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A Multisensory Approach to Visual Methods

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INTRODUCTION

While I was still contemplating this chapter, my partner arrived home with a copy of *New Scientist*. He handed it to me folded open at the review of a new book, *See What I'm Saying* by the perceptual psychologist Lawrence D. Rosenblum (2010). The very sight of and subsequent tactile encounter with *New Scientist* gave me the sense that I was about to read a popular magazine, with its glossy but floppy pages and color images. I was initially drawn to the photograph that centered the one-page review, I imagined, taken from the book and featuring a visually impaired cyclist who, the caption says, 'relies on hearing where most others use sight' (2010: 46). *New Scientist* also smells like a magazine, now it has been read and used for a while; this particular issue has a weaker scent, but still reminds me of the olfactory experience of getting too close up to a Sunday newspaper supplement in the days when I used to read real newspapers rather than reading the news online. The reviewer of *See What I'm Saying*, Richard E. Cytowic, himself a professor of neurology, describes this as an accessible book that uses examples of first-hand experiences to demonstrate how 'the five senses do not travel along separate channels, but interact to a degree few scientists would have believed only a decade ago' (Cytowic, 2010: 46). Interestingly, the idea that the senses are so interwoven and interdependent is now not only the domain of the biological and neurological sciences, philosophers of perception and social scientists who seek out these fields but also is now seeping out in to the popular intellectual imagination of science magazine readers. It is likewise time for anyone who is interested in using visual methods and media as part of social research to account for the idea that neither the vision nor images can be practiced or understood without a theory, methodological appreciation and practical awareness of multisensoriality.

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How could Cytowic's review be relevant to a visual researcher? Quite apart from the points it makes about the ways that the senses are interconnected, it is a material and sensorial object in itself. Considering it in this way we might think of its visuality on two levels. As the anthropologist Tim Ingold has pointed out, the notions of the image and vision have tended to be conflated in existing literatures in visual culture studies and visual anthropology. Thus, in such works, 'it seems, vision has nothing to do with eyesight and everything to do with the perusal of images. Thus: no image, no vision' (Ingold, 2010: 15). Ingold argues that we need to recognize that visual practices go beyond looking at images. Therefore in the case of the *New Scientist* article, we might distinguish between, on the one hand, the practice of seeing the magazine as an object and evaluating and defining it based on past knowledge and experiences, which might initially be thought of as a visual practice, and, on the other hand, the practice of interpreting the visual representations that constitute the article described above – the photograph and the writing.

First, my initial experience of *seeing* it, the visual practice of evaluating it using existing experience, suggested to me it was an intellectual but popular publication. On seeing the magazine in my partner's hands, I 'knew' that the qualities of the pages would feel smooth and glossy, yet not as strong as those of, for instance, the academic journal *Visual Studies*. Such capacities for multisensory evaluation of visual/material objects are part of our everyday life practices. We see and know '*as we go*', as Ingold puts it (2000: 229, original italics). The everyday practice of visually evaluating a magazine involves the same principle as I have described elsewhere of learning to view and understand performances like Spanish bullfighting (Pink, 2007a). It might be conceptualized as what Cristina Grasseni calls 'skilled vision' and should be understood as not a purely visual practice but one that is situated in relation to the other senses (Grasseni, 2007).

Secondly, the article contains images. Its visuality in this sense works in two ways: it has a color photograph as its centerpiece, and it is full of words, which as has been pointed out for some time, are also visual representations (see Pink, 2007a). Yet the image is not purely visual. Photographs are the outcomes of multisensory contexts, encounters and engagements. The act of taking a photograph involves the convergence of a range of different social, material, discursive and moral elements in a multisensory environment, rather than being a solely visual process. Likewise, its presentation in a public domain involves much more than simply visual representation. The visual dimensions of the magazine should not be separated from its materiality, its smell, or its other sensory qualities. Moreover, the capacity of images to invoke experiences that we associate with other sensory categories has been recognized in existing literatures. This is especially the case for touch, which has been closely associated with vision by several scholars (e.g. MacDougall, 1998; Marks, 2000), but can equally be applied to other sensory categories. Thus, when I *see* the photograph of the cyclists going over country terrain, I begin to imagine, based on my own past experiences of cycling, what it might *feel* like to engage in the same practice myself. None of these practices – of seeing, taking photographs, or viewing them – can be understood as simply visual practices. As the content of the book review tells us, neither vision nor the other senses work in isolation – 'the five senses do not travel along separate channels, but interact to a degree few scientists would have believed only a decade ago' (Cytowic, 2010: 46). In fact, although a decade ago scientists might have found these ideas difficult to believe, as I elaborate below, philosophers had long suggested that the senses were interconnected in such ways.

These points have certain implications for visual researchers. If the above arguments that the senses cannot be understood in isolation from each other – as either neurological processes or within human practices – are

valid, then how can we possibly continue to think that we are doing 'visual research' or using 'visual research methods'. How, in fact, can we even justify using the separate culturally constructed categories of vision, touch, smell, taste and sound? As I have argued elsewhere, these ideas need not lead to wholly dramatic changes. A field of academic practice called visual research methods can (and indeed does) continue to exist (see Pink, 2006). Moreover, the varying sets of culturally specific (and constructed) categories used by different people to understand their embodied sensory experiences have two possible roles in visual research: first, they constitute the local categories researchers seek to understand; secondly, they are useful analytical categories in research (Pink, 2009). Yet in order for us to reasonably proceed with visual research methods, a fundamental recognition of the issues raised by multisensoriality is required. Thus, visual research methods, their design, practice and discussion, need to be informed by the following basic principles:

- Visual images are produced and consumed in multisensory environments; they stand for the multisensory configurations from which they emerge.
- Visual images are not simply visual; they are experienced through multiple and intertwined sensory channels.
- Vision itself is a culturally constructed category, as are sound, smell, taste and touch.
- Vision involves more than just looking at images, and visual practices need to be situated as part of multisensory perception.

These propositions do not imply that scholarship around the visual should be abandoned or deconstructed. However, the 'visual' interdisciplines (like visual studies, or visual culture studies) or visual sub-disciplines (like visual anthropology, visual sociology, visual psychology and visual geography) need to be rethought in relation to this sensory turn. Indeed, sensory anthropologies, geographies and sociologies have already emerged and are being consolidated. It also calls for a rethinking of the methods used in these visual sub-disciplines. If the principles of our sub-disciplines are now influenced by ideas of multisensoriality, then the question of how the methodologies that inform the production of scholarly knowledge and debate in those sub-disciplines might be subject to such theoretical shifts is equally important. In *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (Pink, 2009) I have considered how ethnographic research practices might be reconceptualized as sensory ethnography. This involved rethinking the interview, participant observation and visual ethnography methods through a notion of multisensoriality. In this chapter, I point to three central issues when practicing visual research methods that acknowledge multisensoriality: the methodological principles that inform a multisensory approach to visual methods; the question of how, where and why multisensory visual methods might be used; and the benefits and limitations of this approach and practice. In doing so I develop a discussion of examples of how such methods have been used in existing research and suggestions for how established visual methods, such as photo-elicitation and collaborative video, might be rethought through multisensoriality.

A MULTISENSORY METHODOLOGY

It has long been recognized that visual methods are not simply visual (e.g. Pink, 2007a) and that visual images need to be understood in relation to the other senses. Yet until recently (Pink, 2009) the question of how visual methods might be understood as multisensory had not been approached in any detail. In this section I outline a multisensory methodology.

To understand how visual methods might be rethought through the notion of multisensoriality requires initially a distinction between research methods and methodologies. The research method refers to the actual procedure and activity that the researcher

engages in – often in collaboration with a research participant and using audio-visual technologies. The method is part of a research practice in that it is usually performed in similar (although never identical) ways in different contexts. Examples of this, in the case of visual methods, include photo-elicitation, informant-directed photography, participatory video, researcher-produced video and ethnographic filmmaking. As chapters on these methods in this book show, they are already employed in ways that are informed by methodological principles. When the approaches that are used to understand the methods are critically revised, their meanings and the types of knowledge they produce can also be understood in new ways. Yet the shifts in practice might not be radical. Even when a new methodology comes to inform research, visual research methods that are already established might continue to be used in ways that are very similar to the ways they are already practiced. However, if a new methodology is applied to understanding these practices and to interpreting the knowledge produced through them, then what on the surface might appear the same visual methods might actually be generating rather different types of research knowledge and academic meanings. They may produce new forms of empirical knowledge, and allow researchers to develop fresh arguments and engage in scholarly debate in new ways. Therefore, I do not argue *against* existing visual methodologies or methods. Rather, I examine how an acknowledgment of multisensoriality can shift the way we design and understand visual research methods, inform which methods we choose to use and influence the knowledge they produce.

A methodology thus presents a set of theoretical and/or philosophical assumptions, ideas and principles that are applied to research methods. In this section I will outline what a multisensory methodology entails. A methodology needs to be based on a coherent set of theoretical assumptions. The discussion of the *New Scientist* article and magazine with which I opened this chapter has already introduced some of the assumptions that inform a multisensory methodology. These assumptions originate from beyond the social sciences: from, on the one hand, philosophy in the form of the phenomenology of perception, and on the other hand, the sciences in terms of neurological understandings.

In understanding human perception as multisensory, the work of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty has influenced the way most 'sensory' researchers have understood their work. Merleau-Ponty argued that it was impossible for 'pure sensation' ([1962] 2002: 4) to exist on its own and that actually sensations that we experience are produced when we encounter objects and their qualities – such as light, sound and the way they feel. Yet to actually realize or be aware of sensation, it needs to be 'overlaid by a body of knowledge' ([1962] 2002: 5). As I have outlined elsewhere (Pink, 2009: 26–27), these ideas have been especially relevant to anthropologists whose work engages with questions of vision and with the production of visual representations. Thus, in discussing the relationship between sight and hearing, Ingold has quoted Merleau-Ponty's point that the body should not be understood as 'a collection of adjacent organs but a synergic system, all of the functions of which are exercised and linked together in the general action of being in the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 234, cited from Ingold, 2000: 268), thus making 'sight and hearing, to the extent that they can be distinguished at all, facets of this action' (Ingold, 2000: 268). Thus, Ingold situates sight as part of an encompassing process of perception whereby it is inseparable from other senses. The visual anthropologist and anthropological filmmaker David MacDougall has likewise used Merleau-Ponty's ideas to understand the relationship between touching and seeing with reference to film (MacDougall, 1998: 51), stressing how these senses 'overlap'. In recent years, as I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, scientific researchers are arriving at rather

similar conclusions, suggesting precisely that 'the five senses do not travel along separate channels, but interact to a degree few scientists would have believed only a decade ago' (Cytowic, 2010: 46). Neurobiologists Newell and Shams write that 'our phenomenological experience is not of disjointed sensory sensations but is instead of a coherent multisensory world, where sounds, smells, tastes, lights, and touches amalgamate' and our sensory modalities 'combine, substitute, or integrate' (2007: 1415).

These sensations are, however, given meaning by human beings (and whether or not this process in itself should be considered biological is another matter). As social scientists, one of our interests is in the question of how and which sensory categories are mobilized by people in different social and cultural contexts in order to 'make sense' of their sensory experiences. It is significant to keep in mind that the modern Western sensory categories of vision, sound, touch, smell and taste do not automatically map onto the ways that people in other cultures categorize their sensory experiences (e.g. Geurts, 2003); they are but cultural constructions. The resituating of vision as a cultural category that is used to comprehend a much more complex biological and neurological process of human perception has implications for how we understand vision and audio-visual methods and media in social research on two levels in that the visual sense is not purely visual in terms of processes of perception, and visual images are not just sources of visual content:

- Vision: vision is not just about looking at images; rather it is part of the multisensory processes through which we interpret the total environment in which we exist, as well as the specific material objects that we encounter.
- Images: if we count as images, drawings, photographs, paintings and video, etc., we can also think of images as not just visual, in that they are material, tactile and aural too in many cases. This includes analogue and digital images and their interrelations with viewing technologies.

These two principles inform how we would understand images and vision in a multisensory methodology. The task of this chapter is to consider how acknowledging these positions will have implications for visual research methods and methodologies that involve the use of visual media. In this sense a multisensory methodology designed for visual research methods also inherits a series of principles that would inform a visual methodology (see also Pink, 2007a for an expanded discussion of the principles that inform a visual ethnography). These principles involve not only making certain commitments to understanding seeing and images in particular ways but also subscribing to principles that determine some elements of the nature of the research encounter and the researcher's own self-awareness about her or his role in this.

The key principles that inform visual research, as I have developed it elsewhere (Pink, 2007a), relate to:

- Understanding image production as emerging from relationships between people and technologies.
- Acknowledging the (varying) relationships between images and other texts (in research, analysis and representation).
- Understanding the research encounter and thus the production of images as always collaborative and situated.
- Involving a high degree of self-reflexivity, whereby the researcher interrogates her or his role, situatedness and subjectivity in the research encounters and the production of knowledge.
- Taking an ethical approach that is rooted in collaboration, informed consent and continued contact.

A multisensory approach has further implications on various levels:

- Acknowledging the relationship between the visual and the other senses and the multisensoriality of the image.
- A reflexive approach would involve developing an awareness of the culturally and personally specific sensory categories that one uses as a person and as a researcher, as well as the moral values and judgments attached to these.

- Understanding the research encounter as a collaborative event that is part of a multisensory environment.
- In terms of ethics, it requires the researcher to be sensitive to the question of how sensory memories and evocations might affect the well-being of research participants. Ethics are, however, always situated.

MULTISENSORY VISUAL METHODS IN PRACTICE: TWO EXAMPLES

There is no single method or technology to be used in visual research that is informed by a multisensory approach. Although if pushed to identify one technology that is inextricable from the process of doing multisensory research (and visual research by implication) we could say that the human body itself is one of the central research tools. For the multisensory researcher – as a seeing, perceiving, knowing organism – the sensory, affective and empathetic dimensions of being human are central to the research process. Further to this, as is demonstrated in the following examples, video recording, photography and drawing can feature in multisensory visual research. Yet rather than being simply 'tools', audio-visual technologies become part of the way that the researcher experiences and remembers the research encounter. In this section I discuss the application of a multisensory approach to established visual research methods. I will attend to two ways that a multisensory approach is related to a visual one:

- *The adaptation of existing visual methods to focus on total sensory experience and multiple or alternative sensory categories:* for example, the use of researcher-produced video recordings in ways that go beyond observation or investigating ways of 'seeing' what research participants see. Instead, the researcher would seek to immerse herself or himself more completely in the multisensory experience of the particular environment she or he is video recording and collaboratively exploring with the research participant.
- *A multisensory methodology can be applied to visual methods that already exist*: this involves rethinking established visual methods to account for the relationship between the visual and the other senses. For example, we might rethink of photo-elicitation to acknowledge the multisensory qualities of images and the capacity of visual representations to evoke tactile or other sensations.

Below I elaborate examples from two methods – researcher-produced video and the use of participant-produced photographs in photo-elicitation. Readers are referred to *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (Pink, 2009) for a review of a wider range of multisensory research methods.

MAKING IMAGES AS MULTISENSORY RESEARCH ENCOUNTERS

Video observations and researcher-produced video are key methods in visual research. Their uses range from video recording ritual processes, placing of CCTV cameras in people's homes or more public institutions, to video recording people by following them as they go about their everyday lives. There is also a long history of video or film recording of people showing researchers around the places where they have lived. This method, which I have called 'the multisensory video tour' (Pink, 2009: 105) and 'Walking with Video' (Pink, 2007b) is discussed in detail elsewhere (Pink, 2007b, 2009) and originates in the techniques used by anthropological filmmakers (as well as in some genres of documentary film more widely) in the twentieth century (see also Jhala, 2007). In this section I discuss using video in movement as a multisensory method. However, the principles might also be applied to the other methods of video research noted above.

In my own work the multisensory video tour involves the research participant showing the researcher (who holds the video camera) around her or his world. This is therefore a collaborative research method,

which with particular research questions in mind, can examine peoples' relationships with their material environments, the objects and sensory elements in this environment and their feelings and knowledge about them, and the sensory embodied experience of being and acting in and part of that environment. Between 2005 and 2007 I undertook a series of tours of a community garden project as part of research about the Slow City movement in the UK, some of which were video recorded. I have written about these video tours in detail elsewhere (Pink, 2007b, 2008, 2009). Here, I will reflect on aspects of these tours to illustrate how an audio-visual research technique actually engages all the senses. The community garden tours involved David, the chairman of the community garden committee and also a lead gardener, showing me around the garden site, commenting on the progress that had been made in the garden, the plants and garden furniture installed and the socialites around this. Each tour was in the 'same' garden, yet the environment in which each tour took place was unique, with different weather conditions, social encounters with different neighbors, new plants and new growth, a path and benches in place and more. As such, the feel of the sun or rain from overhead, the affectivity of social exchanges, the material meanings and the terrain under foot were constantly shifting. This was reflected not only in what I, as the researcher, heard and saw when David 'showed' me the garden at each stage in its development, but also it formed part of the total multisensory experience of the garden, which included elements that can be categorized as tactile and olfactory. Thus, walking around the garden with a camera involved *also* experiencing the difference between the feel of the wet grass and drumming of the rain on the umbrella I was holding during the first walk, and the firm path we treaded while the hot sun was beating down on us and a dry garden with flower beds that had to be watered in the second tour. In this sense, the *experience* of the practice of researcher-produced video in this project was one through which I learnt about the research subject through all the senses. In this context, the principle of understanding vision as situated comes into play: the visual dimension of my experience of the garden can be seen as part of a multisensory experience, one in which vision is intertwined with other sensory modalities. Thus, as I simultaneously looked at and felt the wet grass underfoot, seeing and hearing the rain beating down on it, I experienced a sensation some of which would be recorded audio-visually. In the context of this particular project, I should note that although this might seem a rather mundane example, actually this was rather an important experience for the researcher to have. This is because one of the reasons that the garden was being developed was precisely because the wet grass of the field was an impediment to local people – especially the elderly – who wanted to cross the field as a short cut into the town. Thus, the experience of making the video offered me the opportunity to empathize with both the experiences of the participants in my research who were developing the site and those of people who I had never met, but for whom the development of the garden was a significant process.

Once this research experience was recorded on video, however, it could be argued that it was rendered bisensory, in that it would now just represent the sound of the rain and the image of the grass. Yet, a multisensory methodology instructs us otherwise. Above I have outlined the idea of understanding images as multisensory and acknowledging the relationships between, for example, sight and hearing (Ingold, 2000) and vision and touch (e.g. MacDougall, 1998). Although when viewing the video recording of walking through the grass we cannot feel the sensation of the grass underfoot, its audio-visual representation offers opportunities to imagine it on two levels. First, for the researcher who has recorded this, the images can invoke the sensory memories of being there and the sensations and meanings these involved. Secondly, for the viewer who has him- or

herself experienced something similar, researcher-produced video offers the opportunity to empathetically imagine her- or himself into the place occupied by the body of the researcher. As MacDougall has suggested, what he calls 'corporeal images' might be understood as 'not just the images of other bodies; they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world' (2005: 3).

While of course a video camera cannot record touch, taste or smell as it does sound and image, it nevertheless has potential to represent the multisensoriality of the research encounter. If we understand the senses as being inextricably interconnected, as suggested in the neurological and philosophical scholarship discussed at the beginning of this chapter, then we might understand that such audio-visual materials can evoke or invite the viewer to imagine an experience that involves all of the senses, rather than simply vision and sound.

IMAGE ELICITATION AS A MULTISENSORY METHOD

Photo-elicitation has been described in its basic form as inserting images into the narrative of an interview (Harper, 2002: 13). The same principle applies to using video or other images. A sensory methodology has two implications for image-elicitation methods. First, it invites us to rethink the interview itself as a multisensory process that involves not just talk (and in the case of photo-elicitation, images) but all the senses (Pink, 2009: 81–96). Secondly, it calls for rethinking the significance of an image when inserted into an interview narrative. Thus, the image is reinterpreted as a multisensory artifact and the practice of viewing it as involving the interconnected senses rather than vision in isolation. I have started to explain how these processes might be conceptualized in the opening example of this chapter when discussing the *New Scientist* article. I will now elaborate through a case study from the existing literature.

Samantha Warren works within the subdiscipline of 'organizational aesthetics', which is concerned in part with employees' feelings about their lives in organizations, through a focus on 'their sensory encounters with the world around them' (Warren, 2008: 560). Warren has used photographs as part of what she calls a 'sensual methodology' (560) to investigate employees' feelings about the environment of an organization which had been refurbished to create an environment which was more 'fun' and 'playful' (567). Warren's research process may be seen as one variation of photo-elicitation. She asked participants to produce their own photographs of these organizational environments in ways they chose themselves, thus providing a set of images that could then be discussed in interview. By understanding the contexts in which the images were produced and the research participant's experiences through a multisensory methodology, Warren's summing up of the roles played by the photographs in the interviews shows very well how photo-elicitation can go beyond the visual. Warren's discussion shows us how, in such a research process, photographs can serve various functions. First they can be seen as a prism through which to comprehend the 'aesthetic worlds' of the research participants. Secondly, they can be used to evoke participant's experiences of these aesthetic worlds in the context of the interviews. Finally, they can act as 'sites' for the exploration of different themes related to specific research questions or objectives – for example, in the case of Warren's research, 'to explore the socially constructed nature of participants' aesthetic judgments' (2008: 570–571). In this way, uses of the photographs in the interviews correspond with an understanding that images are produced in multisensory contexts and thus represent the experience of the body of the person holding the camera (see my discussion of MacDougall's (2005: 3) ideas, above). They also, however, acknowledge the potential of

images to communicate in ways that go beyond the visual. By understanding the senses as interconnected, we can comprehend photographs as evoking the multisensory experience of the aesthetic environment represented. Yet, as Warren notes, the images could be used to interrogate the participants' socially constructed understandings. Using photographs in interviews in such a way also permits researchers to develop an understanding of the sensory categories that participants use to understand and communicate about their experiences of particular environments and activities. Yet significantly, Samantha Warren takes the discussion one step further, developing it through a reflexive discussion of her own role as researcher. By reflecting on her own experiences of the same environment, she was able to empathize with the participants' experiences, and to use her own experiences as a point of comparison with theirs (2008: 569).

As both the examples discussed in this section demonstrate, conventional techniques in visual research can be rethought through a multisensory sensory methodology. These reworkings of existing methods need not fundamentally change the ways that the methods are used. Yet they do provide us with new routes to understanding the meanings of both the images and the ways that research participants and researchers make them meaningful.

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS

Opportunities

New approaches to doing social research offer novel routes to knowing about other people's lives and experiences, and new types of knowledge. As such, they can clearly be seen as opportunities to go beyond existing knowledge, to make fresh contributions to academic debates and to make critical interventions 'against' established ways of working and arguments. In the qualitative methodology literature, approaches to, methods of, and technologies used for social research tend to be rethought and revised every few years. As I noted elsewhere, in the last decades this has included understanding research as reflexive, embodied, visual and, now, multisensory (Pink, 2009). Yet, considering this trajectory of the insertion of new approaches to understanding research, there is no reason why each additional 'realization' should be pitched against earlier ones. Rather, each new methodology may add to existing approaches by offering a way of further situating the ways we, as researchers, produce knowledge. It is in this spirit that I propose a multisensory approach to visual research as an opportunity rather than as a challenge to existing approaches. Therefore, we already know that social research is an embodied exercise and that we should be reflexive about the roles played in the production of knowledge. We also know that since visual images, media and technologies play such a prevalent role in everyday life, we benefit from attending to them as the subjects of our research and may use them as routes to doing research. We might now add neurological and philosophical perspectives on the interconnectedness of the senses and thus the paradigm of multisensoriality. As I show in this chapter, an approach to research that is embodied, reflexive and attends to visual cultures and uses visual media and methods can be usefully situated and expanded by this addition. As the examples of methods discussed in the previous section demonstrate, a multisensory approach to visual research allows one to situate the visual sense and visual methods in new ways. It makes it easier to recognize the wider environment in which visual methods are used and to understand the visual as one amongst a series of categories and practices.

An acknowledgment of the roles of other senses in research also affords us new opportunities to consider how *visual* research methods might be adapted for use through other sensory categories. This involves switching the use of the category of vision

and the use of the image as the dominant sensory modality used in the research exercise for another. Thus, for example, to expand the methods discussed in the previous section, this might be developed in two ways. The use of video walks might be reworked in the form of sound walks or olfactory walks. Indeed, sound walks have long since been developed in arts practice. Or, instead of photo-elicitation, we might refocus on the olfactory, gustatory, tactile, or aural senses to practice scent elicitation, taste elicitation, touch elicitation, or sound elicitation. There are an increasing number of examples of such research practices in the existing literature. Next, I will focus on one from each category.

Sound walks

Above I discussed how a multisensory rendering of a research method that involved walking through and visually recording aspects of material environments could produce new types of research knowledge. Similar methods are also being developed in ways that acknowledge vision, but go beyond the use of visual media to focus on other sensory modalities. The work of Mags Adams et al. (2008), who have developed sound walk methods, is a good example. Their work is interesting from the perspective of a sensory methodology for two reasons: first, it allows one to consider the role of vision in research beyond the idea of looking at visual images; secondly, it shows how sound can become central to a research process, while the relationship between the senses is recognized.

Adams et al.'s (2008: 556) method involved researcher and participant together following urban sound walks along a set route, redesigned by the researchers, in the city of Manchester (UK). Their research process entailed first a brief interview. Then, participants walked the route with the researcher, and were asked while walking it to 'concentrate on what they could hear as they walked and to look at the urban environments they passed through'. Thus, the researchers recognized the relationship between vision and hearing and indeed sought for the participants to make connections between them. Adams et al.'s discussion of this method also resonates in interesting ways with the manner in which video and photography employed in multisensory research has been conceptualized in the examples discussed above. They note that sharing the walks allowed researchers and participants to also share 'a sensory experience of the urban environment' (2008: 557), further resonating with the discussion of the video tour in the previous section. Moreover, they point out that sharing of the experience of the walk made it possible for subsequent interviews with the participants to be 'deeper and more meaningful' (2008: 557), in this sense showing some similarities with Samantha Warren's (2008) discussion of how her experiences of being in the same environment as the research participants made her more able to empathize with them during the subsequent interviews with photographs.

Sound elicitation

Above I discussed how photo-elicitation has been adapted in the work of Samantha Warren (2008) as part of a sensory methodology. Noting the history of the use of photo-elicitation in social research, the anthropologist Richard Vokes takes photo-elicitation as a starting point, but develops the method in a different direction. Vokes points to how the use of objects as a focus in interviews allows them to become 'mediators' and 'objects of translation between two perspectival domains' (2007: 292). Drawing from this, Vokes discusses how in his own work he used a method of 'radio elicitation' (2007: 292), thus using radio sound as the mediating device. Vokes developed three methods. The first method, was in a way similar to the method used by Warren (2008) of experiencing the environment that she later asked participants to

photograph and discuss with her, and in other ways resonating with walking methods discussed above (Pink, 2007a, 2009; Adams et al., 2008). This involved his taking 'radio walks' around the village, resulting in him 'build[ing] up a detailed and objective, picture of the village soundscape, how this changed over time, and how radio noise was "located" within this' (Vokes, 2007: 293). The second method he calls 'unstructured radio elicitation', whereby he stayed with people as they listened to radio programs during the course of their everyday lives, eventually asking questions and making notes during this process (2007: 293). An additional method he developed similar to photo-elicitation was 'a more formal mode of "radio elicitation" based on the classic focus-group model' (2007: 294). Vokes would play a selected prerecorded clip from a radio program to the group and then ask them questions that he had preprepared relating to this. In discussing these methods, Vokes likens 'radio elicitation' to photo elicitation. Referring back to the work of John Collier Jr (see Collier and Collier, 1986) he suggests that both photographs and radio 'have something of a "hypnotic pull"' and 'Like Collier's photographs, radio sets also generate an intense sociality, in that they too are handled and passed round' (2007: 294).

Thus as these examples show, attention beyond the visual allows us to recognize the merits of placing other sensory categories at the fore of our inquiries.

Limitations

It is perhaps more common for proponents of a particular method or approach to sing its benefits rather than discuss its limitations in any depth. Moreover, as I have indicated above, the purpose of a sensory methodology as proposed here is to enhance existing methods, offer new routes to knowing and provide fresh contributions to scholarly debates (and to applied research). Yet it is also important to be aware of the limits of a method for two reasons: first, so that the researcher is aware of the types of knowledge that she or he is able to produce through any one method and of the arguments that can be made based on this knowledge; and, secondly, because knowledge of the weaknesses and the potential points at which an approach might be criticized enables researchers to defend their use of that method against those who might take a different approach.

There remain questions and issues that sensory researchers continue to probe, explore and develop possible responses to. It is significant here to point out that sensory social research is currently expanding and emerging as an increasingly important field of practice and theory. In terms of limitations we might best think of these on two levels: first, the *general* limitations that visual researchers working with a sensory methodology might encounter; and, secondly, the *project-specific* and *situated* limitations that can come into play when engaged in a particular research exercise. General limitations concern philosophical themes relating to, for instance, the impossibility of sharing or knowing another person's sensory experiences, and the subsequent practical difficulties in representing and communicating them. Related to this is the issue of how one is to articulate verbally associated sensory ways of knowing and the meanings. This applies in particular to when people show us as researchers or invite us to experience certain sensations.

I turn now to more specific instances: for example, when I was doing research about domestic cleaning practices in the home, I often experienced sensory aspects of the products and practices used by participants in the research – such as smells and textures – that they never spoke about (Pink, 2004). The researcher tends to be invited to experience such things precisely because they are not necessarily always discussed in spoken words. In this context it is important to understand video, as I outlined above, as a medium that reflects the experience of the person behind the camera. As researchers

analyzing these materials, we must thus be aware that sometimes the video materials function as documents that evoke our own memories of the research context, rather than *containing* those memories as recorded knowledge.

PRACTICAL ISSUES IN VISUAL METHODS FOR THE MULTISENSORY SCHOLAR

This chapter has proposed a multisensory methodology and subsequently presented a series of examples of methods through which this can be realized. In this section I will outline a series of practical issues that might be confronted when the methodology is applied.

Selecting the methods When designing a research project it is most important to select research methods that will best answer the questions posed. In this sense the starting point should not be the wish to use multisensory methods. Rather, the task is to consider how a multisensory methodology and methods that perhaps focus on one or more particular sensory categories might enable the researcher to better respond to the questions that the research seeks to answer.

Remember that the research is guided by a multisensory methodology The idea of using theories of multisensoriality and the interconnected senses to guide visual research methods aims to produce new routes to knowledge through the use of audio-visual media in research. It does not necessarily involve inventing new methods especially designed to use the senses (although this is something that could and does happen). Rather, it involves applying a particular understanding of the place of vision in relation to the other senses and of the multisensorial nature of images to the research process and the chosen methods. When applying a multisensory methodology, remember that this comes into play at all stages of the research process.

Reviewing existing texts The application of a multisensory methodology includes the ways in which researchers analyze and understand existing research texts. Therefore, for example, the same principles that have been outlined for understanding video produced in research can be applied to understanding existing documentaries or other films and photographs that are reviewed as part of the process of preparing to do practical social research.

Taking a reflexive approach Researchers who are seeking to use their senses to understand other people's worlds need to be reflexively aware of their own 'sensory subjectivities'. On the one hand, this means being aware of the sensory categories that they might use to describe the experiences, objects and activities that figure in the research. On the other hand, it requires an awareness of the moral meanings that the researcher associates with these sensory categories and experiences. Once this awareness is achieved, it may be used to reflect on how the researcher's own subjectivity influences the knowledge produced through the research process. It also offers the researcher a useful point of comparison – between her or his own sensory subjectivity and that of the research participants.

Be aware of the limits and potentials of using a multisensory methodology for understanding visual methods and media Researchers should be aware that although it would seem to make 'common sense' that photographs and video would be used for research that involves the visual sense, audio recording for the aural sense, scents for the olfactory sense and textures for the tactile sense, this might not necessarily be the case. A multisensory methodology tells us otherwise. The idea of the interconnectedness of the senses, combined with the case studies discussed above, indicates that, for instance: video research might engage seeing and hearing,

but it also involves the tactile sense and can evoke smells and tastes; photographic research might not only invite participants and researchers to consider the visual dimension of the environment or activities photographed, but rather it might allow the researcher to empathize with the multisensory experiences of the persons involved in the actions or of the environments represented.

Follow ethical guidelines for visual research and discipline-specific practice Research ethics are always situated and depend on the specific configuration of personal, discipline-specific and institutional ethical codes and procedures. It is not appropriate here to issue a set of ethical guidelines particular to the application of multisensory methodologies in visual research. Rather, researchers should take careful note of the ethical discussions available in relation to the methods discussed in this handbook, the guidelines issued by the professional associations dedicated to the disciplines in which they are working, and the institutions to which they are themselves attached. If anything, a multisensory methodology is distinguished by the collaborative approach that is taken to the encounter between researcher and participant, and this, in relation to the procedures noted above should contribute to ensuring that an ethical approach is achieved.

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