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‘It’s part of our community, where we live’: Urban heritage and children’s sense of place

Lucy Grimshaw
Northumbria University, UK

Lewis Mates
Durham University, UK

Abstract

The literature on a ‘sense of place’ often sidelines the voices of children. Consequently, little is known about how children can be encouraged to develop a sense of place. This matters because a sense of place involves feelings of belonging and attachment, and can contribute to children’s well-being and identity. Informed by the research of Bartos and Severcan, we deploy data from a qualitative research project in a primary school in a former coalfield area in the north-east of England to argue that children’s experiences of learning about their urban local history and heritage can help to develop their sense of place. Placing children’s voices centrally in our research, we explore how they engage with learning about local mining history, and the impact of place-based pedagogy. Emphasising the possibilities and importance of their deep involvement with their urban heritage, we show, firstly, the ways in which children’s sense of place is strengthened when they develop a feeling of ownership over their own history. Secondly, we explore how children develop a sense of place through engaging their emotions and physicality, and, thirdly, their senses. We conclude that learning about local history through place-based pedagogy allows children to create and interpret historical events and develop a sense of place. Taking ownership of their history makes the children active participants in telling the story of their place. Children can then develop new ways of seeing themselves in places, as they make connections between the past, present and future.

Keywords

children, emotions and senses, sense of place, urban heritage

Corresponding author:
Lucy Grimshaw, Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing, Northumbria University, Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7XA, UK.
Email: lucy.grimshaw@northumbria.ac.uk

摘要

关于“地方意识”的文献常常忽略儿童的声音。因此，关于如何鼓励儿童发展地方意识，我们所知甚少。然而这又很重要，因为地方意识包括归属感和依恋感，有助于儿童的身心健康和身份认同。借鉴巴托斯和塞弗坎 (Bartos and Severcan) 的研究，我们利用针对英格兰东北部前煤田地区一所小学的一个定性研究项目的数据，证明学习本地城市历史和文化遗产的经历有助于儿童发展自己的地方意识。我们的研究将儿童的声音放在中心位置，探索儿童如何学习当地采矿历史，以及基于地方的教学法的影响。我们强调儿童深入了解城市文化遗产的可能性和重要性，并藉此证明了几点。首先，我们证明当儿童对自己城市的历史产生主人翁意识时，他们的地方意识将得到加强。其次，我们探索儿童如何通过情感、身体和感官的投入来发展地方意识。我们的结论是，通过基于地方的教学法来学习当地历史，孩子们能对历史事件身临其境并加以解释，从而培养地方意识。当孩子们对自己城市的历史产生了主人翁意识，他们将积极参与讲述属于他们自己的地方的故事。当孩子们在过去、现在和未来之间建立联系时，他们可以发展新的自我意识。

关键词

儿童、情感和感官、地方意识、城市文化遗产

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Introduction

There is an extensive, interdisciplinary academic literature around the complex and often elusive concept of a ‘sense of place’ (Shamai, 1991; Shamai and Ilatov, 2005). At a general level, a sense of place describes the relationship individuals have to a place or ‘spatially demarcated setting’ or location (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2011: 795). In simple terms, our understanding of a sense of place combines two aspects as identified by Eisenhauer et al. (2000); firstly, *people* – the social interactions between family and friends, related activities and traditions, plus the memories associated with these; and, secondly, *physical environment* – the natural landscape, scenery, climate, geological features, environmental setting and wildlife.

Several researchers have emphasised the importance of emotions in developing a sense of place (Bartos, 2013; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Inspired by Bartos’ (2013) work – and explicitly the need identified for more research on how an ‘emotional sense of place is developed in childhood’ (Bartos, 2013: 97) – this article adopts a specific focus on children’s development of a sense of place in relation to urban heritage. While children’s voices are often marginalised in the literature, Severcan’s (2015, 2018) recent research focuses on children’s active engagement with heritage and their attachment to place. Bringing Bartos’ research into critical dialogue with Severcan’s and approaching both with a theoretical backdrop, informed by insights drawn from critical and anarchist pedagogies (Freire, 2005 [1970]; Haworth, 2012; hooks, 1994; Livingstone, 1987; Read, 1970 [1943]), allows us to demonstrate empirically how, through participation in place-based community education activities and school trips focused on local heritage, children can develop their sense of place.

This article has three substantive sections. The first explores the key literatures in more detail, elaborating on where our research fits in theoretical, methodological and empirical terms. The second section details the context, design and methods of our research. The third section presents our research findings

and is itself subdivided into three. The first of these subsections draws on insights from critical and anarchist pedagogies and the working-class autodidact tradition to argue that children's sense of place is strengthened when they develop a feeling of ownership over their own history (Gagnier, 1987; Hopkins, 1975; Rose, 2010; Samuel, 1980). The second and third subsections apply Bartos' (2013) conceptual framework to demonstrate further how children make sense of place through engaging their emotions and physicality, and their senses. In placing the child's voice centrally in our research, we stress the possibilities and importance of children's deep engagement with their urban heritage.

A sense of place and childhood

Our starting point for understanding a sense of place is a phenomenological perspective that emphasises human emotions and relationships, and the meanings individuals assign through their experiences of being in places (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). This sense of place can vary in intensity and reflect a person's feelings of alienation at one end of the scale and of complete belonging to a place at the other (Relph, 1976). A sense of place can relate to different spatial levels. For humanist geographers and feminist theorists, this often means beginning with the body (Bartos, 2013) and more generally this then extends to the home, neighbourhood, locality, region, nation and the globe (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2011; Shamai, 1991). A sense of place can incorporate 'nested allegiances' (Shamai, 1991: 347), that is, different feelings and attachments towards different spatial levels, which change during the course of life.

A sense of place often is related to, subsumes and overlaps with other concepts such as place attachment, place identity and place dependence (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2011), national identity or regional awareness (Shamai, 1991). Focusing on children, Severcan (2015: 273) favours the term 'place attachment', which he relates to their 'sense of place, sense of belonging, place dependence, place identity and place friendship'. Altman and Low's (1992: 5) explanation of place attachment is similar to our understanding of a sense of place, involving, 'an interplay of affect and emotions, knowledge and beliefs, and behaviours and actions in reference to a place'. Jorgensen and Stedman (2001: 234) suggest that place identity is akin to gender identity; the conscious and unconscious ideas we have about ourselves with place forming part of our constructed sense of self. Place dependence, on the other hand, refers to the strength of association between person and place and can be positive or negative (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001: 234). We agree with Shamai (1991: 347) that a sense of place serves as a useful 'umbrella concept', referring to the subjective and emotional attachments people have to place(s) (Bartos, 2013).

Quantitative approaches to measuring a sense of place have developed in the environmental psychology literature from qualitative phenomenological perspectives. Relph's (1976) phenomenological discussion of seven degrees of sensing a place, from alienation to a complete sense of belonging, has been deployed to develop quantitative research. Shamai (1991), for example, developed 'sense of place variables' measuring belonging, attachment and commitment to place that allowed for a more concrete and systematic measuring and analysis of a sense of place. More recently, Jorgensen and Stedman (2011) have developed surveys using attitudinal scales to examine participants' place identity, dependence and attachment.

Severcan's (2015) research draws together these positivist and phenomenological approaches to examine the change in

children's attachment to place following participation in place-based planning and design activities. Severcan (2015) focused on disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Istanbul, where children participated in several activities including historical and cultural field-trips and cultural heritage landscape design workshops. A survey using open and closed questions focused on place attachment (children's feelings about place), place knowledge (knowledge of the physical environment, people and history) and collective efficacy (motivation for place care). Severcan (2015) found that participation in heritage-based activities and place-knowledge learning was one way in which children's attachment to place increased. Using participatory photography to elaborate on this finding, Severcan (2018) reiterated the importance of heritage to children's place attachment and confirmed the relationship between knowledge of a locality's heritage and a sense of place.

History and traditions are thus important for the development of affective bonds with places, as are myths and rituals that strengthen attachments – indeed, even bind people – to place (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Our project focuses on local heritage and history; the local is experienced and lived in and, as Ingold (2000: 216; emphasis in original) claims, the local can be an 'experiential centre' from which 'the attention of those who live there is drawn ever deeper *into* the world, in the quest for knowledge and understanding'. Lawrence (2019: 14) suggests that in 20th-century Great Britain, 'social networks were more tightly bound to place', particularly for working-class children and the parents of young children. In the 21st century, within a context of inward and outward migration and longer commuting patterns (prior to Covid-19 lockdowns), it is perhaps pre-school and school-age children (and their families) who are amongst the groups most firmly rooted in local communities as a result of education systems and schooling. This is particularly the case for primary aged children (aged 5–10 years), who on average live within 1.8 miles of their school (DoT, 2019). It is in these local places and communities that children build their friendships and connections to others, their social networks and social capital (Weller and Bruegel, 2009).

Studies in how spaces are accessed and used, and how children move in space, can also capture children's sense of place. How children move around places varies throughout childhood, ranging from accompaniment to independence. There is a temporal dimension to this too: recent research suggests that children's independence has decreased regarding their licence to play and travel to school and around their communities (Loebach and Gilliland, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2000). Nevertheless, there remain differences between children's experiences of place and their independent access to – and use of – local places, and therefore their exploration and knowledge of their local physical environment. This is dependent on several factors: friendship networks, with children going to and exploring areas where their friends live (Porter et al., 2020); gender, with girls more restricted than boys (Elsley, 2004; O'Brien et al., 2000; Porter et al., 2020); ethnicity, with older Asian girls particularly absent (O'Brien et al., 2000); age, with children appearing to 'push' neighbourhood boundaries at seven to eight years old (Loebach and Gilliland, 2016); and independent spatial distance, which tends to increase in the last year of primary school (aged 10 to 11 years) onwards (Elsley, 2004; O'Brien et al., 2000). Children's own confidence and perceptions of safety influence their independent access. Family cultures and parent/carer attitudes and assessments of children's maturity also affect independent exploration

of local environments (Karsten, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2000; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997) and thus the development of their sense of place.

Making sense of place matters for children, as it is related to a sense of belonging and a sense of identity. Jack (2015), for example, stresses the importance of connections to place for identity and wellbeing within the context of social work interventions in children's lives. How we make sense of place is also intimately connected to our individual life histories. Researchers have noted the importance of children's sense of place or place attachments in encouraging their participation in planning, design and regeneration activities (Severcan, 2015), and informing a tendency towards pro-environmental behaviour (Bartos, 2013; Eisenhauer et al., 2000). There are also implications for children's sense of self (Tuan, 1977). A sense of place that connects children to people, environment and place may also lead to the development of collective efficacy and an increase in children's ability to see themselves as part of their community (Severcan, 2015). Chawla (2007) suggests that childhood is where an adult's sense of place begins, and thus studying the development of place in childhood is important. Severcan (2018: 2180) concurs, arguing that children's experiences of place are formative and that 'Once children ascribe meanings to places, these experiences and meanings become the foundation of their emotional and practical responses to places as adults.' Familiar places from childhood may act as reference points and memories to which adults may return (Schofield and Szymanski, 2016). The interest from these perspectives is in how children's sense of place affects future behaviour, actions and emotions.

There is a powerful theme of experience and emotion, particularly related to childhood, that runs through the literature arguing for the continued importance of local places in children's lives. Drawing on feminist and humanist perspectives, we see value in exploring the ways in which children make sense of place through emotions and senses. Bartos (2013) starts with the bodily, physical and emotional responses to place. Likewise, Ahmed (2004) suggests that place, the self and the body are entangled with our emotions. Places stir our emotions; we are emotionally connected to places through our senses, and these connections are embodied (Ahmed, 2004; hooks, 2009). Children are assumed to make sense of place in a more sensuous way in comparison with adults, who are more intellectual (Tuan, 1977). As a consequence, children are viewed as connecting to place in the present rather than having a long historical connection to it (and using this history and memories to make sense of place) (Bartos, 2013). We argue, based on our empirical findings, that by learning about local history children can develop an understanding of their place-based heritage in the present and create memories which enable them to engage both intellectually and emotionally with the past to make sense of place. We turn now to the context for our study and the research design.

Study context: Post-industrial urban heritage and places

In post-industrial urban places, evidence of the past can often be observed in our environmental surroundings. These physical signs of the collective history of a locality can contribute to a sense of place (Bartos, 2013; Corcoran, 2010). Even after regeneration programmes have redeveloped areas, we gain glimpses of local history in the form of old buildings, derelict grounds and housing estates (Edensor, 2008; Severcan, 2018). Yet, the uninitiated can easily miss the physical or geographical scars of bygone ages.

This is the case for the locality where the children in our research grew up. It is a former pit village subsumed into a wider conurbation in the 1950s. Its colliery closed in the early 1970s. By 2010, the locality was among the 20 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in Britain.

There is a significant literature on the challenges facing the former coal-mining communities of north-east England and their socio-political responses. Stephenson and Wray (2005: 193) documented the struggles 'with the problem of "normlessness"' and the 'emotional degeneration' engendered in communities as a result of local coal mine closures. The term 'emotional degeneration' conceptualises the trauma suffered by communities following loss (Hoggett and Miller, 2000), and the subsequent 'mourning' experienced by communities bears comparison with the notion of 'social haunting' (Bright, 2012). This is a salient theme in more recent studies of ex-mining communities (Bright, 2011, 2012; Simpson and Simmons, 2021) that are 'haunted by absent presences' and the 'intergenerational transmission of "affects trauma"' (Bright et al., 2013: 750). Research in ex-mining communities points to this haunting and trauma, which result in disaffection with and exclusion from school for some working-class children (Bright, 2011). Similarly, Taylor (2013) argues that this past shapes the identities of young women in the north-east of England. Working-class young women can embrace the family stories and legacy of mining history, which 'serve to create a fixed sense of place where absent people and places are rewritten into the landscape, fostering a sense of belonging' (Taylor, 2013: 834). Thus knowing their history could be 'orienting, as a claim for visibility, permanence, residency, and entitlement to place' Taylor (2013: 831). Taylor (2013) also notes a counter-narrative positioning working-class people as being 'stuck' both in place and in the past, unable or unwilling to be part of the large-scale cultural and economic regeneration of post-industrial areas. This neoliberal narrative presumes that individuals are responsible for their own 'degeneration' and for failing to fit in (Taylor, 2013: 831). Bright (2011: 512) suggests we rethink these narratives of 'pathological failure of aspiration' and rearticulate them as a social and political 'challenge from below'.

Community-based regeneration initiatives have sought to capture working-class histories, and Stephenson and Wray's (2005) research on former Durham mining communities rediscovering their heritage and culture by forming miners' banner groups offers hope. Stephenson and Wray (2005: 178) argue that these community initiatives were able to use the miners' 'unique heritage' to engender 'emotional regeneration'. Community activists were able 'to give meaning back to their lives' by drawing upon a past 'community of memory' (Stephenson and Wray, 2005: 192). This approach sits well with a wider literature documenting the persistence of industrial-era attitudes and behaviours in the culture of the post-industrial north-east (Byrne, 2002). Recently, for example, Beynon et al. (2020) have explored the transition of trade union culture and membership into post-industrial generations. This phenomenon becomes abundantly clear every second Saturday in July as the city of Durham is flooded with tens of thousands of people marching with brass bands and trade union banners at the Durham miners' gala. This has been held annually every year since 1876 (except during the two world wars, as well as 1926 and 2020), despite the closure of the last colliery in the region in 1993 (Mellor and Stephenson, 2005; Strangleman, 2001; Tomaney, 2020).

This development of community memories with the aim of retaining and sharing working-class histories through critical

pedagogy has been a source of inspiration for our project. The proliferation of local miners' banner groups forms the backbone of the miners' gala. They also conduct outreach educational work (see, for example, Wray, 2011). Given that the memory of mining and the communities that accompanied it is dying out, this educational work – particularly with the younger children – offers an important way to ensure that mining culture 'is not lost to succeeding generations' (Stephenson and Wray, 2005: 175). The proliferation of miners' banner groups since Stephenson and Wray's study suggests that the earlier fears expressed before the 1984–1985 strike by Williamson (1982), and the more recent pessimism of Kirk et al. (2012) in anticipating the disappearance of this mining cultural heritage, are as yet unfounded.

Research design and methods

This article represents an output from 'Making Heritage Matter', a research project exploring why, how and with what effects local mining history is taught at primary level. The research focused on a partnership between a local mining banner association (hereafter 'the Association') and a local primary school. The Association's leading activist, a former local miner and local history expert, started working with the school, providing talks, 'learning walks' (Green and Rayner, 2020; Grimshaw and Mates, 2020; Thomson, 2010) and lessons on mining and trade union history. The partnership developed further with a successful funding bid that paid for visits to local mining museums, miners' gala attendance and education freelancers to deliver specific lessons. The school is a larger than average primary rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted (the UK government's school inspection body). The school has a predominantly white working-class intake, and over 25% of the school's children were eligible for free school meals (this deprivation indicator is higher than the national average).

The school has a 'community ethos', meaning that its leaders viewed the school as part of the local geographical area and connected to the people living there. The school leaders recognised the importance of local history and its significance for understanding the community and families of their pupils. Similarly, they valued place-based education, which attempts to forge social bonds by connecting the children, teachers and schools to others in their locality. Thus, explicitly and critically, the teaching fosters identity work underpinned with a critical pedagogy of place and place-based education that entails tasks focusing on connections to others, the locality, the region and global communities (Jones, 2010; Prosser et al., 2010; Smith, 2002; Thomson, 2010). As we explore in detail elsewhere (Grimshaw and Mates, 2020), the project draws attention to the importance of capturing and developing working-class histories in the spirit of the 'dig where you stand' and 'history from below' movements in Sweden and the UK respectively (Gwinn, 2017; Lindqvist, 1979; Samuel, 1981).

Our research project, developed in collaboration with the school, aimed to capture the teaching of local coal-mining history, investigate children's experiences of learning about it, and produce a teaching guide. We aimed to privilege children's agency, focusing on their experiences and ideas (Harcourt et al., 2011; Moss and Petrie, 2002). The project's research questions were: Why and how is local mining history taught at the school? How is local mining history engaged with by the children? What wider benefits (if any) did the children gain from this place-based pedagogy? The latter two questions are the focus for this article, which locates these children's voices firmly in the debates about place-based pedagogy and urban heritage. The research was approved by the

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee at Northumbria University. The school communicated to parents, and informed consent was received from the children's parents/carers to participate in the research.

Ethnographic methodologies are widely regarded as a key approach for exploring children's social worlds (Emond, 2005; James et al., 1998). This qualitative approach, using observation and focus group interviews, enabled us to be part of the children's worlds at school as we explored and recorded their thoughts and responses to learning about local mining history. Two classes of approximately 30 children aged eight to ten years old took part in the everyday learning. We were invited by teachers to introduce ourselves to each class and explain our research. Each of the authors separately observed lessons focused on mining history during a 10-week period and together accompanied the children and teachers on school trips and events.

Specifically, we adopted 'semi-participant' observation, acknowledging the need for children to control 'the extent to which the researcher is allowed in' (Emond, 2005: 125). We sat at the back of the classroom or in an empty seat next to the children (with their permission). We each took notes, recording information about lesson plans and our observations of the children's engagement in learning and the discussions they had during lessons. As the children became more familiar with us, we supported them in tasks as requested and thus had brief conversations (and as lessons allowed) about the task and the lesson, and exchanged knowledge about local mining history. Following these visits, we (the authors) would discuss and compare our notes, reflecting on significant observations regarding the children's views and reactions. Encounters with researchers can be daunting, particularly for children; this approach enabled us not only to record events but also to develop a good rapport with the children and ease their involvement in the research (Corsaro, 2005). We noticed that as we entered the classrooms children would smile and express excitement that they were again about to study local mining history. This relationship is reflected in the witty pseudonyms that the children felt able to choose for themselves as part of their assent to participate in the focus groups we ran at the end of the teaching.

The focus groups were designed to explore the children's experiences and perspectives in more depth (Hennessy and Heary, 2005). Children were asked to volunteer to take part by raising their hands in class and class teachers then selected five to six children for each focus group. This was a convenience sample and, as typical for research in schools, relied on the teacher as gatekeeper. The total sample of 21 children (10 girls and 11 boys) represents just over a third of the children in both classes. We explained the research to the children again, and reminded them that participation was voluntary. We asked questions about what they had learnt; what they liked and/or did not like and why; what they found most and least interesting; and finally, whether they thought it was important to learn about local mining history (and why or why not). We used examples of their work on local history and our fieldnotes of our observations as prompts. We had an informal approach, with the aim of increasing the value and validity of what the children said (Hill, 2005). Focus groups can create a safe environment by replicating familiar classroom settings, reducing pressure on individuals to respond to every question and allowing for peer support, and they 'may also redress the power imbalance between adult and child that exists in one-to-one interviews' (Hennessy and Heary, 2005: 220). In our experience, the children were all included in the discussion, often encouraged by each

other as well as by us as researchers, and seemed comfortable talking about their experiences. We had lively discussions, often with a lot of laughter. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. At the end, we debriefed the children, reassuring them about confidentiality and anonymity, and replayed some of their interview recordings at their request.

We undertook a thematic analysis of the focus group data and our observation notes – coding and developing themes to interpret children's experiences and views (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is rarely a linear process (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and we developed our codes, analysis and interpretation through an iterative and reflective process comparing our data with the literature and going back to the data to develop our analysis further. As a result of our research design and methods, we present below a rich and detailed description of the children's experiences and perspectives and our interpretation of how these develop their sense of place.

Findings: Children making sense of place

Knowledge of local mining history

The learning began with children being encouraged to ask questions about coal. Some lessons drew directly on issues raised at the outset by the children, but most were planned by teachers based on previous experience of what had worked in the classroom. Local mining history was used as a lens through which a variety of curriculum subjects could be taught, including maths, English, arts, humanities, music and science (for detailed information about lessons, see Grimshaw and Mates, 2020). The school and the Association also organised field trips to local museums, learning walks and participation at local and regional community events. The children were therefore guided through the learning about their local history, although teachers gave them several opportunities to share their learning and discuss their own knowledge and/or family histories in relation to mining locally. All of the children in our focus groups felt it was important to learn about local mining history. Asked about this, Kit commented:

> Well yes because … that's part of our history 'cos round our area … was a big place for mining and it sort of shows how much our history's changed and it's a good thing to learn about 'cos you know your history. You might have ancestors and then you know how your ancestors felt and you know how they worked, what they had to wear because of where they worked, what it was like.

Learning about local history afforded the children knowledge and understanding that they then shared with their families, fostering dialogue between generations. This learning was also developed within the wider community, through joint organising of community events by the Association and school's partnership. This process allowed the children to become experts in their community's history (Prosser et al., 2010). Overall, the children increased their knowledge of the history of mining, though some were already aware of some aspects of it, owing their knowledge to familial connections to the mining industry. For some children, the connections were comparatively close in time: 'My grandad and my great grandad used to work in the mine together, next to one another' (Jeff). But for others there was a much more distant connection: 'My great, great, great, I think he was my great, great, great, great, great, great, great granddad I think' (Cody). Others had gone further and talked at home about mining and read books on the subject.

The children were very positive about their experiences of the teaching. They seemed genuinely excited when we came into

classes and they realised that it was time to learn more about mining. In focus groups, the children all said they enjoyed the classes and found them interesting; many said they learnt new things about mining and their local community. In particular, they developed a keen appreciation of the dangers of being a miner and the sacrifices miners made to provide for their families: 'It was interesting, because, like, for the facts and what sacrifices they've been through and what their daily life was' (Cody). Their interest was sustained in large part because the topic was about the place where they lived, and it encouraged them to see themselves as part of the community, as Kit explained: 'I found it interesting … because it's something about our history, my history, my community's history and it tells us how it was back in them times, so it gives us … it sort of, it really helps.' This quote suggests that at least some of the children felt a sense of ownership over their own history; one in which they felt pride. A significant contributor to this pride came through their fascination with the hardships and dangers experienced by miners in their working lives, as well as by miners' families and communities: 'I think … the people being locals, it's like representing your part of the country by doing a dangerous thing' (Tiddles No. 2). Crucially here, the teaching, and the way the children engaged with it, avoided the pitfalls of propagating an idealised nostalgia; of romanticising the past. Instead, something more akin to a present and future-centred, even progressive nostalgia developed (Adams and Larkham, 2016; Smith and Campbell, 2017).

The knowledge they gained enabled the children to reflect on others' lives, as well as on their own. They thought it was important to understand how things had changed in their area, which helped them to think about their locality in the present and to appreciate how it connected to the wider world: 'I started thinking, like, about how much, like, the world has got more stuff to, like, protect it more and make it less dangerous' (Rhiannon); 'to have respect for everyone who died, like, for everyone else and just to be grateful for what we have now' (Ella). Tuan (1977) suggests that place acquires a deep meaning for adults, with sentiment building up over years, and that children have a short past and are more focused on the present and immediate future. However, our findings tally with the ideas of those who have argued that connection to place is relative, and that knowledge and memories can be accumulated over generations, months or days (Schofield and Szymanski, 2016; Yarker, 2018). The teaching gave the children cause to 'pause and reflect', and to make that 'backward glance' that Tuan (1977: x) argued young children were not suited to. The children liked learning about the connections between the past and present and the differences in life experiences that social change brings. This enhanced their curiosity about mining, as one child explained: 'I used to think: what did they do? How did they get through the day without thinking "ah, I'm gonna watch TV"?' (Abby). The children not only made connections between the past and present, but also to the future: 'We're learning about our ancestry so we can, like, pass it on' (Kit).

The teaching ensured that the children learnt not only about their local area, but also about the regional context; that 'there was loads of pits round the north east' (Jim-Bob). Learning about the local area, as Massey (1995) suggests, provides a way of connecting to the world beyond the local; a sense of place across spatial levels develops as a result. The children learnt, for example, about the significance of local events for the national and international wellbeing of miners. The school was near the site of an infamous underground gas explosion in 1812 that killed 92 men and boys and that was important in stimulating the development of

the miner's safety lamp (Mills, 2016). Learning about the invention of the miner's lamp and the debate about whether Humphry Davy from Penzance, Cornwall, or the north-east's 'Geordie' George Stephenson invented the first safety lamp stimulated considerable energetic discussion in class. The children researched both men, and Stephenson gave (most of) the children of one focus group a sense of pride in the region. The debate encouraged different opinions, and reflections about parts of the United Kingdom, highlighting the variety of allegiances the children had to different places. One child liked Cornwall as he had been on holiday there and claimed to prefer Davy, and his lamp, 'Because I was at a cliff area and I could see bits of coals in the hills' (Jeff) (there is no coal in Cornwall's geology). Charlie reflected on Stephenson's life history, preferring the 'Geordie' lamp because of Stephenson's more informal education and self-sufficiency: '[Stephenson] gathered all the equipment from home and he made the lamp at home rather than, like, in a big factory.'

Inevitably, the closure of the pits and the 1984–1985 strike were discussed, partly in response to initial questions asked by the children at the beginning of the teaching of this topic and partly as a result of the children creating timelines of mining history. In one lesson, the children learnt about the changing importance of coal mining and the role of the Thatcher government in this. This offered at least one child an insight into the left-wing political culture of the region; as we wrote in our fieldnotes, he commented: 'Ah that's why people don't like Thatcher up here.' The teaching did not, however, dwell on these controversies and the teachers are legally obliged to present politically neutral information (Education Act, 1996). The impact of this particular lesson on the children varied. In response to being asked whether they had learnt about mine closures and strikes in the 1980s, one child replied: 'not really; all's we know is, like, it was important but it wasn't really important to Margaret Thatcher so she stopped the mines' (Cody). By contrast, this was the favourite lesson of at least two children: 'my favourite was when we were learning about the scabs [strike breakers] … because it talked about people who went on strike because they didn't want to work but the people who stayed were scabs. They wanted money to live' (Tiddles No. 2). In the lesson, the children and teacher discussed whether or not they would have gone on strike in 1984. These more contemporary political and economic understandings of mining and strikes were taught within a broader historical context, as children also learnt songs about 'blackleg miners' in their music classes (discussed further below).

Learning about mining history helped children develop a sense of place because it offered them a sense of themselves as part of families and of a community with a mining history. Those children from non-mining families expressed relief and gratitude that their ancestors did not have to perform such dangerous work. As one child explained:

> I feel proud because my family moved from another country and my family just came back two years ago and we didn't have to go, like my grandad didn't have to go through all that, he was in another country. (Abby)

To summarise this section, the teaching enabled the children to develop their knowledge of their local area; how it connected to the north-east region and to the country as a whole. They learnt about the significance of the mining industry and its politics; about the improvements to working conditions (in terms of health and safety); and about the use, and then banning, of child labour (at a national level). The children began to comprehend the physical dangers involved in

mining. The knowledge was generated through social interactions across generations and with family and friends. Knowledge of local history made the children feel connected and part of the local community. This learning provoked emotional responses that enabled them to further make sense of place. We now turn to these emotional and physical responses.

Emotions and physicality

Our sense of place can develop through our emotional responses. Emotional attachment to place can arise from growing up in places, living in places for a substantial amount of time or temporarily or having ancestors connected to those places (Bartos, 2013; hooks, 2009). Researching with children in New Zealand, Bartos (2013: 89) argues that 'places become meaningful based on a complex set of embodied sensory emotions the children experienced with their environment'. Learning about mining history produced emotional responses from the children, as suggested above – excitement and enjoyment in engaging with the topic and lessons; shock and sadness when learning about the dangers of mining; pride about individuals, families, communities and the region, as well as gratitude that they did not have to work in the mines any longer. These emotions were often experienced simultaneously.

Learning about local mining history also changed the children's perceptions of their physical and natural environment. Before the topic was taught, for example, some children had little knowledge of coal. One child suggested in class that it was 'something that Santa brought if you were bad'. This changed as the children were taught how coal developed underground and became an important source of energy: 'Because when the trees died they go into the ground and mix with the rock and the soil and they create, like, coal' (Charlie). Having learnt about how coal formed as well as how it was mined, the children came to understand what lay beneath the ground, enabling them to make connections between themselves and the physical and natural environment: 'I feel it's quite good that round this local area, everyone can know about coal mining and looking at what's actually around us and underneath' (Sam); 'So we know there's coal beneath where we walk' (Jim-Bob). This understanding extended the children's sense of place to areas under foot that they could not see but could now imagine, as a direct result of their lessons at school. As Ingold (2000) observes, although we appear to live on the outer surface of the world, the world not only surrounds us but also lies beneath our feet and is shaped and changed by geological forces, nature and human beings both in the past and present.

In some areas, the heritage of mining is present in the renovation or conservation of mining works and buildings. Severcan's (2018) incisive discussion of children's enjoyment of heritage sites does not, however, consider the meanings children attach to this heritage or how it relates to their understandings of history. None of the children in our study mentioned that they visited the local preserved heritage sites, which fits with Severcan's (2018) treatment of the gentrification of such places and the more general inaccessibility of heritage sites to children. In our locality, there is little physical evidence of mining; only a few crumbling, nondescript buildings remain on the site of the colliery that shut down in 1974. Even the name of another local colliery has been corrupted and misspelt in the name of the new industrial estate recently built where the colliery once stood. Severcan (2018) discusses the informal landscapes that children use for play; some of the children reported that they often played in the waste ground around the shaft of a third former local colliery. The

past still manifests in the present dangers it poses for the physical safety of children.

Tuan (1977) asserts that re-imagining the landscape enables us to develop a connection to place. The children began to understand how mining had changed the landscape, by locating old mine entrances and shafts on modern maps in class. They learnt how old pit heaps (formed by dumping colliery spoil) had been transformed into local monuments and areas of interest across the north-east; as Charlie asked us, 'did you know, where the Angel of North [a major artwork by Anthony Gormley in Gateshead, created in 1998] is, used to be a mine?' The children were able to extend their knowledge to other places and understand the connection between the past and present landscape. Talking about his holiday along the north-east coast, Jeff was able to understand his experiences in the light of learning about mining across the region: 'on the beach I was digging and … I kept finding coal everywhere'.

This knowledge of mining landscapes and heritage also extended to the places underground. As a result of their learning, the children could imagine the miners' activities underground. Considering the social and 'natural' dimensions of children's sense of place, Bartos (2013) found that a sense of movement was important. We also found this in our study. The children discussed walking around their local area imagining what was underfoot. They also pretended to be miners crawling under chairs in a classroom lesson. The children could imagine and 'see' the miners working underground with often cramped movements, as one explained: 'You had to go on your side, or you would sit on your right leg and then your left leg would stick out in the way' (Charlie). This physical appreciation of the miners at work, and these underground imaginings, combined with the children's emotional responses outlined at the beginning of this section. We move on now to discuss how these linked to the senses of touch, hearing, smell, sight and taste.

Using the senses

Bartos (2013) suggests that the intermingling of the senses is an important way in which children can begin to connect to their environment and make sense of place. The teaching meant that many of the children touched coal for the first time and this rendered their imaginings of what lay underground more real. Children had opportunities to see and touch mining artefacts during a museum trip and in class, which enabled some to emotionally connect with their history. Most enjoyed holding things and remembered the pickaxe, the shovels, the old miner's safety lamps they held as well as the helmets – they were surprised at how heavy these were, even though they were made of compressed cardboard – and the old miners' clothes they dressed up in: 'we got to see what some of the stuff actually looked like instead of just, like, either writing or just pictures, we could actually see what real things used to look like' (Kit); 'it was exciting, 'cos we got to see, like, all the old things that miners actually used to use' (Geoff); 'I thought that [the helmets] would have been quite light, like, for them to work but they was actually quite heavy' (Jeff Bob).

The ability to hold and see artefacts helped them to understand the life of a miner. In addition, the children were shown paintings of miners' lives and by miners. They also drew pictures which helped them to see how the landscape and place had changed. This again helped fuel their imaginations about the underground: 'we had to draw, like, what was underground, the […] colliery and then we had to draw men doing, like, all the work underneath' (Rhiannon);

> in the mining museum there was, like, different pictures of mining and we were, we saw one of a person who's, like, mining but it's just one person and all we could see is black, like, only in front of them and they could only see coal 'cos they've got their lamp on. And I like the shades of it. (Cody)

The children were able to appreciate the art and see the physical and social changes that had taken place locally through the miners' art. They began to picture the mines underground and understand how this might have been experienced by the miners. They could imagine the smells and taste of the mines, such as breathing in coal dust. Abby felt grateful that things had changed: 'I thought how lucky we are, we don't have to work down the mines anymore and we don't have to breathe up all that coal dust.' Although taste and smells played a lesser role, touching the artefacts was, for Jeff Bob, a prelude to exploring their smell. And doing this certainly made an impression: 'we even had a sniff of them and they like smell, like, awful, like, they really smelt of metal' (Jeff Bob).

Sound played an important part in the exploration of the history of mining. In the mining museum, they heard the loud sounds of mines: 'I really liked it … when we went to that section where it was really loud; it was like the experience of being a miner' (Bob). The children understood that mines were noisy places with the possibility of explosions occurring. They learnt phrases the miners would use and took delight in repeating them in focus groups: 'You'd better watch out lads!' (Bob) and 'lads, watch out lads, fire!' (Jeff Harry). In the classroom, the children were taught traditional folk songs and songs about mining. They performed these at school, at the annual Durham miners' gala and at the Association's local community festival. Through music lessons, they recreated the sounds of mines using percussion instruments. A sense of hearing provided another way for children to connect emotionally to their history, to their local and regional sense of place and to their understanding of themselves. Dialect and language are rooted in places and are intimately connected to our sense of place; often they are markers of identity and belonging. Notably, some of the children reflected on the language and the local 'Geordie' dialect in some of the songs ('Geordie' also refers to people's identity):

> When wor [we] sung all them Geordie, Geordie words 'cos normally, like, some of us are Geordie but then […] it's different words, like, that are, like, Geordie 'cos, like, we don't know that sort of language. So I got a little bit confused 'cos I didn't really know some of them words but then we got, like, to know what the words and stuff, 'cos Miss started learnin' wor [us], what the words actually meant. (Rhiannon)

Despite being from Tyneside and speaking a version of Geordie, Rhiannon and others identified the changing nature of language and identities of those in the local area. Not all of the children identified themselves as Geordie. Of those who did, some still did not recognise some of the Geordie words in the songs. The music teacher highlighted the changing nature of accents and the loss of regional dialects amongst children generally. Some children struggled with unfamiliar words: 'The Geordie language was hard to read, it was annoying and it kept going like "gan" [go] and different words' (Tiddles No. 2). A sense of hearing was thus important and combined with the other senses to develop a sense of place. Furthermore, voice was also important – their teachers' and their own. The children had heard teachers and museum workers tell stories about mining locally and nationally, and they clearly valued the tradition of telling stories or passing them on through the medium of song. But the children also cherished the chance to be

heard; they were keen to be heard telling their stories, as Tiddles explained:

> I liked the music 'cos we learned information in the song, it was fun, you didn't just talk about and learn it, you were actually singing it, the information … I think it's important because, like, if you had, like, families from ages ago that worked down there, you could, like, tell […] all your friends and all your families everything about mines and about what they could have done.

As Bartos (2013) found, separating the senses is difficult. As indicated above, the senses combine with each other, along with emotions and physical movements, as the children develop their sense of place through exploration of their industrial heritage. The children's experiences of touching, smelling and seeing the artefacts, for example, combined with seeing pictures of miners at work, and meant that, as they walked about their locality, they would imagine the miners' lives, underneath the ground, beneath their feet. The combination of the five senses with movement draws attention to the ways in which children develop an embodied sense of place.

Conclusion

This article has focused firmly on the experiences and views of children in order to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which a sense of place can be developed in childhood. Specifically, we have argued that learning about local post-industrial heritage can develop children's sense of place, and have demonstrated the various ways that this can happen. Experiencing emotions and physicality and engaging their senses allowed the children in our study to make stronger connections between place, people and the environment and enhance their sense of place (Eisenhauer et al., 2000). The children extended their knowledge by learning about earlier generations, stories, traditions and the landscape above and below ground. Thus they engaged both cognitively and sensuously with their local place and its history and were enabled to grasp how their place relates to wider spatial scales. Learning about local history enabled the children to make sense of the place in which they went to school; the development of this sense of place excited them and stirred their emotions, and they felt it was important and worthwhile to them in the present and future. This is important, as a sense of place involves feelings of belonging and attachment to place and contributes to wellbeing and identity formation (Jack, 2015; Taylor, 2013).

Like Bartos (2013), we see value in understanding how children make sense of place in the present. But the children themselves also made connections to the future through their recognition of the importance of passing knowledge on to future generations. The literature suggests that a sense of place developed in childhood is significant for children growing into adulthood, nurturing social capital and encouraging participation in community activities and decision-making (Severcan, 2015, 2018) and in pro-environmental behaviour (Eisenhauer et al., 2000). Developing a sense of place through place-based learning allows the children to become experts in their own place, thereby empowering them to participate in shaping places (Prosser et al., 2010) through, for example, regeneration programmes (see Severcan, 2015, 2018). Children will necessarily have different relationships to place and their sense of place will change throughout the course of their lives (Bartos, 2013; Shamai, 1991). Further longitudinal research is needed to fully understand how children's learning about local history affects their sense of place as they grow into adulthood.

In north-east England, industrial history is embedded in the culture of the place, as

manifest in the annual Durham miners' gala (Tomaney, 2020). The legacy of the past has ramifications for the present in relation to the fragmentation of local communities and relatively high levels of deprivation and low educational attainment in many post-industrial communities (Robinson, 2002). Teaching about local history is emphatically not an exercise in offering an uncritical, nostalgic rendition of the past. Deploying insights from critical pedagogical practice opens up possibilities for examining social change and developing a 'progressive nostalgia' (as noted above). This might entail remembering past harms, hardships and dangers, whilst also fostering pride in forgotten events. Such facets of history have offered a source of strength for marginalised communities, exemplified recently in the 'Black Lives Matter' protests. This collective knowledge, empowerment and ownership are all central to critical pedagogical practice (Freire, 2005 [1970]; hooks, 1994; Lindqvist, 1979; Samuel, 1981). Recent activism around working-class experiences of discrimination in higher education has demonstrated the need to continue to encourage working-class and other children to learn about their industrial heritage in order to understand and address the inequalities of the present (White, 2020). Learning about local history allows children to create and interpret historical events and develop a sense of place: they become active participants in telling the history of their place. By taking ownership of and interpreting their history, they can begin to develop their own place and even develop a new way of seeing themselves in this place.

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ORCID iDs

Lucy Grimshaw https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2536-9579

Lewis Mates https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5858-668X

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