps that that.

KL: Um...

Rutherford: feeling about yourself is a really good example because one of the things that these sorts of insights can lead to is things like.

Rutherford: Giving yourself a break more often.

Rutherford: Or allowing yourself to feel happy, allowing yourself to feel sad or something – it doesn't have to be an action or behaviour, it could absolutely be, as you've identified, something that changes in the way that we are with ourselves.

KL: Um, I'm not sure I'm at that point yet.

KL: It's possible that I could be somewhere down the line Um...

KL: But I guess I wouldn't, I wouldn't be...

KL: I'm not entirely certain how, how to take the knowledge forward, I suppose.

KL: If that makes sense?

Rutherford: Yeah, absolutely absolutely. Okay, Moving on then.

Rutherford: What do you think of the value of the insights that you found in reflecting on the photographs that you made during this project?

KL: Well, I mean I...

Rutherford: So, we're now not talking necessarily specifically about the insight from *this* photograph.

Rutherford: But we're just stepping back to the insights, if any – maybe you didn't find any others – that you got from the photographs made in the project as a whole.

KL: Mm, no, no, I think I have, though I think I I kind of, I kind of understand a little bit better about, for instance, why I'm.

KL: attracted to taking certain types of, of, of photos, not not just specific things, but this, this idea that I I kind of, I'm very attracted to taking photos of things that are kind of 'barely there'.

KL: Erm... So, I like to take pictures of paintings on on walls, you know, old advertisements that are are fading away and they're, they're not there, I... really, really am fascinated by reflection um...

KL: And so things that you can see, but not see um...

KL: Things that are, you know, you see what's behind you and not not what, what's in front of you, so I would say that it it.

KL: Is it's been interesting because I think this does give an insight to me as to why I'm attracted to those things, it is this, this, well, I guess, this whole kind of journey of life, but also um...

KL: The whole transiency of it, and if I think about that, it's it's kind of been a reflection of my my whole life, I've always felt that I can't hold on to things and that.

KL: Things sort of slip away from me, either because I don't have control of them.

KL: because I was a child, or because I just, I can't seem to, but yeah. It does come down to a lot of issues of control, but also this issue of how impermanent things are.

[She sniffles]

KL: No matter how real they see it seems, at that moment, or how how long they they appear to have gone on before you arrived or... sustained after you left that, actually, your whole idea of of that kind of permanency is is, um...

KL: I guess a bit of an illusion, because that's not how things are. [She laughs nervously]

KL: So, I, I think, I think, [She sniffles] it does give me insight into this, this, this kind of, I guess it's an overall theme of my life, yeah.

KL: Anyway, whether or not that's going to help me cope with with some of these feelings, later on, I don't know. Maybe.

Rutherford: Just as an aside, I do believe – and it's one of the reasons I developed this process – I do believe.

Rutherford: that, regardless of how much control, we we have or feel that we need about our external situation or circumstances.

Rutherford: it's *always* better to have a means or a medium through which we can maintain a conversation or dialogue with ourselves.

Rutherford: Especially with those parts of ourselves that are not always readily accessible to conscious awareness and that, one of the purposes of this project, is to explore.

Rutherford: The benefit of having an opportunity to maintain this kind of a dialogue or conversation with what I call 'that part which thinks in pictures'.

KL: Okay, no it's a it's actually a really interesting concept and I I, I find it quite compelling, so...

Rutherford: At the end of the interview I'll come back to this point just to elaborate a bit more about its relevance to the issue that you've just been discussing, which is noticing themes in your photographs; I'd like to come back to that, but that'll be separate from this interview.

Rutherford: [Coughs] Excuse me.

Rutherford: Second last question; we're nearly at the end.

Rutherford: Second last question: How confident.

Rutherford: do you feel in your ability to recognize and understand – or decode, if you prefer – to recognize and understand the insights, if any,

Rutherford: that you found in your photographs in this project? So, what I'm asking here is How confident are you in your ability to look at the photographs that you make and be able to make reasonably accurate reasonably confident inferences about what the photographs suggest?

KL: Yeah, I think looking at them, I can kind of perhaps see.

[She snuffles]

KL: See see some of the surface ideas, but I have to say, I think, in order to really understand them, you kind of have to either talk about them or really write about them, you know just get those ideas out because, um...

KL: I, I don't, I don't know if this has happened before [to] me when I thought about dreams when I'm talking about a dream I had with someone and I'll say 'I just had this crazy dream' [She snuffles] and I'll start talking about it, and then I, I can see the symbolism in the dream much more clearly once I articulate it.

KL: So, yeah.

KL: It's... it is kind of, you can, I think, kind of recognize some of those things, but until you actually voice it.

KL: You don't really quite understand, so, I suppose, if you were, if I were to look at pictures and interpret them later on, I really would have to kind of write down my ideas, so I could explore them further, yeah. But it does even help further to kind of talk to someone else about them.

KL: Um, that's interesting.

Rutherford: But do you believe that you would be, or you *are* now better able.

Rutherford: To accurately or confidently recognize and understand the significance of the photographs, even if – and I could not agree with you more emphatically,

Rutherford: By articulating, by putting into words what we think we think is going on here; comparing your ability to do that.

Rutherford: Today, to your ability to do that at the beginning of the project, to do you believe that you are now better able to accurately and confidently tease out – even if it's just the more obvious or the more superficial – implications of the symbolism within the photographs?

KL: Um, yeah probably, yes, yeah, I would say so. Um...

KL: I, I think so yeah.

Rutherford: Okay.

Rutherford: Thank you, and the very last question is: What do you think of the process that we've all just been through – the four of you and me – what do you think of the process that we've just been through as a way of exploring opportunities to improve our self-awareness?

KL: I think, I think it's really interesting actually, I, I never considered.

KL: Erm... that that that would be possible, I suppose. So, the idea that I think is quite appealing and I, I do think erm, there's something to be said for it, I think it, it is really useful. Um... [She snuffles]

KL: Yeah, as I mentioned earlier, the whole thing about dreams and explaining dreams.

KL: I know that, I've noticed this in the past.

KL: Because I have a friend – actually the friend, I was thinking about if someone who would send me a picture – she used to.

KL: Quite often, tell me her dreams and while she was telling them to me, I, I could, I could see the symbolism of what she was saying that she clearly wasn't seeing, so um...

KL: I do think there is this kind of process and, well, I've always thought that you could do that with dreams I, it never occurred to me that you could do that with with pictures as well, but of course it makes sense doesn't it.

KL: Particularly if you're taking pictures of things that are not...

KL: of nothing in particular, I suppose.

KL: Um, that I suppose things you you don't just randomly take pictures of nothing, in particular, for no reason so, erm, it's an interesting way to kind of tap into how you're feeling. I think it's, I think it's really quite compelling so.

Rutherford: Thank you very, very much. Well, that's the end of my 12 questions.

Rutherford: Is there anything that you'd like to add or say.

Rutherford: or observe.

Rutherford: to be to be considered as part of the participant data set? In other words, is there anything that you think is ought to be noted about your experience in this process that has not been covered by or anticipated by any of my 12 questions?

KL: Um...

KL: Not, not really um... but I mean, I would say that, you know, I think it is a.

KL: It is a quite effective. [She sniffles]

KL: Is there, I would like to ask, though, is, are you are you basing this kind of this process on on any particular sort of erm...

KL: I guess psychological.

KL: work by somebody else, or is... okay.


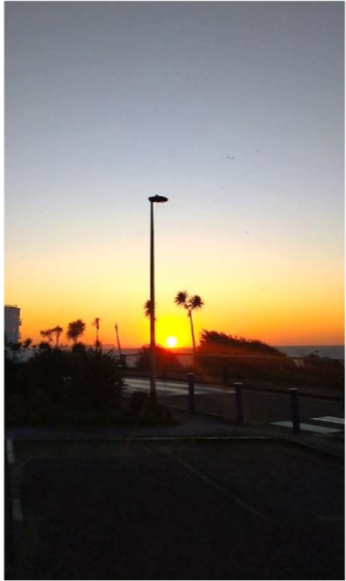
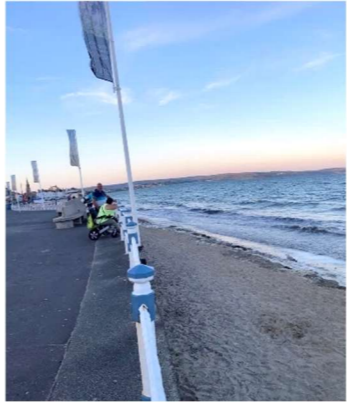
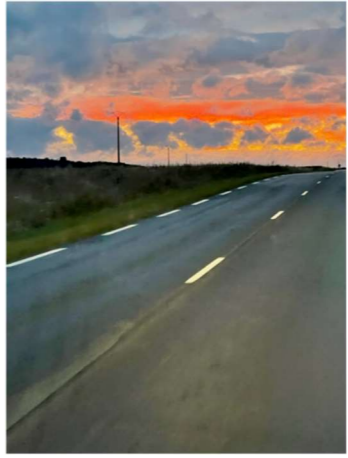

Rutherford: Yes, yes, I am and I'm perfectly happy to talk to you about it, but I will I will turn off the recording because that doesn't need to be part of the data set.

KL: Okay, yeah, I don't yeah, I don't think I need to to add anything else that would, would help with this. If I think of anything, I'll let you know.

Rutherford: Okay, thank you.

Appendix VII: Table of Superordinate and Subordinate themes

Table 2: *Summary of Superordinate and Subordinate themes* (based on Bradley and Simpson, 2014)

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes	AB	CD	EF	IJ	KL
						
<p>The participants' comments and observations on their photographs of the scenes, events and juxtapositions to which their attention had been intuitively attracted</p>	<p>The visual aspects /elements of the depicted scenes, events or juxtapositions identified and/or described by participants</p>	<p>The photograph depicts "stopping time"</p>	<p>The scene (especially the silhouettes of the trees) reflects her "understanding of what life is" and "what (metaphorical) journeys are"</p> <p>She sees the image as something hopeful, looking forward</p> <p>The photograph documents one of her 'rituals' (walking by the sea at sunrise and sunset) which reminds her of "the constant change that we're in"</p> <p>The photograph reflects her (claimed) enjoyment of the transitory nature of things (It documents "an absolutely beautiful thing that will be gone – but that's a positive thing"), ("everything always goes away")</p> <p>In her repeated references to her efforts to proselytise her positive view of change, is she trying to convince herself that she 'enjoys' what she has no power to change? She later refers to being "sort of resigned to the fact that everything always goes away"</p>	<p>The photograph represents 'escape' ("the sea is drawing me away")</p> <p>The photograph contains binary oppositions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "it's like a picture of two parts" • the sea 'draws her away', while the people make her feel 'grounded' (which she later associates with "not happy"), and suggests that the people are "dreaming of escape" • The tension between 'feeling grounded' (which she equated with 'real life') and her desire to 'escape' into fantasy • distinction between busy (which is real and grounded) – versus quiet (which is escapist) • contains "sadness, but with some real good bits" <p>She refers to the fact that the people are "large" (She previously asked rhetorically "Aren't we all?")</p> <p>The moment recorded is not 'the end of the story' but is only a 'pause for reflection'</p>	<p>The photograph shows some kind of natural catastrophe like an explosion. "The sky is on fire".</p> <p>The clouds attracted her attention. She associates the fiery red sky with Hell.</p> <p>"It's all going in the wrong direction, it's going backwards"</p> <p>The story is about the beginning of a nuclear holocaust about which the public (she) was kept ignorant (suggests conspiracy and/or paranoia) She emphasises that she sees this as a real event, not science fiction or fantasy</p> <p>The catastrophe was averted (because she is still alive) which she learned of only afterwards</p> <p>The catastrophe has been averted, but may be the harbinger of "something that will happen"</p>	<p>The photograph illustrates a science fiction story in which a woman is disappearing unnoticed by the people around her. She is seen only by KL</p> <p>The photograph documents the moment when it begins to happen'</p> <p>The woman is beginning to be "flattened" (is losing her property as a 3D object)</p> <p>She expresses surprise that these feelings are exposed/depicted in her photograph Axiom #4 of the project (That while we may be reluctant to consciously acknowledge and/or confront certain insights when presented to us directly and explicitly (because doing so may profoundly discomfort our sense of ourselves), when presented to us allegorically through our photographs, we are often more capable of acknowledging and/or confronting these</p>

<p>The insights to which the depiction of these scenes, events or juxtapositions led the participants</p>	<p>She interpreted the photograph as an indication that she is “stuck” (not going forward, not going backwards) and stuck in this moment in time) and that ‘things are not going as they should’</p>	<p>She associates the scene (a sunrise) with ‘beginnings’, ‘getting away’, holidays and escapism: “a metaphorical journey”</p> <p>Her phraseology (“I just see it as dawn”) suggests that this may be the only interpretation her imagination will permit</p>	<p>“To not let life pass you by whilst, you know, doing certain pursuits” Then “but it’s really hard to make the time for that”</p>	<p>Interprets the photograph as “Going home”, and associates this with ‘going backwards’ to “unresolved issues and a horrible situation” – and distinguishes this from ‘going forwards to a new road in France’ that represents the possibility of a new life” (She acknowledges that this interpretation is “interesting”)</p> <p>She associates the pending environmental catastrophe with her personal and family life. She sees both humanity’s situation and her personal circumstances as “unusually chaotic”.</p> <p>Associates the intensity of the unusual colours with “something really bad happening behind the clouds”</p> <p>She projects the fate of humanity onto the catastrophe. “We are also going towards the chaos and I think that’s one of the reasons why this picture, particularly spoke to me”</p> <p>The event is a cause for worry (“What’s going on? What’s happening? ‘What’s happening in the sky that I don’t know about?’)</p>	<p>Reflecting on the thoughts and impressions that have come to her attention in this project and in this interview, she acknowledges (as an insight) that the notion of ‘transience’ has been a major theme in her life (which, she describes again as a “journey” which implicitly involves transience as we go from one place to another)</p> <p>She identifies “a lot” with the photograph’s depiction of a lack of control and the impermanence of things and that it affects her emotionally to acknowledge this</p> <p>It is noteworthy that her photograph references her thoughts about the death of her sister:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That she often thinks about her sister when traveling alone and is reminded that we are all alone on this journey in life 2. That the people around us fade into the background as we get further and further away <p>The intended message is that she is not alone (“not truly”)</p> <p>Repeatedly states that the photograph prompts feelings of being alone, lonely and alienated (that she doesn’t belong in the situation she’s in) – but without feeling sad or depressed, but just “alone with herself”. It is possible that, with her previous repeated protestations, she is trying to convince herself of something?</p> <p>The photograph led her to the insight that she feels conflicted about the recent death of her stepfather and her feelings of relief not to have this person in her life anymore</p> <p>These conflicted feelings have been on her mind since spending Xmas with her mother.</p>
<p>Commonalities of insights identified by participants (Link ‘moves towards certainty’ with Turning points below)</p>	<p>Is “stuck”, unable to move forward</p> <p>Unable to escape (she is “stuck”)</p> <p>The photograph offered her the means to recognise something significant of which she was</p>	<p>Escapism</p> <p>The photograph offered her the means to confirm “something that I thought was the case”</p>	<p>Escapism</p>	<p>Is “Stagnating”</p> <p>(Feels thwarted in her desire to escape to “a new road” & new life</p>	<p>Unable to move on from her feelings of being conflicted</p> <p>(Is “a woman is disappearing” not a metaphor for ‘escape’?)</p> <p>Looking at this picture made her confront the conflict within herself (about her feelings about the recent death of her stepfather)</p>

	<p>previously unaware</p> <p>Moves towards certainty during the interview</p>	<p>Moved away from a consistently positive view of change, shows movement, progression, evolution</p> <p>In response to the interviewer's question, she changes her mind: (that the image depicts 'a moment in the journey' rather than the final destination)</p>	<p>Moves towards certainty (She adds "Yeah" to her responses in the interview to indicate that she had arrived at an interpretation with which she was content)</p> <p>Several instances of reversals of interpretations ("The people are "content" but "could have been better") Is 'contentment' a form of 'disappointment', or 'settling for'?</p> <p>Having previously disparaged 'contentment', she now claims that she is "quite content and all that sort of stuff".</p>	<p>Remains certain throughout the interview of her interpretation ("not a fantasy, but is a photograph of something that really happened)</p> <p>Several instances of reversals of interpretations. The colours in the sky are attributed to the camera technology, then as "definitely" "in the sky", and then to the phone, and then to "something in the atmosphere".</p> <p>The sky (previously associated with catastrophe, chaos and hell) is later described as "incredible, amazing and beautiful"</p>	<p>Initially hesitates to acknowledge and/or confront feelings of being "alone", but later moved towards acceptance of an interpretation rejected earlier in the interview</p> <p>Eventually acknowledges her subjective interpretation of the photograph "[It] gives the idea that the woman is seen only by [me]"</p>
<p>Barriers to insights (instances in which participants hesitated/resisted identifying what they subsequently acknowledged to be an insight into themselves and/or their situations) and instances of Self-questioning</p>	<p>At the outset of the project, she was sceptical of the premise: that intuitively-made photographs could provide reliable insights – although this was quickly overcome when her photograph confronted her with a depiction that she felt 'stuck'</p>	<p>While she freely offers her associations with the elements and aspects of the photograph, she never explicitly acknowledges that the photograph is 'about' her until pressed to do so, when she then indicates that she cannot see it any other way ("Yeah, maybe I am, maybe I am I. I can't... I can't... I almost can't depersonalize it")</p>	<p>While she freely offers her interpretations of what the couple are thinking, she makes no effort to consider how these projected thoughts might reveal something about herself (refer to the similarity with Rorschach test)</p> <p>Admitted that she "could probably see lots of things" but is reluctant 'to read too much into the photograph if she said more than that'. Yet throughout this project, it was made repeatedly clear that 'reading into the photograph' was precisely the point. (Link to the premise of the Rorschach test) She previously acknowledged imposing her interpretation ("In my head, I feel like..."), so why does she hesitate now?</p> <p>After having previously acknowledged her imposition of interpretation, when asked to consider the couple and 'the moment' or situation in which they were recorded, the following themes regularly recurred:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. She claims not to know or recognise what is happening in the moment she has recorded 2. The couple (and especially the woman) are in their own world (which contradicts the above) 3. Unable to say why she thinks this <p>She is now 'moving away from certainty' (Shows regression)</p>	<p>After listing a number of emotions that she does <u>not</u> associate with the photograph (?), she gives up trying to identify her emotional response to the photograph.</p> <p>She repeatedly resists considering the implications of what she had previously acknowledged: the possibility of recognising the symbolic significance of her photographs to "instigate some kind of development"</p>	<p>Initially refused to acknowledge any personal significance in her 'decision' to make the woman the central figure (the result of her intuitive composition of the photograph) and argues this is determined objectively by the composition</p> <p>Initially unable to recognise her subjective interpretation of the photograph – what someone who knows her really well would mean by sending her this photograph as a way of sending her a message</p>

<p>Participants' recognition that their insights are the product of their interpretations (that 'the insights come out of me')</p>	<p>Acknowledges that her insights are the result of interpretation</p>	<p>Throughout the interview, CD repeatedly hesitates to commit to & 'own' her interpretation of the image</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Possibly something to do with..." • "it might give me the impression of..." • "There's definitely some hope in there for me" • ("Reflecting on it, maybe it represents a woman in her late 30s. I don't know. That's a difficult one".) CD <u>is</u> a woman in her late 30s. 	<p>Aware of her active role in the interpretation of the photograph</p> <p>Acknowledged that her insights are the result of her interpretation. The 'meanings' she recognises are not 'in' the photograph, but are her interpretations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm in my head, I feel like, I'm looking at it like 'escape'" • [as] "if I was telling a story" <p>Recognises that her interpretation is one she has imposed and that she has given herself 'permission' to impose the "happy ending" she desires to see. ("that [...] gets me to [a] happy ending")</p> <p>Consciously attempts to avoid the stylistic 'error' of repetition reveals her willingness ('permission') to creatively interpret the photograph to impose a happy ending</p> <p>After initial movement towards certainty, and then tentative steps backwards (away from certainty), she became both more conscious (and more willing to commit to) ownership of her interpretations, and more certain about the accuracy of her interpretations</p>	<p>She acknowledges that she is imposing an interpretation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "let's say..." • "It doesn't look like a sunset (or natural phenomenon) to me; it looks like..." (a man-made catastrophe) <p>Acknowledges her imposition of the interpretation that the colours are the result of a deteriorating planetary environment</p> <p>Acknowledges that recent events in her life informed her interpretation of the photograph</p>	<p>She acknowledges that her interpretation (that "it's a little bit of an insight") that, 'looking at this picture makes me think of that conflict within myself'</p> <p>Her interpretation of the photograph may be an insight into her grieving process</p>
<p>Some participants' vacillate between acknowledging that the insights were the result of their own interpretations – and experiencing the source of insights as an external authority (Daimonion)</p> <p>As established in the LitReview, the experience of 'receiving' such messages or insights is experienced as coming from a benevolent source different from the 'everyday self'</p>	<p>Regularly describes (experiences) the source of insight as an external moral authority which demanded replies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Do you want to go backwards – or do you want to stay stuck?" • "Look: This is who you are" <p>It also regularly expressed itself in imperative commands ("it told me")</p>	<p>Made no explicit references to an external authority as the source of the insight(s)</p>	<p>She vacillates between describing the source of insights as internal ("it's coming from ourself"), and external ("when you bring in another something") (Daimonion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "whatever story this [photograph] is telling" • "it's taking me away" • "They're leading me to [...] a reflection point" (the figures in the photograph as proxies for an external authority that imposes an interpretation) • "all these little things come to us and create change" (that change is the result of 'these things that come to us' and that "push us") <p>As established in the LitReview, the emotional experience of receiving such messages or insights can feel as if they come from a benevolent source different from 'the everyday self'</p>	<p>Having acknowledged that she is imposing an interpretation of the photograph, she then suggests that the source of the insight is external (a warning that "You're not paying attention")</p>	<p>Made no explicit references to an external authority as the source of the insight(s)</p>

				She seems to be confused (or perhaps just unclear) as to whether the source of the insights she has gained are from within herself ("it's always from our own perspective, because it's coming from ourself"), or whether their source is external ("it can make you change direction")		
Metaphors in which insights were conceptualised and expressed		<p>Spatial metaphors: That she is 'stuck', unable to make progress</p> <p>Metaphor: progress is represented as a path</p> <p>Describes (and conceives of?) the process of insight generation as a "Looking back" (as distinct from looking up, looking forward, or looking within)</p> <p>She claims that remaining "stuck" is not an option and that the only way is to move forward (forward movement as a metaphor for growth or progress)</p> <p>She "had to sit down" (metaphor for introspection, reflection and decision-making)</p> <p>She conceives of the source of her insight as a discussion between two aspects of herself: "I had a candid discussion with myself about my own life"</p> <p>Describes her involvement in the project as a "journey" which has provided her with "a clearer picture" (The metaphor of a 'journey' combines elements of both spatial and chronological metaphors)</p>	<p>Metaphor: Life is a journey</p> <p>Acknowledges that 'the story' is about her and that 'the journey' is hers In response to question (<i>What is it about the appearance of the photograph that tells you this is a story about a journey?</i>) she explained that it is the appearance of the silhouettes of the trees that tells her that this photograph depicts a journey</p> <p>She identifies the Sun as a metaphor (but from her explanations, it is not clear a metaphor for what)</p> <p>The photograph records "the moment when things that have been dark... become light" (although there is no subsequent reference to what it is that has metaphorically 'come to light')</p>	<p>Insights were the product of (her recognition of) the binary opposition of features & elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonfiction and fiction • Real life vs fantasy • Real life vs the desire to escape <p>She sees barriers which separate the various binary opposites</p>	<p>Repeatedly affirms that this is not a fantasy (a metaphor or allegory), but a photograph of "something that happened"</p> <p>She associates the depiction (interpretation) of the pending environmental catastrophe with her "unusually chaotic" personal and family life. ("It's all going in the wrong direction, it's going backwards")</p> <p>She associates the fiery red sky with hell.</p> <p>The road leads to "home" which is associated with 'going backwards' (as opposed to 'going forwards to a new road in France' that represents the possibility of a new life)</p>	<p>The disappearing woman as a symbol for the loss of her sister and her grandmother</p> <p>Traveling alone as a symbol for the fact that we are all alone on this journey in life</p> <p>Reflecting on the significance of the photograph prompted her to think, not about her sister and her grandmother, but about the recent loss of her stepfather (with whom she is clearly "conflicted") Even after all this time, she finds it really difficult for her to think about</p> <p>Photographs as a metaphor for what has been lost (what is no longer there) After her sister died, she found it difficult to look at pictures of her, because they reminded her that photographs are all she has left of her</p> <p>She recognised that 'disappearing without being noticed' symbolises that 'the reality of things and their permanence are an illusion' as an insight – because "that's not how things are" (but is unsure whether this insight will help her cope with her feelings)</p>
	Link(s) between the visual elements/aspects of photographs and insights	The photograph is made looking down and shows the ground at her feet. This represents her interpretation that she is 'stuck', unable to make progress		Despite being in close proximity, the couple are looking off in different directions and so are in their own world		<p>She likes to photograph things that are fading away, things that are there and not there, things that you can see, but not see</p> <p>The depiction of the woman disappearing may be linked with her grief (the deaths of her sister and grandmother)</p>
The insights confronted the participants with challenges		The things revealed by her photograph confronted her with challenges	Her interpretations confront her with challenges ("it could make me feel extremely uncomfortable") and that the insights may be disconcerting	Identified insight: "Not to not let life pass you by" – "but it's really hard to make the time for that"	Her interpretation of the photograph is ("like <i>Ding ding ding ding</i> ") is a warning that "you're not paying attention"	Reflecting on the photograph obliged her to acknowledge her grief (the loss of her sister and her grandmother), although she has been reluctant to "focus on that"

			<p>Acknowledged that the pursuit of Self-awareness can be “a pretty uncomfortable business sometimes” (as per Jung that self-knowledge often meets with considerable resistance, Jung, 1976, p. 145.)</p>			
	<p>Some insights emerged only in the interviews (‘facilitated revelations’)</p>			<p>The insight (Not to not let life pass her by) came to her during the interview (‘facilitated revelation’)</p> <p>The interview (“Talking to you”) “has more meaning [...] than me doing it as a task” (the Reflective text) – She repeatedly likened the interview to therapy</p> <p>Throughout the interview, EF repeatedly changed her position whether the interview led her to the same – or a new and different – interpretation than that described in the Reflective text</p> <p>Her final position (that her interpretation of the photograph changed as a result of ‘facilitated revelation’) challenges my assumption – and which I must therefore ‘bracket’ – that one can find an insight as a result of the self-directed effort to reflect on the potential significance of an intuitively-made photograph. The fact that her view has changed so substantially suggests instead that (at least for this participant) the insight – and her confidence in its accuracy and relevance – was facilitated by (or even dependent on) the questioning/interrogation by an (informed) other.</p>		<p>She found the interview to be useful as a means to recognise and understand the more significant/important issues suggested by the photographs, and compares this to the value of articulating the symbolism in her dreams which enables her to understand their significance much more clearly</p> <p>Acknowledged the benefit of the interlocutor’s ability to offer insights she had not recognised (although this was offered in the context of her comparison of this project with the value of dreams)</p> <p>She claimed that she was able to recognise and understand the significance of surface elements of the photograph, but that to recognise and understand the deeper significance of the photograph required discussion in language (“either talk about them or really write about them”)</p> <p>Lesy (1980) argues that photographs are “like frozen dreams, whose manifest content (what is actually visible) may be understood at a glance, but whose latent content (the meaning we ‘make’ of a photograph) is enmeshed in unconscious associations” (Lesy, 1980 pp.xiv).</p> <p>According to Stolorow (2006, pp.598), Heidegger argued that our interpretations reflect our assumptions (what Heidegger, 1962 pp.190 termed our “unthematized understanding”) and that, in every case, our interpretation is grounded in an advance knowledge or understanding (what Heidegger [pp.191] termed a “fore-having”) which is appropriated by our interpretation.</p>

	The process provided a safe space in which to explore issues (that previously made them feel uncomfortable)		<p>The photograph gave her safe “boundaries” within which to “unpick a few things and explore what it was that was either making me feel slightly uncomfortable”</p> <p>The process “allowed” her (gave her permission) “to look at who she is, how she thinks and what’s going on)</p>	<p>Responding to questions put to her (the ‘facilitated revelations’) provided a safe space in which to ‘look at herself’. “I feel sort of, a certain psychological safety” which enabled her to feel less self-conscious</p>		
<p>Turning points (interpretations which presented participants with challenges which triggered a change in the individual's perspective and/or behaviours).</p> <p>Acceptance of the premise of the project (that reflecting on our intuitively made photographs can provide insights about our perceptions, beliefs or attitudes currently below the level of conscious awareness) was a major turning point identified by several participants which enabled them to take the insights seriously.</p>	Reports of movement-as-development (common to all participants)	<p>Her interpretations prompted her to take action (“I had a candid discussion with myself about my own life”) which led to an improvement in her situation</p> <p>The external authority told her to “Re-evaluate her academics” As an international student, her academic achievements were the most important area of her life and so had a profound influence on her Self-worth</p> <p>She is now prepared to use this new perspective/insight (“I’m going to sit down and reflect on that”)</p> <p>The project led her to re-evaluate her life</p>	<p>Her interpretations (“brought it more to the fore and made it easier to be in the moment”) led to an improvement in her situation</p> <p>(Reflecting on the photograph helped her to recognise and trust the validity of her insight)</p> <p>There is a discernible shift from her initially consistently positive view of change – to ‘resignation’ (Shows movement, progression, evolution)</p>	<p>She reports ‘moving towards certainty’ (Shows movement, progression, evolution)</p> <p>The ‘facilitated revelations’ from the insights from the photograph inspired her to make changes</p> <p>Her comment that her inspiration (to act on the insights) are the result of ‘facilitated revelations’ challenges my assumption – which I must therefore ‘bracket’ – that one can find an insight as a result of the self-directed effort to reflect on the significance of an intuitively-made photograph without questioning/interrogation by an (informed) other]</p> <p>The insight was not the result of her self-directed interrogation/interpretation of the photograph, but of the revelations facilitated by an (informed) other</p> <p>In the latter part of the interview, she regularly ignores that, throughout the project, participants were repeatedly reminded that this was not intended as a form of therapy</p> <p>She enjoyed the experience of having someone pay attention to her thoughts and feelings (“the therapeutic side of it”) felt nice</p> <p>The insights gave her ‘a kick up the bum’ and that this process is “useful for that”</p> <p>The insight pushed her in what she describes as “the right direction” – and that this is “really useful in lots of ways”, but then was unable to (“like, you know”) explain how.</p>		
Participants’ lived experiences of integrating the insights		<p>She bears witness to her lived experience of ‘moving towards certainty (movement, progression, and evolution)</p> <p>Insights led to increased Self-awareness</p>	<p>Insights led to increased Self-awareness</p> <p>Engaging with the insights recognised in her photograph provided timely and valuable insights and advice</p>	<p>The validity of the insights was enhanced because “it actually is myself”, “I know it’s my thoughts, as I’m answering the question”</p> <p>She recognised that “If it was going to be changed... I have to provide</p>		<p>Asked whether she has been able to do anything with the insight that came to her as a result of reflecting on this photograph, she is not entirely certain how “to take the knowledge forward” (“to take the</p>

		<p>Her interpretation prompted her to recognise that she had to move forward, and as a result, she became happier</p>	<p>The ideas prompted by reflecting on her photograph "made it easier to 'be in that moment'— rather than thinking about what I need to do to make dinner, and what I've got on at work and stuff. It brought me more into the moment. A bit more mindful."</p>	<p>the answers" She intends to put the photograph in a place of prominence "to remind me of this conversation and what I thought – and why I thought that" to serve as "Another little booster in the right direction"</p>		<p>knowledge forward' is a metaphor for growth & progress) She is unsure whether she is yet able to come to terms with her grief at the loss of her sister and grandmother, but that she might be able to do so "somewhere down the line" (The phrase is a noteworthy metaphor for growth or progress given that the photograph was made in a train station)</p>
<p>Participants' comments on the capacity of photographs to reveal insights into issues of which the participant was previously unaware</p>		<p>She acknowledged that her interpretation made her aware of her previously unacknowledged feelings of anxiety Photographs can reveal valuable insights of which she was unaware when making the photograph Engaging with her interpretation provided valuable and timely insights and advice Expressed surprise that she found an insight in a photograph, the selection and composition of which was entirely intuitive ("It went without me knowing it") This is Axiom #4 of the project (That the reason our attention may be attracted to scenes or tableaux with which we have no logical or personal connection is because, in their appearance, our unconscious mind may have recognised a symbolic or allegorical depiction of something to which our unconscious wishes to bring our attention) She acknowledges a consistency in the meaning of several of her photographs (her progress towards a happier place)</p>	<p>Acknowledged the accuracy of the insights revealed by the process The experience of reflecting on her photographs confirmed "something that I thought was the case": that she is content with change and finds excitement in change ("It has come through even stronger, this sort of recognition of the light and the dark and the sun and change and that sort of stuff. Definitely". Asserted that "I was definitely drawn to [this photograph]" This is Axiom #4 of the project (That the reason our attention may be attracted to scenes or tableaux with which we have no logical or personal connection is because, in their appearance, our unconscious mind may have recognised a symbolic or allegorical depiction of something to which our unconscious wishes to bring our attention) The project gave her agency ("I hadn't really given myself time or space or maybe just permission to explore") Admits that this required giving herself "permission"</p>	<p>Agrees that her photograph offered an insight into herself The insight was "timely" (referred to a contemporary concern)</p>		<p>She expresses surprise that: 1. Her feelings are exposed/depicted in her photograph 2. As a consequence of noticing (becoming consciously aware of) 'her way of describing' her conflicted feelings about grief, she realised that she is actually talking about the loss of her stepfather Another affirmation of Axiom #4: That while we may be reluctant to consciously acknowledge and/or confront certain insights when presented to us directly and explicitly, we are more likely to acknowledge these when presented to us allegorically through our photographs. The discovery that these feelings are depicted in her photograph may have given her permission to acknowledge them. She finds the prospect of using her photographs as a means to maintain a conversation or dialogue with herself to be quite compelling She had never previously considered the value of reflecting on the possible significance of photographs as a valuable source of insight, but has found the process useful, and it affected her emotionally to acknowledge this Acknowledges that, if dreams can offer valuable insights, one could do the same with photographs – particularly if the photographs are made without conscious intent (because "you don't just randomly take pictures of nothing in particular, for no reason") This is Axiom #4 of the project (That the reason our attention is sometimes attracted to</p>

						scenes or tableaux with which we have no logical or personal connection is because, in their appearance, our unconscious mind may have recognised a symbolic or allegorical depiction of a belief or assumptions to which our unconscious is attempting to bring our attention)
Change in participants' confidence in the merit of <i>Self-reflective photography</i>		<p>As a result of her participation, she accepts that photographs can offer valuable insights</p> <p>Prior to her participation, she would have questioned the sanity of making such unconventional photographs. As a result of her participation in this project however, she accepts the value of such photographs ("if someone should send this to me, you know, I'm going to sit down and reflect on that")</p>	<p>She had not previously considered her photographs as a source of Self-knowledge, but will continue to use Self-reflective photography</p> <p>Self-reflective photography is useful in pursuit of Self-awareness</p> <p>Agrees that reflecting on photographs helped her to "concretise" something</p>	<p>Having been hesitant at the outset of the project, as a result of the value of the insights it has drawn from her, she now sees value in the process</p> <p>After initial hesitation, she became more willing to take ownership of her interpretations, and more progressively certain about the accuracy of her interpretations</p>		
The conduct of the project			<p>Was "overwhelmed" by the significance of the photograph and "delighted" with this way to explore what's going on in her world (her external reality) and in her head (interior reality)</p> <p>She praised the project and acknowledged its ability to confront the photographer with accurate revelations</p> <p>Unlike "ruminating, writing or journaling" in which there is no structure ("you could go off in all sorts of directions"), in reflecting on photographs, she had "a clear focus for her reflections ("This is what I'm focusing on and I'm going to pull this apart")</p> <p>The project provided a safe way or boundary within which to "unpick a few things and explore what it was that was either making me feel slightly uncomfortable"</p> <p>It's something that I will continue to do, definitely.</p>	<p>Having been hesitant/unsure at the outset of the project, following the interview (and the discovery of the insights it drew from her), she now acknowledges the value of the process ("useful" [and] interesting way of thinking about stuff")</p> <p>The process allowed her to identify and "focus on" the insight ("Not to not let life pass you by")</p> <p>The insight came to her during this interview (a 'facilitated revelation')</p> <p>She enjoyed the experience of having someone pay attention to her thoughts and feelings ("the therapeutic side of it [...] just felt sort of nice") – but this is (contingent on the questions being "good enough"</p> <p>Repeated references to both an external authority imposed from outside "a person is kind of helping you heal that" – and acknowledges the role of her interpretation ("using the photograph is quite nice because it actually is myself", "I know it's my thoughts, you know, even though you're posing the question [...] that's quite useful to really know as I'm answering the question. I know it's based around the answers that I'm giving").</p>		

				<p>Reasserts that “the interaction that we’ve had in there” has been a useful “therapeutic thing”</p> <p>States that any situation that “gives a positive outcome is therapeutic”</p> <p>Expresses a preference for responding to spoken questions (a therapeutic relationship) rather than interpreting her photographs in isolation (a reference to her prior claim that her ability to recognise insights depends on being questioned/interrogated by another, because this enables her to be ‘pushed’, and suggests that this preference (to be interviewed) may be due to her “laziness”</p> <p>The question [<i>If someone who knows you really well sent you this photograph...</i>] “turned it” for her (made it clearer to her how to ‘see’ and/or interpret her photograph)</p>		
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Appendix VIII: The poster used to recruit participants for the study



PARTICIPANTS WANTED
for **SELF-AWARENESS** research project

In addition to our snapshots of friends and family, holidays and special events, some of us also take pictures of things just because they caught our interest. We were thinking about something else, when suddenly – as if with a tap on the shoulder – our attention was drawn to the sight of two children playing in a park, an old house, or a bicycle lying by the side of the road. But we don't know those children, or the people who lived in that house – and that's not our bicycle.

This project explores the possibility that, when our attention is attracted to scenes with which we have no logical or personal connection, it is because *something* about the scene or the elements within it was intuitively recognised by our dreaming mind as an allegorical description of the way we see the world – or perhaps an allegorical self-portrait of the person we have become as a result.

This project will encourage participants to reflect on the possible significance of their apparently 'random' snapshots – and to consider them as potentially valuable sources of personal insight.

Over the course of (approximately) two months, participants will be asked to:

1. Meet three times (online) for approximately one hour each time (twice with the researcher and the other participants – and once one-on-one with the researcher)
2. Take photographs of scenes to which your attention is intuitively attracted
3. Describe and discuss your thoughts and reactions to the things you have photographed

Full anonymity is guaranteed.

The researcher is seeking **Staff members** (academic or professional) and **postgrad researchers** interested in participating in this project (sorry, no undergraduates).

If interested, please contact:

Rutherford
Rutherford@bournemouth.ac.uk

Department of Communication & Journalism
Faculty of Media & Communications

Appendix IX: Information Sheet distributed to all participants

Participant Information Sheet

The title of the research project: *The Self as Auteur*

You have been invited to take part in a research project. Before agreeing to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The purpose of the project

This project will explore the use of photographs and photography as a way to improve Self-awareness, leading (it is hoped), to an improved ability to make appropriate life decisions.

Background

In addition to our snapshots of friends and family, holidays and special events, many of us also take pictures of scenes, objects and ‘moments’ just because we liked the way something looked – often without knowing (or even thinking about) why our attention was attracted to that particular scene. For example, we might photograph an elderly couple sitting on a bench, a tree in front of an old house, or a broken bicycle lying on the ground – but we don’t know those people, or the people who lived in that house, and that’s not our bicycle.

While all forms of creative expression offer the means to access our unconscious, as a result of its ability to record details at the touch of a button without the need for conscious decisions, the camera offers us the means to record those images or arrangements of elements in which we have intuitively recognised a symbol for a significant memory, experience or belief below our conscious awareness – but to which our unconscious is now trying to draw our attention.

By uncovering and reflecting on some of the secrets we keep from ourselves, we may be able to improve Self-awareness – and so our ability to make appropriate life decisions.

Each phase of the project (pilot and second phase) is expected to take approximately two months from start to finish.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part because you meet the inclusion criteria for this study:

- You are 18 years or older
- ~~You do not have any prior training or expertise in photography~~
- ~~You do not have any prior training or expertise in psychology/psychotherapy~~
- You are not known to the researcher
- You are able to give informed consent
- You are not an Undergraduate student at Bournemouth University

The project will be carried out in two phases:

- The pilot project will involve two participants
- The final project will involve 8-10 participants

If you have been invited to participate in the first (pilot) phase, you will be informed of this in the first session.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a participant agreement form. We want you to understand what participation involves, before you make a decision on whether to participate.

If you or any family member have an on-going relationship with BU or the research team, e.g. as a member of staff, as student or other service user, your decision on whether to take part (or continue to take part) will not affect this relationship in any way.

Can I change my mind about taking part?

Yes, you can stop participating in study activities at any time up to the point at which data analysis has begun and without giving a reason.

If I change my mind, what happens to my information?

After you decide to withdraw from the study, we will not collect any further information from or about you. As regards information we have already collected before this point, your rights to access, change or move that information are limited. This is because we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. Further explanation about this is in the Personal Information section below.

What is involved in taking part?

1. *You will be asked to meet three times with the researcher at Bournemouth University (on days/times to be determined at the mutual convenience to you and the researcher)*

- In first session, you and other participants will meet as a group with the researcher who will explain the premise and organisation of the project
- In advance of the second (also group) session, you will be asked to submit an 'intuitively made photograph which will be displayed anonymously for discussion by the group during the second session
- In the third session, you will take part in one-on-one semi-structured individual interviews

2. *You will be asked to take photographs*

You will be asked to carry a simple camera (or a smartphone or tablet) with you at all times and be prepared to record those scenes and events to which you feel an intuitive attraction.

Photograph things that attract your attention, scenes that reach up and tug on your sleeve, scenes that look the way you expected them to – as well as those that should look some other way. Photograph the things that frighten you, and the things that make you feel better. Photograph the things you hope for, and the things that disappoint you. Photograph scenes that strike you as a description of yourself: 'self-portraits' made from of objects and landscapes.

You will be asked/encouraged to pay attention to (for example):

- i) scenes or images that make you feel happy when you look at them
- ii) scenes or images that make you feel angry
- iii) scenes or images that make you feel sad
- iv) scenes or images that frighten you
- v) scenes or images that seem to be an 'environmental self-portrait'
- vi) scenes or images that describe your relationship with others

- vii) scenes or images that remind you of the relationships within your family
- viii) scenes or images that describe what your Life is like
- ix) scenes or images that describe or represent something which you feel is missing from your life
- x) scenes or images that describe or represent the life you would like to have in the future
- xi) scenes or images that seem to describe or represent some choice that is necessary
- xii) scenes or images that seem to describe the future (such as ‘the way ahead’ is bright – or that ‘the way ahead’ will be full of challenges or difficulties)

You will be asked not to look for scenes or events that *illustrate* an emotion (so, for example, please don't photograph someone sitting alone on a bench as a depiction of loneliness) but try to remain alert to those scenes, events or moments that inexplicably or intuitively attract your attention (even – or especially – if you're not sure why your attention is attracted to the scene) and record them without trying to arrange or ‘compose’ them to make it look ‘good’. Instead, use your intuition to decide both what to photograph (what elements to include), how to frame it and when to push the button. Guidance will be provided how to do this.

Do not use any of the available filters (apps) to modify the appearance of your photographs.

Suggestions:

- If you find it difficult to ‘turn off’ your rational mind when composing the picture, hold the camera at arm's length and point it towards the scene, and then push the button when the moment ‘feels’ right.
- For those who use an SLR camera rather than a Smartphone, put the viewfinder to your left eye. By doing so, you will be using your brain's more symbolically literate right hemisphere (McCrea, 2010 pp.12).

Please also make a note of the most significant event(s) or circumstances in your lives (including your professional or family life) at the time that each photograph was taken.

3. *You will be asked to reflect on the photographs you have taken*

You will be asked to reflect on a selection of the photographs you have taken.

Begin by regularly leafing casually (‘absent-mindedly’) through the photographs you have made and notice those at which you regularly and instinctively pause. Identify – and set aside – the 4-6 photographs at which you find that you pause most often.

Once you have selected these 4-6 photographs, please title these photographs using just your last name and a number preceded by an underscore ([Smith_1], [Smith_2]). Please do not include other information in the filenames. The titles of the photographs will be anonymised by the researcher later in the project.

Please bear in mind that the personal significance of the resulting photograph does not reside ‘in’ the photograph but, as with Rorschach inkblots, in the ‘story’ depicted in the photograph, or in the feelings, memories or associations of which it reminds you. And be wary too, of the temptation to ‘see’ what comforts your ego.

You will be asked to reflect on these photographs in accordance with the following guidance:

To assist you in recognising the personal significance of the scenes and tableaux recorded in the photographs you have selected, you will be asked to look at the selected photographs in two ways: first *as a group* – and then as *individual images*.

Looking at your selected photographs as a group

While it is easy to misinterpret a single image, by looking at *a group of photographs*, we may find clues to their significance in their similarities and/or in their recurring features and themes.

Looking at these photographs as a group, are there any features or patterns that appear in many of the photographs you selected? Such recurring features might be *concrete* – such as roads that turn to the right or left or that dead end, windows or large areas of empty space, round forms at the top of the frame, people who are always looking up or seen from behind. Alternatively, such recurring features might be *implied* – such as the way that elements appear to *feel* – for example, all of the houses in your photographs always appear to be feeling tired, happy or angry.)

Conversely, are there any elements that are conspicuous by their regular absence? (For example, do your photographs seldom include the sky, horizon lines, or the heads of people?)

If you feel that some photographs ‘belong’ together, try arranging these into the sequence in which they were taken – or, alternatively, into the sequence that ‘feels right’ (even if this is not the sequence in which they were taken) as if they are ‘frames’ in the storyboard for a movie.

Looking at your selected photographs as individual images

When looking at the photographs as individual images, try and recognise the ‘story’ suggested by each photograph. Try to identify the thoughts and impressions that occur to you when looking at each photograph: Does it make you feel happy or sad? Do you find it comforting, or does it make you anxious? What is happening in the story? Or what has just happened, or what is about to happen?

The significance of individual elements (either concrete or implied) may be different in different photographs (in one photograph, the house may represent how you feel about your childhood, whereas in others, houses may represent something else), and so the significance of the various elements should be considered in terms of the particular ‘story’ in which they are appear.

When you believe that you have recognised the ‘story’ in the photograph, try to identify those elements which are the main ‘characters’ in the ‘story’. (Often, the most significant elements are those at which, whenever you are looking at the photograph, your eye comes to rest.) Again, the most significant elements in the image can be either *concrete* (physical objects such as the sky, that tree, a group of people or a facial expression) or the relationship *implied* between elements (such as the fact that the people in the photograph are all looking or walking in the same direction, or the impression that all of the trees seem to be ‘ignoring’ the cars).

Try to describe the story in words, and notice whether you find yourself using idiomatic expressions to describe the way in which elements seem to relate to others, expressions such as:

is looking up to...	...is sitting on the fence
is looking down on...	...drives me up the wall
is happy to see the back	to pull someone’s leg
of...	hands down
is (looking) under the	barking up the wrong tree
weather	wolf in sheep’s clothing
has missed the boat (or are	fly off the handle
in the same boat)	turning a blind eye to...

...because these expressions often suggest the meaning of the juxtaposition of the visual elements.

Consider whether each photograph you have selected appears to be a ‘Who’ photograph (one that seems to describe a person, a personality trait, an attitude or a behaviour) or a ‘Where’ photograph (one that describes a situation or set of circumstances).

Who photographs

The ‘Who’ in our photograph is usually us (or some aspect of ourselves) we have not yet recognised or been willing to acknowledge. (It is important to remember that not all ‘Who’ photographs include people; sometimes the central character is ‘played by’ objects such as a boat, a building or a bicycle. For example, in many of my early photographs, many of my ‘Who’ photographs contained no people, but in which my ego was represented by buildings and my subconscious represented by trees.) To identify the aspect of your Self depicted in your ‘Who’ photographs, consider: what is the character doing (or trying to do)? What is its rôle, purpose or objective? Next, try to identify what the character seems to feel about the situation, setting or circumstances in which they are performing this action.

Just as in our dreams, the people we have included in our photographs often represent some aspect of our own character – sometimes one we have not yet acknowledged. When people appear in our photographs, it is often because – in the way they look, in their poses and expressions, in how they appear to feel, or in the action they are performing – we have intuitively recognised an allegory of some aspect of ourselves that our subconscious is trying to bring to our conscious attention.

Where photographs

In those you identify as ‘Where’ photographs, consider: Is the scene happy and reassuring, or sad and foreboding? Does it make you angry? Does it remind you of something precious, but now lost? Does it remind you of your past, your current situation, or something you fear may lie in your future?

4. *You will be asked to prepare and submit a reflective text and the selected photographs*

You will be asked to prepare and submit a text based on your reflections on the 4-6 photographs at which you instinctively pause most often. High resolution copies of the photographs are also to be submitted as separate files at the same time as the reflective text.

Your reflective text should describe/explain/reflect on what you recognise about *yourself* and/or your circumstances *and how you recognised this* within the photographs. This is a *personal reflection project*; talk about *you*. (If you find it difficult to do this in writing, try talking into an audio recorder and then transcribe your comments into text). When referring to your individual photographs, please refer to them by their filenames ([Smith_1], [Smith_2]) rather than ‘*the one with the blue wall...*’.

The significance you find in your photographs may come from looking at them individually, or as a group. Accordingly, you are requested to consider and discuss each of the selected photographs *as individual images* and as part of the *group of photographs* to which you feel they may belong.

When considering and discussing each of the selected photographs *as individual images*:

- i. Please describe and reflect on the ‘story’ you recognise in each photograph. (What is happening, or has just happened, or is about to happen to the ‘characters’ in this story?) Important clues can sometimes be found in the relationships implied *between* the elements, for example: *The tree is hiding from the men in hats* or *The house has fallen asleep* or *All the children are on their way home – but the girl in the red dress doesn’t want to go home.*)
- ii. Please identify and reflect on the visual symbols that led you to recognise the ‘story’ being told – and how you interpreted the meaning or significance of the various elements

(both concrete and implied) within the photograph. (For example: Why do you believe that the bicycle leaning against the wall refers to your difficulty in making important decisions?)

- iii. Please consider and explain what you believe that each photograph (or each group of photographs) appears to be trying to tell you – and why you think so. (For example: *I think that the old red bicycle in Jones_12 symbolises my desire for fame and public recognition because...*, or *I think that the big blue house in McIntosh_8 refers to my fear of being rejected because...*)
- iv. Please make a note describing the most significant event(s) or circumstances in your life (including your professional or family life) when each of the photographs was taken.

When considering and discussing those photographs which belong to an identifiable *group*

(Among your selected photographs, it is possible that there is more than one group – for example, one group of three photographs and another group of two photographs – and/or that some of the selected photographs do not belong to any group. It is anticipated however, that there will be at least one group to which two or more photographs belong.)

- v. Please identify and reflect on the possible significance of the recurring themes, features or elements in each group. (If there is more than one group, do this for each group.) What are your intuitive associations with these recurring elements? Based on your associations with these features or elements, what do you believe these recurring patterns signify?
 - vi. If you notice that certain elements are regularly absent from many of your photographs, ask yourself what these elements or features might represent or ‘stand for’ for you – and what you think these ‘missing’ elements might represent – and what their absence might signify?
5. *You will be asked to take part in a final interview about their responses to the project during which they will be asked:*
- i. To elaborate on aspects of the reflective text on which the researcher seeks greater clarity
 - ii. To explain/describe the way(s) (if any) in which this Self-reflective photography project assisted you in understanding yourself (What did you learn about yourself from this project?)
 - iii. How might the explanation and/or presentation of this approach to Self-reflective photography be improved as a means to enhance self-understanding?

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Whilst there are no assured benefits for those participating in the project, it is hoped that participating in this project will lead to enhanced Self-awareness and an improved ability to make appropriate life decisions.

Whilst we do not anticipate any risks to you in taking part in this study, in the unlikely event that reflecting on your photographs raises issues or concerns about which you would like to speak to someone, participants are encouraged to contact one of the following sources of support:

- your GP
- Samaritans Telephone: 116 123 or email: jo@samaritans.org (available 24 hours)
- NHS Mental health support helpline 0300 123 5440 (available 24 hours)
- Any of the other services listed on the [NHS mental health helplines](#)

The type of information to be sought and why the collection of this information is relevant to the objectives of the research

Four types of data will be collected:

- Your name and contact details (although this information will be kept confidential; it is needed to provide assurance as to the integrity of the data.)
- The selected photographs on which you reflected in the text (although all individuals will be rendered unrecognisable)
- Your (anonymised) reflective texts which describe the insights you found in your photographs and how your photographs led you to recognise these
- Anonymised excerpts from your one-on-one individual interviews (These will be audio recorded for the purposes of transcription, but the audio recordings will not be shared with anyone, and will be deleted on the completion of the research project)

Will I be recorded, and how will the recordings be used?

As explained above, the audio recordings of your one-on-one individual interviews made during this research will be used only for analysis and the transcription of the recording(s) for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

How will my information be managed?

Bournemouth University (BU) is the organisation with overall responsibility for this study and the Data Controller of your personal information, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it appropriately.

Research is a task that we perform in the public interest, as part of our core function as a university. Undertaking this research study involves collecting and/or generating information about you. We manage research data strictly in accordance with:

- Ethical requirements, and
- Current data protection laws. These control the use of information about identifiable individuals, but do not apply to anonymous research data. (“Anonymous” means that we have either removed or not collected any data or links to other data which identify a specific person as the subject or source of a research result.)

BU’s [Research Participant Privacy Notice](#) sets out more information about how we fulfil our responsibilities as a data controller and about your rights as an individual under the data protection legislation. We ask you to read this Notice so that you can fully understand the basis on which we will process your personal information.

Research data will be used only for the purposes of the study or related uses identified in the Privacy Notice or this Information Sheet. To safeguard your rights in relation to your personal information, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible and control access to that data as described below.

Publication

You will not be able to be identified in any external reports or publications about the research without your specific consent. Otherwise your information will only be included in these materials in an anonymous form, i.e. you will not be identifiable.

Research results will be published in the thesis, academic and arts journals, monographs by the researcher, and/or in conference presentations.

Security and access controls

BU will hold the information we collect about you in hard copy in a secure location and on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically.

Personal information which has not been anonymised will be accessed and used only by appropriate, authorised individuals and when this is necessary for the purposes of the research or another purpose identified in the Privacy Notice. This may include giving access to BU staff or others responsible for monitoring and/or audit of the study who need to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations.

Data will be anonymised during the study, and prior to any publication.

Keeping your information if you withdraw from the study

If you withdraw from active participation in the study, we will keep information which we have already collected from or about you, if this has on-going relevance or value to the study. This may include your personal identifiable information. As explained above, your legal rights to access, change, delete or move this information are limited as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you have concerns about how this will affect you personally, you are encouraged to raise these with the research team when you withdraw from the study.

You can find out more about your rights in relation to your data and how to raise queries or complaints in [our Privacy Notice](#).

Retention of research data

Project governance documentation, including copies of signed participant agreements will be retained after completion of the research so that we have records of how we conducted the research and who took part. The only personal information in this documentation will be your name and signature, and we will not be able to link this to any anonymised research results.

As described above, during the course of the study we will anonymise the information we have collected about you as an individual. This means that we will not hold your personal information in identifiable form after we have completed the research activities.

You can find more specific information about retention periods for personal information in [our Privacy Notice](#).

We keep anonymised research data indefinitely, so that it can be used for other research as described above.

Research results

We will keep your personal information in identifiable form for a period of 10 years after completion of the research study. Although published research outputs are anonymised, we need to retain underlying data collected for the study in a non-anonymised form to enable the research to be audited and/or to enable the research findings to be verified.

You can find more specific information about retention periods for personal information in our Privacy Notice.

We keep anonymised research data indefinitely, so that it can be used for other research as described above.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact the researcher, Rutherford [rutherford@bournemouth.ac.uk] or the supervisor of the research team, Dr. Chris Miles [cjmiles@bournemouth.ac.uk]

Complaints or concerns about the study should be directed the researcher, Rutherford [rutherford@bournemouth.ac.uk]. If your concerns have not been answered by the researcher, you should contact Professor Einar Thorsen, Deputy Dean Research & Professional Practice for the Faculty of Media & Communication, Bournemouth University by email to researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Finally

If you decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed participant agreement form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project.

Appendix X: Summary of efforts to recruit participants for the study

23 April 2021 a Call for Participants was posted on the BU Research blog

23 April 2021 a Call for Participants was posted on the PGR Peer Support page

26 April 2021 the Call for Participants was re-posted on the FMC Faculty Online Forum

By the end of April, I had received expressions of interest from five people.

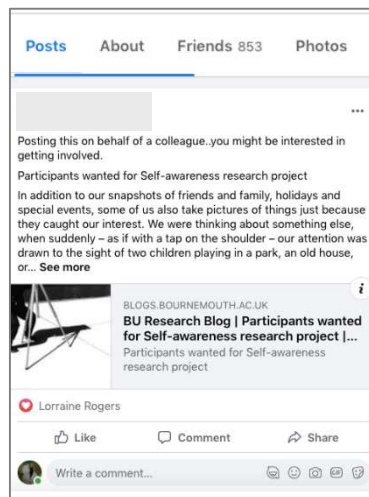
Two of these admitted to prior training in psychology or photography. (In the original post, I excluded those with prior training in photography and/or psychology due to concerns that such training may make it difficult for participants to either make photographs or reflect on their possible significance without bias), but in consultation with my primary supervisor, these criteria were dropped in later postings and I informed the two who had admitted to prior training in psychology and photography that I was able to accept them as participants in the project. Two of the five who had expressed interest later withdrew

27 May 2021 a Call for Participants posted (and shared by several connections) on LinkedIn
Received no expressions of interest

07 June 2021 the Call for Participants was re-posted on BU Research blog
Received no further expressions of interest

14 June 2021 the Call for Participants was re-posted on the PGR Peer Support page
Received no expressions of interest

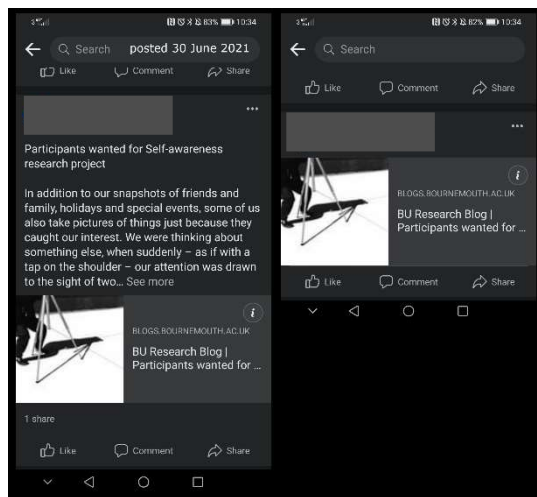
28 June 2021 a Call for Participants shared on the social media networks of three colleagues



Received an expression of interest from one person

28 June 2021 the Call for Participants was re-posted on BU Research blog
Received no further expressions of interest

06 July 2021 the Call for Participants was re-posted on the FMC Faculty Online Forum
Recruited one participant



08 July 2021 emailed APHE (the *Association for Photography in Higher Education*, of which I am a member) with the request to have my Call for Participants sent to members.

Received no response, but on reflection, I believe that this is just as well, as those with high levels of expertise, not only in the practice of photography, but, as teachers of photography, in its discourse, might have found it difficult to escape the influence of what I have termed our 'compositional reflexes' in making photographs, and further, found it difficult to see their photographs as sources of Self-reflective insight.

It had been my intention to carry out the first two (group) sessions during my annual leave in July-August 2021, and then, in the autumn semester when I have no classes, to hold the individual interviews and analyse the data and start to write up my initial findings. Unfortunately, as of mid-July, when I began my annual leave, I had only three participants – and two of them indicated that they would not be available until September.

18 Sept 2021 four people have signed and returned the Participant Agreement form and confirmed their willingness to participate in the project:

name	Who are they?	email address	expression of interest rec'd	sent PIS & PAF?	has signed PA	sent messages	re-confirmed
	PGR on a clinical academic doctoral programme		23 April 2021	Yes	Yes (17 June 2021)		Yes 07 Sept
	Works in Brand & Business Development		28 June 2021	Yes	Yes (05 July 2021)		Yes 08 Sept
	Lecturer in Modern History		08 July 2021	08 July 2021	Yes (21 July 2021)	19 July 2021; 13 September 2021	Yes 13 Sept
	I am over the age of 18 and not an undergraduate student		14 July 2021	14 July 2021	not yet (despite repeated requests)	19 July 2021; 06 September 2021; 13 September 2021	
	PGR - Faculty of Health & Social Sciences (HSS)		23 April 2021	Yes	Yes (20 July 2021)	16 June; 02 July; 09 July; 13 September; 18 September	Yes 18 Sept
	PGR - FMC		29 April 2021	Yes	Has not replied to repeated emails	16 June; 02 July; 09 July; 06 September; 18 September	
	PGR - FMC		03 May 2021	Yes	No (25 June 2021)		withdrew 25 June 2021
	Lecturer in Adult Nursing (HSS)		27 April 2021	Yes	No (28 June 2021)		withdrew 28 June 2022

In the Transfer Report signed off by the panel (30 October 2019), I proposed to recruit a maximum of ten participants:

The researcher will endeavour to recruit up to ten participants (the upper limit recommended by Smith et al., 2009 pp.52) (page 30 of Transfer Report)

The Transfer Report signed off by the panel also implicitly signalled that the research might be conducted with as few as four participants:

participants will be organised into one group (of 4-10) or into two groups (of 4-5) (page 31 of Transfer Report)

I submit therefore that I can proceed with only three (or four) participants in the full study (plus the two participants of the Pilot).

Firefox https://outlook.office.com/mail/id/AAQkADVkYzAxNGMwLTcwM

Message to supervisors - update from Rutherford

Rutherford
 Sat 18/09/2021 14:18
 To: [Redacted]
 Cc: [Redacted]

1 attachments (546 KB)
 Efforts to recruit participants for full study.docx

Gentlemen

I hope and trust that you had a pleasant summer.

In the past six months, I have been on something of a roller-coaster ride in terms of recruiting and securing the commitment of participants for the second part of my primary research. (You will recall that I completed the Pilot study last summer.)

It had been my intention to carry out the first two (group) sessions with participants during my annual leave in July-August, and then, in the autumn semester (during which I have no scheduled classes), to hold the individual interviews, analyse the data and start to write up my initial findings. Unfortunately, as of mid-July, when I began my annual leave, I had only three participants – two of whom indicated that they would not be available until September.

For your reference, I have attached a brief SoE, but in short, despite Consistent and repeated efforts, I currently have only three confirmed participants (with a slim possibility of a fourth). (Earlier in spring, I had eight, but many of these later withdrew due to other commitments.)

Although this is fewer than I had intended, in the Transfer Report signed off by the panel (30 October 2019), I proposed to recruit a maximum of ten participants:
The researcher will endeavour to recruit up to ten participants (the upper limit recommended by Smith et al., 2009 pp.52)
 (page 30 of Transfer Report)

The Transfer Report signed off by the panel also implicitly signalled that the research might be conducted with as few as four participants:
participants will be organised into one group (of 4-10) or into two groups (of 4-5) (page 31 of Transfer Report)

I submit therefore (but ask for your confirmation) that I can proceed with only three (or four) participants in the full study -- to whose data will be added that of the two participants of the Pilot.

With very sincere thanks and best regards,

Rutherford

Programme Leader: [MA Advertising](#)
 Principal Academic in Creative Advertising MProf MPhil SFHEA APHE
 Department of Communication and Journalism

D [Redacted] ☺ ↶ Reply ↷ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 📅 📎 ☰ ⋮
 Sun 19/09/2021 14:28

Dear Rutherford

Good to hear from you. I am glad to hear you are still on the case but sorry to hear recruiting participants has been so problematic.

The question of whether it is feasible to go ahead with so few is debatable but given that, despite best efforts, you have not been able to lasso more than I think you have little choice but to press on.

If they engage fully and produce some worthwhile results then that will give you material to work with to the next stage.

Obviously if their engagement is weak then some strategic rethinking will be required.

Having so few sign up has raised the risk level but from my perspective it is worth continuing.

I think all supervisors will need to be in agreement on this and I am happy to meet virtually or in person if that helps.

Best wishes to all,

[Redacted]