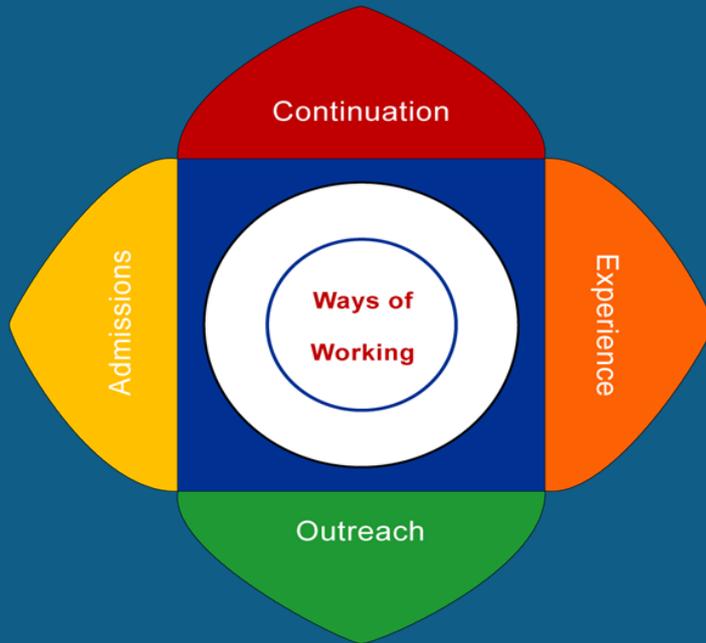


**Bournemouth  
University**

# **My voice, my story: the lived experience of being a non-traditional student at university through participatory photovoice**

Dr Vanessa Heaslip, Dr Maggie Hutchings, Dr Clive Hunt, Dr Sue Eccles

# BU Fair Access Research Project



- Bournemouth University's (BU) pioneering Fair Access Research project (FAR) has brought together students, the Students' Union (SUBU) and staff from across the University to develop and expand expertise and reflexive practice in the field of fair access to higher education.
- The research covers five core areas of work and establishes new ways of working in the field of widening participation research, practice and policy. This feeds into the over-arching strategy of Learning Together to promote equality, opportunity and achievement.
- By learning together with students and colleagues from across the university and the higher education sector, we are building a community who can share experiences and expertise to meet the complex challenges facing widening participation research, policy and practice.

## Input

Listen to students and colleagues  
Facilitate partnerships

- *Networking*
- *Academic buy-in*
- *Professional buy-in*
- *Partnerships resources*

Map effective practice  
Learn with students and other experts  
Undertake research

- *Person-centred theories*
- *Creative approaches*
- *Data collection*
- *Publications*

Share knowledge  
Enable others to adopt and adapt

- *Disseminate research*
- *Fair Access Briefings*
- *Guidance and consultation*
- *Self-assessment tool*

Establish focus  
Demonstrate sustainable legacy

- *WP online hub*
- *Impact narrative*
- *Final report*

**Partnerships**

**Knowledge**

**Praxis**

**Sustainability**

## Impact

- Different groups working and learning together

- Diverse resources to enable others to improve ways of working

- Changing praxis in HE/FE sector
- Enhanced experiences for students

- Lasting infrastructure for research
- Sustained changes in praxis

## Evidence

- Tracking engagement
- Tracking use
- New collaborations

- Outputs
- Citations
- Tracking use
- REF case study

- Policy developments
- Improvements in student metrics for TEF

- Continuing research
- Funding allocation
- Continued improvement for students
- Inclusion in strategies

# What is photovoice?

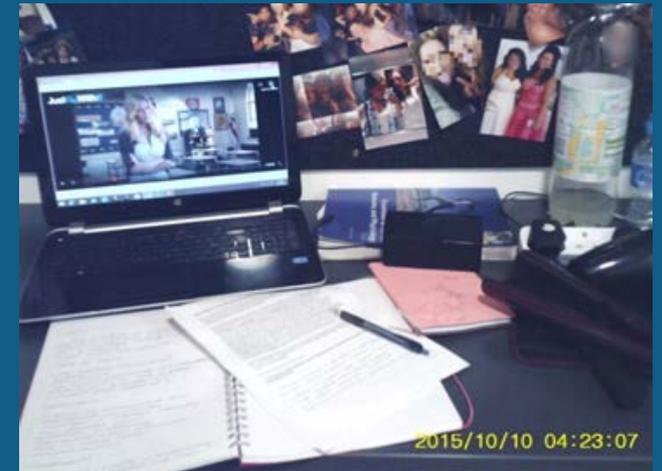
- Collier and Collier (1986) noted that photographs can stimulate new thoughts and memories that can be prompted by although not necessarily contained in the photograph images.
- Bukowski and Buetow (2011) argue that photographs have surface content as visual records, but they can also make the “invisible visible” (p. 739) by evoking feelings, memories, and thoughts that require verbalization to be accessible to researchers.
- Adding sight to sound (through the use of photographs) can expand sensory awareness and increases the reflexive process (Harris & Guillemin, 2012).



# Why Photovoice for this project?



- Fair access, or widening participation, is fundamentally concerned with ensuring that individuals with the talent to succeed at HE are given the opportunity to do so, across the whole student journey (pre-entry to employment).
- We focus on students from non-traditional backgrounds because research shows how the lived experiences of these students are often marginalised by institutions and that this can impact upon attainment and degree outcomes (Hunt et al 2017)



- The project was reviewed and approved in line with BUs Research Ethics Code of Practice.
- We recruited seven students who self identified as either:
  - Mature (over 21 on start of course), having a disability or additional learning need, from a BAME community, first in family to attend HE, from low income families, or who were care leavers or who had caring responsibilities
- The students attended a training day in which we shared our experiences (as researchers) and invited the group to share their backgrounds to foster a sense of group cohesiveness and safety.
- We shared information on photovoice method and explored ethical issues of taking photographs of other people.
- Five of the seven students continued into the project; they were provided with cameras and asked to take photographs of their lives and their experiences of being a non-traditional student in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- The group meet a further two times; the students shared their pictures and discussed what they felt they said about their lives (this was recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically). The students then choose 2 photographs which was shared at the ESRC Festival of social science event.

# Findings



- <https://youtu.be/zR9Etrwt8fE>

- The authors wish to acknowledge both
  - the ESRC Festival of Social Science who funded the project
  - the students who participated and worked with us, both in the collation and sharing of their stories
  - the students who worked with us on developing these stories into the video montage



[vheaslip@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:vheaslip@bournemouth.ac.uk)  
[seccles@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:seccles@bournemouth.ac.uk)