

The sensorium and fleshy schools

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Abstract

As places of learning, schools inevitably foreground cognition. Neglected in schools and in the literature is the body, often an inconvenience or barrier to learning rather than a site of perception and understanding. Where the body is considered, it is primarily concerned with pedagogy and children rather than analysing the broad range of embodied experience: teachers' sensuous experience is side-lined; classrooms are central, with toilets and staffrooms and corridors usually ignored; policy and architecture largely unconsidered. Furthermore, ironically, the focus in the literature also foregrounds the body within its contribution to cognition rather than centring the fleshy experience of sensing. This paper therefore addresses these omissions and focuses on the sensorium—movement, the haptic, hearing, smell/taste and visual—providing a framework to analyse the truly embodied experience of the school environment. It argues that as well as being culturally bound, the sensorium is delineated and encoded within the educational ideology and architecture of schools, prescribed by senior leaders to manage and police the flesh within their school walls.

KEYWORDS

educational policy, sensorium, the body and schools

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Key insights

What is the main issue that the paper addresses?

The lack of attention paid to the sensorium and the physical experience of schools within the academic literature and within education and school policy.

What are the main insights that the paper provides?

How a posthuman (new) materialist lens can provide a framework for understanding the sensuous geography of schools that can inform the creation and critique of school policies.

INTRODUCTION

Monday morning; a different school, another Year 8 class. The building was unfamiliar but the waft of disinfectant and floor polish was instantly recognisable. If she was blindfolded, she thought, she would still know instantly that she was in a school. Early mornings before the kids arrived and the building was empty always gave her another sensation she could never quite put into words. The echo of heels down the hallway, the stillness of the air and silence thick as low-hanging cloud gave an anticipatory impression of building energy that would dissipate as soon as the kids turned up and the explosion of noise, noise of excitement, laughter, sadness, aggression returned the school from inertia to motion. It was a hard sensation to describe, but nevertheless she experienced it several times a week.

On arrival she'd been directed to an awkward-looking Reception area, crammed between pop-up display banners announcing the school's merger with a new Academy Trust and newspaper clippings from sports success. As she waited for another member of staff to arrive, she shifted uncomfortably on the scratchy seat. It was one of those low, modular kinds that are impossible to sit in gracefully. Whose bodies are these actually made for? she wondered; not for the first time. As she fidgeted, she realised that the first thing she would have to find out was where the toilets were; it was that time of the month and not a great day for the brain fog or clumsiness that always accompanied it. The stiff, formal suit might have been a mistake too—she had a sense that she might be needing to move very quickly around this building. Sighing, she turned as a lingering smell of cigarette smoke announced her new colleague's arrival. Pulling her stomach in, she got up and stretched out a hand (freshly wiped on her skirt as it was damp), anxious to make a good first impression.

While schools exist as a collection of bodies, rarely is the body considered in the analysis of schooling. Where it has been the subject of research, too often these studies fail to elevate the countless and multifarious embodied experiences of young and older bodies, as they collide each other with and within the school environment. In addition, too often these accounts reify the cognitive in its understanding of embodied experience instead of focusing squarely on the flesh, the physiological, the anatomical. Finally, there is little consideration of how the body is affected by the organisation, by its architecture, its culture, its rules and regulations. Four things are therefore significant within the literature on embodiment in education. Firstly, there is a neglect of the actual physical processes of embodiment, an ironic lack of reference to the physiological experience of sensing, an elision of the sensorium; this

echoes the wider sociological literature of the body that ignores the 'practical experiences of embodiment' (Wainwright & Turner, 2006, p. 238). Secondly, the literature focuses primarily on the experience of children rather than the teacher, on the embodiment of learning rather than the embodiment of teaching. Even in the organisational literature on embodied work, which features work types from bouncers (Monaghan, 2002) to au pairs (Cox, 2007), teachers are overlooked. Thirdly, the literature focuses almost exclusively on pedagogy, while ignoring the wider experience of teaching as work. There is, as Wolkowitz (2006, p. 16) argues in reference to sociological accounts, an absence of studies that focus on 'how it feels to be embodied or the use of the sense in employment'. Finally, there is little attention paid to how the policies, cultures and architecture of schools interact, control and codify the body, how organisational design attempts to manage the flesh within its walls. This paper therefore aims to address these omissions by drawing on the wider phenomenological and new materialist literature concerning work and the body to provide a means of understanding classrooms through the sensorium—movement, haptic, smell/taste, hearing and visual—to present a sensual geography of fleshy schools that moves beyond a narrow focus on pedagogy and positions teaching and learning as fully embodied, an experience of corridors and staffrooms, toilets and playing fields, as well as classrooms.

Drawing on the wider organisational literature on the body and work, this paper foregrounds the senses within the fleshy school, or more precisely the sensorium, the interaction of our individual senses that give meaning to our existence in the world. It begins by considering the body in education before moving to consider each of the senses in turn: movement, the haptic, hearing, smell/taste and visual. Given the complexity of teaching environments across social, cultural and material perspectives, this paper uses posthuman (new) materialism as a navigational tool (Braidotti, 2013) or a 'diffractive lens' (Bayley, 2018, p. 19) to explore the role of the body in education. This approach intentionally brings together a range of theorists and philosophies to provide a novel conceptual framework that recognises the complexity and contradictions of the physicality of pedagogy and work. As such, we draw on a number of related and complementary theories to explore the social, cultural and material nature of teacherly lives. Posthuman new materialism is '... a method, a conceptual frame and a political stand, which refuses the linguistic paradigm, stressing instead the concrete yet complex materiality of bodies immersed in social relations of power' (Braidotti, 2012, p. 21). An imperative to employ 'conceptual creativity' (Braidotti, 2019, p. 84) avoids mono-paradigmatic thinking and allows the combination of multiple intersectional axes of analysis, keeping social justice as a main point of concern. A materialist focus in its very nature introduces and elevates non-human actors and agents (smells, clothing, furniture), but if not combined with phenomenological experiences risks a flat, or undifferentiated, ontology. By also taking heed of feminist insistence on embodied experience and applying phenomenological approaches, we remember here that teacherly bodies are always already differentiated naturally, culturally, socially and across space and time; and that these differences do matter. This meshing of theoretical approaches allows us to focus on the entirety of teachers' organisational lives, on teaching as pedagogy but also on teaching as work as it allows us to remove the delineation between them: from this conceptual position, teaching and activity outside of the classroom are both embodied and, from the perspective of the flesh, similar activities, both involving the interaction between the sensorium and the environment—it is just the environment that differs. As such, the purpose of this paper is to provide an original conceptual framework for understanding not only the sensuous geography of schools but also how the senses become codified, prescribed and policed within the school environment, policies and practices that attempt to manage and tame the flesh within its walls. This framework provides an original perspective on carnal experience within schools as both phenomenological and discursive, a product of sensuous experience, procedurally encoded and policy determined.

THE BODY IN EDUCATION

Teaching necessarily begins with the body. Whether classroom-based, outdoors, at home, or informal, self-directed or technologically mediated, the human as an embodied subject is always already present. In this practice of relational learning activity, educators encounter bodies all the time and yet educational discourse rarely acknowledges the body as a material and physical agent (Ellingson, 2017). Traditions of Western educational philosophy have long privileged mind over body and the separation of nature/culture in a process of Cartesian dualism (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Zembylas, 2007), leading to manifestations of 'rational humanism' which persist in views of the (educational) world as stable and ordered, rather than complex and emerging (Braidotti, 2013; St Pierre, 2020). In spite of this, bodies intra-act constantly with others; both human, animal and more-than-human (objects, things and the wider environment), creating an affective encounter that 'gives shape to the pedagogical moment' (Dixon & Senior, 2011). How many educators can say that they have never walked into a room and 'sensed' an atmosphere; been affected by spatial arrangements, smells or external noise; or had their practice changed due to the state of their body on a particular day?

Within contemporary English education practice a heightened emphasis on cognition and memory reveals the extent of the Cartesian binary within a system that obsesses over the management of the 'unruly' child body (Erevelles, 2000), while at the same time denying that body's agency in the learning process, an ever-increasing emphasis on 'mind' at the expense of 'body' (Green & Hopwood, 2015). Whilst corporeal entities are emerging and in continuous states of process, school institutions act to territorialise, enclose and fix in place; both literally and metaphorically. Learning subjects thus become dividuated by schooling 'power-machines' which encode and recode ways of having 'knowledge'; where language is a series of 'order words' and children are points of data or 'semiotic coordinates' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 76). The body is largely absent within this logic system, unless its presence makes itself known via unacceptable behaviours, being out of place, or somehow other than the 'Vitruvian' white, male, middle-class subject. Even within physical education classes, the idea of 'body-as-machine' emphasises the corporeal as a system that must operate according to contemporary paradigms of fitness and wellbeing, thus emphasising the body as '... an outer and separate envelope wrapping the subjectivity' (Francesconi & Tarozzi, 2019, p. 4). Schools become 'places where people interact with one another without fully realizing that they are also embodied creatures' (Vlieghe, 2014).

In order to fit this system, pedagogical practice has shifted to a paradigm rooted in notions of 'man of reason', which omits factors relating to senses, emotions and other bodily responses which are unmeasurable. Ofsted's definition of learning as 'an alteration in long-term memory' (Ofsted, 2019, p. 4) highlights the hegemonic focus on the mind over the body, privileging pedagogies such as cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) which render somehow inferior bodily responses which may act to facilitate or hinder the mind as a computational storage facility. This practice necessarily alters the role of educators' bodies too, resulting in an emphasis on transactional exchange and immobile bodily arrangements (Hooks, 1994) which may also be pre-scripted via direct instruction classroom routines.

Much of the contemporary focus on the body emerged from the work of Merleau-Ponty (2002[1945]), who remains omnipresent in the literature. Here, perception is not a matter of transmission between the two sides of Descartes' dualism; perception is an embodied experience, it is sensational; it is not experienced, it is the very basis of experience. The body is 'our way of being-in-the-world, experiencing and belonging to the world' (Crossley, 1995, p. 48). The body, in the carnal paradigm, sees knowing as perpetually bound to the world, ongoing and practical. To see the body as a text or a machine 'eliminates its sensory capacities, its odours, textures, joys and anguish' (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009, p. 217)

and so our understanding of the body, of sensuality, shifts from a thing in the world to a way in which the world comes to be (Leder, 1990, p. 25). Flesh, for Merleau-Ponty, is potential, a site of possibilities, it is 'flesh of the world' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), the source of all meaningful behaviour; the body is how we think with and through, bodily knowing becoming the 'primary mode of being and becoming' (Green & Hopwood, 2015, p. 18). Perception is not an internal process; the outside world is not projected internally to be made meaningful. Perception happens in the world rather than in the mind.

Seeing the body and mind as inseparable and entangled is a key concern of posthuman and new-materialist theorists such as Braidotti, who calls us to acknowledge the 'embodiment of the brain and the embrainment of the body' (Braidotti, 2017, p. 33). Reminding us of the permeability of our 'leaky' bodies (Grosz, 1994), posthumanism elevates the role of corporeal experiences but also highlights the inextricable connection between the bodily and the material. These ideas are reflected in developments in neuroscience, such as embodied cognition theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Shapiro, 2011) which purports that cognition isn't confined to the brain but is a process of complex intra-action between mind and body. Gaining 'somatic awareness' via an embodied approach, Leigh and Brown (2021) argue, enables educators and researchers to address the messy reality of the human condition. This transdisciplinary move away from siloed ways of knowing the world is arguably an essential requirement in these complex 'posthuman' times.

New materialist pedagogies of affect and embodiment have been particularly explored in early childhood education, whereby children are seen as being closer to the material world and there is greater acceptance of embodied responses to human and non-human agents. Affect here is '... the intensity that no one body is able to own; the empirical and emotional mixture we don't have a feeling or proper noun to describe, the in-between zone of things that makes us question boundaries between knowledges, bodies, practices' (Hickey-Moody & Wilcox, 2020, p. 2). In one example, Dernikos (2020) turns to the role of soundscapes in the primary classroom as affective sites which reinforce the social norms of Whiteness. Whilst the excited involuntary exclamations of joy and laughter (while reading) were frowned upon and silence was continually reinforced, other noises (school bells or announcements, traffic, music outside) were not; demonstrating that certain sounds (and who is making them) matter. Dernikos also describes the way in which children related differently to a particular book when the character shared her first name; reading shifted from a collective to a group activity and the normative pedagogical ideal of silent reading was disrupted. The intra-action of sound, book and children '... [created] temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb[ed] the linear time of progress' (Eshun, in Dernikos, 2020, p. 152). In this way, attending to 'fleshy frequencies' which draw lines of flight from the status quo of normative classroom behaviour can offer new insights into the way that learning is enacted.

Other feminist new materialists have taken similar ideas and enacted them in research studies which promote the agency of material items and explore the way in which they intra-act with bodies to create sensory and affective responses. Such items include school uniforms (Wolfe & Rasmussen, 2020), rulers (Renold, in Jones et al., 2019) and slippers (Taylor, 2018). By exploring the affective relations between object and human subject, and 'following the flow of matter' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 345), the studies highlight not only bodily affects, but also trouble prevailing in educational worldviews relating to heteronormativity, consumption and bodily surveillance. The acknowledgement that we, as humans, are always partially constituted, or affected by the non-human is thus an important recognition which de-centres 'Man' as other entities are brought into focus.

Complex and wicked problems such as global pandemics, the climate catastrophe and increasing inequalities—resulting in heightened states of bodily vulnerability—are calling us to reconsider the entanglements of the body and emphasise situated and located ways of knowing and being (Haraway, 1988). Making a corporeal turn is thus not only a practical

and informed move within education, but also an ethical imperative in systems of schooling that both overlook the body whilst at the same time maintaining strict control over it via surveillance and practices of racialised and gendered bodily control. Bodies matter, and some more than others. As bell hooks states: 'Once we start talking in the classroom about the body and about how we live in our bodies, we're automatically challenging the way power has orchestrated itself in that particular institutionalized space. The person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body' (Hooks, 1994, p. 137).

THE SENSORIUM

While traditionally research on work has retained a Cartesian dualistic underpinning, more recently the social sciences have undergone a 'sensorial revolution' (Howes, 2006) that understands organisational life as a deeply embodied experience, 'irremediably embodied' for Hindmarsh and Heath (2007). Here, 'workers have an understanding that is not just cognitive but also corporeal, developed by bodily engagement in habitual, quotidian work practices' (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009, p. 222). They occupy and interact with the work environment and with co-workers, pupils, customers and inmates, objects and bodies coming up against each other. Workers move, they see, feel, touch, hear and smell (smell and taste operating closely together therefore being difficult, anatomically, to differentiate). They experience space through embodiment, a multisensual embodiment (Tuan, 1993), within a 'sensuous geography' (Rodaway, 2002) that is both spatial and temporal. Our senses build a sense of the world around us, they tell us how far away a sound is or where a smell is coming from, but senses also have a temporal nature. We recall memories intertwined with things we have seen, heard, touched or smelt. The senses are also cultural, shaped and moulded through a cultural filter (Jeans, 1974)—the experience of sensation learned as well as universal and instinctive: cultural in terms of the culture we are born into, but also cultural in terms of organisations and workplaces.

Senses are both a medium and a message: a medium that channels information about the environment emanating from surfaces, light, air pressure, chemicals and vibrations; a message or perspective on the world, each sense, selectively, gathering information from the environment. Sense is, therefore, sensation and meaning. Sense and perception are not, however, passive receptors, but active systems (Gibson, 1968), exploratory, constantly engaged with the environment. The beginning point of this exploration is the body—the 'subject of perception' for Merleau-Ponty (2002[1945])—a sense organ that can feel, that houses the anatomy of our senses and the 'primary tool for movement and exploration of the environment' (Rodaway, 2002, p. 31): it gives an orientation in the world; it gives us a measure of the world through which to judge space and distance; the locomotion of the body allows us to explore, to move to meet our needs; it provides a coherent system to bring together the structures and functions that allow us to sense. Within the body are then the individual anatomical mechanisms by which we sense and, while the characterisation of the senses differs across the literature, Rodaway (2002) focuses on four senses or dimensions: touch, smell (and taste), hearing and sight. The senses have five characteristics. Firstly, cooperation as senses operate together in multiple combinations, enhancing our perception but also, sometimes, confusing it. Secondly, the senses operate within hierarchies, with certain senses dominating in different circumstances and different environments. Thirdly, senses can appear in different sequences depending on the environment. Fourthly, senses have thresholds, appearing and disappearing at differing levels of stimulation. Finally, there is reciprocity, the relationship between the body and the environment and the things and people within it.

Teaching—like other work—is a practice founded upon the senses, working in concert (Howes, 2003), underpinning both those usually unacknowledged movements and

perceptions of a routine lesson; the habituated that becomes taken for granted, to the compound, cacophonous embodied experience of a bee flying into the classroom or a fire alarm. Teachers have an understanding that is corporeal as much as it is cognitive. As such, the discussion of the senses below expands the existing literature to take account of the four areas of elision: they focus on the actual physiological experience of sensing, prioritising the flesh in school; the discussion foregrounds teachers instead of just children; they consider teaching as work as well as pedagogy, with teachers as organisational beings that experience outside of the classroom as well as inside; they take account of the cultures, policies and architecture of schools, sensory environments in their widest sense, both physical and virtual. From this basis, we will now consider each of the four senses in turn—the haptic, smell/taste, hearing and sight—to provide a sensuous framework for exploring the fleshy experience of schools. Such a separation is of course largely artificial as the sensorium is plural, with different senses working together in different combinations depending upon the interaction with the environment. To return to the bee entering a classroom, the experience would include hearing, vision and movement concurrently—while each can be considered separately, the interplay is what makes sensual cognition possible. The separation in this analysis is to ensure that each is given consideration and not subordinated. Before the most commonly considered senses, while not classed as a sense in all typologies, we begin with ‘movement’—intrinsic to the embodied experience (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009) and the first of Gibson's (1968) ‘perceptual systems’.

MOVEMENT

To move, the body relies on the vestibular organs whose primary activity is to maintain bodily equilibrium under the stimuli of gravity and acceleration. Movement is central to the majority of work practices and is at the core of perception, triggering ‘sensory activity that the consciousness in turn experiences as feelings’ (Tangen, 2004, p. 21). Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2009) split work movement into two components: firstly there is *rhythm*, a ‘patterned energy-flow of action, marked in the body by varied stress and directional change, also marked by changes in the level of intensity, speed and duration’ (Goodridge, 1999, p. 43); secondly, there is *timing*, the ‘act of determining or regulating the order of occurrence of an action or event, to achieve desired results’ (Goodridge, 1999, p. 43).

The movement of teachers' bodies is continually scrutinised and teaching observations will comment on how effectively teachers moved around the room or how they planned a movement pattern to support all children. Yet the attention is usually only from the observer rather than the observed, from the pragmatics of motion rather than the sensation of moving. In a great lesson, teaching is physically effortless, the body is light and the timing of motion becomes an accompaniment to learning; in a bad lesson, the body feels heavy, clumsy, motion becomes awkward and stumbling. Under observation, every movement is felt and hot, cool air against sweaty palms on the body moving at speed. Experienced teachers will adopt a rhythm as they move, a timing that accentuates speech and exemplifies key points with gesticulation and positioning. Speeding up and slowing down, rushing to a child making an excellent point, crouching down for a quiet pupil, standing tall to manage disruption, wincing—but not slowed—as yet another table corner creates yet another leg bruise. Visualisers and demonstrations model movement, the precise engagement with the artefacts of the classroom accompanied by a narration that must be impeccably timed to be effective.

Outside of the classroom, in corridors that become jammed, in stairwells that engender cries of ‘BUNDLE!’, movement becomes slowed, the sensation becomes of constriction, sometimes

of disordered bodies and the feeling of inertia. Elsewhere, children are encouraged to be more active, participating in the 'daily run' to combat obesity. Movement becomes more urgent, more pressing to get to the staffroom kettle first or face the immobility of the tea queue, or to feel the satisfying, comforting slump into a favoured chair before a chair-rival gets there, to experience the inanimate bliss between movements. Sometimes, there is the deliberate speed to get outside—to smoke, to vape, to breathe fresh, child-free air—to feel the motion of the body meet the sudden rush of the outside as the doors open, moving from inside to out, from shade to sun or the staccato drumming of rain onto coats and faces while rushing to shelter.

Movement is in many ways the source of all sensation (Tangen, 2004), the catalyst of experiencing and knowing our environment. Each movement triggers sensations, bringing the nose to different smells as one walks from the classroom to the canteen, touching and being touched, seeing the reflection of light on different surfaces from different angles, traversing the various soundscapes. Yet movement within schools is also engendered by other senses: the relative stillness of a lesson explodes into movement as the bell signals the end of period. The taste-promise of an illicit sweet creates furtive under-desk hand movements, as does the sight of a secret note being passed away from the teacher's gaze. A stationary playground supervisor erupts into speed at the distant sight of a child falling over. Stillness and movement, both routinised with the rhythm of the day and also random, are at the heart of the sensuous school.

HAPTIC

Active or passive, touch is always intimate, the literal meeting of the body and the world, mediated by skin, and the earliest sense to develop in the embryo. Touch is about weight, pressure, temperature, surface, an 'infinite range of tactile sensation' across 50 receptors per hundred square millimetres (Rodaway, 2002, p. 43). Gibson (1968) notes two distinct faculties of touch: firstly, there is pressure on the skin—contact between the body and its environment—and secondly, kinesthesia, the body's perception of its own movement. This, then, is the haptic, used to differentiate from the everyday understanding of 'touch'. The haptic is interaction, it is about being immersed within our environment, explorative, a communicative act between us and others, us and objects, us and atmospheres. But as well as literal, the haptic can also be imagined (Rodaway, 2002), a memory or metaphor that emboldens intimacy.

Schools comprise a vast array of human and non-human elements that come together to form educational assemblages: from teachers and pupils to wooden desks, laminated books, dinner trays, plastic toys, paper towels and sports equipment. Turning towards the tactile nature of education reveals the fierce materiality of school-worlds; a multitude of items are touched and touch us on a daily basis. From the regulation list of essential pupil equipment to the confiscation of illicit fiddle toys, what children and adults are able to touch necessarily influences educational practice; we are enmeshed in a dynamic material environment. Bound by school dress codes (often rigidly applied to both students and teachers), bodies are also touched by regulated forms of clothing. Formal wear, the normative design of which often means that clothes fit too tightly, can restrict movement and provide a heightened awareness of 'being dressed'. The manmade fibres in cheap suits and school uniform are designed to repel stains, but can also keep in moisture, irritate sensitive skin and restrict the flow of air. The sensation of a scratchy blazer, a choking tie or the pinch of high-heeled shoes provides constant sensory feedback at varying levels of discomfort; often unacknowledged, but present nonetheless.

With regard to human interaction, the issue of how bodies can touch one another in schools is fraught and complex. It is layered with both explicit and unwritten social codes relating to safety, behavioural norms and cultural practice, and is underpinned by hegemonic understandings of what childhood means and how professional relationships should be

enacted. Touch can be the slight, unintended bodily contact of teacher–pupil which results in sudden reactions of blushing, turning or jumping away; or it can be the expansive, entangled, joyful mass of embracing girls' bodies, moving en masse around a building. Yet touch also carries a risk, a fear: teachers must police their distance and be seen to not touch for fear of accusations in a climate of 'fear, confusion, contradiction and moral panic' (Piper & Smith, 2003, p. 879). Conversely there is also the risk of a child lacking comfort when they are upset. Proximity is policed yet explosive within extremes, violence met with physical restraint, behavioural outbursts met with force within strictly procedural (and cultural) limits. On the sports field, of course, physical force is to be encouraged (within the rules), with cuts, bruises and broken bones often badges of honour and nostalgised. Whether material or human, who can touch, what we can touch and how we touch matters within the 'body schema' in Merleau-Ponty's (2002[1945]) terms, the 'social possibilities that both compel and constrain our embodied inhabitation of the social world, and through which bodily boundaries, skills, capacities and "dispositional tendencies"... are shaped' (Hancock et al., 2015, p. 1716).

HEARING

Schafer (1977), a musician, coined the term 'soundscape' to describe the sonic environment, the 'sensuous geography derived from the ears' (Rodaway, 2002, p. 84). For Schafer, soundscapes have 'keynotes', repetitive background sounds against which we perceive other sounds; 'signal sounds' are in the foreground and grab our attention; 'soundmarks' are communal, a recognisable sound within a group; the auditory environment can be 'lo-fi' with too much auditory information to discern individual sounds or 'hi-fi' with low ambient noise and discrete, identifiable, sounds. Hearing is passive (listening is active), physical rather than chemical, the detection of vibrations transmitted through the air and intercepted by the ear canal and ear drum membrane, creating a sense of place and distance from the intensity and pitch of sounds. It is exteroceptive, sensing sounds in the environment, and proprioceptive, registering the sounds we make ourselves, particularly our speech (Gibson, 1968).

In some ways, the management of sound is the prime concern of those who work within schools. As the sound engineer searches for exactly the right balance, so too does the teacher, crafting the optimal soundscape within which learning can occur. Hi-fi is the aim, low ambient noise to allow authorised sounds—the teacher's voice, selected children's voices, videos, music—to facilitate learning, avoiding the lo-fi inhibitors of chatting and low-level disruption. Within a hi-fi classroom, teachers can detect the signal sounds of a mobile phone, the rustle of a sweet wrapper, the whispered joke or the laboured sigh. Quiet children can be heard clearly, louder children can be reminded to reduce their volume, styles of language can be policed (Cushing, 2021). In class time, in corridors so quiet that shoes echo, judgements are made on what is heard, timorous teacher voices amid a cacophony of children attract a concerned gaze while thunderous voices may attract a satisfied nod. Elsewhere, voices within toilets and other restricted spaces invite investigation.

Yet outside of the managed soundscape, the emotion of hearing within schools is most acute: the unalloyed joy of children's laughter in the playground, the sudden burst from hi-fi to lo-fi in uncultivated soundscapes, the soundmarks that reverberate away from the school into the neighbourhood, the sounds out of place, like birdsong or a pneumatic drill from local roadworks seeping into the classroom. Hearing here necessitates increased aural vigilance to detect the signal sounds of a child crying from falling over, or a colleague sobbing on exit from the hum of the staffroom, suddenly silent once detected by the communal ear. The unmanaged soundscape is a reminder of the temporality of cultivation, that schools can be unpredictable places and hi-fi can be punctured by a child's sudden fart and the eruption of disgust-amusement or the shrieks at the entry of a bee through the window, all of which

require the teacher to once again manage sound; to adjust their own volume to quell the aural pandemonium and allow learning to once again take place until the signal sound of the end-of-lesson bell and manage the volume of the packing of bags and entry into corridors that can be enforcedly silent or naturally boisterous.

SMELL/TASTE

Often neglected, subsumed by the prominence of the visual and aural, the olfactory sense is as intimate and memorialised as the haptic, navigating the topography of ‘smellscapes’ (Porteous, 1985). In contrast to the haptic, which is responsive to mechano-receptors, smell/taste is chemical, a reaction within the nose and mouth, transmitted through the olfactory membrane to the olfactory bulb of the brain. Smell/taste is also an ‘adaptive sensitivity’ (Rodaway, 2002, p. 64), ‘excited by novelty but dulled by familiarity’ and entwined with our emotions. At work, olfaction is pleasant, for sommeliers or florists; or it can be unpleasant, the bodily fluids facing veterinarians (Hamilton, 2007), doctors and nurses (Bolton, 2005). Smell/taste is the ultimate manifestation of corporeal porosity (Riach & Warren, 2015), seeping from us and into us as we interact with the environment.

Smells return us, often suddenly and violently, to the body; and the school smell/tastescape in particular can evoke powerful ‘Proustian moments’ for both students and teachers. A whiff of a particular brand of disinfectant, a waft of sweaty PE kit or the taste of over-cooked vegetables can take us immediately back to formative school experiences, to ‘restore the past’ (Tuan, 1993), even after a gap of many years. The affective nature of smell, with its continuous reminder that we are embodied, emerges through the pungent smell of body odour in the pubescent child; morning coffee-breath, or the sharp tang of menstrual blood in the toilet block. These bodily smells do constant battle with odour-masking products such as chewing gum, deodorant, air fresheners and strong perfumes. This layering of acceptable and unacceptable smells can form an intense sensory atmosphere, augmented by a lack of ventilation and a reduction in oxygen levels over the course of a school day.

A desire for cleanliness, or the outward appearance of it, in a context where multiple bodies are confined for long periods of time, means that smells associated with schools are often chemical in nature (bleach, floor polish, toilet cleaner, soap), cleansing the imposition on the smell blank-canvas (Riach & Warren, 2015) that organisations seek to maintain. Smell reflects the rhythm of the school day, as morning coffee turns to lunch preparation, the olfactory interruption of a Home Economics or PE lesson, or the increasing pungency of teenage bodies towards the end of a summer afternoon. It distinguishes the inside and outside too, as an open door and a waft of fresh air—perhaps carrying the smell of freshly cut grass or petrichor after rain—becomes associated with playtime, an opportunity for movement, or a rush for freedom after a difficult day. Then there is the staffroom, where smell/taste is cultural and social: certain brands of coffee preferred, cakes as celebratory bursts of sweetness on birthdays and rapidly disappearing biscuits. Only certain meals can be micro-waved (fish strictly banned), full bins avoided, smokers-hue attracting approbation. Within every area of a school, smell/taste is the sense that most reminds us that we are essentially an animal species; and for this reason the one we most attempt (but often fail) to control.

VISION

Ocularcentrism, for Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2009), is a hangover from Kant and the sensual hierarchy that subordinates the other senses. Sight is, however, a matter of appearance rather than pure perception, and what is seen depends upon experience; not

simply a matter of passive seeing but looking in active ways (Emmison & Smith, 2000). Physiologically, sight is the perception of patterns of light and their interaction with surfaces within the environment, received in the retina that transmits and translates light to the brain as nerve impulses. Here, then, vision is a 'creative interpretation of appearances' (Rodaway, 2002), rendering the potential for perceptual errors and illusions. The visual is always about motion, within the environment and within us, and even our visual memories are moving: 'people see as they move' (Ingold, 2000, p. 226).

Teaching and learning are inherently ocularcentric, with all things rendered visible. Children's learning must be visible in order that it might be assessed; the valorisation of the written and the legible to make decisions on progress that can be entered on colourful charts and spreadsheets. Equally, children's behaviour must be visible so that misbehaviour can be swiftly identified and managed, space between children maintained, assemblies watched hawk-like by teachers lined up at the sides. But vision is also the primary sensuous means of the performance management of teachers, the watched body assessed for competence and assigned judgement that can—just as with children—be entered onto colourful charts and spreadsheets. The school experience is designed to operate as an assemblage of surveillance techniques (Page, 2017a,b): glass walls, open-plan offices, doorless doorways, classroom layouts, CCTV, learning walks, teaching observations, all rendering those within schools perpetually visible. Classrooms are designed to ensure unfettered sight of the teacher and the white/interactive board, and teacher mobility ensures that student work and activity is equally visible.

And, perhaps more than any other sense, ocularism is embedded within policies; a binary of what must be seen/what must not be seen. We might think of the policing of uniforms, spotting the perfectly tied tie alongside the inappropriately short skirt; we may think of techniques that insist on children sustaining eye contact with the teacher at all times; vision ensuring children walk in single file in a corridor, or the eagle eye of teachers on playground duty, detecting misbehaviour at 100 yards, a perfect rendering of occupational oclarity (Goodwin, 1994). Landscapes are created with slogans, school mottos, trophies, awards and press cuttings, the exhibition of children's work or thematic displays carefully curated on multicoloured backgrounds, topographies that encode and exemplify the ideology and policy maps of schools. Yet within visible environments, resistance is possible and children (and sometimes teachers) evade sight, lurking in the hideouts in the grounds, the blind spots from CCTV, texting under the table or hiding cheat notes in pencil cases in exams. And so those whose job it is to see must be mobile; motion and vision intermingling to detect the seemingly undetectable, to make the unseen seen, to make visible learning and misbehaviour in equal measure.

CONCLUSION

This paper has brought together theories of culture, phenomenology and materialism to emphasise the entangled nature of teachers' bodily and sensory experiences. This convergence reveals the complexity of working lives for subjects who are always part of multiplicities of bodies in relation, and thus offers possibilities for new understandings of school ecologies. By providing a novel conceptual framework for analysing sensory experience in schools, it has addressed the elisions in the extant literature: firstly, it has provided a focus on the fleshy experience, the distinct physiological experience of teachers with schools by considering each of the senses in turn, as well as how they interact and combine; secondly, it has provided a focus on teachers who have too often been sidelined by the predominance of studies on children; thirdly, rather than a narrow focus on pedagogy, it considers the wider sensory experience and cognition of teachers as employees, as workers, as well as

pedagogues; finally, perhaps most importantly, it considers the sensorium within the interplay of the virtual and physical environments of policy, cultures and architectures, of classrooms as well as other spaces within schools. This framework, therefore, can be used to interrogate school policies at the point of drafting; they can be assessed using the individual senses, to consider how they might impact upon bodies and how bodies might experience them. In research terms, this framework can provide an additional means of examining phenomena within schools; it can add a consideration of the whole sensorium and how teaching, learning and working are experienced by the flesh and what impact that could have on our understanding of lives within schools.

While the culture of a school is generally cultivated to support the development of children and ensure learning takes place, what culture does in equal measure is encode, delineate and manage the sensuousness of the school experience. Internationally, the sensorium differs by culture: we may think of differences in the acceptability of touch, for example, or smells or noise. Schools, equally, are often considered places where the sensorium is culturally determined. There are schools where children must be silent as they move between classes and schools where they are free to talk; 'Teach Like a Champion' inspired schools where children must maintain eye contact with the teacher at all times and schools where children are free to look where they will; schools where teachers must enforce proximal distance from children and schools where a comforting arm is encouraged; schools where food is freshly cooked in the kitchen and schools where it is delivered ready-made; schools that insist on regulation uniforms and those that allow deviation for personal comfort; schools of glass walls where all is perpetually visible and schools with doors and brick and privacy. Viewing the sensorium as solely cultural, however, can suggest a sense of organic growth, of practices and norms emergent rather than deliberate. In schools, the opposite is also true.

In schools, the sensorium is often a matter of deliberate policy-making arising from the ideology of senior leaders, their philosophy and prescription for determining the optimal conditions for learning. Rarely explicit in policy, the sensuous affect is traditionally seen as a by-product of cognitive-centrism of schools; the body seen as a hindrance or an inconvenience to learning rather than an immutable part of the experience of learning. The body is a means rather than an end: flesh as a proxy for engagement and a means to move the mind between classrooms; a source of motion to be fed to avoid disruption of attention; a location of senses to be managed and policed and trained to be sensuous in the pursuit of good behaviour and cognition. However, it is constituted within policy. But the encoding of the sensorium is not just a matter of local policy; national educational policy is equally enacted. For example, we may think of the increase in physical movement and the change in school dinners to combat childhood obesity, or Ofsted's definition of learning that negates the flesh and the senses.

The sensuousness of schools is, therefore, not a by-product at all; it is not an accidental impact or the gradual accumulation of norms into culture. The sensuousness of schools is deliberate and intrinsically linked to the educational philosophies of those who create and enact policy. Here, the management of the body and the sensorium becomes routine and routinised, built into the rhythms and timings of the day as equally as it is built into the architecture of schools. This 'intrinsicness' of the sensorium is only revealed through problematic bodies, through the girl with a skirt too short or the teacher who touches a shoulder or the child of colour with natural hair or the child who uses slang or the teacher who microwaves fish or the obese child. The sensorium detects the problematic body and reveals how deeply engrained the flesh is in the construction of the school architecture and the school policyscape, and engenders discipline. And in this, the fleshy school is political and contested.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

BERA ethical guidelines were followed within this project and, as a conceptual paper, no human participants were involved.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this paper as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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