

## **Sensing place: Embodiment, sensoriality, kinesis, and children behind the camera**

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*ABSTRACT: This article is a call to literacy teachers and researchers to embrace the possibility of attending more consciously to the senses in digital media production. Literacy practices do not occur only in the mind, but involve the sensoriality, embodiment, co-presence, and movement of bodies. This paper theorises the sensorial and embodied dimension of children's filmmaking about place in two communities in Australia. The films were created by pre-teen Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in Logan, Queensland, and by Indigenous teenagers at the Warralong campus of the Strelley Community School in remote Western Australia. The films were created through engagement in cross-curricular units that sensitised the students' experience of local places, gathering corporeal information through their sensing bodies as they interacted with the local ecology. The analysis highlights how the sensorial and bodily nature of literacy practice through documentary filmmaking was central to the children's formation and representation of knowledge, because knowledge and literacy practices are not only acquired through the mind, but are also reliant on embodiment, sensoriality, co-presence, and kinesics of the body in place.*

*KEYWORDS: place, senses, digital media, children, youth, sensorial, knowing, movement, co-presence, embodiment, knowledge.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this article we demonstrate that children and youth can know places through the entanglement of their senses and their bodies behind the camera. We can know place by being in a place, and by experiencing place through our sensing bodies (Casey, 1996, p. 18). As Pink (2009, p. 30) argues, "We cannot escape from place, since it is simultaneously...what we are seeking to understand, and it is where our sensory experiences are produced...". We also know places by acting on them. We argue here that children and youth who create digital films can experience and develop knowledge of the world through their senses in four important ways – embodiment, sensoriality, co-presence with others, and movement – in place. Such a perspective parallels a conceptual shift in the social sciences and humanities towards a sensory revolution that focuses on the body and the senses in social encounters. It is now time to reconsider the role of the senses in relation to learning about the world and place, and here we demonstrate these possibilities in relation to the digital filmmaking of children and youth.

We have previously applied a number of theoretical paradigms to original research of children's digital media production. For example, critical sociology has proven generative in examining relations of power in digital filmmaking and the

multiliteracies classroom to understanding how access to digital media literacies is more accessible to children from the dominant, white middle-class (for example, Mills, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011b). Combining multimodal social semiotics with socio-spatial theory has enabled new understandings of the dynamic spatial configurations that constitute filmmaking classrooms (Mills, 2010a). Theories of transmediation (Siegel, 1995; Suhor, 1992) have been applied to understand how children shift meanings across sign systems during stages of media production, such as from two-dimensional storyboarding to creating three-dimensional moving images and sound in filmmaking (Mills, 2011a). We have provided reviews of the literature on space and literacy practices (Comber & Nixon, 2008; Mills & Comber, 2013); the digital turn in socio-cultural literacy research (Mills, 2010b); and theories of place and literacy pedagogy (Comber, 2012, 2013).

Other theorists of digital filmmaking with children have considered children's use of local knowledge in filmmaking (Brass, 2008); interpreted children's filmmaking as curatorship of self (Potter, 2010); and examined children's use of kineikonic or moving images in film (Burn & Parker, 2003). Ranker (2008) has examined how digital video can be used with inquiry projects for learning, and how children used semiotic resources across modes in their meaning-making with film.

This paper draws attention to the potential role of documentary filmmaking in the formation and representation of children's knowledge of place. We bring together two projects that demonstrate the sensorial and embodied nature of children's experiences of place, with the understanding that "place is a relative location" (Green, 2013, p. 27). Following Massey (2005), we conceptualise place as relational, as dynamic and changing, as always in connection with other places. In this sense, belonging in a place always requires negotiation. As Massey (2005, p. 124) points out: "But places change. They go on without you." As we will show, in the aftermath of Cyclone Rusty, people needed to reconnect with each other in a place of shared significance, a place that was materially changed by the cyclone. We argue that knowledge and literacy practices are embodied, collective, and acquired through both mind and moving bodies. This includes an important sensorial dimension that has previously been unobserved in most studies of children's digital media production through filmmaking, although it has been acknowledged in sensory research methodologies (see, for example, Kress, 2011; Pink, 2009).

## **PLACE MAKING: TWO PLACES, ONE STORY**

In 2013, Kathy Mills was presenting to educators in Southeast Queensland about a video production project with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Year 5 students and their teachers in Logan, Queensland. The Year 5 students had also presented their documentaries about places in Logan to a national conference – Building a Child-Friendly Community.

At the same time, not long after severe tropical Cyclone Rusty had struck the Pilbara region of Western Australia, close to Port Hedland, Barbara Comber shared how place-conscious pedagogy could be brought together with critical literacy and digital communication with educators from Aboriginal Independent Community schools in northern Western Australia. At this event, Barbara Comber was delighted to hear

about similar work already happening at Strelley Community School, under the guidance of teacher Pippa Kelly.

In order to consider these cases, we employ principles of sensory ethnography, following Pink (2009), chosen because this methodology explicitly acknowledges that emplaced experiences play an important role in the generation of knowledge. Sensory ethnography typically incorporates widely used visual methods, such as video, visual artifacts or hypermedia, to represent the materiality of culture and experience in ways that do not privilege one form of knowing over another (Pink, 2009). Children's documentary films and video-recordings of what they say about their films, to document their experiences of place, are significant data in their own right. Such artifacts can provide insights about how different young people experience place and choose to represent that experience.

Sensory ethnography explicitly draws on geographical theories of place, place-making, and space in combination with philosophical and anthropological work on place and perception (Casey, 1996; Ingold, 2007). It is distinguished from typical ethnographic research by its capacity to bring together the phenomenology of place and the politics of space (Pink, 2007b). The ultimate purpose of data collection was to take us into the students' worlds as well as the world of their communities, gathering their sensorial accounts of what it is like for young people to experience real places in their local area.

### **Place One: Logan, South East Queensland**

In the Queensland site, Kathy Mills, Naomi Sunderland and Allan Luke invited teachers and students from low SES backgrounds to participate in a study of their emplaced experiences. The project was significant, because although there are statistics about the compromised social health of low SES communities in relation to place, there are few personal accounts of children's embodied experiences of places in Logan (Sunderland, Bristed, Gudes, Boddy, & Da Silva, 2012). The fourteen Year 5 students (ages 9.5-11) included male and female students, and were culturally and linguistic diverse. The students included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who primarily spoke English as a first language. They attended a primary school that has a student population drawn primarily from economically and socially disadvantaged suburbs of Logan, Queensland, Australia.

A variety of literacy practices were embedded in the micro-documentary filmmaking unit about local places. The unit addressed the Australian National Curriculum outcomes in English, Geography, Health and Physical Education, Information and Communication Technologies, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2012a). The students participated in Indigenous yarning circles led by an Aboriginal teacher to become sensitised to, and aware of, the local meanings and significance of "country". The researchers and teachers facilitated small-group and whole-class discussions about local places, and guided the children's Internet research about Logan. The students used Google Earth satellite imagery of the local area to identify the school and other landmarks. We worked in groups to write interview questions for conducting street interviews, and a graphic designer taught camera techniques and guidelines for interviewing community members. During filming, teachers modelled

and students practised a wide range of video-camera, lighting and visual composition techniques in outdoor settings. The students learned about capturing and arranging video content for a documentary in sequence.

During post-production, the students were shown how to upload video footage, critique frames, select and trim camera shots, and edit their films using Apple iMovie software. We explicitly taught specialist vocabulary for describing places, and the students wrote their documentary voice-overs. The students rehearsed and recorded video-narration using a purpose-built room for audio recording. Throughout the unit, we guided the students through critical literacy activities with an emphasis on social action. For example, the students envisaged themselves as community leaders of the future, presenting their recommendations for community change through their participation at a local conference.

### **Place Two: Warralong Campus of the Strelley Community School**

At the Western Australian site, the student participants attended the Warralong campus of the Strelley Community School – the oldest continually operational Independent Aboriginal Community School in Australia, operating since 1976. The sixteen Indigenous students were members of Pippa Kelly's high-school class from Year 7-12 (ages 13-17) and were all members on the local community at Warralong. The community is remote, located about two and a half hours from Port Hedland in a predominantly low socio-economic area. Currently, there are approximately sixty-five students enrolled at the Warralong campus of the Strelley Community School.

The secondary school teacher and geographer, Pippa Kelly, initiated the documentary filmmaking in this Indigenous community. She trained and worked as a geography teacher in Victoria before moving to Costa Rica, where she set up a non-profit English Language School to teach children and adults in a small rural community. Pippa Kelly also worked as a field coordinator for a project funded by UNESCO. She has interests in physical and human geography, community development, authentic communal learning tasks, language, positioning students as storytellers, and the potential of new digital technologies to enhance and support student learning.

The film project was incorporated into the high school's literacy learning program. Students worked on various tasks involved in the film production and editing, and also completed writing tasks based on their experiences as part of their assessment for English as a Second Language or Dialect course. In terms of literacy practices, the Indigenous students at Warralong and Strelley developed the questions, filmed each other and community members, helped set up shots, and encouraged peers to speak. The teacher, Pippa Kelly, modelled how to speak and perform on screen, and taught them interviewing and camera skills. She also involved the children in the post-production stage of editing, preparing and recording voice-overs, and selecting the footage and transitions, subtitles and credits. Students also wrote about their own experiences of the cyclone after producing the film. The motivation for students to represent their experience can be enhanced when they get multiple opportunities to explore and represent their experience of an event in different modes and media and as part of a community production. The project was an authentic celebration of place and community connectedness.

## **SENSING PLACES IN LOGAN, QUEENSLAND**

In the Queensland site, students were prepared for filmmaking in local places through a series of eight 2-hour workshops over a number of weeks. Students were to work collaboratively in pairs to produce micro-documentaries (3-4 minutes duration) for an intended audience of community leaders to give the viewers an appreciation of the sights and sounds the children experienced in different places. Sensitising activities were conducted with the children to heighten their sensory awareness of places – sights, sounds, smells, touch and movement. Researchers and filmmakers took the students on “sensory walks” through the local suburbs, shopping centre and a local recreational area. The students were also permitted to take one video camera home. The students video-recorded their experiences of places, and recorded interviews with community members in the shopping centre. They recorded their sensory experiences of what they perceived to be happy and healthy places, or unhappy and unhealthy places.

A pedagogical goal of the teachers was to position young people as filmmakers and knowledge producers. With regard to the Australian English curriculum, the students learned to “Plan, draft and publish imaginative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structure, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience” (ACARA, 2012b, ACELY 1704). The students also used film editing software to “... construct, edit, and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements: (ACARA, 2012b, ACELY 1707). The sensory ethnography primarily drew on the children’s personal accounts of places represented in their micro-documentaries and film. The students produced six movies in total, working in pairs.

Each of the films combined footage from three places of significance – the school grounds, a local recreation reserve, and the local shopping centre – including street interviews with community members who were shopping or relaxing outside the stores. Several students also chose to incorporate scenes of their street. The students applied a range of filming techniques for different purposes (for example, tilting, panning, zoom, tracking), and consciously incorporated a variety of shot-types to add interest and to evoke different feelings experienced in each place (for example, long shot of the sky, close up of a flower, medium shot of their body). To help the children think critically about the potential transformation of their local places, the voice-overs were required to complete the phrase: “If I were a community leader, I would change...”. An example movie can be viewed here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7h91a1kahyrd1ni/3exNxGX7wx>).

## **CYCLONE RUSTY, 2013: STUDENTS TELL THE STORY**

In Western Australia, one of Pippa Kelly’s educational and pedagogical goals was to position students as the knowledge-holders, and to value their stories and interpretations of making meaning of place. She also sought to create a text that brought together their collective experiences of place. This filmmaking project took the students beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom into other community places of significance.

These goals were underpinned by the educator's commitment to respecting diversity and high expectations for students within an ambitious project that incorporated new digital technologies, and embedded the multiple cultural and linguistic resources available in the community. We begin our analysis by providing a summary of the film produced by Pippa Kelly and her students.

Severe tropical Cyclone Rusty was an extreme weather event resulting in the material change of various places in the local community. Community members were forced to evacuate their places of residence and seek shelter in Port Hedland or Marble Bar, as the community was subject to a Red Alert. After the opening introduction, the documentary interwove segments of television news reports about the approaching cyclone.

It was described as being a "Monster Cyclone" and "... one of the biggest weather systems on the planet" at the time. From there, the film transitioned to the high-school students (behind the camera as reporters) asking community members and peers about their experiences of the cyclone. People reported being in a range of locations: Marble Bar, Port Hedland, or in Warralong, filmed as post-Cyclone Rusty narratives.

A key question asked of interviewees was: Who were you with? The film recorded answers from a range of children and adults in a variety of languages. Most participants mentioned being with family, pets, and even the teacher. A second set of key questions asked: What was it like? How did you feel? Here, people who had experienced cyclones before compared Rusty to their memories of other experiences of cyclones. The story was told from multiple perspectives – a series of adult respondents speaking to camera, groups and individual children also. Speakers code switched between English or Aboriginal English, and languages that included Nyangumarta, Pitjantjatjara, Martu, Maori, Lurtija, and Spanish. This film, entitled *Cyclone Rusty 2013*, made place the focus of the English curriculum. Part A of the twenty-two minute documentary can be viewed here:

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/ce2tqs1awgku8fq/final cut.m4v](https://www.dropbox.com/s/ce2tqs1awgku8fq/final%20cut.m4v).

Real-time, on-location shots of the effects of the cyclone, as it happened, interspersed the reported accounts of their placed experiences. As the film proceeds, the camera returns to Red Bank, which had been dry before the cyclone, and was now replenished and beautiful. The pleasure of being in the place is palpable (Part B can be viewed here: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/4t5g6d8nqe9dudt/End section.m4v](https://www.dropbox.com/s/4t5g6d8nqe9dudt/End%20section.m4v)). The sound track of the song *Weather With You*, written by Tim and Neil Finn (1991), accompanies the images of the children's activities at Red Bank. The chorus is repeated: "Everywhere you go, you always take the weather with you."

## IDENTIFYING RECURRING THEMES IN THE FILMS

Focused segments of the video record were selected from the films that implicitly or explicitly addressed the focus of this research – the sense of place experienced by the students and their community members. The manifest content approach theorised by FitzGerald (2012) was the inductive analytic method used to identify themes in the video data. This method involves selecting and examining relevant sections of the

video footage that help to illuminate the research topic; for this study, ways of sensing place. Four recurring themes were evident in the children's video documentaries of their experiences of place across the two sites: i) embodiment and place; ii) sensoriality and place; iii) co-presence and place; and iv) kinesics (or movement) and place. These themes arose from within the content of the films, rather than by overlaying an existing theory of place on the data. Video data captured *in situ* contains a richness of information, and permits replaying of events to identify subtle yet significant human interactions and discourses, strengthening validity (Heath, 2004).

## FINDINGS

### 1. Embodiment and place

Having described the content of the documentaries, we discuss how media production can be used to collect shared interpretations of place in Logan, and a catastrophic event in WA, as these were represented and experienced sensorially, tangibly and corporeally. Embodied sensory experiences in material places and moving across different social spaces can be seen as rich resources for representational work in the English classroom. As Massey (2005, p. 154) argues, "Place is an arena where negotiation is forced upon us." We can see evidence of this in the Cyclone Rusty film in terms of social relations, as people report the need to be "with family" during the cyclone, but we can also see that the materiality of the storm – both the dangers and its potential – forces interactions with the non-human world.

Observing the students filming in different local places of significance illustrated the way in which filming, as a literacy experience, is embodied in respect to the students' tangible representation of their sensory experiences of place. It draws attention to the way in which physical experiences of places are central to their story. The filmmakers' bodies and the bodies of their peers were not peripheral, but central to the representation of their experiences of place. When filming, the students concerned themselves with the positioning of their bodies in places of significance, making visible the connections between their bodies and the environment. The story of Cyclone Rusty could have been told very differently. Most of the accounts were presented after the cyclone had regenerated their preferred swimming hole; hence it became less an account of a possible disaster, and more of a story of place as dynamic, social and pleasurable. They did not dwell on what might have been.

Our senses indicate our relationship to the world. Likewise, our senses function as a kind of structuring of space. Thus, filmmaking on location can be interpreted as an embodied or "emplaced" practice that involves interrelationships between the mind, the body and place (Pink, 2009). For example, in Figure 1, the child filmed himself descending the playground slide, video camera in hand, to capture the kinaesthetic sensation of movement. The student appraised this as a "happy and healthy place", and used this moving camera technique to invoke an embodied reading of their sensed experience and subjectivities, enabling viewers to anticipate what it feels like to be in this place. It records the movement and image of the child's "body behind the camera" and the child's relation to place (MacDougall, 2005, p. 3). A continuous pattern in the children's documentaries was the development of a multisensorial sense



of place, because “as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place” (Feld & Basso, 1996, p. 91).



**Figure 1. Embodied Practice – Child’s movement on a playground slide**  
(Note: Still images are extracted from movies for ease of reference)

In the Cyclone Rusty video, there was a sense of “belonging to country” and having a strong “connection to country” – a fundamental part of Indigenous cultures in Australia. This understanding of place is directly linked to the senses, and place is given meaning through a direct physical connection and contact to place (See Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Aboriginal man talks about the significance of the river as place**

In Figure 2, a prominent member of the community asked to be filmed with the river in the background. He chose the location for the interview after careful consideration. He sat on the ground, inhabiting the place with his whole body, and described the change that had happened to a local place due to the cyclone: “Before the cyclone, Red Bank was dry. Now it’s full and beautiful.” The viewer is positioned to



understand the sensory elements of this place by seeing the river in the background, seeing the sun shine down on his skin, and hearing the sounds of other community members in the background. The film shifts to children and community members swimming, playing and fishing in the local river, rediscovering and celebrating the change that has occurred to this special place.

These two video production projects demonstrate how media production through film provided children and youth with a tool that can enable embodied communication about place. It can mediate empathetic understandings of others' perceptions of their environments (Pink, 2007a). The use of the video camera encouraged both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to engage physically with their sensory and material ecologies, representing their emplaced experiences corporeally.

## 2. Sensoriality and place

We were also interested in place itself as pertaining to sensory phenomena, because without the senses one cannot know place (for example, Feld & Basso, 1996). A focus on this phenomenological and sensorial understanding of place suggests that a sense of place in the students' video production was constituted through multisensorial interaction. In Logan, the children went on excursions that involved sensory walks in the local shopping centre and recreation reserve, stopping to listen to the background sounds to which we become desensitised in our rush from one place to another. The group sat in a circle in the schoolyard and by the river, closing their eyes to attune our senses to sequences and layers of far-away sounds and proximal sounds. Enacting the Indigenous yarning circle, the students and researchers reflected on how the soundscape of each place made them feel.

The sensorial nature of place-making was demonstrated when the children created a close-up shot of the dandelion held in their fingers. They showed the effect of their gentle breath upon the dandelion seeds as they dispersed into the wind (See Figure 3)



**Figure 3. Sensorial Practice – Blowing dandelion seeds**

The children at Logan captured vivid footage of glorious sights, such as flowers, tiny ants and clouds. They recorded contrasting sounds of birdcalls, traffic and crowds to

represent a soundscape of natural and built places. Understanding and representing place involved tactile interactions with the ecology, as their surroundings were experienced sensuously (Lund, 2005). Like recent ethnographic studies that have emphasised the sensory nature of sociality (for example, Brenneis, 2005), there is need to recognise the sensorial nature of connections with place.

Turning to the Cyclone Rusty film, we see how the final frames give the viewer a sense of how the place – “Red Bank” – is given meaning by various community members. Rather than simply being a physical waterhole that has been flooded after the cyclone, we gain a sense of the importance of the place through the lived evidence of children, youth and adults swimming in the river, splashing in the water, and fishing from the sun-lit riverbank (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Girl sitting in the sunlit riverbank**

The significance of place is indicated by embodied meanings in this Figure 4 – facial expressions of delight, sounds of laughter, and intergenerational gathering of the community. The dialogue reinforces these bodily meanings with the participants and the caption: “We went to our favourite place – Red Bank.” This scene shows how various people embody place and bring meaning to the place by their emplaced actions and movements.

The scene is a sensory celebration of the spatial change that has occurred in this location – the reinhabiting and sensing of place again. We can almost feel the warmth of the sun through the lens, and knowing that the strong winds associated with the cyclone have dispersed, this location has been given a renewed sense of place to its inhabitants. In both sites, space and geography are conceptualised sensuously in the films, capturing the “multisensoriality” and “corporeality” of human experience of place, and an entanglement of the senses with the landscape (Pink, 2009, p. 18).

### **3. Co-presence and place**

Co-presence was an important dimension of the students’ place-making and multimedia representations of place. There was an inherent sociability of places shown in the films that was engendered by filming others who co-inhabit place (Lee & Ingold, 2006). Shared movements of the body sometimes showed this connection to others in place as the children interacted collectively in shared activities together in

the final scene at Red Bank. Filming is a multisensory literacy practice that can potentially be shared to audiences and empathetically comprehended with other subjects in place, and the viewers beyond it.



**Figure 5. Elderly community member being interviewed by students in the local shops**

In Figure 5 above, the children at Logan filmed an interview with a returned soldier who frequented the local shopping centre at least once a week. When the children asked the man why he came to this place, he replied, “To shop, to sit [pause] to meet people.” We used interviewing to help students engage with local ways of seeing place. This engagement with talking and listening helped the students to understand others’ cultural categories to describe place. There was a necessary co-presence and active participation with peers and others that shaped their shared multimedia representations of place.

In the final scenes of the Cyclone Rusty video, the soundtrack of the song, “Always Take the Weather with You”, accompanies moving images of children and youth enjoying the space that they have created by their social interactions at the river. It was filmed on one of the first days after members of the community were allowed to return to Warralong from emergency shelters in other locations (See Figure 6.0).



**Figure 6. Children swim and play in the river after the cyclone**



A strong sense of co-presence and community was displayed as a wide variety of community members interacted together with pleasure in one place, sharing a common understanding of, and connection to, this special place.

Through their collective and shared activity they ascribed meaning to place. It is again a safe place, a place for celebration, and a release from the anxiety and displacement caused by the cyclone. There is always a “social world” represented in “the material world” (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 1). Being in harmony with others is an element in the place-making of children and youth that was not taken-for-granted in their representations. It was through involvement with others, and listening to others, that students made sense of their place.

#### 4. Locomotion and place

Creating a sense of place also involves kinesis or movement, which was illustrated through film production in both sites. Whether it involves the locomotion depicted in documentaries that represent people “walking with” the camera, or people moving in other ways, kinesis is inherent to place-making. The media production process is a way in which the movement of people, things and sensory experiences are drawn together to understand connections to place (Pink, 2007a).



**Figure 7. Child walking in a safe place**

In Figure 7 above, the child placed the camera on the ground to film her feet walking along the pavement, stopping momentarily to tie her shoelace as the voiceover argues persuasively: “If I was a community leader, I would make more green spaces and areas for kids to play, but they have to be safe areas.” There is sense here, in this “walk of art”, that the locomotion of the body is salient to the children’s sense of safe places (Butler, 2006, p. 1). Lund (2005, p. 40) argues that our human “... sense of vision...cannot be separated from examining the body that moves and touches the ground.” A scene of walking feet, along paths, roads, and balancing precariously on walls, was a repeated motif in the six micro-documentaries of Logan. Rather than attempting to develop a sense of place-making through cognition alone, locomotion

provided a portal for accessing memories and understandings of place and “culture on the ground” (Ingold, 2004, p. 166).



**Figure 8. Children climb the trees after the cyclone**

In Figure 8, we see children and youth using kinesics or movement to explore and give meaning to this particular place. Numerous students climb into trees on the bank of the river, their hands and feet connected to nature. Some remain in the trees, casually talking to friends or watching others below in the water. Others attempt to scale the trees to the highest point, to jump into the deep waterhole below. This movement of the body, descending through space, and the playful interaction with natural elements, demonstrate that children and youth belong to this place, because they are comfortable, safe and happy here. It is collectively perceived by members of different ages in the community as “beautiful” and one of their “favourite places”. The voiceover is characterised by the sound of laughter as the children rediscover the environment with moving hands, feet and limbs. Through their physical interactions with the ecology, it becomes a harmonious place once again, where the community assembles to enjoy being at Red Bank together, while variously occupied in and relating to the place.

In both videos, there is a focus on “the moving body”, which allows a view of the sensing and living body in motion and in place (Lund, 2005, p. 41). There is evidence from the children’s filmed movement and walks to different places, that the world can be perceived, not only through the mind, but also kinesthetically through the hands and feet (Ingold, 2004).

### **SENSING PLACE AND VIDEO PRODUCTION IN THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM**

This analysis of sensing place through media production draws attention to the sensorial and embodied elements of literacy learning that are often taken for granted in the curriculum. During both video projects, students’ senses and the places in which they filmed were not incidental to literacy learning, but were integral to their understanding of the world and their knowledge formation.

Literacy learning through media production about local places of meaning involved a pedagogical approach that supported students' engagement with the world in a sensorial and embodied way. Knowing and filming experiences of place drew upon the students' corporeal interactions with tangible environments using their sensing bodies, and through locomotion or movement through places. There is a growing body of research indicating that children's direct and embodied experience with natural environments promotes cognitive and intellectual development, facilitates a sense of place, and enhances social relationships and memory (Health Council of the Netherlands, 2004; Maller, 2009). In addition, children's direct and sensory contact with nature and exposure to natural ecosystems has benefits for a sense of emotional health and wellbeing (Maller & Townsend, 2006; Seymour, 2003). While students are certainly capable of abstract knowing in the absence of first-hand experiences of places, such as those that are distant in time and place, the literacy curriculum can become more meaningful "by drawing on local phenomena as the sources of at least a share of children's learning experiences" (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008, p. xvi).

The literacy pedagogy and learning through video production described here also involved co-presence with peers and community members to generate knowledge about local places. This is an important social dimension of knowledge production. The pedagogy positioned students as filmmakers and knowledge-producers, speaking directly with community members and recording these interviews to obtain a verbatim account of the lived experiences of others in place. The communication and dissemination of knowledge between groups and generations is social and participatory (Harris, 2007). In these filmmaking units, learning did not preclude talking with others to know and accurately represent the viewpoints of others in the community. There is a specificity of knowledge formation in terms of its social situatedness in particular times, places and communities. At the same time, knowledge is interrelated with the wider network of knowledges, discourses and circulation of media beyond these local social interactions. The idea of learning being inherently social is well acknowledged by learning theorists, as Wenger (1998, p. 227) states: "Learning is fundamentally experiential and fundamentally social." Pedagogy must account for the social dimension of learning and representation of knowledge.

In addition, both projects involved guiding students to engage in critical reflection and action on place. As Green (2013) observes, "Places differ, moreover, not simply literally or physically (i.e., scientifically), but also culturally and historically. Moreover, they can also differ politically, and must always be understood in terms of power or privilege" (p. 27). Referring to the dominance of metro-urban normativity, he argues for more explicit attention to the peripheries. The students who participated in these projects were in various ways positioned as on the periphery in terms of their location, class and race. Positioning them as filmmakers and experts about their places became a significant pedagogical move.

The prescribed curriculum was not permitted to hinder the capacity for developing the students' critical consciousness. For example, in the Queensland site, we conducted group discussions with students in which we asked them to envisage themselves as future leaders. The students included the following phrase in their audio tracts: "If I was a community leader I would change...". The students were engaged in a process of reflection about possible transformative action in the local community, whereby

they achieved a "...deepening awareness of the...realities that shape their lives, and of their capacity to transform" their situation (Freire, 1970). This can be seen as the beginnings of what Freire (1970) refers to as "critical consciousness". In the Western Australian site, the high-school class engaged in this process by reflecting on their difficult decisions about whether to evacuate or to remain with the community during Cyclone Rusty. The process of collectively reinhabiting their favorite place by the river the day after the cyclone similarly involved a form of action on place.

## HOW CHILDREN KNOW AND ACT ON PLACE

This sensory ethnography combined students' digital media production created in two diverse places in Australia to demonstrate that children know places through embodiment, sensoriality, co-presence, and kinesis. It also demonstrates the value of children's video production for understanding and representing evocative place-making in schools and communities. The active participation of children's whole bodies – the eyes, the ears, the feet, the hands and other organs – as well as an active mind, are involved in making sense of place, and of representing perceptions and knowledge of the world. A sense of place in these examples was shaped collectively as a sensorial rediscovery of places, while acknowledging the multiple languages and dialects among the community. There is clearly a need for the English curriculum to transcend the limits of cognitive knowledge to acknowledge the sensoriality of embodied ways of knowing and representing the world. Teachers can be encouraged to readily explore the potential of walking and sensing behind the camera to understand knowledge from multiple perspectives. We have offered an emergent paradigm of the role of the senses in children's knowledge and experience of place, and demonstrated the potentials of video production by children and youth to account for the inextricable interrelationships between place and the sensing body. Finally, we have demonstrated how teachers can be mindful of a transformational dimension that encourages critical consciousness through reflection and action in place.

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