Sheffield Hallam University

Editorial

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Editorial

Karen Daniels and Lucy Taylor

The rich collection of articles in this edition reflect a number of important considerations about literacy as a social and cultural phenomenon that spans a lifetime, from the youngest child to the oldest citizen. Literacy practices arise and are inseparable from our personal, family and community experiences- they enrich and give meaning to our lives. However, and importantly, literacy practices are deeply implicated in power relationships, as some kinds of literacy are privileged at the expense of others. The need for literacy research to provide critical perspectives on how we understand literacy has never been more pressing, and many of our articles implicate literacy within broader societal issues. How we might take a critical stance and develop this as teachers as we work with students to understand these issues is a thread that runs through many of the articles in this edition.

Within this collection we hear a diverse range of voices, from Native American Youth, Octogenarians, EFL learners in China, doctoral researchers and participants in out of school reading and writing clubs. Our authors share detailed descriptions of the practices and experiences of those with disabilities, the very young, and those often marginalized by dominant literacies illustrating how literacy practices permeate our lives and are always at once socio-cultural, material and embodied experiences.

The first four articles in this issue provide critical perspectives on approaches to embracing the knowledge and experiences of minoritised groups. In a timely exploration of the impact of culturally relevant pedagogies on young learners, Jones and Lynch describe a study of a book club in which children engaged with culturally relevant literature. In their paper '*Teachers' and Black students' views on the incorporation of African American children's literature in an after-school book club: collaborative and culturally based learning*' they detail the responses of US elementary school children to a selection of books chosen to allow them to see reflections of their own lives. Their findings demonstrate the importance and value of such approaches to provide authentic experiences for diverse populations of learners. In contexts where learners may not have access to culturally relevant texts, this research has particular significance. In another out of school setting, Silva, Raymond, Brikiatis and Magnifico offer further insights into culturally relevant pedagogies, with a focus on writing-workshops. Through practitioner inquiry, they explore the impact on teen participants of a writing-workshop approach which de-centres whiteness. Their paper '*Enacting anti-racist writing workshop pedagogies in an online, drop-in writing club for youth*' presents a thought-provoking call for reconsideration of models of writing workshop and writing instruction. They invite the reader to examine the types of writing, and writing pedagogies that are normalised, and to find ways to challenge them in order to allow for creative, collaborative and reciprocal writing relationships to develop.

In '*Native American youth finding self through digital story telling*', Wicker and Ruan present findings from their study as they worked to build narratives with Native American adolescents, drawing on a multimodal approach to text creation. The article provides powerful stories of minoritised young people's experiences, and describes how multimodal composition and film making can act as a vehicle for their identity expressions, drawn from cultural knowledges, literacies and personal experiences. Importantly, the project highlights the ways in which minoritised groups negotiate the continued presence of racism in society and schools. Wicker and Ruan's study highlights the need to transform schools into sites that embrace and support Indigenous knowledge. Sun's article *'Cultivating critical global citizens through secondary EFL education: a case study of mainland China*' takes the reader to a

Secondary English Language teaching in China and the role of developing critical thinking through Global Citizenship Education. Foregrounding the transformative power of multimodal texts in fostering perspective-taking skills, empathetic sensitivities and critical imagination, the project engages young EFL learners in discussions around global issues such as decolonisation, poverty, modern slavery in order to promote active and critical engagement with world issues. The article provides thought-provoking insights into the critical reflections of the study's participants.

The next set of articles develop current thinking about the ways in which funds of knowledge and broader life experiences are interwoven with literacy practices. Taking an ethnographic perspective, the article '*Children's literacy funds of knowledge in an urban Mexican elementary school: changing the approach'*, Tapia, Reyes and Kalman share insights from a study where they investigated the literacy events that took place around a life science project in a sixth grade classroom in Mexico City. What emerged was that despite children's interests being seen as irrelevant in school settings, the things that really mattered to children came to the fore. The texts produced reflected children's concerns- their religious, festive and life experiences beyond school, and this fuelled their engagement and enthusiasm during the project. Tapia, Rejes and Kalman conclude that children construct spaces where their everyday worlds can play out and this is reflected in their text creation.

Zare, Kozak, Rodrigues and Martin-Chang focus on the ways that early interests, habits and experiences can be influential in literacy practices later in life. Their paper, *'The roots of reading for pleasure: recollections of reading and current habits'* seeks to illuminate the relationships between reading experiences in childhood and the habits which continue into adult life. A sample of students from 12 universities in North America participated in the study, revealing that those who recalled positive early experiences of learning to read were more likely to describe themselves as enthusiastic readers in adulthood. The authors demonstrate that habits formed in early schooling have long-lasting effects. These enduring effects are also a focus of a novel study of an under-researched population. Heydon and Stoke reveal the literacies of later life in their paper '*The literacies-as-events in the day of a life of an octogenarian: literacies of thriving as habits of a lifetime and (im)materially constituted*'. Taking a sociomaterial approach to literacy, and using ethnographic 'day in the life' methodologies, they identify the ways that the habits and passions of a lifetime become part of literacy events which enable an individual to thrive in later life. Through this detailed engagement with the day to day literacy events of an octogenarian woman living in the United States, the authors counter the deficit discourses which can surround aging and offer new ways of thinking about literacies across the life course.

In considering the relationship between children's life experiences and their schooling, Yap and Gurney ask us to consider how a pedagogy of multiliteracies might be realised. In '*Exploring practices of multiliteracies pedagogy through digital technologies: a narrative inquiry*' the authors provide a narrative/ observational case study of one teacher's values, beliefs and practices in teaching using and creating multimodal texts in New Zealand. The authors argue that teachers should have a deep understanding of the cultural contexts in which they teach and of the cultural and linguistic resources that children bring to the classroom, in order to understand and mediate the power relationships that exist between educators and the young people they work with.

The final set of three papers engage with and add to thinking about literacy theory. The relationality of literacy practices is explored by Gravett, Heron and Ahmad, with a specific focus on the under-examined area of doctoral literacies. *The doctorate unbound: relationality in doctoral literacy research* offers new

perspectives on how to understand complex and varied doctoral literacies using the concepts of assemblage and literacy-as-event. This study makes an important contribution to literacy theory within the sociomaterial and posthuman field, but also offers insights for doctoral researchers and supervisors in the context of changing experiences and expectations of doctoral study.

In '*Rethinking the contributions of young people with learning disabilities to iPad storymaking: a new model of distributed authorship*' Doak discusses how the affordances of the iPad and its applications can facilitate shared story making with young children with disabilities. The article highlights how previously known concepts, such as 'authorship', can be reconfigured in recognition of developing digital technologies and their affordances, and of how seeing literacy as social, embodied and material opens up new ways of understanding such concepts. A detailed examination of play is provided by Hulston in *'Embodied meaning-making: using literacy-as-event to explore a young child's small world play',* in order to provoke ways of considering how meaning is constructed in an early years classroom. Following an episode of shared reading, a child and teacher are involved in a series of interactions around small world play. Through close multimodal analysis, and drawing on Burnett and Merchant's concept of 'literacy-as-event', Hulston asserts how meaning making arises from an unpredictable and dynamic interaction of people, objects and materials, and bodily movements.

Taken together, this stimulating collection illustrates how a range of theoretical perspectives are needed in order to understand the significance of literacy, and together they provide lenses to know literacy differently. We are prompted to consider how literacy is fluid and changing, constantly constructed and re-constructed and negotiated, and is closely connected to our sense of self, of who we are and what we can do in the world.