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**“IT’S ALL OF THESE PUZZLE PIECES.”:  
THE REPRESENTATION AND THE MANIFEST DISCOURSE OF DYSLEXIC  
EXPERIENCE**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

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In  
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**Ruth Gibbons**

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## ABSTRACT

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Dyslexia as a term to define bodies has undergone various interpretations in the 120 years since it was first diagnosed (Shawitz 1996:98). The numbers of people calculated as dyslexic world wide ranges from 1 in 4 to 1 in 10 reflecting confusion about what dyslexia actually is, as well as issues around how people are diagnosed (Elliot and Grigorenko 2014:31-34). Research about dyslexia has happened in a variety of fields including education, psychology, and medicine but anthropology has been predominantly silent in the discourse of dyslexia. This thesis explores dyslexia from an anthropological perspective as embodied experience and expression through worlding. Through working collaboratively with people with dyslexia it explores intersubjective relationships, language expression, sensory awareness and being-in-the-world. A central part of this exploration was using art as a way to understand knowing (Rapport and Harris 2007, Hogan and Pink 2010), which expanded into explorations of how dyslexics attune sensory knowing and pay attention to all of the experiences of everyday life. Using art as an empathetic ethnographic invitation I discuss and explore dyslexia as a way of knowing and moving through the world. Therefore, I focus on dyslexia beyond a diagnosis into the way people inhabit and negotiate their experiences as complex, creative agents in their lifeworlds. The research covers creation of artworks, making new words to represent dyslexic experiences and many discussions late into the night. It has been a collaborative exploration of experience. From discussions of whether Giraffes need scarves through to declarations of “we are iron man” my collaborators have expressed their ways of being-in-the-world and this thesis engages with their dynamic ways of interpreting and knowing the world.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table Of Contents</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>Terminology</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>

### **Chapter 1 – Introduction: “Our voices not heard.”**

What Is In A Name: “We Knew It Was Subjective To Begin With” .....	2
Interpretations Of Dyslexia: “It Is Such A Weird Word Diagnosed. It Sounds Like I’ve Got Cancer.”: .....	3
Finding The Field .....	6
Dyslexia, Creativity and Visual Representations .....	8
Focusing On Dyslexia: “Every experience you have ever had.” .....	10
- <i>Personhood</i> .....	10
- <i>The Everyday: Experience And Expression</i> .....	12
- <i>Aesthetic Embodied Thinking As Worlding: Perception With Feeling</i> .....	13
Intersubjective And Inter-Objective Worlding: Representing Lived Experience .....	14
‘Reading’ The Thesis .....	15
Summary.....	16

### **Chapter 2 – Meaning Is In The Making: “This is how it is I want it to show them that it doesn’t stay one shape.”**

Why Use Expressive Art Practice? Researching Dyslexia .....	20
- Communicating Embodied Knowing .....	21
Collaborative Making Art as Evocation .....	25
- The Process of Making.....	26
- Explorative Practice: “I went why am I?” .....	29
Meaning Through Making: Art as Embodied Knowing.....	32
Opening a Collaborative Dialectic Themed Works: “No It Has To Be Forward.” .....	38
Collaboration Through Mutuality: Individual Works.....	41
- Exploring Experiences with Individuals: Personal Journeys and Collaborative Practice .....	43

Why Art as a Collaborative Method: Mutuality through Art as Method .....	50
Summary.....	53

**Chapter 3 – Introducing my collaborators and their Artwork:  
“We Can Craft Them To Have Deeper Meaning.”**

Amanda.....	56
Elise.....	58
Craig.....	60
Mathew .....	62
Debbie.....	64
Philippa .....	66
Heather .....	68
Janine .....	70
Mark .....	72
Marie .....	74
Aby.....	76
Sam.....	78
DYSPLA.....	80
Contributors who chose not to create artworks.....	82
The Alphabet.....	83

**Chapter 4“Do You Get Those Blank Stares?”: Navigating The Everyday**

Inhabiting A Name .....	85
- “Are there some day’s you’re more dysleXic than others?”.....	87
Correction As Everyday Experience: “I think you meant to say exotic.” .....	89
Moving Through The World: “The Weird Dance.” .....	93
- The Inconsistencies of Left and Right .....	94
- Travelling: “So where exactly are you?” .....	96
- Time: “There are two 10 o’clock’s.” .....	97
- “Wibbly Wobbly Timey Wimey Stuff.” .....	99
Conversations as Creative, Real and Imagined: “Everyone Hurries Us Up Or Cuts Across Us.” .....	101
- “The Blank Stare” .....	102
- “You never know what’s Behind The door.” .....	103
- ...And then there was candle wax.....	107
Summary .....	108

## **Chapter 5 Language With The Body: “To Waffull, Because It’s Full”:**

Words Are Part Of The Everyday .....	110
Words Are Montage .....	111
- Words Are Not Passive: Representing Language With The Body .....	113
Performing Words .....	114
- Creating Meaning: “It’s hard to tell my story.” .....	117
- Beginning of Alphabet .....	118
Corporeal Reality of Words: “I’m not allowed to read them there.” .....	140
Intersubjective Storytelling: “It’s waffull.” .....	146
- Waffull As Joining In: “Sometimes I finish people’s sentences.” .....	151
Playing With and Losing Words: “Powlf-ulm.” .....	150
Transrobe: “I have to watch myself because I get lost in books.” .....	151
Summary.....	156

## **Chapter 6 Exploring The Senses As Embodied Worlding: “It’s Ness.”**

Anthropology, Dyslexia and the Senses .....	160
The Montage of Embodied Thinking Through the World: “You’ve gathered it all together.” .....	166
- The World Is Porous: “I sense out a space.” .....	171
- Paying Attention: “You’re in it and you’re part of the things in that space.” .....	173
Sense-Consciousness: “Dyslexic-Ness.” .....	175
- Ness is Between: “It’s normal for us.” .....	180
Montage Overload: “When it happens you just have to let go.” .....	183
Summary.....	191

## **Chapter 7 Gesturing As Embodied Expression: “To Create More To Create Ness.”**

Gesturing With The World.....	193
Communicating Embodied Knowing: “It’s Discussionnessness.....	197
Gesturing Intersubjectivity.....	204
- Gesturing Listening: “Everyone else feels better, but we have no idea what was said.” .....	205
- Gestures Puncture Proxemic Space: “It was like poof.” .....	208
Dyslexic Gesture.....	210
- “It looks dead.” .....	213
- With Objects: “Everything just flowed.” .....	215
Gesturing Against Bodies: “They have to be uncomfortable.” .....	217
Summary.....	221

## **Chapter 8 Conclusion**

Art as Empathetic Evocation of Embodied Knowing.....	224
The Senses And The Everyday .....	226
- “The Wrongness” .....	228
- “It’s More.” .....	229
Ever Evolving Field .....	238
- Questions For Ongoing Research.....	231
Collaborative Research.....	232
Final Comments.....	233

## **Reference Material**

Bibliography .....	235
Appendices.....	249
- List of research undertaken .....	250
- Collaborative artwork projects .....	252
- Interactive works at Installation.....	278

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## List of Illustrations

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### Chapter 2

In Conversation.....	27
Possibilities .....	34
Five of the Letters .....	35
Meaning is in the Making .....	40
A Collaborative Practice.....	45
The Dialectic .....	49
Amanda.....	56
Elise .....	58
Craig .....	60
Mathew .....	62
Debbie.....	64
Philippa .....	66
Heather .....	68
Janine .....	70
Mark .....	72
Marie.....	74
Aby.....	76
Sam.....	78
Dyspla.....	80

### Chapter 5

Letter F.....	118
Letter C .....	119
Letter A .....	120
Letter M.....	121

Letter R .....	122
Letter H .....	123
Letter J .....	124
Letter S .....	125
Letter T .....	126
Letter L .....	127
Letter B .....	128
Letter U .....	129
Letter V .....	130
Letter E .....	131
Letter Z .....	132
Letter Z .....	133
Letter O .....	134
Letter M .....	135
Letter I .....	136
Letter N .....	137
Letter P .....	138
Letter Q .....	139
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
1 <sup>st</sup> Moment .....	164
2 <sup>nd</sup> Moment .....	168-169
3 <sup>rd</sup> Moment .....	178-179
Final Moment .....	189
<b>Chapter 7</b>	
Gestures .....	196
Come .....	199
Ness .....	202-203
Seeing .....	218-219

## Appendices

Attaining .....	254
Education .....	256
Learning .....	258
Reflections .....	260
Seeing the World .....	262-263
“it’s thinking” .....	265
Outside the Box .....	267
Through the Looking Glass .....	268-271
Possibilities .....	274
“Wibbily, Wobbly” .....	276
Installation writing responses .....	278
Movement is thinking .....	280
Canvas responses to Installation .....	282



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## Terminology

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- DysleXic/DysleXia The use of the capital 'X' defines the experiences and observations coming out of the dyslexic community as sub-cultural knowledge.
- Dyslexic/dyslexia This traditional form of the term is used to relate to medical, psychological and educational perspectives.

### **New Words Created to Represent DysleXic experience.**

- Ness: An experience and an expression of lived experience for persons with dysleXia. Relating to sensory awareness, intersubjectivity and inter-objectivity.
- Noshush: Represents agency when dealing with sensory overload.
- Powlf-ulm : Refers to both the ability to play with and enjoy words as well as the loss of words both spoken and written words.
- Transrobe: DysleXic reading practice where the person reading feels that they are both within the story and surrounded by the story.
- Unness: Dissonance between embodied experiences of ness and societal expectations.
- Waffull : Is intersubjective communication which is full of story details.

### **Senses**

- Equilibrioception: Sense in relation to balance also known as the Vestibular sense.
- Proprioception: Sense of motion, acceleration, awareness of position of body.
- Cronoception: Sense of time within the body away from the clock.
- Introception: Sense within the body and body function.
- Peripheral Chemoreceptors: Sense related to awareness of oxygen levels in the blood triggering breathing and exhalation.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: “Our Voices not heard.”

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Traditionally dyslexia research has focused on the problematics of literacy, describing it as a disorder and alternatively relating it to giftedness. These supposedly divergent literatures both emphasise cognitive processing and situate dyslexia within the brain. I argue that dyslexia is a whole body experience that is fundamentally a way of being-in-the-world that exists across different modalities of perception, in complex and embedded ways involving the whole somatosensory system, rather than the reading issues superficial interpretations of dyslexia suggest. This project, therefore, seeks to expand beyond the problematics and debates about disability and giftedness into the everyday experiences and expressions of dyslexia. I will focus on everyday experience as “bringing near” (Heidegger 2010:1631-1636) of the world, centering on it as active bodily practice by recognising persons as both actors and acted upon in their movement through the domain of the everyday. More specifically, I state dyslexia represents a distinct sense-consciousness and this different paying attention affects people’s bodily constructions and negotiations in daily life. To explore this negotiation of sensory-perception I decided to step outside of existing research methods related to dyslexia. I chose to work collaboratively and to use art as it engaged people in visual, aural, and sensory creative practices, as well as undertaking participant observation. I focused on art as a method because it provides making as a visceral sensory process engaging the body in communicating experiences. Crafting stories and experiences through art as embodied knowing, becomes a way to approach the spaces that exist between words and experience (Taussig 2011:13), it enables mindfulness and self-reflection through ideas formed and half-formed through complex thoughts and corporeal reality. The works here capture moments in time of the exploration of persons inhabiting the term dyslexia and privilege their personal knowing experiences. They represent both individual and shared body narratives in a variety of mediums from digital to sculptural pieces. Through the process of creating the artworks, it enabled a unique way of considering and representing personal knowledge in ethnographic research. My collaborators and I worked together to understand what it meant to inhabit the term dyslexia and through the method, complex topics surfaced and were explored. What emerged was an aesthetic engagement with every day as the art became ethnographic invitations into an exploration of the “bringing near” of the world. This thesis covers some of the complexities we discussed, the

stories shared and artworks created about being-dyslexic-in-the-world.

### **What Is In A Name?: “We Knew It Was Subjective To Begin With”**

Dyslexia has conventionally been described as “a spectrum of specific learning difficulties and evident when accurate and/or fluent reading and writing skills, particularly phonological awareness, develop incompletely or with difficulty” (Dymock and Nicholson 2012:14). Words are used both to identify people as dyslexic and to define their relationships to words as problematic. Accompanying this are descriptions of dyslexic minds or society in general being deficient and/or flawed (Raphael, Salovesh and Laclave 2001, Davis and Braun 2010, Bishop 2007, Ehardt 2009, Marshal 2005, Reid 2007, 2011, Shawitz, Moody and Shawitz 2006). These definitions are used to define people’s lives by wording and essentialising what it means to be dyslexic. What is often missed in this whirl-wind of research and theories are the actual daily embodied experiences of people with dyslexia.

The current, most dominant, voices about dyslexia are about cognition, with the new term ‘Neuro-diverse’<sup>1</sup> reinforcing the focus on the mind, rather than looking at embodied lived experience. Within Educational and Psychological fields, the experience of dyslexia is examined using FMRI's and psychological testing (Shawitz, Moody and Shawitz 2006, Elliot and Grigorenko 2014). To achieve a diagnosis of dyslexia requires completing a variety of different tasks that focus on cognition. The tests gather groups of different ‘symptoms’, looking for a particular profile of strengths and weaknesses. While some general interpretations of people’s experiences become symptoms the parameters of dyslexia are not standardised resulting in a diagnoses of dyslexia being controversial. As Elliot and Grigorenko (2014:150-151) have recently stated, “in many areas identification is still patchy and variable in nature” (Riddick 2010:175). Eide and Eide (2010) have also shown there is, as yet, no conclusive way of diagnosing dyslexia or stating a definitive way the brain processes information. The research that limits its focus to biological functions or literacy, rather than looking at dyslexia from the perspective of dyslexics themselves, makes assumptions about lived bodied experiences. Naomi Folb, an insider researcher in dyslexia, explained her frustration with researchers trying to define dyslexia.

Every time they tried to understand it [dyslexia] through an experiment testing it out

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11111584/GCHQ-employs-more-than-100-dyslexic-and-dyspraxic-spies.html>

through different people they just could never come up with a conclusive answer. All the different studies do not speak in unison together. We knew it was subjective to begin with. Now you've gone and done all these scientific studies and you've come out going, 'Oh it's totally subjective.' Of course it is! (personal communication 2013)

Her frustration with the existing approaches to dyslexia resulted in using elements of ethnographic methods during her Ph.D to address her concerns. However, little has been done to work collaboratively or ethnographically with people with dyslexia. Folb and I also discussed why dyslexics are not regarded as experts on themselves, as she had found, like myself, a lack of dyslexic stories by dyslexics. She had also recently attended a conference run by a prominent dyslexia action group and asked me the rhetorical question, "Why, at a conference on Dyslexia were there no dyslexics as speakers?" (personal communication 2013). In spite of all of the research that has been undertaken the everyday experiences of people with dyslexia continues to be predominately limited to examinations of problematics like reading (Chevin 2009), memory (Bell 2006) and time management (Bishop 2007). It results in stories being lost and as one of my collaborators explained, "our voices not heard" (Anne). I engage with these complex, creative, discursive and expansive voices of people with dyslexia by exploring the commonplace of everyday experience using ethnographic and ethnographic-artistic methods. I will not be using existing definitions of dyslexia such as those within medical (Price , Howard et.Al 1998, Chevin 2009), educational (Carroll and Iles 2006, Rowan 2010 ), social disability (Watson 2011:94-98) or psychological disciplines (Shawitz 2008:142, Thomson 2009), but exploring dyslexia as a term inhabited in the everyday using my collaborators definition through their art and stories.

### **Interpretations Of Dyslexia: "It Is Such A Weird Word 'Diagnosed'. It Sounds Like I've Got Cancer."**

My collaborators inhabit the term dyslexia in their everyday lives. For most they have come to the term through testing including the Wechsler Intelligence Scale, for two through family connections and several from various professionals from teachers specialising in dyslexia to doctors. They were all given the definition of dyslexia from those outside their bodies. My collaborators' experiences continue to influence how they interpret and inhabit the label dyslexia and through their stories and artworks have revealed dyslexia as a vibrant, intersubjective, and aesthetic engagement with the world. I have found a variety of self-interpretations weave through their understandings of dyslexia and can include psychological, medical, social and

educational findings, either rejecting or accepting the outcomes from these various fields. My key collaborators have described the existing research as, often, contrary to their self-knowledge and their intersubjective experiences. The individual interpretations of dyslexia were reflected in the stories and artworks which showed shared practises and disparate ones, expectations of problems as well as the potential for success. These interpretations have ranged from dyslexia as a 'disability,' caused by a brain functioning disorder which requires intervention, - to 'difference' perspectives which interpret dyslexics as being able to "see outside the box" (Debbie) and finally dyslexia as giftedness. Consequently, the term 'dyslexia' I am using in this thesis is different from the medical, psychological or governmental ones and is a term inhabited in the everyday by the people themselves. Thus to distinguish this lived experience I am altering the word to dysleXia<sup>2</sup> to align the term with community/sub-cultural identity; with the approval of my key collaborators.

My collaborators all prefer the term dysleXia which is why I engage with it rather than 'nuerodiverse' and expand it by using dysleXic and dysleXia to represent their sub-cultural experiences. The capital X is done to distance their experiences from the medical, psychological and educational term as it was originally associated, and sometimes still is, with disorder. I have chosen to limit the use of terms like disorder as they are culturally loaded and used for a variety of different purposes - including political and social power as well as disempowerment (Watson 2010:100). Several collaborators support the label 'disorder' and when referring to their experiences, I use it. Barry is adamant that "I have a disorder, I am disabled." He felt, "the giftedness difference thing with dyslexia is only because the rich middle classes can't accept that little Johnny is disabled." He expressed this on one occasion when we went to a gallery. As we stepped into the expansive vestibule on our way out of the gallery, two women approached us and asked us to fill in a questionnaire about the exhibit. He answered "so long as someone reads and writes for me." The ladies replied as if he was joking, with a polite laugh, and handed it to him to fill out. "No, I mean it! I have dyslexia I can't do this." They quickly responded by picking up a pen and form, with one of them asking him the first question. As the questions continued about our reason to be there and how we had found out the gallery was open he became angrier. He explained. "I'm disabled. How can I know the gallery was

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<sup>2</sup> The 'X' is used intentionally. It defines the difference between the medical, psychological and educational perspectives from lived experiences described by my collaborators. The 'x' was chosen by my key collaborators as a way to distinguish their knowledge and lived experience so the lower 'x' remains when referring to psychological, medical and educational uses of the term.

open when you don't advertise in a way I can access." He also told them because he could not read the words next to the work the gallery failed him. "I know they're important, they're there for a reason, but I can't read them, they separate the artworks from me." When he finished, he handed them his card and spoke about dyslexic disability needing to be recognised. For Barry, the word disorder was a place to challenge people to take action to help with his disability.

Jean sees dysleXia as something that exists in a specific place in her brain. It is something to overcome and represents a daily internal battle which she described as sometimes winning and at other times not. "Words are not at fault it is my relationship to them," Jean explained.

Philippa sees disorder as a word which wrongly assumes that her body is in some way faulty. When we talked about dysleXia and finding ways to represent her experience she said "supercalifradyslexicexpialidocious we're amazing." She believes that her way of being-in-the-world is "just as valuable as anyone else's" and the term disorder does not belong in the same breath as dysleXia.

For Amanda, being diagnosed with a disorder would refer to everyone else. She explained "It's such a weird word, 'diagnosed'. It sounds like I've got cancer....a better word for it is being discovered as a dysleXic." She firmly believes that dysleXia is gifted difference, to the extent that people without dysleXia "lead boring and unimaginative lives. They miss out on so much." She makes it clear to those she interacts with that disorder is a term referring to those "left out" of dysleXic experience. This spectrum from debilitating disorder to gifted difference is part of the self-interpretation of what it means to be dysleXic.

Through reading the literature and discussions with various professionals who work with dyslexics it became clear that a label is not an experience and how dysleXics navigate the world remains little understood from a dysleXic perspective. My collaborators' different insights of lived experience at times overlap with existing research, but their interpretations of their experiences are also divergent and contradictory. This research aims to engage with these perceptions through using the everyday as a part of the methodological question. Using an ethnographic method acknowledges dysleXics as agents of their world, negotiating their everyday as persons and dysleXia as an experience lived through people's individual lifeworlds, with all that it encompasses. Clair wanted to make it clear that dysleXic's are individuals and that assumptions about what it means to be dysleXic should be avoided. "We're all coming together

in unity in this one aspect that we have of our lives, but we also shouldn't tar each other with the same brush, you know? Because everyone is different, we should prick that bubble" (Claire).

### **Finding The Field**

I came to research dyslexia through my experiences of people with dyslexia. In my family and extended family, dyslexia is part of our shared stories and history. Stories like those about my great great grandfather on my mother's side who was an entrepreneur, running four London pubs but his wife had to handle the administration as he was illiterate. Their daughter, my great-grandmother, had difficulties with her speech. I remember her saying things like hopsipital<sup>3</sup> rather than hospital and she had difficulty writing. I currently have cousins, second cousins and close family who are dyslexic and twice exceptional.<sup>4</sup> We currently have four generations of dyslexics alive in our family, the oldest is 90, with half our family on my mother's side dyslexic, however, I am not dyslexic.

In my family dyslexia is 'difference', it was and is regarded as a normal part of who we are.<sup>5</sup> However, when I decided to focus on dyslexia for my Ph.D. and began looking through the literature, I was surprised by the muting of the voices of dyslexics' themselves. Their voices appeared to be silent, rather than the vocal and flamboyant people of my experience. It triggered questions for me about why these voices were missing, what stories were being lost and whether a different research platform would make it possible for these voices to 'speak.'

The material discussed in this thesis comes from an ethnographic process of discovery and flexibility. I began my research with a focus on dyslexia in New Zealand but it expanded beyond this initial boundary. The flexibility was particularly important when my research did not begin smoothly, as I struggled to find places where I could speak with people with dyslexia. I had not taken into consideration the negative connotations still attached to the dyslexic discourses in New Zealand, particularly in relation to adults, being told during their schooling, that they were "failures." There was also the "you just get on with it" (Amanda, Philippa) attitude of Kiwis, the interpretation of "the pioneer spirit" (Craig) and the "number 8 fencing wire" (Amanda) mentality

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<sup>3</sup> Word reversal in speech or problems with pronunciation are one of the ways dyslexia can be diagnosed

<sup>4</sup> Twice exceptional is where a diagnoses of Dyslexia and Giftedness are identified together.

<sup>5</sup> The genetic and hereditary factors of dyslexia are still not fully understood although there have been connections found in the 18<sup>th</sup> chromosome. The genetics versus bad teaching discussion continues to be raised with the recent publication of "The Dyslexia Debate" (2014) in which the authors question the validity of the term dyslexia.

of being self-sufficient (the “number 8 fencing wire<sup>6</sup>” mentality is a way of thinking through the world and dealing with problems). The lack of governmental support for dyslexia may be the reason for these assumptions about making do with no help. There were also very small numbers who knew they were dyslexic in comparison to the estimated number of dyslexics in New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in looking for collaborators in the research, it was difficult to find people who firstly knew they were dyslexic and secondly that saw value in exploring their experiences.

During my initial research I found New Zealand used a variety of English methods including the 4D programme as a way to target issues with reading and writing. As I was already going to the United Kingdom to attend a conference I chose to extend my time and followed the research trail to the UK. My process has resulted in a multi-sited approach which

...moves from its conventional single-site location... to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross cut dichotomies such as the “local” and the “global,” the “lifeworld” and the “system.” Resulting ethnographies are therefore both in and out of the world system (Marcus 1995:95).

When I went to England I initially wanted to understand why New Zealand was looking to the UK. In both countries, I worked with a wide age range from the age of 10 to 65. In England, I also altered the method to suit the time and materials available. In choosing to do this, I was not aiming to do a cross-comparative study. However, researching in New Zealand and the UK made it possible for me to see differences in the interpretation and the expression of dyslexia as well as similarities between the two countries. The method, therefore, both sits in the local, for me New Zealand, and converses with the global, thereby sitting inside and outside of the world system.

The research through the exploration of the everyday focuses on dyslexic experiences by

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<sup>6</sup> Number 8 fencing wire was/is a product used by farmers. It is used as a saying to cover anything that needs to be made but with few available resources for the work to be done. Number 8 fencing wire was used to fix problems, invent solutions and make needed tools. It is based on the idea that New Zealand is at a distance from the rest of the world and needed to create what was required due to lack of access to certain goods.  
<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/inventions-patents-and-trademarks/page-1>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz/info.html> there is an estimated 70,000 school children who are dyslexic but adult numbers are unknown.

placing emphasis on my collaborators' representations of being-in-the-world. These different ways of being-dyslexic-in-the-world are reflected in the life experiences of the people involved in the research. The people who took part ranged from the age of 10 years to 65 years and were from New Zealand and England. They were from a variety of different backgrounds from students, to being unemployed, to career academics<sup>8</sup> and their stories and artworks reflect their diverse experiences of the lifeworld and knowledge about being dyslexic.

### **Dyslexia, Creativity and Visual Representations**

Research has been undertaken on the creative process of dyslexia; to the extent that there is a specific Institute at Yale University looking at creativity and dyslexia that is overseen by Dr Sally Shaywitz. Tim West also focuses on creativity and dyslexics as visual thinkers by drawing on research that suggests links between visual thinking, creativity and language difficulties (1997:35, 231). The focus on visuality and creativity has raised debates around whether dyslexics are visual thinkers including work by Wolff and Lundberg (2002) who found a prevalence of dyslexia criteria in art students (41). Dyslexia has ongoing links with creativity, even though debates continue about whether it is part of dyslexia or an adaptation to reading difficulties, with studies often disagreeing with each other (Winner et al 2001, Karolyi et al 2003).

When I chose to use artistic methods, I began by looking at the existing images and representations of dyslexia. The Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (DFNZ) has used art in an ongoing interactive garden exhibition at their base in Christchurch (NZ). The artworks are from a variety of different artists, from both New Zealand and the UK and celebrate the diverse thinking of dyslexics. From Richard Taylor's bronze sculpture of Alice reading with the letters running off the page and around the garden to MacKenzie Thorpe's 'Falling in Love,' the garden focuses on communicating dyslexia through art. The creation of sculptures was a conscious "choice to give people an experience and we've had people from around the world contact us and thank us" (Whitehead personal communication 2012). It moved dyslexia away from text which is the predominant medium of communicating dyslexia.

Other visual images associated with dyslexia are those created of the brain and its processes using imaging technologies. Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) and Magnetic

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<sup>8</sup> I will expand this information in Chapter 3 when I introduce my collaborators through their artworks.

Resonance Imaging (MRI) are ways to visualise and situate dyslexia in the brain (Price and Howard et al 1998, Temple and Poldrack et al 2001, Temple, Russell et al 2001, Hazibeganovic and Noort 2010). The images created of the brain have become popular as a research tool for dyslexia and are a prevalent visual representation of dyslexia. They appear on blogs and websites about dyslexia as well as academic texts and are predominately used to illustrate and to reinforce dyslexia's connection to the brain. Cohn suggested in his research on technologizing the mind that "the image like any photograph, is invested with a kind of autonomy (Edwards, Harvey and Wade 2010:77). This is also the case for fMRI's and MRI's in dyslexia which are further distanced from experience when illustrations are made of them in almost cartoon versions of the scans. Cohn raises concerns that are also relevant to images of the dyslexic brain.

The objectness of the scan is not only illusory but potentially damaging.....the potential deletion of compounding socio-cultural features....through the starkness of the final images, must consequently remain a real concern.....but, as the power of penetrative visibility increasingly dominates the idea of what it is to know, it all too easily might dismiss the central role of subjective experience and social interaction" (Edwards, Harvey and Wade 2010:81).

Unfortunately, the way these images are disseminated can imply a concretising of life in a way that it cannot be concretised. These different images of the dyslexic brain can also result in contradictions and questions (Elliot and Grigorenko 2014:99-104, Eide and Eide 2010:33,38 ) and I believe, the mind and body dichotomy being re-emphasised through them. In this thesis I show the brain is "not an isolable anatomical body, but part of a system that passes through the person and his or her (culturally specific, historically transient) environment" (Buck-Morss 1992:12).

Anderson (2001), in her research on dyslexic potters, begins to open space to describe dyslexic visuality as more than what is seen, by suggesting that clay holds memories and stories. She explained that, through looking at the clay, an object is seen before the making reveals it; consequently, seeing became a process of creating through the body (2001:23). Anderson also begins to raise questions about how dyslexics engage with objects, specifically clay, and correspondingly how they add meaning through the process of making. I found similar connections to the act of making with my collaborators and bring this into embodied thinking

which I will discuss further in chapter 2. In the following section, I begin to raise themes that run through the thesis relating to complex sensory engagements, negotiations of making representations of the lifeworld and dysleXic worlding.

### **Focusing On Dyslexia: “Every experience you have ever had.”**

As an anthropologist, entering a new culture is about understanding perspectives and lived experiences, and I bring those same aims to the research of dysleXia. DysleXic being-in-the-world engages with the lifeworld through the seen and unseen, informed and disparate webs of knowledge. As Elise explained, it’s “all of that stuff that you have those different puzzle pieces from everywhere of every experience you have ever had” (Elise). I will show how ethnographic art practices as expressive of embodied knowing, gave a way to explore everyday experience and enabled discussions of worlding as ongoing, generative being-in-the-world. The artworks, therefore, evoke my collaborators’ life stories and how they navigate the world.

Three main areas relating to experiences of dysleXia have evolved over the fieldwork which flow throughout the thesis. These themes are dysleXic *personhood* - “I am a person and what I have to say is just as important” (Philippa), *the everyday as experience and expression* - “I have learned there are other people like me. I just thought I was strange” (Craig), and *worlding as aesthetic embodied thinking* with feeling- “It’s about drawing everything in” (Amanda). Streaming over and around these themes are discussions of lived experience, intersubjectivity and inter-objectivity.

### ***Personhood***

As I discuss the experience of dysleXia, I recognise my collaborators as persons.

Persons, first and foremost, are centres of something. This is absolutely crucial. It means that persons are not mere conglomerations, inventories, or compilations of diverse features. At the core of the person is a centring, interior focal point of personal being, consciousness, and activity. Persons exhibit structures of internal organisation that provide a hub or nucleus of coherence and continuity of awareness and action. It is not that persons are perfectly unified, harmonised, or consistent internally. We are not. Personal being involves certain degrees of internal disconnection, disjuncture, and lack of integration between parts. People's structures of belief and patterns of behaviour, for example, do not always consistently add up. (Smith 2010:62).

As stated earlier, there are a variety of persons who were involved who have their individual ways of interpreting their experiences. These persons, as Smith stated, are “centres of ...personal being, consciousness and activity” who were active in shaping their representations of their lives in their artworks and stories.

I have found during my fieldwork, that personhood reflected people’s interpretations of dyslexia. I found dyslexic persons’ approach the world actively, with agency and with a loss of agency in moments of the body or society demanding attention. If, as Smith suggests, persons attune to the world through choices made and not made, personal every day experiences, interior dialogues, amorphous thoughts and visceral connections with the world become central to connecting with lived experiences of dyslexia. “It must be remembered that the body, even before it has come to think, is always a sensibly experiencing organism positioned in its world in a way quite distinct from the placing of an object in a box” (Eagleton 1990:22). It, therefore, becomes vital to open spaces (Irving 2009:295) in which to explore these experiences and I found art was one of these places.

My collaborators are creative persons who

...create, grasp, and communicate meanings... draw connections between different entities in ways that generate import and significance for people. Yet the making of meaning is real, important, and ineliminable in human life. The world and its parts do not simply exist for people functionally or at face value. They have significance (Smith 2010:49).

Representing persons through research and depiction within dyslexia relies heavily on particular kinds of words (Watson in person 2013). The process of research and writing up can remove the body from storytelling through the way transcripts lose their inflections and gestures written on the page become still. Through metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson have shown that words are born out of bodies experiences (2003:249), but words, through their format, have particular information that they impart. The inability of the text to give this extra information is problematic for many of my collaborators and limits what can be explored about dyslexic experience. For some of my collaborators, the fact that I am writing about their experiences means that they cannot access information which they have shared with me but through the images they are not

removed from their stories. As persons who can create and symbolise their experiences moving away from text dominant representation opened spaces for exploring and engaging in examining their personhood about dysleXia.

### ***The Everyday: Experience And Expression***

The 'everyday' in this thesis is formed through continual interaction with physical, sensory, social, private and imagined worlds, shaped through interactions in complex, multifaceted intersubjective, inter-objective, mutuality, sensory making and remaking with people and things (Jackson 1997:21-22). For my collaborators, the everyday fluctuates alongside maintaining a concept of 'normal.' The 'everyday' I develop in this thesis is created by my collaborators from their interpretations of daily practices of being dysleXic.

The lifeworld is meaning-making through interaction, intersubjectivity and mutuality (Csordas 2008:111). The dysleXic 'everyday,' I will suggest, is a constant making and remaking through embodied thinking in relation to the world and recognising this constant movement as accompanied by ongoing experiences and expressions. These changes happen in the smallest details from the very molecules in our bodies, the levels of oxygen in the blood and the ways in which neurotransmitters fire. The flexibility of everyday experiences is sometimes a conscious part of daily practice; events may trigger it during the day, for example changing where to get lunch because the line is too long at the usual place, or may go unnoticed in the repeated 'familiar' actions. The "practices of everyday life have the potential for the generation of resistance...or the maintenance of normativity" (Pink 2012:16). In the dysleXic lifeworld, my collaborators have shown many sustained and erratic rituals, which are accompanied by ongoing movement, and possibility within "the mundaneness" (Elise) of everyday life. In using the 'everyday' I am paying "attention to the matterings, the complex emergent worlds and happening in everyday life" (Stewart 2011:445). This commonplace interaction with the world I show as connected with senses, history and emotions that influence the way in which persons interact with people, places and things on a regular basis.

In chapter 4 I focus on the concept of the 'everyday' by drawing on the specific moments my collaborators described as being part of daily dysleXic experience. I then explore the 'everyday' in relation to language (Chapter 5), senses (Chapter 6) and gesture (Chapter 7) as a complex attunement, where bodies labour in making and remaking bringing the world near (Heidegger 2010:1631-1636). "The body as a site of knowing remains largely uncharted territory; both the

body as possessed of an interior space, a personal preserve, and the body as co-extensive with particular geographical, historical, social and cultural spaces” (Rapport and Harris 2007:328). Paying attention to knowing bodies has resulted in focusing my method on finding new ways to explore these experiences. It was one of the reasons for using art and surprisingly led to creating new words to represent these happenings. Therefore, alongside the art, there are varieties of different new terms created by my key collaborators that reflect this everyday worlding and embodied engagement. When I use these new words, there will be a footnote describing the word the first time it is used, and it will be available in the terminology at the beginning of the thesis.

### ***Aesthetic Embodied Thinking As Worlding: Perception With Feeling***

Throughout the thesis, I use aesthetics in its original meaning as a way to engage with the world and the artwork created. “Aisthitikos is the ancient Greek word for that which is ‘perceptive feeling.’ Aisthisis is the sensory experience of perception. The original field of aesthetics is not art but reality – corporeal, material nature” (Buck-Morss 1992:6). Aesthetics, therefore, is useful as it is an approach “born as a discourse of the body” (Eagleton 1990:13). Aesthetics corporeal nature of perception with feeling and discourse of the body embraces, the intersubjective conversation threaded through the artworks. The aesthetic opens opportunities to engage with the body’s discourse in relation to sensory perception. Aesthetic theory recognises art and theory as a dialectic exchange reflecting “representation back on itself and to open it up to what it is not – to make conscious of itself and, in doing so, to indicate the limitations of this consciousness, the gaps or empty spaces within it” (Carroll 1987:55).

I use aesthetics and embodied thinking as an exploration of the senses within dysleXic worlding, engaging the whole person in creating knowledge. Persons as bodies have different sensory connections with things, peoples and objects and aesthetics reinforces sensory-cognition within dysleXic worlding. An example of this is the body’s connection to light and dark. The sensory-cognition when light is on the retina varies to sense of light on the skin. They trigger different acts that take place between sensing, perceiving and interacting with light. Individuals are both actors and acted upon by the light, and these reactions reflect individual’s ways of paying attention to the world - through movement, ignoring or regarding the information. Coming across a completely new object or one that defamiliarises (Ostranenie) can create moments of "in-betweens" (Jackson 2012:84) in the perceptual act, where it is sensed but is not yet perceived; using the light analogy feeling warmth on the skin may be sensed before it is

understood to be sunlight. Senses interact with the object, but perception requires other information, for example, the situation, personal or social history, other sensory information, to give it meaning. The aesthetic discourse of the body connects the senses and knowing person in “a legitimate cognitive mode” (Buck-Morss 1992:6) of embodied cognition. The aesthetic ongoing sensory perceptive acts are active engagement with and paying attention to the world.

Buck-Morss (1992) and Eagleton (1990) suggest an individual’s aesthetic perception has the potential to impact on their interpretation of the world. I will show that my collaborators aesthetic worlding is made up of sensory information, interpretations of expectations, previous experiences, embodied thinking and personhood (Smith 2010:49). The way in which the senses are used and filtered affects these ways of being-in-the-world. Lived experience forms meaning and sensory engagement through socio-cultural spaces and embodied personal experiences of the everyday. Embodied thinking through and with art extended dyslexia into a whole body knowing, not focused only on the mind. Through the acts of perception with feeling, it is possible to use art to explore experiences, as art enabled my collaborators to engage with their experiences cognitively, perceptively and sensorially (Hogan and Pink 2010:163, 165) resulting in various manifestations of their individual worlding.

### **Intersubjective And Inter-Objective Worlding: Representing Lived Experience**

Michael Jackson (1997:8) has suggested that the anthropological project is an intersubjective space created through fieldwork. Through my methods, I have used this space interwoven with conversations, self-representations and various interpretations of themselves and others. I explore intersubjectivity throughout the thesis, woven through aesthetics, embodied thinking and the everyday, alongside the stories of my collaborators. In my collaborators narratives, writing, sculpture, art, film and audio-visual works, intersubjectivity is approached through their lifeworld. They reveal complexities within sensory and perceptive experience as relational, subjective and interobjective ‘conversations’.

Intersubjectivity “lies *between* people” (Jackson 1998:3), *between* personal sensory metaphors and the interpretation of those symbolic representations. I am therefore drawing on the place of the *between* (Stoller 2009:96) as situated amid embodied sensory-cognitive knowing and unknowing and amongst literate experience and sensory experience of dyslexia. In the creation of the artworks, my collaborators also positioned themselves *between* their lived experience and representation of those experiences. The representations created by my collaborators and the

intersubjective spaces took place throughout the fieldwork, particularly in the way that they explored their knowledge using the physical manifestations of art.

### **'Reading' The Thesis**

My method encouraged collaboration through person's voices and artworks, our discussions and explorations of dysleXic-being-in-the-world, theory, and the concept of the 'everyday.' The individual artworks represent specific experiences the person chose to focus on and are in a variety of different mediums, including paint, canvas, digital imaging, sound, photography, sculpture and animation. There is also a group work which looked specifically at dysleXic relationships with language where twenty-three people altered letters of the alphabet using collage techniques to represent their own experiences. The works express the lifeworld out of lived corporeal reality and represent the diversity of person's experiences. My fieldwork took place in both New Zealand and in the United Kingdom over meals together, interviews, discussions, attending support group meetings and the creation of artworks as we explored inhabiting the term dysleXia in the everyday.

Some sections of the conversations with dysleXic people have been structured in such a way that they record the dysleXic voice. The result is that the grammatical structure is not necessarily that of the academic perspective but reflects the dysleXic encounter explored through the artworks and layout of this thesis. The artworks created during the fieldwork are threaded throughout the thesis. They are not added as illustrations but are used to bring readers and viewers closer to people's lived experiences. They add into the gaps that can exist between words and embodied experience drawing other dimensions into the discourse of dysleXia. I use a variety of ways to engage with embodied thinking including quoting my collaborators, quoting shared discussions, descriptive storytelling and sensory quotes, using the various artworks and embodied interaction with the page.

I approach the artworks in a variety of different ways in each of the chapters. In chapter 2, the images explore the collaborative process of using art and are my visual explorations of the fieldwork as it unfolded. Chapter 3 introduces my collaborators, with their artworks, as the works add to the gaps that exist in the written introduction I provide about them as persons. The works reflect their choices in how they wanted to show their stories. Including the artworks constructs "a particular form of description" (Cox and Wright 2012) adding complexity to the simple text that accompanies them. In Chapter 4, I have chosen to limit the images I use and to

focus instead on participant-observation. I have done this in part to create a point of difference between text-based information and the work that follows in the following chapters. However, the page for people with dyslexia is not a benign surface and scanning for information can be difficult, so I have added some small graphics to help dyslexic readers navigate the chapter. It is not done to create a graphically pleasing page but to create a point of reference for dyslexic readers.

In chapter 5 I give equal weight to the visual representations and the text by formatting the chapter to include a section which is made up of the dyslexic letters. Words and images do different work and the immediacy of the images, and the depth of experience they express, cannot be performed in the same way in text, nor do I attempt to do so. In the text, I focus on individual elements rather than on the works as a whole leaving them to communicate their stories on their own. In chapter 6 I alter the way I use the works again. I use ones which were heavily connected with the senses and use Grimshaw and Ravetz “empathic moments” (2006:26), which they relate to observational film, to the works throughout the chapter as they also require “imaginative [and embodied] connection” (2006:26). These “empathic moments” range from artworks which have been laid out to create a sensory narrative, through to film which breaks up the reading process to highlight the body in the topic of the senses. I also use text to create a descriptive story, based on discussions with collaborators. I take these “empathic moments” one step further in Chapter 7 by asking the reader to create gestures and respond to gestures. If the text is being read digitally this may be more difficult to do. The gestures are designed for a printed version, however, if you imagine them as drawn in front of you, it will still be possible to participate. Gestures I will discuss as an experience and an expression of being-in-the-world, so I ask the reader to connect with these expressions through the way I have designed the chapter. These chapters ask more of a reader than a traditional text as they ask for you to pause and become cognizant of your sensory-cognitive acts in interacting with the works engaging in active embodied thinking.

### **Summary**

Through the stories and artworks of my collaborators, this thesis explores dyslexia through the ways they, as persons, make and remake their world. I draw on diverse fields, from phenomenology and sensory anthropology to theories of atmosphere, aesthetics and intersubjectivity, and bring them into connection with dyslexic experiences of the everyday. The

reason for these diverse fields is to put dysleXic experience beyond the existing boundaries of theoretical knowledge applied to dysleXia and to create theory built out from people's lived experiences. In this thesis, rather than being directly confrontational about theory, I critique the work I use through using only what is relevant to build a theory around dysleXic knowing. While I use some work from the fields of psychology and education, these are not my main sources, as they generally focus on dyslexia through the lens of written language. I do not engage in the debate about whether these experiences exist before or after a diagnosis of dyslexia or about whether certain experiences are adaptations to not reading (Wolff and Lundberg 2002). I state experiences from my collaborators' perspectives, drawing on how they interpret and ascribe meaning to being dysleXic and how they 'bring near' the world.

As stated above throughout the thesis, I will engage with dysleXia through people's lifeworlds. I will discuss dysleXic lifeworlds as an assemblage of intersubjectivity, environments, thought, knowledge, gesture, subjectivity, somatosenses and histories as embodied knowing. I discuss dysleXic worlding as active and creative through the ebbs and flows of lived experiences, looking at how people make and remake their everyday alongside their interpretations of dysleXia. Through the artworks created and our conversations I explore embodied knowing and expressions of experience and I discuss embodied thinking between dysleXic and non-dyslexics which can create clashes, revealing the complexity of dysleXic engagement with the everyday. I therefore, explore dysleXic knowing as a multifaceted intersubjective, inter-objective complex interweaving of sensory, social and private being-in-the-world. I begin by discussing the methods I used and the practice of using art as active embodied cognition.



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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **MEANING IS IN THE MAKING:**

**“This is how it is I want it to show them that it doesn’t stay one shape.”**

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Existing research focuses predominately on the problems of dyslexia - placing an emphasis on brain difficulties that are then either highlighted to emphasise disability or used as a foil for giftedness theories. These foci create an overemphasis on either giftedness or disability and fail to consider the importance of collaborative research or ethnographic methods. Explorations about dyslexia are, therefore, sought in particular ways, which then shapes the way dyslexic experience is understood. Anthropology offers a different approach to exploring dyslexic knowing through ethnography and in this chapter, I explore my anthropological practice using art as an ethnographic invitation, where my participants and I could think, make meaning and theorise about what it means to inhabit the term dyslexia. I aim to show that art has value because it enabled an active practice, expressing corporeality and interiorities through an interactive process between objects, persons and materials. Using art opened a particular window to look at dyslexic-being-in-the-world that created an explorative aspect to the research for both my collaborators and myself. The fieldwork for me was part of this process of exploration, which took place between my expectations of the method, the needs of my collaborators and the anthropological goal of coming close to other people’s ways of knowing (Hogan and Pink 2010). It became a journey of emerging learnings, flexibility and creativity. By focusing on art and discussions created through the art, I show, how through its various mediums, it became a way to theorise about the lifeworld. Using my experiences in the field, I discuss the unfolding of the artworks through text and include my visual explorations of my fieldwork practice. I will show the method revealed complexities brought about by the process of art as an ethnographic invitation and how the materialisation of making, through these artworks, resulted in complex interplays between making meaning and bodied expressions of knowing. Therefore, this chapter discusses the processes undertaken in making and creating meaning with persons who inhabit and interpret the term dyslexia through their daily lives; by exploring how persons orchestrate the everyday through the weaving of voices, sounds, images, silences and pauses, corporeal reality, sensory experience and interiorities (Smith 2010, Hogan and Pink 2010, Irving 2011:24).

## **Why Use Expressive Art Practice? Researching Dyslexia**

Methods within dyslexia research have focused on specific areas concentrating on the mind and literacy related to brain processes and reading (Temple et. Al 2001, Rosen 2006, Snowling 2000, Shawitz 2005:82), creativity (Shawitz<sup>1</sup>, Folb and Watson 2012, West 1997), remedial help (Davis 1997, Waldie, Austin, Hattie and Fairbrass 2014, Kodama 2014) and to a lesser degree, research looking at the life course and self-esteem (Laughton 2010, Alexander-Passé 2006, Bell 2006, Dymock and Nicholson 2012, Riddick 2010 ). Art methods have been used in a limited way using photography to explore problematics of dyslexia (Bell 2006, 2013) and drama ethnography (Falzon and Mifsud 2014) with children, but the emphasis in using artistic methods is predominantly on examining existing artists (Albertson 2001, Colgin 2009, Watson 2012, Wolf and Lundberg 2002). There are also non-academic explorations using dysleXic experience to create performances that explore individual's personal knowledge (Benedict Philips,<sup>2</sup> DYSPA,<sup>3</sup> Mathew Scurfield 2014, The Big Picture: Rethinking Dyslexia).<sup>4</sup> Accompanying these approaches have been debates about disability and social models of disability which overlap with the different perspectives (Watson 2013:94, Riddick 2001) and difference as giftedness (Eide and Eide 2011, Davis 1997, West 1997). All of these projects bring strong voices for their perspectives into the dyslexia discourse and to a lesser extent, the dysleXic<sup>5</sup> discourse.

Anthropologists have briefly looked at dyslexia (Kaschube 1972) but anthropology has yet to bring into the dysleXia discourse its various voices. Anthropological ethnographic methods alter the way in which the field of dysleXic experience is entered and explored, due to methods such as participant observation. I chose to use art as ethnographic method to help explore the complexities of the everyday (Sennett 2008:673) and to move away from the mind-body dichotomy often prevalent in dyslexia research (Shawitz et.Al 1998). I found through using art as active making, my collaborators engaged with their knowing experiences, examining and theorising through their artwork, their own knowing (Harris 2007) about experience. The artworks in their creation were, and remain, a complex interplay of hidden and visible lived experiences.

The diversity of dysleXic lifeworlds do not always lend themselves to the written page and become lost in words, graphic images of the brain and statistical data. However, in the

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<sup>1</sup> Sally Shawitz heads up the Yale Centre for Dyslexia and Creativity

<sup>2</sup> <http://benedictphillips.co.uk/rereding-3d-thinkers-in-a-2d-world/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dysthelexi.com/about/>

<sup>4</sup> I am here listing only a few of the artists who engage with their dyslexia through performance.

<sup>5</sup> I use 'dyslexia' and 'dysleXia' to distinguish the difference between medical, educational and psychological discourses and those which come out of ethnographic sub-cultural discussions.

performance work of Aby Watson (2013) and Mathew Scurfield (2014) their corporeality, as people with dyslexia, becomes part of their explorations of their experiences through performance. My aim with the method was to engage with person's everyday bodily constructions and sensory-cognitive experiences.<sup>6</sup> Art because of its different mediums, enabled researching body and personhood, interiorities (Hogan and Pink 2010) and self constructions (Edgar 2004). Art became an ethnographic invitation, opening up spaces in which to discuss, visually and verbally, people's lived experiences. The artworks created both reveal and emphasised certain sensory knowing. As Hogan and Pink have stated "in its most simple form, making an artwork, and reflecting upon it can involve for the participant moments of inner dialogue, the experience of fleeting urges, moods, visceral embodied emotions stimulated sometimes by the tactile qualities of the materials" (2010:158-159). Painting, drawing, sculpture and other mediums have the potential to engage with experience in different ways to words.

Through the creation of the artworks, I hoped that the method would evoke experience through active crafting. The creation of the artworks also produced sensory practices that impacted on the intersubjectivity between my collaborators and myself, which I discuss in the section on collaborative practice. In Paraesthetics, Carroll (1982:xii-xiii) suggests that art opens places to create theory as through its various mediums, when used to evoke lived experiences, it becomes possible to theorise about the lifeworld. Using interviews or more traditional ethnographic practice I would be distanced from peoples experiences, because of the topics able to be explored through words and I would miss the "...conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending centre of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication (Smith 2010:61). Therefore art as ethnographic invitation became central to my practice.

### ***Communicating Embodied Knowing***

I have found current dyslexia research relies heavily on written documentation which creates particular ways of communicating about the body (Taussig 2011:13). Words, Ong (2002:99) suggests, are specific thought objects that cannot express the immediacy of lived experience, for example, in a book no one talks over the top of each other, but in everyday life it can be common. Words, whether written or spoken, create particular ways of describing lived

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<sup>6</sup> These sensory engagements are not related to the currently popular ideas relating to multisensory techniques in education. The sensory here is about existing bodied knowing.



about the body that the act of writing seems “to erase the reality you are writing about” (Taussig 2011:287) but it also creates a type of ‘reality’ about the body. Using art as an explorative practice alongside other communicative forms, explores the lifeworld in different ways to words by engaging in active bodied practices of lived experience. Unfortunately, “conventional scholarly practise is limited in its capacity to communicate the directness of the sensory and affective elements of emplaced experience,” but the use of arts methods brings “researchers and their audiences close to other people’s multi-sensory experiences, knowing, practise, memories and imaginations” (Pink 2009:132). Sometimes words are the best way to communicate, but they are complicated and embedded in particular ways of knowing about the world.

Spoken words, written words, static images, film and sound all create different ways of communicating embodied experience. Words and art mediums come from different privileged expressions of bodies and experiences and as Crowther suggests art, allows for alternative representations of knowing.

In the case of the visual arts [ I would add all art forms], their aesthetic distinctiveness flows out specifically from a privileged relation to human embodiment and its modes of visual perception and space occupancy (Crowther 2009:559).

Art is more than engaging the body in direct representation through action, as the act of speech also engages the body in activity, it is a way of theorising and expressing embodied knowing (Carroll 1982:x). As Sennett has stated, “here is a, perhaps the, fundamental human limit language is not an adequate “mirror tool” for the physical movements of the human body” (Sennett 2008:1461). Art mediums evoke the lifeworld through the act of making and have the potential to elicit sensory discourse by engaging the body in representation (Crapanzano 2004:75, Cox and Wright 2012:120). Sensorial and cognitively rich experiences are part of dysleXic everyday experience and making art, whether static or moving, using sound, touch, interoception<sup>8</sup> and proprioception<sup>9</sup> opened ways into understanding dysleXic worlding.

However, art also has its borders.

Art does indeed represent the sensation of life, but it does not recover it, as it was never

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<sup>8</sup> Sense within the body of the body

<sup>9</sup> Sense of motion, acceleration and awareness of position of body

lost. Instead of representing life in terms and concepts and theories, it represents it mimetically by recreating the unfamiliar and confronting the recipient with an unstable reality (van Heusden 2010:161).

Art creates a different space to discuss people's bodies and being, it creates different types of engagement with being-in-the-world. These complex learned interiorities became expressed in ways that words just cannot do and bodied moments through corporeal materiality became conveyed through the stroke of a paintbrush or the twisting of plasticine. Bodied knowing and bodied language gained a place to communicate (Sennett 2009:1461, Cox and Wright 2012). I also think that this means that in making art there are moments when there are no words to describe the process, but it is a dialogue of bodied sensory consciousness. I wanted this information that exists outside of words and even conscious thought to be part of what I gathered in the field.

Interpreting the field and finding new ways to interact with participants results in anthropological methods becoming more complex (Pink, Hubbard, O'Neil and Radley 2010, Amit 2008:5-7). To access my field, I had to find different avenues, as living with my collaborators for a year was not practical; there is no village<sup>10</sup> of dyslexics where I could go to participate and observe. In spite of this, I wanted to focus on "the social reality of the lifeworld" (Jackson 1997:19) and to create an intersubjective collaborative practice. As Jackson has stated

...ethnographic fieldwork brings us into direct dialogue with others, affording us opportunities to explore knowledge not as something that grasps inherent and hidden truths but as an intersubjective process of sharing experience, comparing notes, exchanging ideas, and finding common ground. (1997:8)

In my anthropological approach to dyslexia through art, opportunities arose around people's personal knowledge, interiorities and their explorations of the everyday. The method enabled conversations through the artworks' representations of embodied and sensory experiences and resulted in new conversations that later led to creating new words to express these experiences in language. Opening space through arts' methods created an environment for people to make

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<sup>10</sup> Many collaborators I worked with have not knowingly spoken with people who are dyslexic outside of their families. This adds a dynamic of isolation. For many of my New Zealand collaborator's in meeting other dyslexics they found that more people began talking about dyslexia creating a ripple effect of conversations about dyslexia outside my research.

meanings of their sensorially rich lifeworld, from a variety of different mediums. For my key collaborators, this resulted in in-depth discussions about experiences and in finding commonalities. Through the active making of the works “the irreality of the imaginary impresses, the real on reality and the real of reality compel[led] the irreality of the imaginary” (Crapanzano 2004:15). The artworks, in drawing the unreal and the real into expressions of self, reveal multidimensional complex persons. In choosing to use art, I hoped that it would have a way of communicating experience through its need for sensory and bodied engagement. When I began this process, I did not understand the complexities that would emerge through making art or conversations that would surface because of the act of making.

### **Collaborative Making: Art as Evocation.**

I began this project with the aim of watching the process of other people making. This did not transpire as expected. The evocation of embodied thinking using art, which focused on dyslexic experiences of language, went ahead with a variety of different age groups, but people seemed unwilling to look at individual expressions of dyslexia. Even though the method did not seem to be working, I felt it was important to stay with art. Not because I have a particularly strong background in arts, in fact, I have more training as a musician than an artist, but there was something I thought that art could bring that interviews and ‘hanging out’ as participant observation would not. I could not articulate it at the time, and to be honest, I still struggle to do so. It is something about the ephemeral openness of it and the fact that art does not close something down to a defined ‘thing’. The openness of art “frames debates around visual anthropology” (Cox and Wright 2012:122) and when it came to the Installation<sup>11</sup>, after the work was completed, I thought that it was a problem too, but as Cox and Wright (2012) have suggested, art is “evocation.” Art as making, engages active thinking, bodied, persons in exploring lived experience through interiorities and the corporeal reality of creating.

Seeking understanding is, I believe, born between the gap of existing knowledge and the unknown by placing persons between knowing and unknowing, building stepping stones towards understanding. How they are evoked influences the gaps traversed and the spaces filled in creating a bridge to mutuality. I found art opened up an empathetic dialogue during the fieldwork and built paths to both understanding and confusion. They were a process of ever unfolding information which both made sense and at other times seemed incongruous. These

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<sup>11</sup> At the end of the research all of the work was put together in a one month long Installation.

evolving explorations resulted in different ways of discovering experiences through an empathic walking with my collaborators through creative practice. Pursuing understanding about everyday experience revealed itself to be multifaceted and complex through the fluctuations of information created during the practice of making.

I started with the aim of asking people to represent their own experiences, but as it was not working (because people were not coming forward), I looked at my method and altered my practice. I did this in several ways, including suggesting a photographic walk and/or offering myself to do the technical work of making the image to the person's specifications. To deal with my growing panic about nothing being made, I also became a maker and pushed myself outside my normal boundaries, using the works as fieldwork engagements. The result was I attempted sculpture and wearable art for the first time, as I began to work on pieces; which were based on themes that had arisen from my initial interviews. I chose mediums which could be used to share exploring dyslexic experience, as I hoped that people could contribute. I found doing this opened up explorations of experiences and ways of asking about bodied knowing that I did not have the words to ask. Participant observation, therefore, happened through the art, through its making and in collaborative making.

Through making art as a process, it shone a light on experiences that I would never have known to ask at the beginning of my fieldwork, as I did not know their bodied experience. As people let me into their ways of knowing, I learned more about the depth of the experiences I had initially asked about, but this was a process for all of us. They had to learn to trust me, trust their abilities to use art and become familiar with using art as an exploration of the lifeworld. The caution of my key collaborators changed completely on the night I showed them the work I was creating. It was at that point that our journey became more complex as we began exploring their experiences with each other and building their explorations into my own.

### ***The Process of Making***

Art was a way to discover what it meant to be dyslexic with each other and with me, the non-dyslexic. Spaces for dialogue and empathic explorations were posed through the group pieces by myself, through the way that I shaped the works, chose colours and interpreted my collaborators. They resulted in responses to the non-verbal observations I had made, and sometimes not recognised, but created in the work.



### **In Conversation**

(An Exploration of Mutuality created as I began my Fieldwork)

In the art of inquiry, the conduct of thought goes along with, and continually answers to, the fluxes and flows of the materials with which we work. These materials think in us, as we think through them. (Ingold 2013:327)

Inquiring with materials and making, resulted in imaginative descriptions and un-worded knowing layered in the process of creation. The thematic works became places to explore the field and often the works would begin representing experiences of which I was not fully cognisant, becoming a journey into mutuality created through art as active practice.

One of these works started with a desire to show how dyslexic's sensorially interpret their lifeworld. The work had begun with trying to find a way to represent the stories during interviews about paying attention. "We see everything at once from all directions" (Mathew), "We sense the entire world around us, we don't just see what's in front of us" (Elise). I decided to use representations of the body (in the form of a cardboard mannequin) and attach mirrors that could reflect the environment. I ran the mirrors down the spine as it felt like the right thing to do. When we discussed the work, part way through its making, I asked whether the body should be completely covered and what they felt needed to change. I was told to add another type of reflective surface as "sometimes the information is vague, it's not the same around the whole body" (Amanda). The spine "feels right" (Craig) I was told. Like myself they did not understand why, but I was told "it feels right, don't touch it" (Philippa). I had also placed the mirrors on the body surface but was asked to put them over the ends of the neck and the arms. Without knowing I had asked about the sensory connection with the world being related to surfaces of the skin and the barriers between inside and outside. I was later told it was not simply about the interior, exterior boundaries, but something deeper, including the importance of arms and head in sensory engagement and their connecting with the world, not with surfaces, but with their whole being. Over time, the position of the mirrors has become more important, as we have explored sensory awareness. Drawn into this making meaning is "the symbolic act, stimulating a critical reflexivity on the part of participants and observers..." (Marcus 2010:269). The observation that I had not realised I had created in the art, became central to my future understanding of dyslexia and I found this influenced how I discussed dyslexia when I went to the UK.

Using art as an exploration of experiences made it possible for me to open up spaces early on

in my fieldwork, to ideas that were not fully formed - to use them as an intersubjective space and for embodied thinking with my collaborators. They provoked discussion; we shared in understanding and not understanding their meanings, but sensing their 'rightness' or 'wrongness' without the words to explain.

My collaborators' reflexivity and the way the field evolved, affected the way in which I inquired about embodied knowing. Using art resulted in evoking experiences which were layered with embodied and intersubjective meaning. Working visually, kinesthetically and verbally through embodied cognition opened space to explore dyslexic intersubjectivity, mutuality and the lifeworld. Using art became a way "... of opening up the space in which to discuss the contingency of people's bodies and being" (Irving 2009:295) and crafting of experience within art forms became central to this. Heidegger (2010:120) suggests that bodies and Beings are complex spaces that are impacted on in the way a person is questioned. I would suggest that rather than art being used to question, it is, instead, an invitation to exploring lived experience, which is influenced by the mediums used and the ability to explore knowing, whether verbal, written or, as I found, through making art as embodied thinking.

***Explorative Practice: "I went 'why am I?'"***

Shapiro (2010:1670) suggests that embodied thinking is linked to the use of metaphor drawing on the work of Lakoff and Johnson. They have suggested language is drawn from bodied experiences stating, "our conceptual system is largely metaphorical...what we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor" (2003:1). The metaphors used influence communication (Lakoff and Johnson 2003). I would add that the metaphors and their mediums impact on how experience can be explored. Embodied thinking through metaphor and corporeal reality, influenced making the art. Material images and objects that were part of everyday experience, through ostranenie (making strange) created meanings. These meanings, when juxtaposed against each other, were used to express bodied interiorities. The representations of experience, manifested in constructions, uses of symbolism and metaphor drawn from bodied practice. These being-in-the-world metaphors became active answering and exploration of everyday embodied knowing, through imagery, sculpture, and film. The different mediums chosen influenced my collaborators' interpretations and representations of everyday dyslexic experience, as using sensory methods opened space for discourse visually, tactilely and specifically about their lifeworld.

Fieldwork is not 'paint by numbers', where the process is laid out and it is only a matter of

asking what colour goes where. For me, it is more like a watercolour, where the different washes and colours bleed into each other and slowly take form as the colours juxtapose and blur. Watercolours are made of layers of paint, there are overlaps and mixing, but the different additions enrich the work, adding complexity and unexpected effects. Through remaining flexible, the changes in my method opened opportunities for explorations of embodied knowing to wash over and bleed through each other. Just as watercolours need materials to be created using art made materials available to the process of understanding and being with my collaborators. I have used art as *with*, collaboration as *with*, lack of my understanding as *with* to join my collaborators in this unfolding process of making. Through explorative art practices, there were some shared experiences, but in reality the individual person was highlighted. It has been in these discussions, and making with individuals, that personal experiences have been explored and interpretations of dyslexia as bodied experience surveyed.

Through crafting representations, my collaborators included perceptions, imagination, embodiment and intersubjectivity. I also learned through my experience with Debbie that asking questions to clarify my understanding could influence making. Talking with Debbie about the painting she wanted to make, I asked, "is there a reason for choosing to paint?" She asked me to clarify. "Is there a reason you want to paint rather than use another medium?" I explained. She looked at me confused, so I clarified further. "We've just been talking about how you see things in 3D rather than 2D on a flat surface; I was wondering if choosing a canvas was part of this representation." She responded, "I hadn't thought about it." At our next meeting talking about her work, she explained. "You blew my mind when you asked about the painting. I just hadn't thought about it, and when you said about other mediums, I went, why am I? Why do I have to do it this way? I started to think about it, wow, what can I do, I can do anything." We then sat and talked about her new plans, which evolved into a 3D DNA strand reflecting her new desire to include sculpture and her experiences of the year she created her work. My question and Debbie's response resulted in art providing a platform for mutuality in seeking to understand corporal reality.

Part of the process of making encouraged people to explore experience through creating the artworks. As persons with agency, my collaborators were able to make choices around what they shared, withheld and the forms used to do this. For many collaborators, they spoke about looking at their experiences and examining them. The creative process gave an opportunity to explore their ways of knowing. It became a place

...to be able to gain enough distance from oneself to make oneself the object of one's mental gaze, to look inward. It is not simply to be a knower, but to know that one is a knower in a way that this reflexive self-awareness can condition one's knowing, not only about the external world but also about oneself (Smith 2010:63).

Using "art defamiliarises our habitual perception of the everyday world" (Kessler 2010:64) providing ways to explore knowing. As stated above words and art are different mediums and as words are central to dyslexia discourse I believed it was important to build mutuality about language through art. It was a point where I began privileging the voices of my collaborators by asking them to explore language away from the various literature and remedial therapies which colonise bodies. Part of the original goal of the research was to address how people with dyslexia would represent their experiences and therefore, approaching language became important. People from the age of ten to sixty-five engaged with the exploration of language through art and in this making the letters became symbols of experiences of text. With the alphabet, there were no guidelines on how to do the letter. People began by choosing a letter and then making selections from the materials available. There was a wide variety of objects as well as paint, glue, glitter and plasticine. The objects also included a watch Philippa's mother (May) gave me. As May handed it to me, she explained "I want to know what people do with it, what the watch will mean." In choosing the objects, I believed that "intrinsically hidden in an object are multiple experiences waiting to be told" (Paskow 2004:101) so I gathered as many objects as I could. Questions about art were posed through the potential of the objects to represent or explore knowing.

There were moments when evoking experience through art became overwhelming. For some of my letter collaborators, choosing which objects to use was difficult. Luke explained the problem that there was too much choice, and he didn't know which direction to take. Sarah, one of the school students, struggled because "there're so many options. Normally I can picture what I can do but this time it was like Whoa" (Sarah). Wanting to represent their perspective of language became more complex as they viewed it through the multiple objects as symbols (Smith 2010:49 – 50) of experience in front of them. I learned that this initial feeling of being overwhelmed changed through kinetic engagement with touching the objects and art supplies I had brought with me. The objects then became something tangible, connected with the body

rather than abstract ideas .

I am amazed at the paths that we travelled. I began seeking to understand about everyday experiences which evolved into active and dynamic explorations of dysleXic worlding and embodied knowing. I would never have known to discuss the differences they experience in sensory engagement with the world but through using art and working collaboratively I was able to take part in different kinds of exploring experience. Art as an ethnographic invitation became a way to knowing more but also opened up vast areas with more to be explored.

There was a point when we stopped seeking to understand dysleXic experience and I was left with questions about the existing dyslexia research. I have struggled with the existing research; I have constantly questioned myself as to what I am missing or whether I am failing to find the material when looking for literature. I keep thinking that someone must have thought of inviting people to collaborate in exploring embodied experience before; someone must have used art to explore embodied dysleXic knowing. I am still looking, as I have been for four years. The approach seems to remain around disorder, limiting the spaces for understanding peoples lived experiences. I wondered if I was misreading the work or if people with dyslexia are subsumed in the academic and political agendas which define questions to such small parameters because of funding, time constraints and fields of study. These are still questions that I am asking of myself.

### **Meaning Through Making: Art as Embodied Knowing:**

The artworks revealed forms of knowing and knowledge making. "...Our human capacity for imagination and creativity- can encompass all kinds of knowledge. Our human poeticism is at once the centre and the circumference of our human ways of knowing" (Rapport and Harris 2007:309). The individual artworks, unlike the letters, underwent multiple changes and variations as my collaborators examined their experiences and the intersubjective purpose of the works. Over the year many of the works were created, there was also, as Sennett has suggested, the "process of making concrete things" (Sennett 2008:164) being an exploration.

Making meaning, as ethnographic exploration, came through individual and shared representations and interpretations through art interlaced with knowing. Interiorities reflected in sound, visual and kinesthetic forms are representations of embodied knowing, rather than explorations of a day in the life of a dysleXic. Merleau-Ponty has suggested that Cezanne's own embodied knowing, specifically his relationship with the world through colour, influenced

the way he painted the world (1945:4-7). Cezanne's bodied knowledge was placed on his canvas and palette through his mixing of paint colours and strokes of the brush, showing connections between techniques and bodied knowing (Merleau-Ponty 1945:8). The relationship with the canvas, paint, and Cezanne's thinking, sensory body, influenced the way he experienced the world and made art. This affinity between embodied experience and art was also found by Irving, who discovered work produced by people near to death were conveyed in the artwork, through expressions of joy, pain and loss (2009:297-298). Just as Merleau-Ponty suggests Cezanne's work would not exist without his vision differences, and Irving, that lived experience is expressed through art, I suggest that the same is the case for the work in this research.

In the act of making, the mind and body are in continual dialogue with the world (Sennett 2008:1922) and my collaborators drew from their individual body-knowing and discussions to create their expressions of dyslexia. The crafting of sculptures, films and the images reflected their thinking, feeling, histories, interiorities and knowing through art as an active practice. The work where this is particularly evident is in the Letters. Each of the letters represents an individual point of view of language. The person's skills, interpretation of their experience of language and the way they chose to represent it tell these personal stories. People drew from their individual stories and experiences to alter the letters. In many situations, the letters remained in the existing shape and had colour and/or objects added to them.

At one session, I had ten students at the same time, they seemed focused on their own work and the lack of crossover in style reflects that, like Cezanne, they were using their own bodied knowing to make their artworks. The letters use a variety of symbols and metaphors to communicate experience with the aim of expressing their knowing of words. For example, Karl had found out he was dyslexic a few weeks before the letters focus group. He sat staring at the letter and then grabbed a paint brush; I watched as he painted black and grey all over the letter (V). As he finished, I asked him about his letter. On an exhaling breath, he said, "Words are just boring." Sarah (letter S) collected May's watch and began shaping horns with some wire mesh. As we sat talking, she stabbed the end of the 'S' and began pushing the horns into place. She pointed to the clock explaining time, "that controls whether I love or hate words."



**Possibilities**

(An Exploration of symbolism of language)



Five of the letters completed.

At another focus group, Jacob had other plans (Letter J). He asked for a pair of scissors and began digging into the letter, cutting and dragging the cardboard out of shape. He collected paint, keys, glue and a padlock placing them over the letter, deciding what would go where. “This is how it is I want it to show they don’t stay one shape” (Jacob). Jackson took great care dividing his letter in half, “words are good and bad; they are not one thing,” (Letter H), and Taylor ran various objects through his fingers as he positioned and repositioned them (letter N). As he was making I asked him what he wanted to do, “I want to show words lock themselves away” and I watched as he tightly wrapped wire around the letter, locking it away.

Language through the use of the blank letters, was thought about and materialised in the artworks created (Tuan 1989:240). As I suggested above, just as Cezanne was influenced by his embodied experiences, so were my collaborators as they chose how their letter would carry their experience. Their own knowing of language influenced the choices they made through the objects, colours and shapes added. The letters became through the process embodied semiotic representations of language. Art enables this juxtaposition of the lifeworld to be explored through re-making meanings, using everyday objects (Van Huesdan 2010:160) with embodied knowing.

In writing about the phenomenology of art, Paskow suggests that through paying attention to objects, in particular art, it creates a relationship between the thing and us. “Each thing we encounter if sufficiently attended to, will be felt to have a kind of personality for us” (Paskow 2004:101). In choosing the art forms, my collaborators were making meaning, relevant to their knowing, in the piece. I suggest this resulted in a *between* (Stoller 2009), a place where the works existed in the creative space of making with embodied knowing, becoming complex virtual elsewheres (Crowther 2009:356-540). Rather than being the finished work, the complex virtual elsewhere became a part of the making and representing the importance of the works as pieces of discovery and self-exploration (Hogan and Pink 2010:167).

Each piece is given meaning through the layering of histories, interiorities and reality as “without the depth of memory, experience is impoverished” (Morss 1992:16). These images had embodied emotions sculpted and collaged into them (Hogan and Pink 2010:159). The expression of knowing often relied on existing metaphors; for example, themes that carried across the alphabet included keys and padlocks, good and evil, and time as a negative experience. Malleability was another theme that was important, with plasticine being used as a

medium to create texture or for sculpting. Metaphors, as part of language, are “containers for meaning” (Lackoff and Johnson 1980:10) and metaphors in the art are also containers that point to other meanings, corporeality and sensory information. After the letters had been completed, I sought to understand what was assumed about these artworks, away from the context of their creation. I used John Berger’s (1972) technique of showing the work to a group of people who had no understanding of the works’ histories. I showed them to an undergraduate class without giving them any background and asked them what they thought the letters were saying. One student asked if they were produced by prisoners, another if it was language students who made them. We continued to unpack their assumptions about the artists and found the recurring images of imprisonment and being locked away, of lack of access, colour and metaphors of freedom had assigned the works’ meaning and made them think about particular groups of people. The letters, when shown as a group, created a collage of information that was used to re-evaluate their meanings. As Irving (2009) found in his work, connections with corporeality and expression remained connected with the works. Even though the artists and the context for the works were not present, they communicated experiences through their metaphors, juxtaposing themes and colours.

The reflexive practice which art and craft afforded, as engaged bodied knowing, enabled my collaborators to explore their experiences. “In other words, the imagination, in all its artistic permutations, enables us to approach the world afresh. Inspired by the imagination, art enables us to weave worlds...” (Stoller 2009:2113). Imagination and embodied thinking facilitated stories and sensory experiences to unfold and empowered my collaborators to do so. Berger links the weaving through art to the act of drawing as something uniquely corporeal (Berger in Taussig 2011:39), I would add that this also needs to include other methods people engage with, in the act of making, as making is corporeal. Making through art was woven into people’s daily experiences, using embodied knowing. Whether in the act of making they “climb into the screen and have a look around” (Craig) or chose to weave the experience through a corporeal poem, making was embodied thinking.

The very act of creating an image (irrespective of one’s practical intentions and subsequent uses of the image) one literally acts upon the world, and in so doing, changes one’s cognitive relation to both the represented object and to oneself, and to existence in more general terms (Crowther 2009:335).

### **Opening a Collaborative Dialectic Themed Works: “No; It Has To Be Forward.”**

As I stated above, when I changed my practice in response to people not coming forward, I included working with individuals and creating works myself around the themes coming up in the research. I decided that if I was going to become a maker myself, central to my involvement in making was not to limit the mediums I used, especially as I was asking other people to try something different I needed to be willing to do the same. I decided to focus first on the needs of the issues I was going to represent and what mediums I believed would be best suited to them. I was very nervous about creating works related to the themes, which had arisen during interviews, as I believe lived experience influences art, and I was concerned my embodied knowing would affect the creation of the works. So I began by looking at experiences I shared with my collaborators and focussed on one about schooling. School was not a natural fit for me, I struggled particularly with writing, and in my teenage years, due to health issues, I missed a large amount of high school. I could relate to the struggles described and recognised experiences within my body that they were recounting. I returned to my recordings, noting where education and learning were discussed and the tones of voice and verbal expressions that were used. From there I used my creative practice to look at possible meanings and metaphors and how they could be attached to different places or objects. I initially decided to create Maori cloaks and layer them with metaphors around education and learning, but I was worried I would denigrate these precious objects or the Mana associated with them. Instead I decided to use a generic cloak to build on as the initial connection with education.

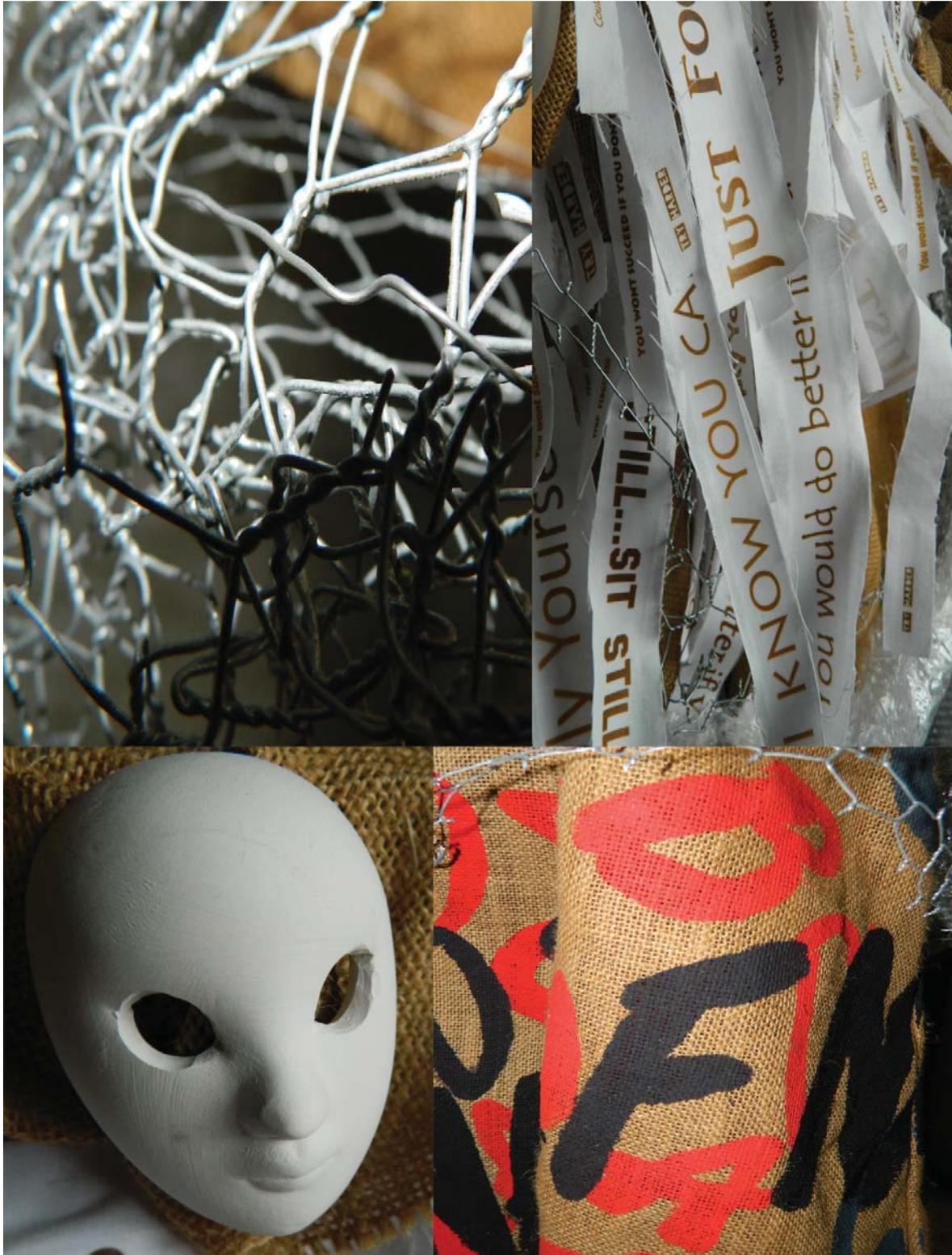
Some of the images seemed natural, like screen printing grades on the surfaces and masks to represent watching. The wire hood also seemed a natural, fit as in my field notes I had recorded the gesture of people spreading out their hands, pushing them towards their heads and talking about the way their brains were locked down at school. Still stuck on the idea of the Maori cloaks, I wanted to create a feathered effect. To do this, I wrote down and typed up the comments that had been given to my collaborators on their report cards and then put them on cloth that I made into strips and sewed on. I wanted them to be like a weight on the shoulders. It was not something that my collaborators focused on but they distanced themselves from it, instead choosing to focus on other aspects. I found out later that it was personal and in reading the words they could hear the voices of various teachers saying them. They distanced themselves because they did not want to engage with those memories.

In making, I learned how to shape the framework for the wings and hood and I learned about

various mediums to get the right paint effects. Making was not always an easy or rewarding task, but it was essential to the ethnographic process and helped me to remain reflexive of my practice. Most importantly, I learned to hold the works out in open hands so that they could be altered and changed as my collaborators desired, which sometimes was difficult. However, I used these moments to understand why I felt it was important to me, to ask myself whether I was losing something valuable, misunderstanding my collaborators or caught up with a particular aesthetic. I then worked on letting go of my assumptions of the artworks and sought to understand what my collaborators were saying. The conversations about these works began from the first time they came to see them and I made clear on each occasion that they were unfinished and could be changed at any time.

At our first dinner, after the works had begun, whilst it finished cooking, we walked over to the education cloak. I noticed the wire Hood had fallen forward again on the mannequin and went to reposition it. “No, it has to be forward like that. I thought it was there on purpose” (Philippa). With guidance, I moved the hood down to the position wanted. “That’s it, hunched in and shoulders drooping” (Amanda). I had created the wire hood to show the experience of controlled thinking that had come up on several occasions during interviews. I did not know this extra information that needed adding. The metaphor took on yet another layer of information through our interaction with the pieces. My position of the hood hid some of the stories, and the artwork is symbolically richer for the changes made by my collaborators. The discussion of the hood showed how metaphors, whether written, spoken or visual will reveal information and “hide other aspects of a concept” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:10). This collaborative making of meaning resulted in an exploration of experiences and bodied knowledge by opening up and hiding parts of their stories through embodied metaphors.

Creating the themed artworks and collaborating with peoples’ individual representations, resulted in a heavy workload. As the Installation came closer and I was overwhelmed by the work load I asked my key collaborators help with work on the themed pieces. The works were brought into the lounge at my house and art supplies were spread out on the table and over the floor. People worked on various pieces, swapping and changing throughout the day. The fine details and getting the ‘right feeling’ was frequently discussed, triggering stories and discussions. On one occasion there was a debate about using peacock feathers, as Amanda was concerned they were bad luck. To make sure that this was not the message given she and Elise added artificial gems to some of the feathers. In doing this the weight of them reshaped



Meaning is in the Making

the feathers creating curves where there had been straight lines and giving the piece the movement that had been so important when we discussed it at the dinner. The cloak had jewels, feathers and ribbons added until everyone said it “felt right.” It was not about looking right but an internal embodied sensing of the information being communicated.

One of the pieces I had begun creating about dyslexic agency, with a wire frame and keys, had been a static sculpture then suddenly became more vibrant as sound and movement were added to create “the sound of flight” (Amanda). To check the sound, Amanda would run her fingers over the keys, “is it right yet?” and when she felt she could not get it right, Elise helped. The works became an ethnographic space to explore knowing through materiality and these works needed this information; it was not enough for me to do them alone, as they were not my stories but theirs. The layers of metaphor through the images and sound were drawn from my collaborators’ individual and shared experiences of being dyslexic. Their meaning was placed within each of the works they created, as the artworks each provoked self-reflexivity through embodied sensation. Ethnography of the everyday “demands a form of reflexivity that goes beyond the interrogation of how culture is ‘written’ to examine the sites of embodied knowing” (Pink 2009:15). Working collaboratively, this reflexivity took different forms, at times it resulted in people standing or sitting in front of the works with their eyes closed; I was told it was about sensing the works not simply about how they looked, they had to “feel right too” (Amanda).

The act of creation for both the letters and the other artworks, blended real experiences and imagined intersubjectivity into complex representations.

The technique of art is to make objects “unfamiliar,” to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged ( Shklovsky 1917:2).

Through defamiliarisation (Ostranenie), it became a process of re-making the familiar with new meanings, causing people to take time evaluating the possibilities and their experiences and in doing so they challenged the routine perception of the objects used. These pieces I have never seen as mine. I have contributed to their creation and learned both physically and mentally about my collaborators experiences and making them firmly ours.

### **Collaboration Through Mutuality: Individual Works**

Working collaboratively with individuals was a different process to the group works. In creating these works, I spent more time with my collaborators, which resulted in interesting conversations in the way knowledge and experience are reproduced. Crowther suggests “picturing is an activity where making of the image is inseparable from the network of intentions and purposes and practical contexts in which the work is produced” (Crowther 2009:770). Through working collaboratively, in creating the works, as well as the intersubjective purpose of the works we explored ideas of making meaning, embodied knowing and expectations of the piece in the work it needed to do.

As stated earlier, Paskow claims that through paying attention to objects, in particular, art, it creates a relationship between the thing and us (Paskow 2004:101). However, this rapport is predicated on difference and creating spaces in which mutuality has a platform that is “continually being generated, tested out, and reworked...” (Irving 2009:295). Histories, existing relationships and embodied knowing affected mutuality as we explored making. The making of the works was influenced by choices made within structural, interpersonal and societal constraints (Ingold 2008). Mutuality, while predicated on difference, exists within hermeneutic borders and limits that can result in misunderstandings. Mutuality is a way of bringing into being shared moments, but people remain agents in the process of making. The aim of the work by my collaborators was to link sensory communication with their works, to share elements of their lifeworld. In the moments of creation, conscious decisions were made about what they would express and in doing so, they made interpretations about myself, the research process and the media they were using to express their individual experiences.

Philippa was interested in springs. As we sat at her kitchen table she chose a letter and began searching through the box looking for what she wanted to use. “I love springs,” she exclaimed as she came across one in the box, “because they do things [and] can move.” As she played with the spring, she talked about how dyslexics are like springs and at school (she was 16 years old) teachers focused on keeping the spring compressed. “There is so much more inside us, if they would just let us stretch out they would see.” We continued talking, and she kept looking through the objects, getting excited about them, but choosing little for her letter. She instead painted it black, put it aside to dry and looked for something to “bling” it. At the end of the session, we began talking about what she would like to create as her individual work and she returned to the spring we had discussed earlier. “Can you bring me a spring, a big one?” I struggled with finding something that would fit what she wanted. In the end, I decided to go to a

car mechanic's shop for suspension springs as they would be the right size. However, I was worried that they did not have the movement we discussed.

Philippa did not seem to mind, "Mum look at these cool giant springs Ruth's got me." We sat down again at the table, and I watched as she twisted the two springs together, diving into the box of supplies for objects to wrap around them. She found some wire flowers, string and ribbon and tied them together. Many of the objects she had discarded for her letter were looked at again and some became part of this sculpture. She explained, "There is so much hidden inside if they would just let us stretch." She included in her stretched out space letters stuck onto gift boxes. She explained, "Words are in here too. They just don't let us have space to get to them." In using the spring, the interpretation of springs was layered by collaging everyday objects into and around it to give it meaning. This *ostranenie* (Shklovsky 1917) altered how Philippa interpreted the objects and gave them meaning which later also influenced the perception of the viewer as they looked for the meaning of her work. In exploring her experiences in the making of her piece, she used the physical characteristics and tactile qualities of the springs and objects, as part of her exploration of her experience. My main role with Philippa was to provide the spring and to talk and watch as she built her work. Philippa and Debbie were the only people who chose to create their works themselves.

### ***Exploring Experiences with Individuals: Personal Journeys and Collaborative Practice***

Taking photographs helped Amanda to focus on what she wanted to do for her artwork. She had decided to do the photography walk at the Auckland Art Gallery. I handed Amanda the camera and she took photographs of anything that caught her eye. As we continued walking, she found that she was focusing on details, reflections and hands. Later, while sitting in a local café looking through the photographs, she was surprised to see how many images she had taken of hands. She decided that it made sense because hands were important to her as they were communicative. Amanda then began to discuss what she wanted to do as her artwork and by the end of our discussion it was fully outlined. When we first discussed her work, she planned to use a poem by Robert Frost, but when we met again she quietly told me she wrote poetry and wanted to use her own poem. She then handed me her iPad to read one of her poems. She explained this moment at one of the artists' tours at the Installation.

I told Ruth one day that I write poetry she didn't bat an eyelid. She just acknowledged it, and I thought, ok. I thought dyslexics aren't supposed to be writers, but she didn't react.

So this here is me shouting to the world quietly that I write poetry.

Amanda decided to gesture as she read her poem and to photograph her hand movements. My job was to take the photographs; however, in retrospect, I think it would have been wiser to video and then take screenshots rather than fast shutter photographs, as the movements were difficult to capture. Aiming to emphasise her gestures, Amanda stood in front of curtains as the sun shone through, removing details of her skin and clothing. Using rapid fire photography achieved the effect she wanted, but at the same time lost other details, such as the fine details of her hands that video may have kept. The photography technique resulted in needing to find a way to deal with the background so that it did not draw the eye away from Amanda. As I combined the photographs, I remembered a discussion we had had about gestures triggering movements in the atmosphere, like ripples when a stone drops into a pool of water. I used this image and a distortion filter in Photoshop to drag the background, mimicking the atmospheres swirling with her movements. As we discussed the way the image was progressing, Amanda asked, "can you make it more?" She wanted the swirling to represent the feel of the air and to drag in the world. Later, when we had the word, she described it as gesturing the *ness*. Through our discussions and spending time together, Amanda began to reveal something she had hidden - through our collaboration, she had explored her poetry and gestures, which she says she would not have done alone.

Every time we met up Craig, in his early 20's, would talk about eyes. He would describe an artwork he had created at Jewellery class or discuss the way he read people. Eyes were clearly important to him, but when we began to talk about the artwork, he would describe complex ideas unrelated to this image. His ideas varied from a clay sculpture with audio-visual material projected over it, to using his jewellery making skills, to collages that combined photography and drawing. He had so many ideas he wanted to create, but they did not evolve from the idea stage. He was enthusiastic about the possibilities for all of them, but enthusiasm did not result in physical creation. He eventually explained that he did not know what to do for the next step. The difficulties with the process reflected, not only the project, but also his life experience at the time as he was struggling with knowing what to do with his future. A year into discussions about the artwork, and a year into struggling with what to do with his life, the art was no further forward. At the next meeting, he began talking about using eyes and we discussed the idea of putting different objects behind different people's eyes. I suggested using Photoshop as a way to do this and he decided to work with a friend who knew how to use it, then to ask family and



friends to pose for the faces. This project also stalled, but as we had spoken of eyes in greater depth and I had learned more about Craig, I was able to find different ways to help.

In our meetings, Craig had often needed other ways to help him communicate, he often used plasticine while he was talking. The visual and tactile had been essential to him, so to help the stalled project, I created something visual to use as a place to begin discussions. I used images to signify metaphors he had used when describing people and placed them behind masks; then we met and talked about what I had done and what needed to change. As we talked, I found out one reason it had not progressed was that he felt like he was exposing his family and himself. I asked if he wanted to make it more about himself, rather than about other people or use a mask as I had done in the mock-up. He did not like the mask that I had used, and as we talked, he decided to use his face instead and added new metaphors to go behind the eyes. The next time we met, I taught him some of the basic steps for using Photoshop and he moved the various images behind the eyes and altered the face.

A brick wall was used to represent being blocked out, watch faces to represent people hurrying and the other metaphors to symbolise experiences and sensations of his everyday intersubjective relationships. He created symbols he wanted to use and gave them meaning relevant to different relationships in his life. When I started the mock-up for the image, I had used metaphorical meanings familiar to our discussions and when I ran out, I chose images I thought had no meaning to me (however, looking back the butterflies could be linked to the progress with the work). Important to this process of collaborative making is that Craig did not choose to use this image as he had ownership of the work and knew I would not be offended by changes he chose to make.

The completion of the image also represented changes in his life, as after it was finished he began to move forward, looking at training as a sound engineer. Unlike other people involved, his intersubjective interpretation of the audience was broad. On completing the work, he said, "I'll be interested to see what people read into it. I want people to interpret it however they want." The time he took in crafting the image seemed to contradict this comment but at the Installation he found peoples' interpretations fascinating. The image surface and the 'listening' towards each other did not appear to have the same requirements that some of the other works had.

When I spoke with Elise, she immediately wanted to do something that was moving and used sound, choosing to do audio-visual in which she had no skills so I was asked to record and edit the film. She decided to use the experience she had had when walking around Huka Falls in Taupo, New Zealand. She wanted to show how sound affected the way she engaged with the environment and asked me to video and then distort various parts of the image linking them with the sounds. I spent time on YouTube learning to use Adobe After Effects for the distortions, whilst Elise sorted out the sounds she wanted and recorded them on her tablet. Periodically, I was emailed sound clips and then we would discuss which ones to use.

Getting the distortion correct took time, as Elise wanted it to be accurate to her experience. She sat beside me while I ran through the various possible distortions and decided it needed pixellation, although my skills were not good enough to get it exactly as she wanted it. We looked at the film on several occasions, fine-tuning the sounds and the distortion. Between the times that we met, I questioned myself about every change I made, as to whether they were correct. I also found film as a medium dictated areas to be used for the distortion, as shadows could hide the effects. Elise chose how the sounds would come in and when they should drop out, asking that the entire film be slightly blurry due to the sound of the waterfall. We also discussed how she gained control over what was happening, and we created this experience through the editing of the clip. At the time it was made, I did not understand the intricacies of sound and film and it limited what I could do. The representation of gaining control over the sounds and the waterfall do not reflect her current experiences, as there appears to be a sudden dropping out of the sounds and distortions on the clip. However, after watching it, Elise decided that the sudden finish was necessary for non-dyslexics, feeling they would not necessarily know the changes that were happening in their bodies<sup>12</sup>. “That’s fairly close..... Nope, I’m happy with that” (Elise). In doing so, she interpreted the virtual intersubjective space her artwork would be creating alongside her embodied experience. She did not ask me, as a non-dyslexic, how I reacted to it however, or whether I agreed with her assessment, it was very much her work.

In making meaning in her artwork, Elise was also thinking about other bodies. “The imaginative or mimetic representation of human life entails the imitative recreating of semiosis, that is, of a process of relating stable and unstable patterns, signs and occurrences” (van Huesdan

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<sup>12</sup> This also shows an instance of error as suggested by Sennett (2008:2426) which became part of the process of collaborative crafting of the work.

2010:161) in the act of making art. There was an interpretation of the viewer being able to filter what they were seeing making it a less dramatic representation, and therefore not embodying the dyslexic experience. This ability to adapt sensory knowledge, Elise put down to being able to eliminate certain information, specifically sensory information, from their bodies. She explained that people would not understand her experience if she represented her current experience, as it is much more subtle than what was on the screen.

Yes, I still have this; it is not as bad now. I want people to understand. I want that cricket to be nagging away at them so that it becomes a repetitive sound that your half waiting for but is always a surprise when it comes. That's how it was like as a kid. (Elise)

The interpretation of the viewer and particularly the non-dyslexic viewer, shows how she actively imagined them as part of her making process. She used this otherness, which then impacted the embodied experiences she drew on (Rapport and Harris 2007:319). At the same time, it gave a place for us to talk and for me to learn, how Elise was examining the work through her embodied knowing. My role was to do the technical work, as Elise explored her experience.

Marie's image began with a discussion of a glass body with flowers inside, that were to represent her hidden self. Creating Marie's work involved a lot of discussion to understand her perspective, as we did not have the face-to-face time I had with my New Zealand Collaborators, which meant I could not draw on her non-verbal reactions to the work. We had only one meeting in the UK and the rest of the time our exploration took place via phone, Facebook and email. I found I relied more heavily on my own aesthetic in creating the image, than I did for the other pieces, placing the flowers in positions that were visually pleasing rather than personally significant for Marie. I struggled with this artwork initially, trying to create a whole body of flowers, but the flowers became overwhelming and in doing so the story associated with the work appeared to get lost. Marie's story could not be seen for the flowers, as the wood could not be seen for the trees. I felt and still feel, that the person got lost in the artiness of the work, and I think the pared back version makes it possible to see Marie, so this version was the one I sent for her comments. I had initially chosen to use pink for the flowers, as she had a bouquet of pink flowers on her cell phone screen. She asked that I alter some to yellow, because it was her favourite colour. After the first image, she decided they needed to be breaking out of the glass by her heart, as the flowers were used to represent her breaking out of the confines of feeling stupid.



**The Dialectic**

Participant Observation through Art

Flowers reflect the relief and joy I experienced when I had had my diagnosis. The flowers represent joy and happiness and the roses the change to come. The thorns represent the symbolic of pain and torture I felt all those years not knowing and believing something was wrong with me.... No more...it's time to move on embrace myself with the glass figure being who I am, transparent. (Marie)

Marie emailed me after receiving a final printed copy of her representation saying, "It's so beautiful I cried. It's up on my wall as something to live up to." This response surprised me as I had simply tried to create the representation we had discussed making. I had had a similar response to images in my MA (Gibbons 2010) and checked with Marie that I had represented what she wanted. She explained, "this is me!" Van Heusdan has stated that "life is represented mimetically in art through the recreating of fuzziness of reality, and that art forces the reader or spectator to deal with that fuzziness" (Van Heusden 2010:160). In working collaboratively with Marie, I had to face this fuzziness as I struggled to reconcile her description of the work as both about her current and future self.

### **Why Art as a Collaborative Method: Mutuality through Art as Method**

As I became involved in the process, I remained conscious of not imposing my understanding of dyslexia over my collaborators and constantly sought to empathise with experience as the works progressed. In making, I stood alongside my collaborators, using my body knowledge together with what I was learning about them. Self-reflexivity is vital to the method when collaborating in the creation of representational artwork. Sennett has suggested "Technique develops,.. by a dialectic between the correct way to do something and the willingness to experiment through error... [and that]...The two sides cannot be separated" (Sennett 2008:2426). Within this dynamic of experimentation and error was myself generating another level to this dialectic of creation. As with Craig's work, these aesthetic discussions provided opportunities I would not have had using another method or if the method had not changed with the artworks becoming collaborative. "Because the aesthetic exists, the dense particulars of perception can be made luminous to thought..." (Eagleton 1990:17) revealing complex, sensorially rich narratives to collaborative practice. As we worked together, I learned that even the slightest colour change, or position of an image in a piece could impact on the way the image was interpreted by my collaborators. Using "imaginative self-consciousness" (van Heusdan 2010:157), each of the artworks contains layer upon layer of information, underlying, overlapping and surrounding the images, through the metaphors and the process of creation.

As stated earlier, research is about opening spaces (Irving 2009:295) and through being part of this collaborative process, it created a space where I was able to share in the complexity of experiences being explored.

Each of the collaborations show the need for a flexible process, as in each situation I was working with individuals who had their stories to tell and their personal knowing to draw on. It was not a process where I stood out of the way and watched or pushed forward my ideas over those of my collaborators, but a dialectic where we conversed and evoked the lifeworld through the work we created. Even though the making was about the lifeworld, the works exist within a boundary or framework of my collaborators' making, which they chose to build meanings into. I did not define how people chose to make representations; what they chose to do and how they chose to do it reflects their choices in giving meaning in their works.

The artworks brought dysleXic perspectives on the lifeworld into the spotlight, highlighting specific experiences. The use of art was not a simple one to one comparison but a complex interplay of ideas, skills and interpretation. The representations of the everyday did not result in people creating works of themselves in particular situations, but were and are situated in a creative *between* (Stoller 2009:112) as bridges to experience. Each collaborator chose how to build this bridge. Elise used other people's bodies to embody her experience and we are to see through her eyes and hear through her ears with our bodies standing in the gap of embodiment. Her active use of another person's body was not the case for all of the works, for example, for Craig it was the viewer who was being looked at while they looked at the image. People's bodies outside their own became important to the way that they inscribed meaning into their works and their bodies experiences.

These embodied meanings and physical responses became central to the making of the pieces and recognising that art requires responses. For Elise, how people would look at the work and the covering of their ears figuratively with her own through the headphones further enforced the meaning she created and the bodys' engagement in making meaning. These works were active in approaching being-in-the-world, as connected to representation through other bodies. The discomfort that Elise expressed through her work, was translated into other bodies, and I often saw this discomfort, as individuals whipped off the headphones to eliminate the sounds, choosing instead just to watch the video. However, due to the medium she chose, some information was lost, as she could not express the sense of pressure on her body that

happened, along with the sound and vision, due to using film. Her knowing experience was drawn on in its creation, but the representation of full sensory experience was limited by the medium.

The montage of remembered experiences, aesthetic thinking and making of meaning did not stop, for my collaborators, at the Installation. We have frequently spoken about the work and I have noticed that experiences, not previously discussed, have become part of the works. Even events that happened after the pieces' completion, have been added to the embodied meanings of their artworks.

The works now exist in different forms in multiple spaces, from lounges and garages to the Installation and this thesis. They also exist in various ways, from the time of their making to each time they are seen by a new viewer. They are not a single shared experience or an absolute truth, (Jackson 1997:8) they are, instead, truths. In its "projection of a virtual content from a material base, the visual artwork exemplifies this. It shows how alternative virtual places and times are projected within, immediate 'real' coordinates" (Crowther 2009:536-540). The real, immediate, moments created through the development of the work, the interpretation of every day experiences and histories were all drawn together because of the artworks of the experience of dysleXia. As stated above, the artworks are not directly representational of everyday experience, but are instead a crafted layering of dysleXic-being-in-the-world.

As stated above in making meaning, metaphors and symbols could be used to evoke a type of sense-conscious description. Stoller has said that stories create bridges (2009:465) and through sense-consciousness, these bridges require people to step into a shared space; A bridge between persons. Using art to create these bridges between persons, reflect both agency, in fieldwork process, and mutuality in the intersubjective reality of research. The intersubjective relationship is not one which is straight forward; it is complex and interwoven with peoples' interpretations based on their expectations and histories. Mutuality, like intersubjectivity, is predicated on difference (Irving 2009:295) and it is not possible to state that people will have a complete understanding of another's lifeworld. Mutuality connects with individuals desires to communicate and to understand another person's lived experiences. However, there will always be things that sit outside understanding, existing in the ether of the *between* (Stoller 2009:103).

For my collaborators and myself, art as an evocation of embodied knowing affected our

experience of the research. In our last dinner together, I asked my key collaborators how they saw the research process and method used. Amanda began by lifting her hands above her head as she spoke.

In my brain, I am seeing a picture of what you're doing as a tidal wave, with everything dyslexic as the water, and you're being surrounded. We're on the side-line in the distance going, let it take you, just go with it. Let it take you!

As Amanda's hands completed the gesture of a crashing wave laughter exploded at the table and tears were running down our faces. We had many meals and discussions during the fieldwork about the method, experiences and the everyday. We discussed the art as more than visual representation but of the works carrying with them bodied experience. Sitting at the table at that final dinner as we laughed I recognised that even though I had learned a lot about my collaborators experiences I still had more to learn.

### **Summary**

Asking people to represent their experiences using art forms resulted in a variety of different approaches from my collaborators. How they elected to do this varied in the mediums they selected and in the life experiences they felt were important to explore for themselves and to communicate. Through the explorations of intersubjectivity, aesthetic awareness was mingled with metaphor "creating new understandings and, therefore, new realities" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:235) about dyslexic worlding. These sensorially rich experiences linked to the physical body and imagination was explored through the metaphors in the artworks and the art became ethnographic invitations and as ethnography.

As an anthropologist, I have learned the importance of following the opportunities that arise in the field and this has helped me to approach a complex and involved topic. It was due to this flexibility that I was able to follow where opportunities became available, and I believe the research is richer for this. In designing the method, I had not expected the difficulties or peoples' concerns about creating artwork, as I had mistakenly assumed that dyslexics would appreciate this outlet. My approach to the field was naïve, but I believe that if I had known how complex the research would become, I would have questioned whether I should even begin. The complexity of accessing the field added diversity and led places I could not have predicted.

Coming from the difference perspective, rather than disability or giftedness, I believe, enabled

me to see beyond interpreting experiences as disabling or over emphasising traits to label them giftedness. As the fieldwork method unfolded it became a collaborative exploration that did not rely heavily on words, but, through using art, we were able to explore interiorities and embodied knowledge. The fieldwork became a place where people could reflect on their experiences of dyslexia and a place where dyslexic stories were no longer removed from the dyslexic community through text. Interiorities, corporeality and the different mediums became enmeshed with each other through the media used and our explorations of embodied knowledge.

Crafting the works would not have been produced without this context, without the research being undertaken in this way and my discussions with my collaborators. The works crafted were expressed through “self-creating consciousness” (Crowther 2009:538) using sensory engagement with lived experience, and were the tools used in the process of representation. The method imagines new ways to represent the reality of experience and in the process, it has shown art as an active practice which communicates about the body through sensory engagement (Hogan and Pink 2010:165). Evoking art from the body through different mediums enables people’s corporeality, sensory and perceived reality to take part in embodied thinking and creating practice. I have found the intention of the artist can clash with the audience but the process of making is an important way to enter the field. Despite the different experience of the artworks, both perspectives can exist within the same space contained within the bodies and Being of the people making and creating. The works, therefore, contain multiple levels of interpretation and representation from personhood to the interpretation of other, including the past, present and future imaginings of their experiences of dyslexia. In the following chapter I have the privilege to introduce you to the people who collaborated in this research and the artworks they created.

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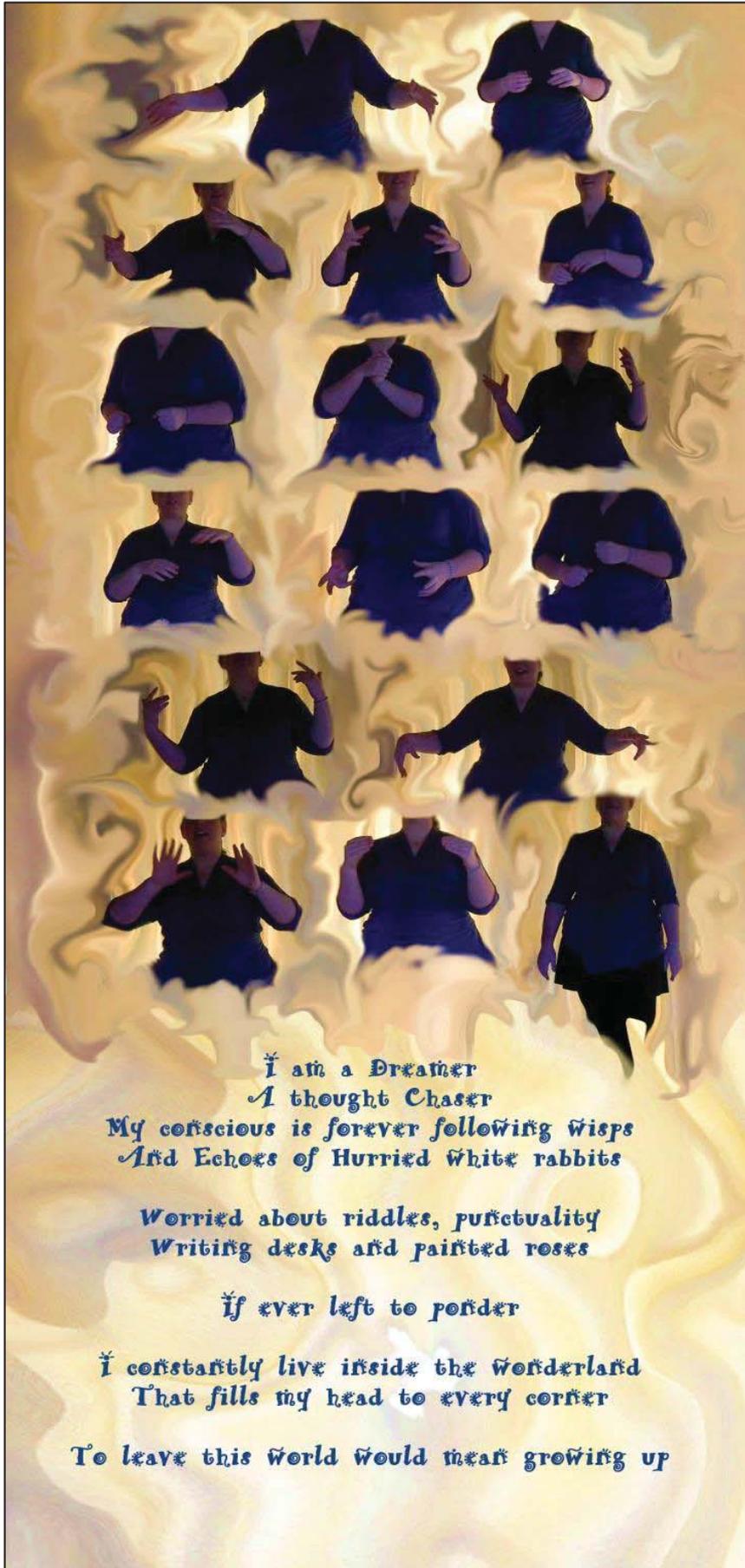
## CHAPTER 3

### Introducing my Collaborators:

“We too can craft them to have deeper meaning.”

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Over the course of the fieldwork while making art, over coffee, shared meals, discussions at the Installation and conversations in passing, I had the privilege to meet a variety of amazing people with stories to share, some of whom became collaborators and others who briefly passed through the fieldwork adding their stories and observations. In this chapter, I introduce my collaborators beginning with those who created individual works, by introducing them with their artworks. Beside each of the artworks is a description of the person who created it and the artist's description of their work. There are a variety of mediums photographed including those who did audio visual that are shown as a film still, but can be seen in more detail on the accompanying USB stick in full. The works shown here are individual artworks on specific experiences of dysleXia, the alphabet letters made at the focus groups will be shown in Chapter 5 as part of the discussion on dysleXic Language and the themed works appear throughout the thesis and in the appendix. Not everyone who was part of the research chose to do or show their artwork and I also introduce them here.



I am a Dreamer  
A thought Chaser  
My conscious is forever following wisps  
And Echoes of Hurried White rabbits

Worried about riddles, punctuality  
Writing desks and painted roses

If ever left to ponder

I constantly live inside the wonderland  
That fills my head to every corner

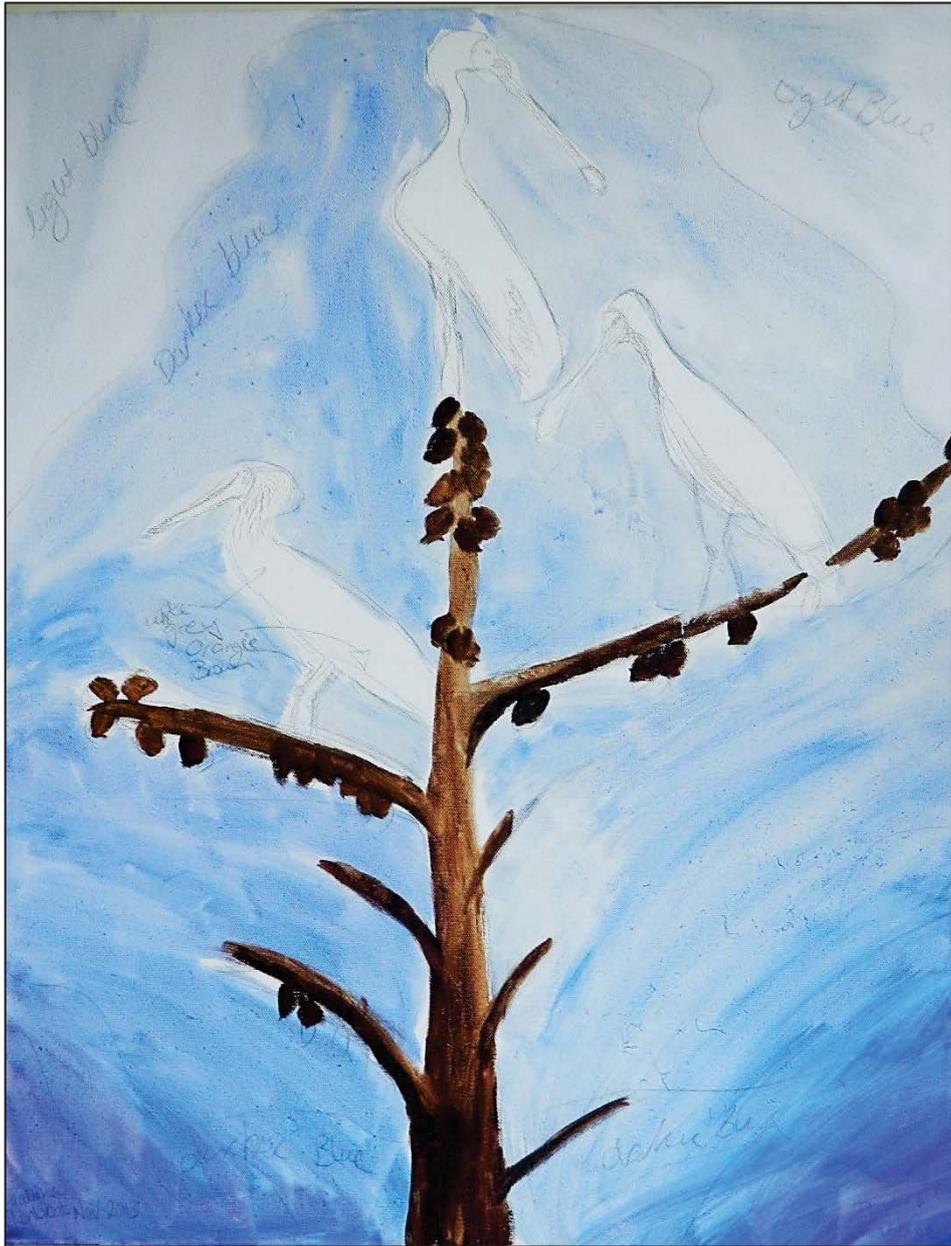
To leave this world would mean growing up

## Amanda

Amanda is in her early twenties and lives in New Zealand. She works for an organisation, working with youth and teenagers, running events and overseeing their development. During the research, she completed her teaching degree but is not planning to become a teacher. As a child, she was diagnosed with dyslexia. She described her experience, “We had to go down a back alley and whisper it to a person who had previously been doing dyslexic training. It wasn’t really understood back then.” Later, at tertiary level, she had a second diagnosis to be able to access the University’s dyslexic support facilities. Her father and brother are both dyslexic and she described how lucky she was, after her initial diagnosis, to have family and teachers who were positive about dyslexia. She explained that this did not mean she has not had negative experiences about being dyslexic but that these initial positive comments helped her to develop a more constructive interpretation of dyslexia. Her artwork is photography with digital manipulation by myself and the poem is her own, the piece is called *The Wonderland*.

As a dyslexic who thinks in pictures, I wanted to show the words I write in the way I think them. I want the audience to understand how my dyslexic brain understands language. The way I have done this is by using my hands to draw the pictures for you. You might notice other dyslexics use their hands to talk, as much as their mouths. They are drawing pictures for you and themselves to help understanding. I also decided to showcase that words, although they don’t come easy to dyslexics, they can still hold magic for us. We too can use them to craft deeper meaning and understandings about different subjects. The hope was to dispel the common misconception that dyslexics “don’t do words.” Lastly, my poem tries to give the audience an understanding of what it is like using a multi-level, busy brain and the constant over thinking. But also wanted to try and capture the idea of a dyslexic in a daydream, and its uncontrollable but wonderful nature.

Amanda also completed a letter, which is in Chapter 5.

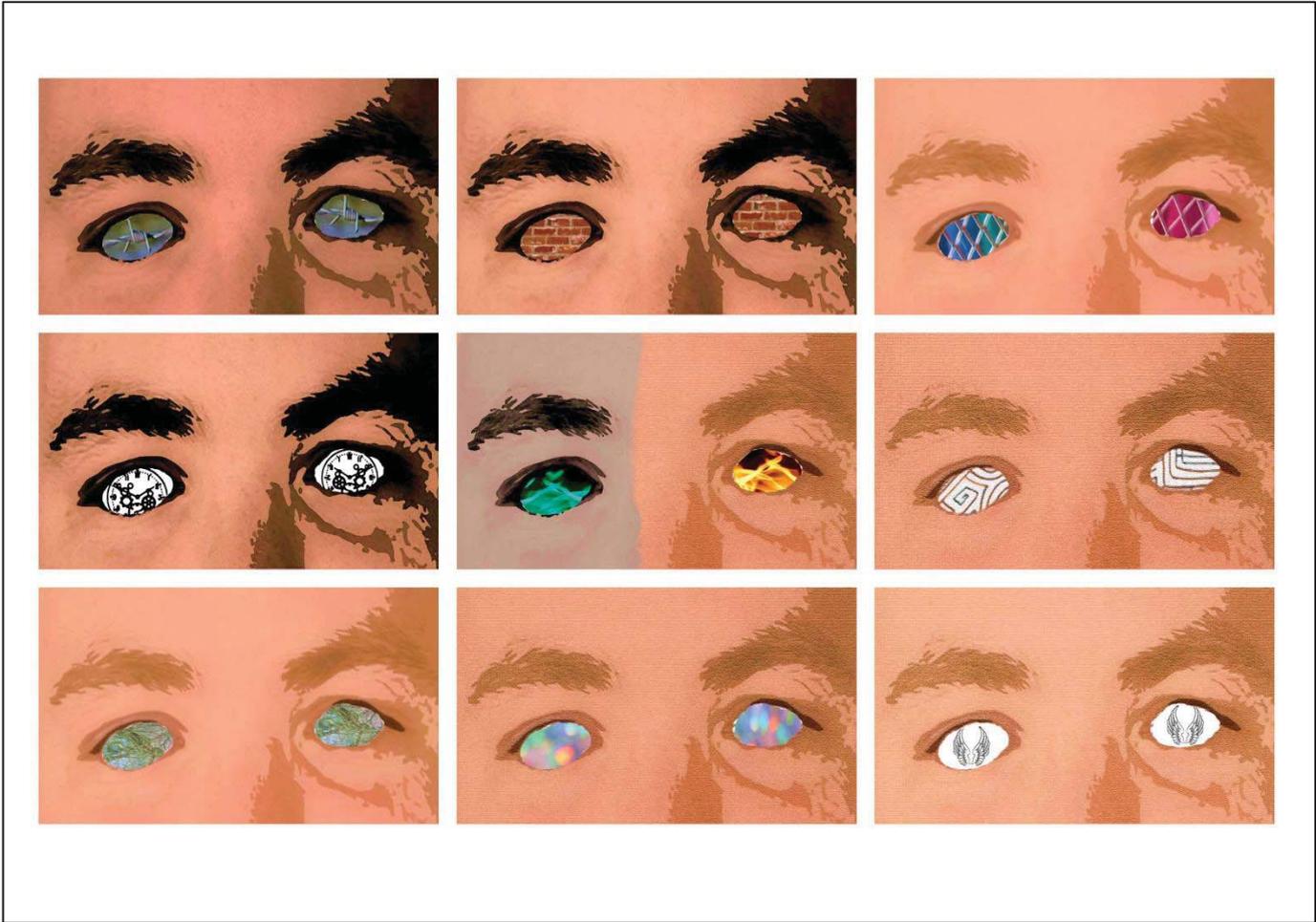


## Elise

Elise was in her late thirties and lives in New Zealand. She is a Civil Engineer running her own consultancy and is a solo mother with two twice-exceptional (gifted and dyslexic/dysleXic) sons in their teens. Elise is currently working on her Masters in Engineering. The first artwork on the previous page is acrylic and pencil on canvas. Elise wanted to show how busy dysleXics are, in what they do and think, and that what is created is still worthwhile. She named her piece "*I'll Be Back...*" and explained, "We all have busy lives and for me I lead three. As a parent, as an Engineer and as a Scout leader. It is when these lives collide that things don't get finished the way you first plan....yet the results are still beautiful." Throughout the exhibition, she was asked when would she finish the painting top image previous page). She responded, "It is finished. Sometimes things are just as beautiful. Why do they always have to be finished? We are often accused of not being focused but in reality we see and do so much. We should have the right to see the unfinished as beautiful." This artwork now lives on a wall in her hallway. The second image is a still from the film made depicting her experiences of sound and vision (*Sound Fall*).

Sounds in life, natural and synthetic, overlay each other. It is an untaught lesson to learn how to fade them out. Yet in doing so, I lose the full beauty in the picture as sounds are more invasive. It is not a vacant look you see in my eyes. I am trying to listen to what you are saying.

Elise also has a letter in the alphabet which appears in chapter 5.



## Craig

Craig is in his early twenties and lives in New Zealand. He found out he was dyslexic when he was a child. During the research, he began looking at what he wanted to do with his life and has now started a degree in sound engineering. He wanted his work to express his intersubjective relationships and is called *Looking In*.

I didn't really want to have a set thing of 'this is what it is'. It's more just people look at it and they see what they see, but the main thing about the eyes was the whole reading people thing. It's how, when looking into the eyes, there's stuff that you can quickly get a basic feeling for their mood and what kind of person they are on that day. Say, in walking into a classroom, and you've got 20 or 30 other kids in there, just by a quick glance at all of the faces, I knew which ones to stay away from that day, which were more receptive of me and just judge the general atmosphere of the room within 5 seconds of walking in there. One habit I started to cope with this was turning up to class earlier and as people turned up, I could do that process just that little bit more slowly not all at once. One misconception I have noticed with people who talk about dyslexics, especially through school, is that dyslexics don't notice stuff. First time I heard about dyslexia at school I was taken to watch a video. It said that people with dyslexia don't see as much as other people, but it's the complete and utter opposite. Instead of seeing just what is in front of us we see everything around us at once and it just takes that bit longer because we are processing everything, we take in everything. (Craig).



### **Mathew**

Mathew is in his late 30's, lives in New Zealand and is married. He works at a university helping to develop the buildings and facilities and he specialises in the use of CAD. He is a musician and a trained boat builder who helps in the community working with teenagers in his church. This is a still from the film we made together called "*It's more of a feeling.*" During filming, he explained, "It's how I can get it. I can pick up all of the subtle differences. How can you learn to drum by looking at a sheet of music? It's so much more than that." After editing the film, I reviewed the finished film with Mathew, "After getting over the cringe factor of seeing myself on TV, I realised this really is what it is and how I do this."



## Debbie

Debbie is married with three children; all are dyslexic. She lives in New Zealand and when we began the research she was home-schooling all her children. She was also undertaking a degree but found home-schooling and her studies difficult to manage. At the end of the research her children were all in the school system as she hoped it would give them more opportunities. With the children now at school, she has resumed her studies. The artwork, on the previous page, is paint, paper-mache and foam noodles. The other images are details of the work.

The new science of epigenetics investigates extensively, at a molecular level, how experiences (environment) alter gene expression without changing the nucleotide order of the individual genes. ... my DNA doesn't mean it has to rule my life and overtake it, the true me, can still be expressed positively. I can determine, by how I choose to react, how much I let it be a hindrance or how I could use it to my advantage..... For me, colour is enhanced. I can picture the end product in my head before it's seen in reality, I see numerable ways to solving a problem. Although at times this can also be a double-edged sword. Negatives are things like when it comes to writing my thoughts onto paper, it could take me an hour just to write one paragraph for an assignment! Having to decipher, 'what do they mean?' "Which answer do they want?' There are so many answers to that particular question! Where does that punctuation go again? I can remember how to spell that word!! And having to read a lot, quickly, just doesn't happen. I cannot skim read at all! All of these types of things can become like a ball and chain weighing me down and twisting me up inside, not allowing "me" to be expressed.

Debbie has a letter in chapter 5.



## Philippa

Philippa is in her late teens and lives with her parents in New Zealand. When the project began, she was still at high school and had recently been diagnosed dyslexic. She was advised to do the Davis course, which she completed shortly before I began my fieldwork. During the fieldwork, Philippa decided not to continue with school and finished at year 13. After working for a while, she decided to train to become an early childhood teacher and completed her certificate. As the fieldwork finished she was just starting training as a hairdresser. The image is of her individual work which is a collaged sculpture. Her piece is called *Stretching*

People don't realise that there is so much in here. They keep us compressed and won't let us stretch out. There is so much, even language in here if they would just let us do what we need to do.



**Dyslexia is not an  
excuse not to try**

## Heather

Heather is in her late teens and lives in New Zealand. Her image is called *Pathways*. She and Philippa are the same age and she also decided to finish school at year 13, and become a midwife. Heather had not received a diagnosis from an educational psychologist as it was beyond her family's means and found out about her dyslexia through online testing and through a teacher who had been taught to recognise dyslexic traits. Heather chose to take part in taking photographs and as we talked she showed how important nature was to her. When we discussed the work, she asked that I take photographs of light through trees and told me she wanted to add a slogan. After choosing the photograph, she then altered it to enhance the effect of the light.

Dyslexia is not an excuse. I find it really hard when people say "I'm dyslexic" and use it as an excuse, so they don't have to do something. I am dyslexic and I try harder than anyone else. I get so sick of people who just use dyslexia as an excuse. I know it's hard, I work really late and I try really hard and sometimes it doesn't make any difference. I want those who use it as an excuse to stop it. It's not an excuse!

Image of the Mind



### **Janine**

Janine is originally from Jamaica but moved to the UK as a child. She is in her late forties and had been working on postgraduate study in the field of Social Work. Janine came to the research through a contact I made with a specialist, helping dyslexics with writing and reading difficulties. She chose to take part in taking photographs of things that drew her eye. As we talked through the photographs, she spoke about the importance of shapes, explaining, "I see shapes where ever I go." When we spoke about the artwork she decided to use shapes. We began by roughing out the shapes and colours she wanted. My initial image based on the outline was declined by Janine and she decided to create her expression of dyslexia using Microsoft Word (*Images Of The Mind*). The major change to the design was the colours, these had been yellows, greens and blues which were changed to tonal shades of pink and purple in the final image. When I asked her about the changes in colour she explained.

I think it's because I feel more peaceful now. The colours I used were the ones that came with the image I saw within my mind. I am hoping that I have done it some justice within my translation and interpretation of it. I mostly see colours when my mind is at peace and I am relaxed. Now that my mind is rested and relaxed and not in the process of mental exhaustion these are colours and shapes I can use to represent my thoughts. The colour is a variation on shades of purple and orange for the sun.

**di s l e x e a**

**D y s l i x e a**

**D i s l e x e a**

**D y s l e x e a**

## Mark

Mark is in his mid-thirties and lives in Manchester. His piece is called *D\_SL\_X\_* and is a stop animation piece. When we met the first time, he was working as a shop clerk but he had recently been notified the company was closing. He was concerned about what his next step would be and how his dyslexia would affect his ability to find a new job. Mark had recently again sought help with his reading and writing and was seeing a teaching specialist, he was excited that he had been able to read a newspaper article for the first time. He wanted his work to “show people all the possibilities of it. Dyslexia is such a hard word. I couldn’t spell it to begin with. I want it to have all of the different ways it could be spelt so people know.” I worked on the animation and Mark gave feedback on his work.

When I was first diagnosed as a dyslexic I couldn’t spell it. Why do they give it a name we can’t spell?? I want this to represent that experience. When I saw it completed for the first time I found when it goes fast I could read it better than I had ever done before.

The images are of four of the different spellings used in the animation which can be found on the accompanying disc or USB. Mark was also involved in the photographic walk but did not choose to use this as part of his artwork.



## Marie

Marie was in her late thirties and had lived in Manchester most of her life. She was unemployed but looking at further training at Manchester University. She had 2 children in their teens living with her. She had been diagnosed as dyslexic a couple of years before we met. Marie's work evolved as we discussed it. She wanted to show how she had been affected by people's judgements of her as stupid and lazy, her resilience and how people's discrimination had not "destroyed" (Marie) her as a person. She called the piece *Dyslexia, My Life, this is who I am and I am okay with it.*

Flowers reflect the relief and joy I experienced when I had had my diagnosis. They also represent joy, happiness in my life. The roses represent the change to come. The thorns represent and are symbolic of the pain and torture I felt all those years not knowing and believing something was wrong with me.... no more...it's time to move on embrace myself with the glass figure being who I am, transparent. (Marie)



## **Aby**

Aby Watson (real name) is a performance artist in the UK who has also undertaken insider research, focusing on dyslexia and creativity. Due to a loss in the family she was unable to create a new work for the exhibition as she had hoped; instead she chose to edit a film of her wonderful work “Dust Yourself Off” which she completed for her Masters in Fine Arts. The work, edited for the exhibition, is on the accompanying disc. Due to the nature of some of our discussions in the thesis, Aby also appears under another name. She wrote the following to accompany her work.

Aby Watson is a dyslexic and dyspraxic theatre maker based in Glasgow, Scotland. Aby approaches making performance in a way that mirrors how her mind works, in a non-linear fashion that despite having sporadic energy is structured with reason. She has edited this footage into an installation that she hopes will illustrate her work as a theatre maker whilst also emphasising the potential for honest dyslexic creative voices. Aby has altered this clip from a longer work which can be accessed on Vimeo<sup>1</sup>. The piece is based around Swan Lake and her desire as a child to be a dancer. From the opening where she is being the Swan devastated by the Princes betrayal through to her claiming her place to be herself this piece explores narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> url available in bibliography



## Sam

Sam Barclay (real name), is dyslexic and a typographer who is passionate about printed language. When Sam and I first met he had just finished a Kickstarter fund for the printing of his book on the experience of dyslexia using text to communicate the experience of language, called *I Wonder What It's like to Be Dyslexic*. The four images on the left are from his book, and were created using different techniques including typoglycemia (which he uses to create the experience of having to re-read words to understand them), colour, altering letter formats and removing parts of letters, playing with ideas to show what is necessary for words to remain legible and to affect the reading process.

# DYSPLA FESTIVAL

Celebrating Dyslexic Storymakers  
SINCE 2007

[www.dysthelexi.com](http://www.dysthelexi.com)

## **Dyspla**

Dyspla was developed by Lennie Varvarides and is based in England. She wanted to create a place for dysleXic storytellers and runs events for dysleXics by dysleXics on script writing and performance. Dyspla runs a festival every November, drawing together dyslexic people with a passion for writing and performance. I met Lennie and her partner along with one of the directors that had worked at a previous festival. Lennie is herself a dysleXic storyteller, who wanted to create a space for dysleXic's to freely explore their creative process. The clip on the disc is an edited version of a film that was in production when we met. More details about the festival can be found at <http://www.dysthelexi.com/>

### Contributors Who Chose Not To Not Do Artworks

Jean is an academic in New Zealand in her late fifties. She works to develop the university and has a background in science. Jean began creating an artwork focusing on language and on how she sees and controls language. She described her work as similar in style to Modigliani. However, she chose not to include her artwork because she did not think it was finished.

Hayden was involved in the initial stages of the project and took part in the film *When I Walk into a Room*. Hayden lives in New Zealand with his wife and two daughters. He is in his late forties working as a building inspector having worked as a builder. Hayden elected to not be involved beyond the film due to work and family commitments.

Adrian was in his late twenties and had just completed his honours degree majoring in anthropology. He began by being involved in the film and was going to continue with the rest of the project but had to pull out due to business pressures.

James is in his late thirties and a new father. He works in sales and lives in New Zealand. He described himself as ADHD and as dyslexic as he was told when he was tested that “if you have ADHD you have dyslexia they just go together.” James was involved in the initial interview but due to family commitments chose not to continue.

Anne was in her mid-twenties and is an early-career academic in the UK who has a passion to have dyslexia recognised as a different way of learning. She has undertaken insider research and alongside her academic work has a publishing business for dyslexic writers.

Barry was in his late fifties and unemployed. He had a Masters in fine art and was active in advocacy for dyslexic adults. For several years he had known he was dyslexic and described his dyslexia as reflecting a lack of intelligence. He was the only person who said he had been diagnosed as dyslexic and autistic. He ran a dyslexic support group, weekly support sessions and a help line for dyslexic adults. Barry had planned to have an artwork in the exhibition but it did not translate from its original canvas to print and as it did not meet the artist's original vision it was not included (the original could not be imported due the use of his blood in the work). However Barry did do the photographic walk and these images were included in the Installation.

Peter lives in the UK and described himself as profoundly dyslexic and disabled. Like Barry, he is an advocate for dyslexic adults and is very vocal about the needs of his disability. He runs a web site and support line for adults with dyslexia.

Martin is in his late forties and the father of two children. He is a member of the support group I attended in the UK and described himself as profoundly dyslexic. He is unemployed

and is learning to read with the help of a support person who attends the adult support group run by Barry.

Dave is also in his late forties and attends the support group run by Barry. He works part time but is unable to find full time work, he explained that this is because his “reading is crap.”

Jake is in his late fifties and is unemployed. He is part of Barry’s support group and we met at the drop in centre.

Michael and his wife (non-dyslexic) are part of the support group run by Barry. He works full time in the police force in the UK.

Maeve is a professional performance artist in the UK. She is in her late 20’s and has a Fine Arts degree in performance.

Anna is an agent and producer in her late twenties. She lives and works in the UK with her partner and baby.

Catherine lives in the UK and is the mother of an adult dyslexic son but is not dyslexic herself. When he was younger she was his advocate and helped to create a support network for children with dyslexia with other parents, this still continues today. In talking with Catherine I discovered that the variety of different support networks within the UK meant that support was somewhat fractured. Both Barry and Peter, who each run their own support groups and networks, confirmed this during our discussions.

### **The Alphabet**

As all of the letters appear in the Language chapter I am simply going to introduce them here without their works.

Emily was ten when she made her letter. She was home-schooled at that time and is one of Debbie’s children.

Jacob was 13 when he made his letter. He is Debbie’s oldest son and is both dyslexic and gifted at mathematics.

Alan is Elise’s youngest he has received a diagnosis of being both dyslexic and gifted (twice exceptional) and was ten when he made his letter. He lives in New Zealand with his mother and brother and is home-schooled.

Jackson is Elise's eldest son and was 12 when he created his letter. Like his brother he was also diagnosed as twice exceptional. He had begun his schooling in the Rudolf Steiner system but due to ongoing bullying he was removed. At the time of the research had been home-schooled for two years.

Michael was sixteen when he created his letter. He had been home-schooled since the age of 5 and was a gifted wood turner and carver.

Sophia was in her late sixties and lived in New Zealand with her family. She is a qualified minister.

William, Luke, Fiona, Beatrice, Alistair, Sarah, Clara, Teresa, Taylor, Karl, Maria, Stephanie, and John attend a regular High School in New Zealand with a specific stream for dyslexic students for some subjects. The students above range in age from fourteen to sixteen.

I also visited a boarding school in Kent, England which has a specific focus on students with learning differences. Unfortunately, I found out about the school at the end of my fieldwork and was only able to spend a day with the staff and students.

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## CHAPTER 4

### DEFINING THE EVERYDAY: “Do you get those blank stares?”

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Within the existing dyslexia literature, the dominant voices on dyslexic experience proclaim problems of cognitive processing, such as memory and language, to be at the core of the dyslexic experience. While this is done with the best of intentions, to overcome perceived difficulties in reading and remembering associated with dyslexia, it reduces dyslexia to brain and literacy issues removing individuals personal knowing and embodied sensory knowledge from everyday being-in-the-world. In this chapter, I aim to show that how dyslexia is inhabited and interpreted through every day experiences should be central to understanding and approaching what it means to be a person with dyslexia. Moreover, I claim that what makes up everyday dyslexic experiences includes physically navigating the real, created, emotional and sensory world. To do this I discuss the dyslexic everyday as an entangled interplay of experiences and self-interpretation, choices missed and made “composed out of heterogeneous and non-coherent singularities” (Stewart 2007:4). The everyday has been ascribed meaning through my collaborators understandings of how they inhabit dyslexia. It is created out of interactions and events, both accumulating moments which build on each other and those that create clashes, crashes or discombobulate (Jackson 2012:180). Using conversations that took place through participant-observation, over meals, making the artworks, in a variety of cafes in New Zealand and England and at the art installation I look at the everyday as a place of exploration, of lived experiences and as an ongoing attunement of the lifeworld. Particularly valuable are the conversations between people with dyslexia as they explored their knowing of the world, alongside other people who shared their experiences. During the ebbs and flows of our conversations questions triggered ideas and exploded out of unexpected comments, such as the one I will discuss about candle wax, as these knowing persons explore what is dyslexic being-in-the-world.

#### **Inhabiting A Name**

Layered in the term ‘dyslexic’, is the way it is inhabited as either a disability to be overcome or as another valid way of being-in-the-world. These divergent and in some cases, passionate views around difference, disability or giftedness, expand the complexity of what it means for an individual to say they are dyslexic and influences how they navigate the



everyday. DysleXia cannot be described as limited to a single process in the brain or a disorder that creates specific outcomes (Eide and Eide 2011), as dyslexia is a broad term which Elliott and Grigorenko state has lost all meaning due to a lack of aetiology (Elliott personal communication 2015). Around the tornadoes of theories, remedial methods, and medical research is the lived corporeal reality of dysleXia. The experience of dysleXia is part of my collaborators' everyday as an embodied experience. It is an aspect of the lifeworld that is interpreted and assigned meaning through people's daily experiences, whatever part of the continuum they assign themselves to. I am not saying that there are not common experiences, as everyone involved did share some similar stories, such as stories of exclusion. However, the way in which these were experienced in the lifeworld also reveals the unique interpretation and understanding of the individual in these situations. Therefore, dyslexia, as a term, has meanings and experiences layered over and around it from a variety of different voices.

Using the term dyslexia by persons about themselves had different connotations and expectations attached to it. The negative connotation of dyslexia as a term has, in part, resulted in some collaborators choosing not to talk about it and often withholding this information from anyone regarded as unsafe. This differed at the support group in the UK, where disclosing dyslexia was described as being required in particular settings and situations. Disclosure was important for furthering the cause of dysleXia but was also recognised as resulting in discrimination. The discussion linked disclosure to problems in the job market and included police officers, who described problems with promotion. Burt explained he reached the final stage of taking his case to court before they allowed him to progress. In the support group, hiding dysleXia was negative as it did not achieve the help that was needed from disability services. The principal leaders of the group saw dysleXia as profound disability and struggled with people who did not say they were dyslexic. They saw themselves as advocates for their fellow disabled. People involved in the research in NZ had predominantly chosen not to talk about their dyslexia.<sup>1</sup> Craig had tried to explain to friends about dysleXia but "I've just given up now. They just choose to keep thinking of it as a learning disability, and it's more than that." In NZ negative responses involved judgement and comments about being disabled, while the positive ones were when people did not make any particular response. For many of my New Zealand collaborators, they do not mention their dyslexia/dysleXia. "I've tried, but they still don't understand" (Craig). Jean explained, "When I started this, I asked myself, 'is the reason I don't tell people because I don't want to be told how well I've done in spite of being dyslexic?'" This differed to my

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<sup>1</sup> The differences between the UK and New Zealand may be due to the lack of governmental support for adults and little for school-aged children so disclosure was not attached to any support networks.

experience in the UK where dyslexia was more widely discussed showing disclosure and non-disclosure reflect agency. People, however, are not a single label as Marie explained, “I am more than a single diagnosis. Why do people make it so much more than it is? I am a creative, imaginative person. Why does dysleXia mean a negative label?”

Throughout our discussions I found the dysleXic lifeworld is more than a matter of learning to cope with pre-given realities but a constant negotiation of personhood, society, and environment through the everyday. The experiences of my collaborators reveal both commonalities, individual expressions and experiences of being dysleXic. This chapter reflects both these shared understandings as well as ensuring the individual is also visible in their stories. Part of what makes these stories individual is the way people interpret what it means to be dysleXic in the lifeworld

The life-world is the quintessence of reality that is lived, experienced, and endured. It is, however, also a reality that is mastered by action and the reality in which – and on which – action fails. Especially for the everyday lifeworld, it holds good that we engage in it by acting and changed by our actions. Everyday life is a province of reality in which we encounter directly, as a condition of our life, natural and social dividends as pre-given realities with which we must try to cope (Schutz in Jackson 1997:20).

The way in which these pre-given realities are interpreted within everyday experience is reflected in the way being dysleXic was understood. Bringing an anthropological approach to dysleXic lifeworlds meant seeking to understand the rhythms of the lifeworld (Jackson 2012:330) from the perspectives of people who inhabit the term dysleXia.

This means placing both oneself and the other on the same existential footing, and seeing all worldviews not as theories of knowledge about the world but as existential means of achieving viable ways of living *in and with* the world (Jackson 2012:2439 original italics).

In taking this approach, I found dysleXia was not limited to the problematics associated with it, but a complex, lived reality, navigated and inhabited through the everyday. However, dysleXia is not a constant state of being, as Folb (personal communication) recently found, dysleXia is not continuous but can fluctuate from day to day.

***“Are There Some Days You’re More DysleXic Than Others?”***

The types of dyslexic experiences and the dyslexic versus non-dyslexic days have recently been put forward by the work of Naomi Folb (Interview 2013). During her Ph.D. research she found some of her participants spoke about some days being more dyslexic than others and these very dyslexic days were shown through difficulties of language, both spoken and written and problems with explaining ideas. When I spoke with Maeve, a professional actor, about her experiences of days when she is more dyslexic than others, these days were characterised by problems relating to spoken language. She talked of sometimes tripping over her words and at other times using the wrong words. However, these days were also the ones that she felt were the most productive for her art. She found that on these days her ideas and her body flowed more freely and that she was able to extend herself into unexplored areas of her work. Maeve explained that she felt more connected with her creative process and the environment she was working in; alongside this creativity her writing became illegible, and her emails had multiple spelling errors. Anna described the problems of not being able to pronounce words and spoke about the tongue, "My tongue feels stuck in place, not heavy, but at the same time flowery which is weird." This feeling of the tongue not co-operating was expressed in a variety of different ways by others and included the sense of the tongue feeling stuck, heavy, swollen or thin as a piece of paper. These dyslexic days were assigned to altering their sensory experience of language and at the same time creating greater freedom in a variety of artistic and creative outlets.

The fluctuating days were not a concept that everyone agreed with. For Barry, Paul, Dave, John, Peter and Martin, who see dyslexia as 'profound disability' and 'disability,' they described no difference in their daily experience. They saw no fluctuation between days that they recognise themselves as more dyslexic than others. However in discussions about reading and writing they did explain that some days, words may be easier to access than others. I also found a gender difference when talking with my collaborators in the UK noting it was more often women who noticed the fluctuations in their experience of dyslexia than men.

When I returned to New Zealand, I brought back Folb's question of "are there some days you are more dyslexic than others?" The fluctuating states of being was widely accepted by my New Zealand collaborators. For some, they had the same experience of feeling more creative and innovative on these days, but for others this was not the case, they were simply days of frustration. The frustration of tripping over words was the main problem they described. The words they spoke of tripping over, were ones that were used every day, not unique or complex, as Elise explained, "Sometimes it can be the 'the'." This raised questions about correction, as in the moments of difficulty with language, as Maeve expressed, they can also be creative, expressing other ways of being-in-the-world. A

correction on a very dyslexic day by email or text “can throw you for six. You start to doubt everything” (Elise) affecting their creativity as well.

### **Correction As Everyday Experience: “I Think You Meant To Say Exotic.”**

Having the opportunity to get together with other people with dyslexia has been something that my collaborators in New Zealand have cherished. The fear of correction was initially part of the process. However, the dinners became safe spaces where they felt accepted and did not have to worry about being judged. “When I first came here I thought; oh gosh this is going to be horrible, no one is going to understand me, and now we talk about everything, we talk and hang out” (Philippa). This comfort was not something instantly achieved, as people tested the safety of the space and the people they were talking with, whether it was one on one or as a group.

The first point where people defined it a safe space was when Philippa, trying to describe her friend’s animals, began by saying, “I have this friend, and she has these amazing erotic animals.” The dyslexics at the table did not seem to react to the use of the word. As she went on to describe her friend owning various lizards and other exotic animals the reaction at the table did not change. None of the dyslexics appeared to have a problem with the word substitution, but there was a difference between the dyslexics and non-dyslexics at the table. The dyslexics did not show any particular reactions; there was no laughing, no comments and no change in body language. My initial reaction was to tense up slightly and feel bad for her, as I thought she might have embarrassed herself by using the wrong word. This was not the case. Her mother (non-dyslexic) who was also at the table reacted by tightening her hands and shifting in her chair.



After the story had finished and we were moving onto another topic, she said to her daughter, “I think you meant to say exotic, not erotic.” At this point, all of the dyslexics at the table came to Philippa’s defence. They explained it was “not a problem” (Elise, Craig). They then gave different words that they had thought she meant to say. They knew the word erotic was not the one that she had meant to use and so simply made the substitution without commenting. As we continued talking, they explained that the word used was only part of her story and did not impact on the picture she was drawing or the journey she was taking her listeners on. It showed something about how dyslexics interpret stories, but also highlighted another experience that had come up during the interviews, that of word correction being part of everyday experience. Aitchison has suggested that the fact that people use the right words is more of a miracle than a given, due to the complex cognitive structures created around learning and using words (Aitchison 2003:40). However, for my collaborators, the fact that words are not performed in a specified manner results in

questioning their abilities as individuals and their intelligence; as Craig explained being called “stupid” (Craig), because they did not perform the word correctly.

Word correction, no matter the age of my collaborator, was common, particularly about text. While people have not always talked about having words corrected by non-dyslexics, this has been something I have seen happen in a variety of different settings. These corrections take place in both written and oral forms of language and something as simple as a shopping list can result in a correction. Words like flour may have been used or spelt incorrectly (flower) and the person is told that they were wrong, even if this list was only going to be read by the individual who wrote it. Amanda described how people would correct her spelling even when the note was written on her own hand. As she pointed to her palm, she explained, “I now write here so that no one can see it, and I write upside down so people can’t read it.”

Correction impacts on how my collaborators communicate. In writing an email, several participants said they just wrote and ignored the spellchecker and then spell check at the end of the email before they sent it. It was easier to do this than stopping and starting and losing their train of thought. Spellcheck was important as it avoided comments and criticisms “although it doesn’t get everything” (Elise). It is especially important in the workplace, for example, Amanda was told by her boss that she needed to get her emailing “under control” because it was unprofessional. However, there were those times when an email would get through, especially if they were having a “dyslexic moment” (Amanda). The response from the person would often include a correction, or if the person was not known to be dyslexic, a question as to whether they were “okay”.

Several non-dyslexics I have spoken with have described disclosure by dyslexics of their dyslexia through email. They described emailing the person whom they did not know was dyslexic asking if they were okay because of the problems in the email. “I think I know what you mean. [about email] I asked if she was okay. She came back with I’m dyslexic. Okay so I get it now, this is normal for her” (Agatha ). To my key collaborators, this response implied that the problems in the email were reflecting problems that the writer was having in their everyday life. The realisation of problems with language resulted in the person reading the email giving extra accommodations to the dyslexic writer. Nevertheless, when I discussed this response with Craig and Amanda it raised questions for them about being labelled ‘learning disabled’ “and it’s not that” (Craig). The experiences of my collaborators raise issues around why it is necessary to correct another person’s spelling or grammar outside the educational environment. It appears to assume that the correction is going to be helpful and will make it possible for a person to correct it next time, which may not be the case.

The expectation of correction was not altered by the system used and digital communications by computer, phone and tablet could result in correction. In an interview, Mathew explained he had chosen not to be involved on Facebook, this was because he was worried about getting the wrong spelling, "I have a page, but I don't write on it. Everyone else posts to it." Amanda, Elise and Philippa all spoke about the "dreaded asterisk" which was used by people when they corrected their spelling. In looking at pages run by dyslexics for dyslexics, spelling and grammar are not changed and there are no corrections made in the comments. Paul explained about sites for dyslexics by dyslexics on Facebook and Twitter that he had joined. "It was a bit strange to begin with because it sounded like Klingon, but I thought, that's cool, anyone can write what they like so I didn't need to worry." Since beginning this research, Facebook has included a spellchecker and Mathew has begun to post short comments. However, in some situations this has not altered the dyslexic sites as the people writing the comments appear to be choosing not to use the spellcheck option.

Correction and text for Barry, Peter and Martin resulted in all formats being seen as creating a barrier, as a place of being told they were failures, which further disabled them. When Barry and I met, he apologised for being late as he had had to phone and talk to everyone to remind them about the support meeting that night. He explained that he does not text, "I have to phone everyone otherwise they would forget. It has to be talking because we don't understand anything else." Language, whether digital or print, was a battle for Barry and he distanced himself from it. He described how he was fighting with the library to make sure it was accessible to dyslexics and that he demands all letters from the Council are sent on an audio CD explaining, "I can't read so they have to change. They do it for the blind, why not for me? I am word blind." For Barry, it was a political space and the expectation was that the government needed to overcome its lack of awareness to the needs of dyslexics.

Words for people with dyslexia are used to shape, create and dominate intersubjectivity. Watson and Folb (2011) examined dyslexic ways of reading and writing in an article about creative writing. They focused on how dyslexic language impacted on the ways people outside their experience interpreted their intelligence and need for correction. In their article, they devoted a section to unaltered dyslexic language. They did not spell check or do a grammar review to show this different relationship with language. However, in doing so, they explained, "In becoming published we expose ourselves, and our ideas. In breaking the 'rules' of writing, the value of our perspective was put into question" (2011:46). The connection to clarity and being seen as unintelligent was also discussed by Catherine. "We don't have people who are dyslexic to write the information on our website,<sup>2</sup> because we

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<sup>2</sup> The web site is about the various programmes run by the dyslexia support group she helped to found.

don't want people to look at the site and ignore us because there is a spelling mistake. We want them to keep looking and see what we have.”

All of my collaborators spoke about the amount of correction they received while at school and in higher education. These corrections happened in a variety of different environments and intersubjective moments. They could be public, by being laughed at or jokes made about the way they have written or said something, to having someone very quietly come up to them and explain to them what they had done wrong. “They are the worst. It's like they are doing you a favour. The favour would be to ignore it” (Philippa). Alongside these discussions were ones about how they coped with the constant correction.

Due to the constant possibility of being told that they were wrong, I wondered if it would have a negative effect on people's self-esteem. The responses reflected the different perspectives that my collaborators hold on dyslexia. Barry (profound disability) described the need to educate the uninformed. He would challenge the corrections to language and instead tell the other person to correct themselves and their behaviour toward dyslexics. For those who saw dyslexia as 'disability', correction was to be avoided, and they had multiple ways of trying to circumvent the correction. One of the ways to negotiate not being exposed and shamed involved having someone else take control of written language. This was also the case for some people who saw dyslexia as difference, they did not want to deal with people's feelings of pity or shame. Mathew, who sees dyslexia as difference, would sit down with his wife in the evening, and they would go through his email, with her writing the responses. Those who saw dyslexia as difference, they explained, “it's just part of everyday life.”

After a while as a kid you just tune it out, and it sounds a bit like mawh mawh mawh, like the adults from the Charlie Brown cartoons.....as an adult you have a choice as to how to react to it, you either let it wash over you or you let it hurt. Those are your choices. (Elise)

In each situation, the different adaptations to correction showed agency through performed actions and hidden responses to moments of correction.

Words, accessing words, their meanings, and the correction of them are the elephant in the room when discussing dyslexia as it is the most debated and researched experience, but I found dyslexic language is complex- it is more than correction. At the first dinner, a situation arose where everyone began to speak about the first book they had read. Craig had begun

to read as a preteen and spoke of his love of reading, “the thicker the book, the better.” The first full book that my collaborator’s had read varied in age between late teens and adulthood. They spoke with passion about what books they had read. Philippa’s mother (non-dyslexic) looked at everyone somewhat bemused and responded to the discussion saying, “But I thought dyslexics can’t read.” Elise explained, “That’s what we’re told too.” As the conversation continued, what became important was being able to access the literature and this involved several steps; including giving themselves permission to access the book the way they preferred, rather than the way they believed they should. As Jean explained when we met, “I need to be able to do that. As long as it gives me room, I like the book. It’s difficult to explain.”

### **Moving Through The World: “The Weird Dance.”**

Movement is used in remedial practices for dyslexia in a variety of different ways (Davis 1997), but I have yet to find research which looks at movement as connection with spaces and people from a dyslexic perspective. Taussig suggests that sense of our environment is through “usage, [making] meaning, to some crucial extent through touch, or better still by proprioception” (Taussig 2009:269). Proprioception<sup>3</sup> and the cultural expectations associated with the way this sense is articulated in the bodies’ of my collaborators, impacts on dyslexia. My collaborators who saw dyslexia as difference, all spoke about social space and the expectations put on their bodies in moving through it. Their discussions of being told “don’t fidget”, “don’t stand so close”, to “watch out” were ongoing dialogues from their childhoods. The expectation that they were going to move through a space or rather not move through spaces in appropriate ways, resulted, in childhood, in being steered by a parent and told to keep their hands out of the way. Proprioception became something organised by those outside their bodies, to the extent that Elise explained, “I find myself doing it even now. I go into a shop with breakable things and I put my hands behind my back, but only then, not all the time.” Becoming aware of body position, and societal expectations of the body are experiences created as the body is socialised within a culture and environments (Rapport 2014:37). The body socialised, is part of the lifeworld, sometimes recognised as such and at other times unrecognised (Jackson 2012:198). My collaborators struggle, at times, to perform the societal boundaries that related to proprioception resulting in crossing, for them, these unrecognised boundaries. For example standing too close to a non-dyslexic resulted in censure or “the weird dance. We step forward and they step back” (Philippa).

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<sup>3</sup> Proprioception is the unconscious perception of movement and spatial orientations arising from stimuli within the body itself. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/proprioception>

Proprioception is one of the ways in which dyslexics give attention to the world and engage with the world. I saw differences between non-dyslexic spaces and dyslexic spaces. The dinners at my home became dyslexic spaces. Movement, particularly gestures, were not controlled and limited, and people seemed to feel comfortable to move through the space as they saw fit. This resulted in people getting up and down from the table whenever they wanted to and using their hands freely in conversations they had with one another, rather than “hiding our hands away” (Elise). Many spoke about being clumsy and referred to it as being a dyslexic trait. They were very aware of where their body was in relation to other people and other objects. When they passed each other, they seemed to come close, but they did not bump into one another, or accidentally hit another person or object while gesturing. It raises interesting questions about how these boundaries to spaces and persons impact on dyslexic personhood and reveals expectations of gesture in intersubjective relationships, which I will discuss further in Chapter 7.

Not everyone discussed body awareness. Those who saw dyslexia as a disability, did not talk about the experience of being in a social environment and the expectations of the body in that space. Even when I referred to stories I had been told about the experience of being told not to fidget, they would briefly agree and then everybody moved on to a different topic. Movements were not attributed to their dyslexia in the same way as they were for those who saw dyslexia as difference. For those who saw dyslexia as disability, their focus on moving through the world was on the ability to read signs and bus numbers. For the difference people, movement was the way they expressed their knowledge of *ness*<sup>4</sup>.



### ***The Inconsistencies Of Left And Right***

There are still debates about whether difficulties between left and right are dyslexic traits (Reid 2011:63, Ginsberg and Hart 1971) but for many of my collaborators, they put this experience into their stories of being dyslexic. Left and right, I was told, was linked with navigating an environment, putting on a watch, having a concert stamp put on a hand and signing a document in the correct place on the page. Left and right, in relation to persons in the British and New Zealand contexts, are important ways to navigate and delineate spaces, body and mind. The division of the body into left and right resides in the everyday through the person's expression of these concepts. These concepts can be used to navigate a landscape through which a person moves or a piece of paper on which a design is being drawn. The egocentric concept of left and right extend out from the body into the landscape to both understand it and to interpret it (Shepherd and Hurwitz 1984). Where another culture may use the landscape itself to give directions, New Zealand and British societies situate

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<sup>4</sup> Ness is one of the words created by my collaborators it reflects their embodied knowledge of an environment. I will discuss it in detail in chapter 6

direction from the body. Exploring this hypothesis further in New Zealand left and right may also be contained in landmarks where left and right are used to define them. For example, a large Pohutukawa tree may be used as a central point with left and right given in a list of instructions 'turn left at the Pohutukawa'. However, this also requires the position of the body. Wherever you stand around the tree, left and right is based on the situatedness of the body (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:3). Having made this statement, I am now going to disagree with it. My collaborators have said that left and right are flexible, interchangeable concepts which are not contained within or drawn out from the body.

As Amanda and I drove to the Art Gallery to do the photographic walk, we discussed learning to drive and passing the driving test. As we laughed together about the difficulties of learning to drive and the driving test Amanda said, "It was left and right that I had to focus on." I asked if she had used the hand technique<sup>5</sup> for helping with left and right. She looked at me and said "that doesn't work, you move your hands, and either one could be the left." This was not the first time I was to hear the story about the failure of this technique. At our second shared dinner, Amanda told this story, and Elise lifted her hands mimicking Amanda's movement saying, "Oh no! You're right! This is going to stay with me now. I'm going to have to find another way to work out left and right." Where initially using hands to reinstate left and right in the body had been useful for Elise, the body's own flexibility belied its use.

The body was a flexibly, adaptable space, not a stable platform from which an environment could be interpreted. Their body did not contain the egocentric left and right and for my collaborators, this abstract concept existed in other people's bodies, not their own. In the countries where this research has taken place, left and right are considered suitable methods of direction. Navigating an environment as situated from the body is, therefore, prevalent in the ways that my collaborators are asked to move through the world. However, "If one person treats as movable that which is considered fixed by someone else, it causes real anxiety" (Hall 1968: 91). For Amanda this meant she was more nervous about left and right, than the driving test itself. Left and right for many of my collaborators are not fixed but movable and contradict the supposed stability of giving and receiving directions, getting to meetings or to a friend's new house for a meal. Everyday navigating of the world becomes a complex interaction between body experience and the need to be in the right place at the right time. However, not all my collaborators describe direction as an issue related to their dyslexia, Craig explained that he travels by whether it feels that he is going in the correct

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<sup>5</sup> The hand technique involves holding out your hands in front of you with the tips of your fingers pointing straight up and the palms pointing away from the body. Then the thumbs are extended at right angles so that the thumb and index finger make either an L shape or a mirror image of an L. The one that makes the L shape is the left hand.



direction. Direction influences moving through the world as it impacts on time, bodies and being, which I will discuss further shortly.

### ***Travelling: “So Where Exactly Are You?”***

As the door opened and closed, alternating the smells of dinner cooking with the damp evening air, voices of greeting mingled with the quick breath and tense apologies of the late arrivals. There were a variety of different stories as to how they finally arrived at my house, with some finding it difficult. For those who had not had any difficulties, they were surprised at how far away from the house some people had managed to get. May (Philippa’s non-dyslexic mother) mingled her laughter with the general introductions saying “I should have known better than to trust the dysleXic to give me directions.” In doing so, she linked time and navigation to her apology and her interpretation of dysleXia.

Debbie, at another meal, was very late getting to dinner. Her struggles had begun with a possible clash between a family event and the dinner. As she knew ahead of time that she was possibly going to be a little late, she decided she would send texts so I knew what was happening. She sent a text near six in the evening, well over an hour after the time we were due to meet, saying she was on her way. We decided to wait a little longer before eating dinner so that we could all eat together, even though Debbie had said not to wait. As time ticked on I tried ringing but her phone was off. An hour later, everyone was hungry and decided to eat but we were concerned, as the time she was taking did not reflect the distance she had to travel. Eventually, we heard the wheels of a car as they crunched across the gravel and came to a stop. When she walked in the door she was both relieved and exhausted, she was short of breath and hunched in, speaking in a tense, high voice “I forgot to turn left.” Her words of apology and explanation tripped over each other, part apology and part explanation. She had gone over an hour in the wrong direction and on having found my road, knocked on one of the doors at the end of the road to ask if they knew where I lived. The experience of the journey was written in her body and her actions as she attempted to get the sense of feeling out of control under control. Slowly, her voice returned to its normal pitch - she looked around at those at the table seeing them for the first time as individuals, rather than a group she had disappointed, and began to learn their names.

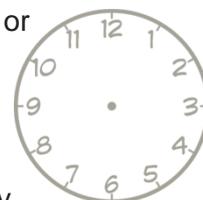
Instead of responding with censure or with comments of ‘it doesn’t matter’ people around the table began to share their experiences of travelling. Amanda spoke about arriving and sitting on a driveway wondering if she was in the right place, “It just didn’t feel right” she explained. The sharing of the stories of getting lost helped Debbie to feel accepted and to realise that while it was stressful, and she was apprehensive about how we would react, she

did not need to worry. Debbie had written in her body the stress of the journey and through recognising her experience, my key collaborators then shared their stories. The collective experiences were helpful, and those who had not had any trouble with this journey were supportive of those who had. The final comment made by Debbie was, “I wasn’t going to give up. I had come all this way, and I was determined to get here.” Everyone laughed, with Craig saying, “That’s ‘cause your dyslexic; we don’t give up, ever.” Elise responded, laughing as she spoke, “Even sometimes when we should [give up] we just keep going.” The altering of intersubjectivity by being with other dyslexics resulted in a recognition of shared experiences of time and navigation which took on new meanings in being shared. Time and Navigation were recognised as impacting the body and being a part of everyday experience and was something to be negotiated. Their storytelling suggests that there is more to everyday activity than simply conforming to existing dominant forms of navigation. It showed how expectations of something such as left and right impact on the body physically and can challenge a person’s belief in their own abilities.

**“There are two 10 o’clock’s..”**

People arrived at different times at each of our meetings due to traffic, work, getting lost or simply running late. At one particular shared meal with my key collaborators, Craig and Elise had arrived early to help with the preparation. As we waited for people to arrive, the clock continued past the time we were supposed to be eating and disappeared quickly in 10-minute increments. This was to be like other meetings. “Catching up” turned out to be more complex than I had expected<sup>6</sup>. To the usual nervousness of meeting someone new was added the stress of simply getting there. The *there* was a construction of two concepts, navigation and time. Meetings were frequently rearranged due to clashes in time, dates and places. Initially, I worried that I was at fault in asking busy people to organise meetings when they did not have the time. When I asked people if it was too much the responses to my question about my process often began with an apology, saying that it was their failure. As we continued talking and got to know each other, I found that it was more than a clash or being too busy but time was being interpreted in a complex way.

Time affected all of my collaborators no matter where they came on the continuum. “Time [based around the clock] is a .... construction created for the purpose of creating continuity and patterns removing some of the abstract of everyday” (King 2010:98). Nevertheless I found for dyslexics, time, based on the clock, does not remove the abstract but has the potential to create new types of abstract experiences. Time involves different fields,



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<sup>6</sup> Meeting changes are a normal part of fieldwork however throughout the length of the research the only meetings which were not altered was with 2 non-dyslexics.

“Physical time is the order of a succession of events; human<sup>7</sup> time is an abstraction from the observation of succession” (Weinert 2013:94). The abstract clock time impacts on the person as does physical time but in different ways and for my collaborators time as a whole was seen as “unorganised” (Elise).

As we talked I found, for my collaborators, remembering our meetings was not about a clock and diary but an event. Our meetings did not happen at a time and place - they were a happening as an event attached to intersubjectivity and locations. During one of these discussions, Amanda explained to the group, as she drew two columns in the air, “there are two ten o'clock's.” The laughter and responses to Amanda’s comment echoed people’s agreement that multiple times exist in a single day.

That’s why we can book two meetings and not see they clash, other people see them as happening on the same day and see the clash, we don’t because we see the meeting and the people and they are separate so the times are separate. (Elise)

Moran states that time “must be thought of in terms of time” (Moran 2000:5163) but what also needs to be included is the affect and effect it creates in the lifeworld as time, as expressed by Amanda and Elise, is not a single thing to which a person adheres. Based on the clock it is a construction that impacts on and interacts with the dysleXic person (King 2010:69-70). Clock time was not only associated with seconds, minutes and hours but had a physical influence on the body. Interpretations of the clock and other people’s expectations of it influenced what time meant intersubjectively and personally. For my collaborators, ‘clock’ time was not something linear and abstracted from the body, but enmeshed with physical time in the body through prioritising intersubjectivity.

Time was not something that divided into clock and physical time they were instead stratified through intersubjectivity. A way to think about this is to see clock time like a river which diverts and splits off creating different small streams. The flow of water remains consistent, but the streams (planning for meetings and commitments) create separate pathways crossing over each other and heading at other times in opposite directions. If one places a small paper boat (physical time) at the beginning of the river it will flip from stream to stream depending on the flow of the water and spin in the eddies not knowing which path to take. The discussions I had in these eddies were spinning with their sense of panic and apologies, as they realised what had occurred and wondered what path they could physically take. For example, for a variety of different reasons Heather would change our meetings. Often they were cancelled because of events that she knew were planned but they did not become

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<sup>7</sup> I question Weinert’s assertion of “human time” as it calls into question the humanness of my collaborators, so instead I will be using the term clock.

linked to the time or date when we were meeting. “Hey there, I can’t meet I have an assignment due, I am so so so sorry this is so important. Is that okay?” Sometimes our planned meet ups were on the stream not travelled. The question at the end was common with all of my collaborators and appeared to relate to concerns over whether I would be disappointed. It was accompanied by careful questions of me to see if I would be angry or censure them. I asked at the dinners what was happening in these encounters and why there was so much concern. My key collaborators explained they expected the “usual” response of rolling eyes, the slowly shaking head, the silence at the end of the phone or the sigh of disappointment. Each response was described as the punishment for not conforming to time.

### ***“Wibbly Wobbly Timey Wimey Stuff”***

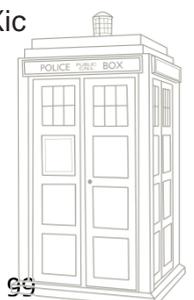
Clock time was a limiter of lived experience and being able to become immersed in an activity was regarded as a luxury, as it wouldn’t normally “let it happen” (Craig). Craig described losing time through gaming because he became immersed in the world. He explained, “I can get incredibly immersed into the story and experience.” Elise agreed.

It’s one of the things that I have to watch with my youngest son<sup>8</sup>. I cannot cut him straight off. I’ve got give him a full countdown of at least 15 minutes to get him off the computer. I’ve got to give him that time to get out of that world because basically he climbs into that screen of the Minecraft world and needs time to reconnect with this world. (Elise)

As she described this experience, she gestured with her hands grasping and pulling motions reinforcing the embodied experience she was describing. Craig continued explaining, “This is not like non-dyslexics. You have to physically pull yourself out piece by piece and reverse out of the game” (Craig). Clock time fails to allow space needed to connect with activities and people and demands attention, drawing collaborators away from intersubjective and interobjective spaces. In the existing research, dyslexia is described as “robbing people of time” (Shawitz 2008:235,322) but this does not consider the ways in which dyslexics pay attention to the world and how these impact on what time means to dyslexics. Weinert (2013), as I stated earlier, suggests time needed to be interpreted through time. When looking at dyslexia, it is used to show problems (Philpott 198:4) but I would suggest that the study of time also needs to consider different interpretations and its purpose from a dyslexic perspective. My difference collaborators stated that, for dyslexics, it is a flow of multiple things into one another. It is more closely linked with physical time, although as Amanda

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<sup>8</sup> Her son is dyslexic



explained, “when does a dysleXic ever do one thing at a time” (Amanda). Time is not a straight forward concept, as both Elise and Amanda have said, quoting Dr Who, time is “wibbly wobbly timey wimey stuff.”

The sense of failure with time is part of the everyday as no matter how hard my collaborators tried, they said, “it would happen again” (Amanda). These intersubjective relationships of disappointment about timing resulted, often, in an apology coming before the greeting whenever we met together. Interlaced with physical time is the expected possibility for multiple physical and clock times as there can be “two ten o’clocks” (Amanda). It is physically impossible to be in two places at once but creatively in its planning, the two times are not linked and the events do not clash, preparations are made and the details filed away. They are separate entities - one event is with one group of people and another is with a different group. Therefore they do not clash, at least until the reality of physical and constructed clock time defines it otherwise.

The importance of constructed time and following its required format created inner conflict for many of my collaborators. They knew that they had done their very best, which included using their phones and tablets to record information and setting alarms, but past experience had told them it was not good enough. It resulted in interpretations of their behaviour and being told they were “scatty” (Phillipa) and “disorganised”(Heather). Through the various stories, I heard time was an abstract concept which impacts on personhood, demanding particular kinds of attention. I was told these experiences resulted in feeling time was disjointed and abstract, creating histories of failures. Personal histories were used to interpret clock time, including experiences of seeing the disappointment in someone’s face, the censure in an email or being laughed at and described as “forgetful” (Phillippa). These histories were/are drawn on in the experience of time.

As stated earlier, experiences of censure were common to all of my collaborators and time was no different. For those who believed that dysleXia is a profound disability, the reactions to this censure resulted in them being angry. Time for Barry was about memory, he explained that it was the other person’s fault because they knew what he needed, and they were at fault for not providing it. He said, ‘they need to ring me/us regularly so that we know what’s happening. We don’t have a memory so they have to do what we need.’ There were also those who saw dysleXia as a disability who had negotiated keeping and breaking meetings. They used other staff members to book meetings or to deal with the disappointment of the person who could not meet with them, thereby distancing themselves from this issue. Within dysleXia as a disability and dysleXia as difference, a response to a timing problem could be “I’m sorry I have dyslexia I get these things wrong sometimes”

(Philippa). For those who see dyslexia as difference, they see themselves as responsible for negotiating the world using their phones and diaries. One collaborator explained that if anybody ever asks her to do anything she asks him or her to send her an email so that she can remember it properly. The collaborators who saw dyslexia as difference had varied responses, including apologies for being late to being very self-critical. Time was not related to memory as the event was remembered and the clash came later with the clock. As we discussed the complexity of meeting there was also the response of laughter as Amanda said, “you should have expected this” (Amanda).

### **Conversations as Creative, Real and Imagined: “Everyone Hurries Us Up Or Cuts Across Us.”**

In social gatherings, there are moments when relationships begin to form through introductions, telling stories, finding a shared experience, and using social rules, including those around invitations to eat and drink (Rapport 2014:37). This was the case for my collaborators in both our individual meetings and the group meetings. It appeared to be a process of testing to see how people would respond to them as persons and to understand the group dynamics; I also believe it was to try and understand what it was like to be with a group of dyslexics as those at the dinners had never done anything like this before. Testing was more common in New Zealand than in the United Kingdom. In the UK, I found questions focused on what I believed about dyslexia and what I was hoping to achieve, rather than checking to see if they felt safe speaking with me.

At the dinners in NZ, the statements were either about themselves or about their relationships with other people. Responses from myself or the group would affect how the stories were shared; I noticed differences in the ones I was told privately and when they were shared in a group. As people became more comfortable, they started talking at speed and often over the top of each other, with three or four conversations going on at the same time with everybody taking part in all the conversations. At other times there was complete silence as one person spoke, as happened in the story about the Lizard. When I asked about this complete silence, I was told, “we are not used to being able to finish our stories. Everyone always hurries us up or cuts across us. It was amazing being able to do that” (Elise). The story telling was accomplished with words, intonation, hand movements, gestures, and body position. When others joined in or wanted clarification of a point, they often echoed the movements of the initial speaker. These complex conversations do not come across in the recordings I made as they have become a blur of intonations, a question about education, a statement about emails and comments about not being able to make non-dyslexic’s understand.

In both the UK and New Zealand story telling was multi-linear. The freedom to use this type of speech represented being-with (Sartre 1984:335, Kunjundzic 2001) other dyslexics and the differences required in communication with non-dyslexics.

Craig: "I still remember that first night. It took a little bit for everyone, it took about half an hour for everyone to get comfortable and then like boom. And Philippa, your Mum, was just sitting there going what????"

Philippa: "she keeps on going on about it she's like, 'man I just remember that one night. For this whole time, I just thought that you were special and it's not you, there're more people like that'."

Craig: "I remember one time, I was around your place talking with your mum, and I said that happens every time we catch up."

The montage (Buck-Morss 1992:39) of storytelling was comfortable for the dyslexics at the dinners but for Philippa's mother somewhat confusing. "But at least you sort of understand it, you could take part. I just got lost" she explained later as we talked. Over the meals shared together I sat, watched and talked, as this non-linear speech pattern repeatedly jumped between the past, present and future. This meant that historical, as well as present information, was brought into their storytelling. In drawing from multiple sources, jumping between the various pieces of information my collaborators described them as appearing random to non-dyslexic's but "important to us" (Craig). Many of my collaborators had not experienced the acceptance of other people to their storytelling and after the dinners would often stay late talking until exhausted. After one long night of talking Amanda suggested "we really should start these things earlier in the day, like before lunch" (Amanda).



### ***"The Blank Stare"***

During one of the conversations what appeared to me to be a dramatic change in topic was the question by Elise "do you get those blank stares?" (Elise). This led to an initial response of surprise and then laughter as everyone looked around the table and realised that they had all had the same experience. They then explained to me they were referring to the experience of having conversations with people and seeing that they were losing their listener. Craig explained, "There's a moment where you see that you have lost them, where you know they don't understand what you're trying to say." Everyone spoke about trying to relate stories and not being understood or told they talked too much. Jackson, quoting Hannah Arendt, wrote about the importance of stories as "it is in the presence of others who see and hear what we hear [that] assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves"

(Jackson 2012:3380). Stories from a dyslexic perspective can also be places where their perception of reality is challenged. Where Jackson suggests intersubjectivity in storytelling is about involving people in the experience resulting in validation, for dyslexics their storytelling resulted in the “blank stare” devaluing their narrative resulting in feeling “out of place” (Elise). Storytelling had the potential to challenge their reality rather than giving the assurance Arendt describes. Amanda had adapted her storytelling to address this issue by using techniques to help people understand the structuring she used. She used phrases like “I know I’ve said this before, but this is relevant here”, and “this didn’t happen now, but it’s important to the story for you to know now.” While this gave structure to her conversation, I noticed within half an hour of interacting with other dyslexics it stopped completely as she realised it was not necessary.

Weaving of past, present and future into a multi-linear narrative in a dyslexic environment created a further inclusion of others’ stories. As one story was shared other people interlaced their experiences, sometimes threading them through at the same time as the first speaker or when the first speaker took a breath. It was both relaxing and stimulating for my key collaborators, with Philippa saying “I didn’t have to explain myself and didn’t get that blank, glazed-over look when people think that I’m saying too much.” I, however, sometimes lost track of the conversations. We began discussing why they told their stories in that format, and what made it necessary for a dyslexic to tell them that way. “I don’t say everything I could say,” Philippa explained, and Amanda added, “People ask for the short version and it is the shortest version” (Amanda). This developed into discussions around the difference between the short version for a dyslexic versus a non-dyslexic. What was needed in the intersubjective space of storytelling differed as what was short to a dyslexic could be considered long by non-dyslexics. Philippa said to her mother, “You see, it is the short version; it’s our short version.” She felt validated in her storytelling mode by being listened to and supported. Storytelling was about the transitive, bounded and imagined which reflected how my collaborators valued storytelling.

***“You Never Know What’s Behind The Door.”***

A notion of experience must recognise not only our sense of things substantive and bounded but our sense of the transitive and unbounded if we are to avoid reducing experience to the conceptual orders we impose upon it (Jackson 1997:27).



Conceptual order, written onto the word dyslexia, resulted in my collaborators either feeling the need to hide or profess their dyslexia. However in these moments the transitive and

unbounded was lost and people become limited through the label's interpretation. Accepting that the transitive has value opens up possibilities for seeing beyond the boundaries of the word dyslexia into dysleXic experience. One area which opened up was the importance of mystery and possibilities. At the second dinner, everyone discussed imagination and potentiality hidden in everyday experience. This is not to say that the mundane was not important, in fact, both Elise and Amanda mentioned that it was important to have the mundane because otherwise you "couldn't know about the spectacular." One of the stories shared over dinner that reflected the importance of mystery was that of the unexpected door. The importance of this everyday, mundane object in an unusual place was significant as it altered the everyday lifeworld.

Amanda described walking down a flight of stairs with a friend and finding "A door ten foot" up in the middle of the stairwell. As she walked down the stairs, she focused on the doorway and because she was looking and trying to understand why it was there, she tripped and fell down the stairs. This prompted a variety of other stories, as everyone spoke about their experiences of doors that were where they shouldn't be. For Elise, the door had been in the middle of nowhere in a church in England she had visited at the age of ten, over 26 years earlier. She explained how, in this beautiful place, the small door at the top of the building had transfixed her. "My Dad had to come and drag me out of the place" (Elise). When I asked what was so important, I was told it was about the possibilities. "You never know what's behind the door it could be anything, a mysterious world could live behind the door" (Amanda). "Yeah, anything could be there" (Craig). The doors through aesthetic engagement became attached to a wealth of possibilities, both sensory and imagined. In the giftedness literature, there is a celebration of diverse and creative thinking by dysleXics with an emphasis on the mind (Eide and Eide 2011:35-38) with people like Richard Branson used to demonstrate this talent. However, talking with my key collaborators I found that this thinking was embodied, where the body is taken up by the sense of possibility, not only the mind.

The potential for mystery in the everyday was important to many of my collaborators but for others it was to be avoided. Mystery, for those who saw dysleXia as profound disability connected it to the unknown, and the unknown was something negative. When I asked about the unknown it was something to be avoided, it was seen as a place for potential failure and judgment. It was often linked to life history and specifically to difficulties with reading and writing. Words were described as a mystery because they were so difficult to access and mystery, in general, became negative as well.

For others in the difference and giftedness end of the continuum, a mystery was something private. It was seen as play and that not everybody understood play. As an adult, they felt the need to be wary because their behaviour could be viewed as foolish, with the response being “not to behave like a child” (Philippa). Mystery and possibilities highlight the differences between the ‘disability’ and the ‘difference’ model of dyslexia. For the ‘difference literature’ it is important to be able to hold in contention the mystery and the known of the world and to see neither as negative, but as having potential (Watson 2011, Eide and Eide 2011). In the difference literature, the ability to see connections and possibilities, where others see none, is part of the dyslexic experience and something to be celebrated (Eide and Eide 2011). The “how did you see that” response to a dyslexic coming up with an idea, that other people had not seen, is central to the difference literature and is often linked to being one of the gifts of dyslexia (Eide and Eide 2011:115-118, Davis 1997). In talking with each other, Philippa, Craig, Amanda and Elise explained that to see the possibility of the everyday meant giving themselves the opportunity to play. The right to play seems to be affected by the age of my participants as the younger ones find it difficult to keep their sense of play out of the schoolroom “you can’t play at school” (Luke). For my older collaborators, they predominantly had demarcated spaces in which they allow themselves to play, for example, through “painting” (Sophia).

Dyslexia is often linked with being right-brained and creative (Shires-Golan 2008, Strawan 2008, Albertson 2001).

The right hemisphere favours new and creative connections, the recognition of more distant and unusual relationships, and skill in detecting inferences and ambiguities (Eide and Eide 2011:36).

Creativity has been examined in a variety of ways (Alexander-Passe 2010, Watson 2011) including, in the work of the Shaywitzs’, through clinical studies at the Yale Centre for Dyslexia and Creativity. However, what seems to be missed is the importance of creativity in everyday practice. This creativity does not create a single event such as making a piece of artwork, but it is important to every moment of every day. Creativity is expressed and experienced through a variety of different mediums and in those moments of creativity, it was about seeing the potential of ‘things’ as “everything has possibilities,” as Philippa explained. Recognition, of ambiguities, as Eide and Eide stated above, and the ability to see connections that are missed by non-dyslexics, is important to most of my collaborators, but at the same time, this can be difficult to manage. Questions, judgement and surprise, were some of the responses they had to their playing with ideas. Accompanying this, for the younger dyslexics and to a lesser extent the older collaborators was self-doubt about

whether they should mention their ideas. There was the belief that “someone else must see it too” (Mathew), “I didn’t say anything because I thought they knew” (Alistair).

How to manage creativity in the workplace and at school was influenced by how people interpreted their dyslexia. For those who had disclosed their dyslexia or believed in their ability to come up with ideas, they would suggest them, not worrying if anyone picked them up. I found those who saw dyslexia, as profound disability, it resulted in them doubting their suggestions stopping them from talking. At school, being a creative dyslexic was regarded as negative and both Philippa and Craig said they needed the “out there people,” because they let them be themselves. School was about conforming and thinking, looking or acting in a way which did not express their creativity and both left school early. There have been comments from all the people who came to the dinners, that they felt free, they could just let go and be themselves. Craig explained this different creative intersubjectivity, saying that normally he needed to “ratchet in” himself, adding how, with other dyslexics, he did not have to worry. “We get it, we get each other, you don’t have to explain things it’s cool.” On one occasion, this intersubjectivity was coupled with a discussion of Plato’s cave.

Just the make-up of our physicality of being dyslexic gives you the ability to turn away from the wall<sup>9</sup>. Someone else has to be given the experience, you know?  
Non-dyslexics need to be turned. (Amanda)

My collaborators recognised a difference in their intersubjective interactions in the world and for those at the dinners, this became an important space “away from having to always explain ourselves” (Amanda). Being able to discuss mysteries was linked to being able to “draw outside of the lines. We can see things. We just have to learn that we are allowed to and stop locking ourselves down” (Elise).

### **... And Then There Was Candle Wax.**

I mentioned earlier in this chapter, that there were statements and comments made at the group dinners that were used to help people find their social place. As everyone became more comfortable, these statements and behaviours were dropped. Passing phrases, instead, became places to bounce off from and on one occasion, this led to people choosing favourite songs on their cell phones and everyone singing along. At another time, we were generally talking about what it means to be dyslexic and I reflected back, “then do you think there are times when you can see possibilities in something other people see as unimportant?” (Ruth). Before I even finished the word “unimportant” Amanda began the conversation.

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<sup>9</sup> This discussion was about Plato’s cave and his theory that people only see reflections of real life on the cave wall. That to see the real world it is necessary to turn around and walk out of the cave.

Amanda: "candle wax."

Everyone responded at the same time.

Philippa: "Ohh my god candle  
wax" Craig: "ohhh candle wax"  
Amanda: "yeah I know"  
Elise: "the amount of years of candle wax"

Craig: "Candle wax is so cool."

I watched a little confused as everyone's words tripped over each other as they excitedly talked about candle wax. Then Amanda began her story.

Amanda: "The power went out one day at my house, and my dad's dysleXic as well as me, I've said that before but it's important to the story. We had this big white candle on the table

Elise: "ooh."

Amanda: "in the middle of the table and it pretty much melted all the way down and the wax like spread over the whole table and."

Philippa: "cool."

Amanda: "and dad looked at me like mmm hmm and we made a whole city on our wooden table like out of this wax."

Craig: "Oh that's so cool."

Amanda: "it was so amazing and then we were just getting candles from everywhere and getting them, burning them for the wax it was the best thing ever."

Craig: "that's what you call a cool dad moment."

Amanda: "Best dad ever."

Everyone caught the laughter and joy of the moment expressed by Amanda as they participated in the story. They talked with gestures of pressing the imagined wax through their fingertips, sensorially engaged with the aesthetics of the wax. The intersubjective dysleXic space resulted in catching the story with their whole bodies and adding their own physical memory. This happened on several occasions and contrasted with the comments they made about not showing this to anyone else as "they don't get it" (Craig, Amanda, Elise,

Mathew, Philippa). We have discussed this moment since, each time it seems to come back to the corporeal reality associated with the story. The story, like the wax, was embodied. The sensation of the warm and hot wax on the fingertips, the way that it dries, gathering the corpuscles into its tight covering and then being peeled away, releasing the skin was materially and verbally linked to this intersubjective moment.

### **Summary**

The lifeworld is a constant negotiation which takes place as individuals move through the everyday, and this is also the case for people who are dyslexic. Dyslexia is inhabited in the everyday as a corporeal reality, lived through shared and individual experiences. The reality includes relationships with time, navigation, language and creativity which manifest in experiences and expressions of dyslexia. Through the fieldwork, dyslexia was manifested through the situatedness of being-in-the-world by being inhabited and outworked through interpreting everyday experiences. There were different ways of Being that were influenced by the environments and intersubjectivity as well as interpretations of disability, difference and giftedness. The everyday highlights dyslexic experience and that it should not be about trying to find the essential truth of the dyslexic, but an awareness of the flux of everyday experience. Agency of expression of dyslexia ranged from the openly expressed, as can be seen in the dinners, through to the suppression of perceived inadequacies, through the use of spellcheck and alarms. Having looked here at the broad strokes of the everyday, as discussed by my collaborators, in the following chapters, I focus on different aspects which I have raised here, beginning with language from a dyslexic perspective followed by the senses and gesture. Dyslexia is not simply a diagnosis relating to literacy or a functional issue in the brain it is a lived embodied reality of the lifeworld.

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## CHAPTER 5

### LANGUAGE WITH THE BODY: “To Waffull, because it’s full.”

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Language is the most widely researched aspect of dyslexia with the predominant focus on why written language is difficult to attain and how to make words attainable (White et. Al 2006, Elliot 2005, Shawitz et. Al. 1998, Hurst 2015). Language and dyslexia focuses on encoding (Whitney and Cornelissen 2005), decoding (Ossmy, Ben-Shachar and Mukamel 2014), word meaning represented in the mind (Peyrin, Lallier, Demonet et al 2012), or language acquisition (Blachman 2013:56-57). These various foci, unfortunately, create boundaries to exploring dysleXic interactions with written, read, spoken and heard language. In this chapter, I look at how words exist for people with dysleXia in a dynamic, complex, multifaceted relationship, beyond attainment or failure. I argue that language is, for people with dysleXia, *with* and *within* the body through its performance and consumption. More specifically I state that when language expands beyond the boundaries of attained and not attained, and dysleXic perspectives are accepted, it is possible to recognise their complex, rich and multifaceted montage of words.

Using the letter artworks, interviews, dinners and the creation of new words, I explore the layers of meaning placed on and around words through dysleXic practice as an experience and an expression of being-in-the-world. The letter artworks are part of this chapter and explore language representing other facets of the experience of language. The images of the work directly engage with written words and evoke “lived experience[s], that are unavailable to writing” (Taylor 1998:535 in Cox and Wright 2012:126). Ong stated that, “Print is curiously intolerant of physical incompleteness. It can convey the impression, unintentionally and subtly, but very really that the material the text deals with is similarly complete or self-consistent” (Ong 2013:130). My collaborators have shown the page as incomplete, needing the body beyond the boundaries of the margins to have meaning. To explore this experience I alter the layout disconnecting the margin and through the ragged edges of text play with its physical space on the page. I alter the stability of the left-hand margin modifying the familiarity of reading, encouraging the seeking of words to challenge the completeness of the page. The lines instead point off the pages and out into the world. In changing the margins, I aim to alter the text’s accessibility and stability, engaging with some of my collaborators’ descriptions of the page. Text and images provide different forms of information and this chapter values the different and distinct forms of knowledge each medium offers to explore embodied experience. Therefore, I use each separately to support

their different forms of knowing about the body. Thus, this chapter explores embodied engagement with words and their intersubjective and aesthetic potential from a dyslexic perspective.

### **Words are Part of the Everyday**

Words are part of our everyday experiences - from looking at bus timetables, to reading road signs, choosing a meal from a menu, checking labels in the supermarket, emailing, texting, talking, reading TV guides or reading advertising signs. Words are used intersubjectively to tell stories, communicate, describe places and define people (Taylor 2012:4). Words are therefore a part of being-in-the-world and part of the everyday. Language has added meaning when attached to the term dyslexia and to say that someone is dyslexic defines them as finding, predominately written, words difficult to access.

Language is the point where dyslexics become labelled and re-categorised as words become a place to define the body through their lack of easy attainment (Bell 2006, Chevin 2009). Granger explained “the category LD (Learning Disabled or learning Difference) has been used to mark particular bodies as deviant bodies, to normalise bodies and steal our bodies from us” (2010:4). This link between body and language recognises its personal and social nature (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:30, Crapanzano 2004:71) and places words with the body. Ricoeur (Dorairaj 2000) and Derrida (Edwards 1997:112) have suggested words contain hidden meanings and part of this, I suggest, is the way in which we interpret words through sensory and embodied knowing. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) highlighted the body in words through metaphors saying that bodies’ movements are embedded in language. Language, they propose, is corporeal and intersubjective. The connection with the body, they suggest, enables language to contain information and meanings beyond the words expressed, resulting in complex information being communicated. Ong (2013:46) adds another layer, stating that words have meaning made on them and to assume that the meaning is constant reduces the embodied experience of language. Folb, herself dyslexic, expresses the connection between words and the body, echoing Ingold’s worlding of words (Ingold 2000:249). She suggests that in writing, words always remain personal “they are mediated and selected, shaped by our experiences” (Watson 2012:137). Words are, therefore, *with* the body both shaping and shaped by language.<sup>1</sup>

I explore words as having the potential to impact on and with the body altering perception and interpretation of spoken and written language. Levi-Strauss (1955) suggested that

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<sup>1</sup> Studies also show that the mind is reconstructed on a synaptic level as the body is moulded into being a particular type of reader. (Dehaene 2014, Dehaene et. Al. 2010)

language already exists and is something to be found and learned - reflecting his structuralist perspective (Tonkin 1982:109). Heidegger (1998: 57,59-60) suggests, from a philosophical semantic view, language is a dialectic in which it both names the world and the world calls language into being. Heidegger's words as unfolding are also relevant to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980:175) work that explores the ways words represent bodied experience. These perspectives state words are brought into being in the lifeworld and related to embodied knowledge. Disseminating words in various contexts creates different types of embodied interaction through speech, writing, reading and listening. Engaging with language from dysleXic perspectives highlights the reality that language is more than the sum of symbols or sound (Ong 1988:90). DysleXic persons complex interplays of bodied-cognition with words influence pragmatic and semantic fields through being-in-the-world with words. Words have multiple experiences and expressions for people with dysleXia as I was told they have been used to define people as failures and to call into question people's belief in themselves.

Before exploring the montage of language for dysleXia, please watch the clip DYSPLA<sup>2</sup> to begin situating language in dysleXic experience, as it is important to remember the effect language has and continues to have on people with dysleXia. The clip is of a collection of people sharing the impact of words in what Levi-Strauss (1955) described as finding language.

### **Words Are Montage**

Language is more than something waiting to be found.

Word meanings cannot be pinned down, as if they were dead insects. Instead, they flutter around inclusively like live butterflies. Or perhaps they should be likened to fish which slither out of one's grasp (Aitchison 2003:41).

Words need the body for meaning, understanding and performance (Schlee 2012:125). The sensory montage (Irving 2013:76-78) creates a space to begin to explore language from a dysleXic perspective as dynamic and engaged with the body. Montage blends these different fragments (Buck-Morss 1992:34) which flutter in and out of intersubjective communication and recognises language as an embodied ongoing mosaic of experience; influenced by life histories, proxemic relationships and context. Embracing the concept of montage within language acknowledges the interplay between persons and world,

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<sup>2</sup> The clip is in the folder labelled chapter 5 on the usb and called Dyspla on the DVD.

orality and text. It points to the complex interplay of senses, experiences, internal dialogue, internal visuality, chronoception<sup>3</sup>, interoception and environment that my collaborators have described as related to language. Recognising language, from my collaborators' perspective, as a unique sensory experience where information may not be edited out of the process of reading or speech. Adding to this phenomenology of language opens possibilities to support both negative and positive dyslexic perspectives of words. I am not saying that readers, in general, do not engage with sensory information, but that the way that people with dyslexia pay attention to the world alters their interaction with words which impact on, are used and enmeshed with everyday experience. Language for dyslexics has the potential to inscribe sensorially complex meanings around words, creating a multifaceted interplay of language with bodies.

The experience of holding a pen or pencil as it travels across the page, the weight and texture of the paper in the book being read, or the tapping of plastic keys on the keyboard under the fingertips, all give examples of sensory connection to the symbols of written words. These levels of interaction are influenced by editing of sensory information and awareness of these experiences is affected by attention paid to them. The environment in which reading takes place or where writing is done impacts on the experience of the performance of language. The stories of authors or our own writing attest to this when we seek certain environments because they are more conducive to the act of writing or reading. For example, I find the sound of bird song outside a window enjoyable but when a sentence will not form the song becomes annoyingly in the way of the words and I shut it out. Conversely, for many of my collaborators, the song would become enmeshed in the words they were reading or writing, not separate entities where one exerts control over the other. Sarah showed that words communicate sensory information as they are formed and consumed. "It just gets all mixed up and rahhhhh!" (Sarah). Identifying language as a moving sensory montage enables the complexities of handwriting and text to be juxtaposed against and *with* lived experience.

We must also be aware that the senses can also oppose, destabilise and juxtapose conflicting realities, creating complex montages of sensory information whose consequences need to be addressed when attempting to understand how the senses establish the basis for action and practice (Irving 2011:3).

This basis for action and practice related to the senses and words for my collaborators

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<sup>3</sup> Sense of the passage of time.

includes social expectations of appropriate interactions with language, such as spelling, reading, pronunciation, speed and letter shapes.

### ***Words are not passive: Representing Language With The Body***

Sensory information is part of the montage of words through their performance and consumption including the shapes made, whether through the lips or with a pen. For example, the noises of the classroom or office can influence the way in which the person shapes their letters, as Philippa explained, “I get frustrated, my body tenses and my words get smaller and smaller and harder to read” (Philippa). The assemblage of information creates an experience of language that is outworked through its expression of the letters and the senses of the body. Language is expressed as bodied knowing. To put this more generally, if while we are writing, another person walks up quietly behind us and scares us this shock can manifest through a mark on the page, by a spike on the symbol we were writing or a line across the page. The environment has altered our relationship to the process of writing. To put this into the context of the montage, the overlaying of sensory information gathered from the feeling of paper on skin, pen in hand, ink flowing on the page is added to the quickened breathing, frustration and censure entangled in the words on the page.

The performance of words and expectations of this performance trigger responses. My collaborators, in certain contexts, manage this sensory montage around words by altering sensory triggers, using a variety of techniques including ear plugs or music to alter their effect (Hornikel et. Al 2011). Philippa explained, “Sometimes the words are easier with music, Mum doesn’t believe me, but they are.” The sensory montage here uses other senses to connect with and manage text, as like many of my collaborators, Philippa found words themselves caused responses in her body. She described the need for tactile movement in her classroom, sitting clicking a pen in her left hand while writing with her right. “It was the way I could think. I didn’t even realise I was doing it. I think it was disturbing the rest of the class though because my teacher handed me a koosh ball and said ‘try this’” (Philippa). Touch through the pen connecting with flesh, tendons, nervous system, paper and body as a whole connected to the process of writing. She did not hear the clicking pen, but its corporeal association made it possible to focus instead on the words forming on the page. The sensory experience of the repetitive clicking enabled her to alter her sensory relationship. “I guess it was a bit like a stress release or something. I just wrote better that way when I was clicking the pen” (Philippa).

Words, from a dyslexic perspective, reveal expectations in the way they are performed and responses when they are not achieved. For example, Elise showed this while helping in the

final stages of setting up the exhibition, “Do you need any help with anything?” (Elise). I asked if she could put something onto the canvases, so people knew what to do. “If you could just put ‘write on me’ on one and ‘draw on me’ on the other that would really help.”

When we caught up later on, she explained that she had written on the canvas but had realised she had written the wrong ‘write’. “Initially I panicked and then I thought it doesn’t matter I’ll make it into a statement. It’s now wright, write, right on me” (Elise). Her statement was to write the homophones revealing differences in the performances of the spoken and written word. Crapanzano has stated bodies exist between the signifier and the signified (2004:21) and in this moment words leaked across each other and the senses. Her body both affected what was written and responded when she realised she had made a mistake.

Whilst this could be looked at as being related to phonetic similarities in the word, it is a dyslexic representation of the plasticity of written words across bodies.

In his recent book, Sam Barclay (2014)<sup>4</sup>, challenges the normalisation of spelling and text requiring particular formats to be accessible. By altering word formats through various techniques he challenges the symbols of language and replication of the symbols through the forming of repetitive shapes. As both dyslexic and a typographer, he explained to me that words had “always fascinated” him. In his work on spelling, he shows adaption of words by eliminating parts of them (2014:6) showing it does not always alter comprehension. Barclay shows that language is not as vulnerable as the repetitive training and censure for an incorrect performance of language implies, in one piece, he alters the letters showing the words remain accessible. For example “*No one eevr siad taht riaedng on the baech was esay*” (Barclay 2014:9) is still able to be read by a majority of people. At the installation people with dyslexia often commented they found it easier to read. His works in the installation confused several people and raised questions about why letters are in the order they are. “Why do they insist if it can be understood?” (a ten-year-old boy at the installation). For my key collaborators, it raised questions about why they had suffered so much by the insistence letters be spelt correctly when they could still be understood out of order.

### **Performing Words**

The dyslexic experience of language communicates further complexities relating to how language is used to define bodies and people’s expectations of what makes language a consistent form of intersubjective communication (Philpott 2000:193). The concreteness of language is represented in its intersubjective expectations of performance and these relate

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<sup>4</sup> Sam’s book was created to give non-dyslexic people an understanding of what reading is like for people with dyslexia. However, I found more often dyslexic people responded favourably to the work finding it easy to read.

to formatting, phraseology, spelling and grammar in writing, context and tone in speech (Philpott 2000:181, Blakemore 1992:18). Jean blamed these rules on the creator of the printing press saying, “It was the printing press that created all these problems, that’s where they began.” She explained, “They normalised spelling. Until then it wasn’t fixed, just look at the history and all the spellings.” Heidegger states that humanities “guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of being insofar as they bring this manifestation into language and preserve it in language through their saying” (1998:239). The preserving of being and language attaches to the written format of words and speech and, as my collaborators have expressed, their personhood can be challenged.

Performance of words through the body shows societal expectations of language. Training at school teaches that letters have specific shapes and that words are constructed and performed a particular way. In some cases, my collaborators had been told after being diagnosed as dyslexic to stop trying to write by hand and to learn to type instead. This is not uncommon. My nephew (who is dysleXic) was advised, when diagnosed, to focus on learning to type rather than using a pen because his writing would never be very good; language at that moment was ascribed meaning and a particular expectation in its performance. However like Amanda, he enjoys writing by hand when participating in creative writing. This tactile relationship to the page and the process of thinking with the pen embraced the sensory act of writing rather than the correct performance of its shapes. For some of my collaborators learning the shapes of letters had been changed “from pen to clay” (Philippa) making letters tactile and impacting on their relationships to shaping letters.

DysleXic intersubjective listening and speech, predominantly, did not follow linguistic turn taking theories<sup>5</sup> as described by Kendon (2004:159) but could handle non sequiturs and multiple conversations happening at the same time. In one unforgettable attempt to transcribe one of our dinners, I counted 7 conversations taking place between 5 people, with no one losing track of the conversations they were taking part in, except for me who became lost as I tried to transcribe them. Words are not passive as bodies impact on language and language impacts on bodies through their performance and consumption.

When my key collaborators and I came to represent the experience of writing, the expressions of frustration were easier to represent than those of pleasure. Through the gloves and tray interactive artworks at the installation, people embodied the tension between corporeal and cognitive experiences of language. They would begin with reading the

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<sup>5</sup> Kendon asserts that a conversation is cyclical and people have places where responses are required that conversations have a rhythm of response which can be signalled through speech or gesture.

instructions and then wriggling and stretching fingers into altered gloves before attempting to pick up the pen. The difficulty of holding the pen influenced senses of touch, vision and proprioception affecting the symbols as they were written and expressing the dyslexic sensory montage of writing. The pen required a particular way of holding, it needed the fist grip. "You've got it. It's the fist grip. It's what I tell parents to look for" (Beresford personal communication 2014). For both activities, there were handwriting samples and by the end most people were ignoring the examples and focusing instead on the paper and their hand, often giving up after only a few letters. This reflected the experiences of many of my collaborators who spoke about the page being left blank, often because in trying to keep their handwriting tidy, they had run out of time to complete the work that had been set. The performance of words did not match the need to express information.

The altering of sensory experience in writing at the installation made the blank page visible as an expression of dyslexic interaction with words. In altering the engagement with the pen through the gloves, it created a bodied conflict between sensory experience and expectations of performing words. Often the focus for looking at handwriting and dyslexia is on the actual shapes of the letters but through this activity, it also showed the importance of the blank page. The silence on the page communicated information about embodied interaction and the importance of types of body movement to form the symbols. In speech, moments of silence are not necessarily empty but instead hold meanings away from the words being spoken. Writing here holds the same pregnant silence, holding meaning and information, including what could not be written such as lost ideas. There is therefore eloquence in these visual silences created outside of text.

Philippa's experience of the body tensing as words trip over each other causing frustration, shows the conflict between her desire to communicate and the speed at which her body could keep up and perform all of the words she wanted to speak and write. I believe that this situation has significance, having seen that when dyslexics talk with each other, the dissonance and frustration is not present. There was not the speeding up of speech, sometimes the wrong word was used (as described in the Ethnographic Everyday chapter), but this was not regarded as problematic but normal to them, or their "tribe" (Peters 2015), where there were no issues around tripping over words and being told to stop talking.

The way in which people with dyslexia are thought to perform and consume language perpetuates the expectation that words need to be accessed in particular ways; continuing this socio-cultural myth around language and teaching language. For example, Elise could read fluently before she went to school, however, being made to read a specific way at

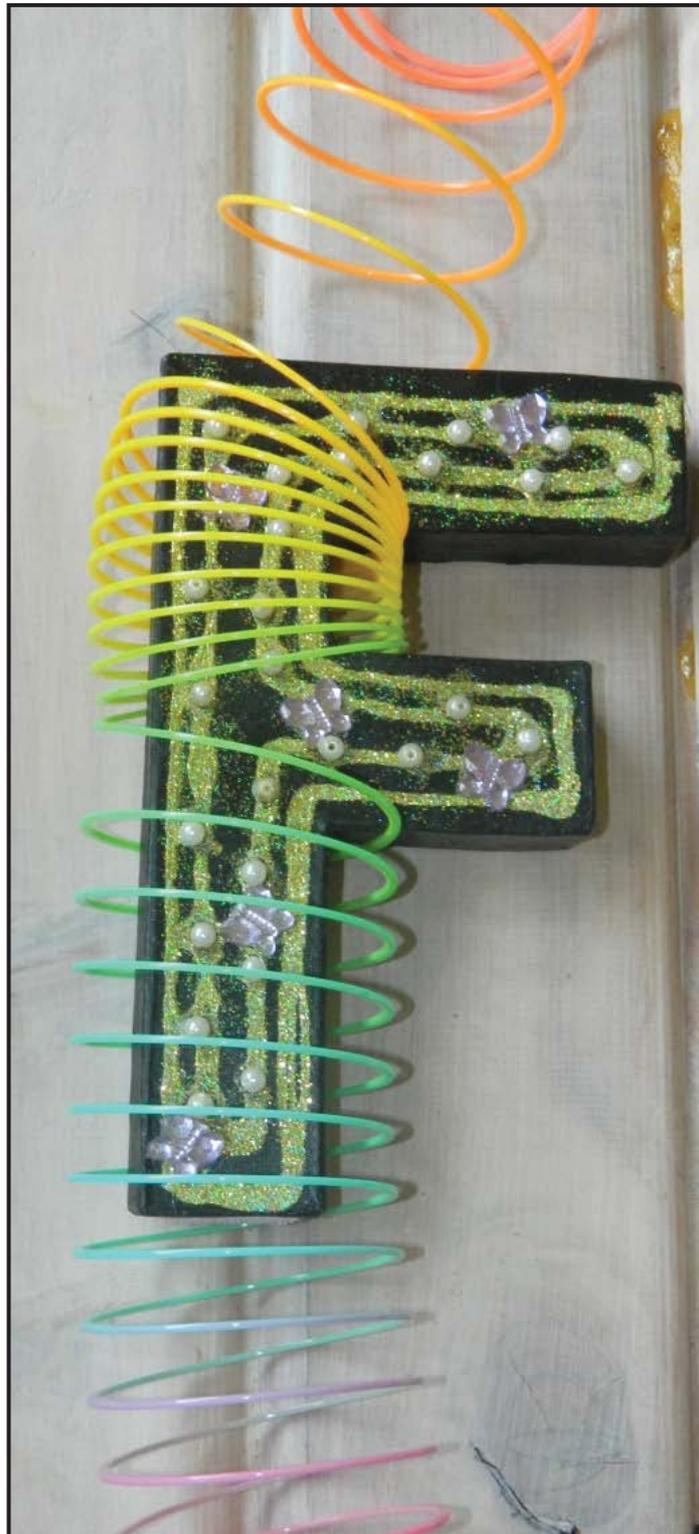
school resulted in her no longer being able to access the words that had once come easily to her. Decades later Elise was able “to unlearn” the way she was taught to read at school and read the way which worked for her. In making this statement, I am doing so with an awareness that for Barry, Peter and Mark this would be an anathema. They do not accept that dyslexics can be fluent readers.

***Creating Meaning: “It’s hard to tell my story.”***

Language, for people with dyslexia is a complex montage of different interactions and experiences, as the letters show. Each of the artworks has on it and in it people's experiences and embodied knowledge in an exploration about what language means to them. As the ‘N’ was wrapped and pierced ready for the padlocks and the plasticine was smoothed over the surface of the ‘A,’ the artworks began to express the sensory and embodied connection for my collaborators with text<sup>6</sup>. In each of the artworks which follow, words are given an identity of their own as an object beyond being a symbol of sound, but pointing to embodied experience with words. The twenty-two letters were created to represent specific parts of the lifeworld.

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<sup>6</sup> All of the letters became representations of experiences of reading and to a lesser extent writing. None of the pieces relates to speech.



Philippa: "words are in here too. They are beautiful."



Debbie: "Mine is about my journey. I began being lost and beaten by words and slowly I have learned to conquer them. That's what the keys are about. At first I couldn't reach them but now I am learning myself how they work."



Alan: "I don't know why I did it. I just wanted to." Elise: "I know why. You were taught to read with plasticine. Don't you remember?" Alan: "Nope."



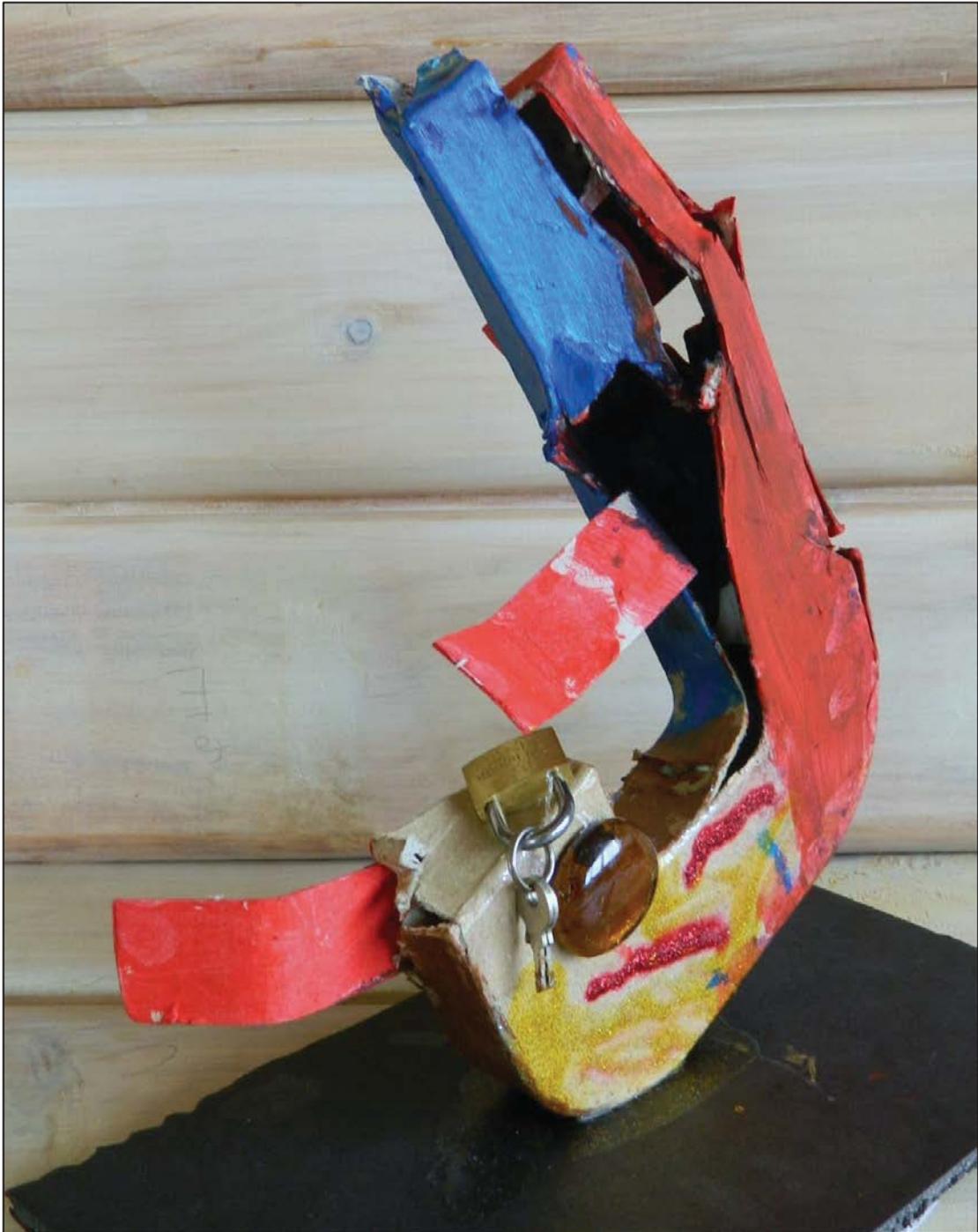
Clara: "The key chain thing is that the letters get tied back to the page so I can't see them. I did it because I don't like purple and I don't like letters. Dots because the dots cover up all the letters and I can't read them and lines go across the page and the other letters and numbers they change to different things like 3's become 5's."



William: "It's like a cage trapped trying to get out and it is dependent on how much time you spend on....doing words and the flower thingamabobs are the growth that you can improve your writing phrases and that parts just for decoration and it's the bright in the black....to cover up and the keys are like for the way out ....like the cheat ways to get out of things like help you get out of..... oh I don't remember."



Jackson: "I did this 'cause words are not all bad. They're good when they help like when gaming they give you the instructions. They also are frustrating and hard when they don't make sense. That's why the two sides with the horns and the halo."



Jacob: "I want to show them this is how it is. Words don't stay in the same shape. They don't look like they're supposed to. The key's and lock are about being locked away because of the shape."



Sarah: “so this is what it is. My access to words is totally managed by time. Time decides whether words are good or bad. Like, in a test words become bad and good, I don’t know I guess when I’m enjoying something.”



Beatrice: "I want it to be shown like it's on a lean so I can show that words are like falling off the page because that's what happens to me. They don't stay put they don't stay where they are supposed to stay. The words wriggle around on the floor., they turn around and switch places and swap with each other. I guess they like being cruel...oh it needs to lean left not right."



Amanda: "this is how words are. I'm not sure why the gold but it seemed important."



Elise: “words can just explode. You never know when it will happen or what words will cause it. Sometimes it is disruptive you explode with too much information and you’ve got to try to get it under control. Other times it explodes with a rich world around you and your immersed in this incredible vibrant world.”



Maria: "Words aren't simple but they can be amazing. They can be beautiful and that's what I have done....the paper clips are about the links that happen creating a story."



Karl: "I put black for like boring sort of so like boring and uninteresting sort of. It's the words that are uninteresting. I put grey on the top because I thought it looked better. "



Emily: "I don't know why. Letters can be pretty. I didn't want it to be sad."



Sophia: "Words used to be blocked away. The walls show this but they are being broken down through growth and changes. We get labelled as faulty, as less than. Judgements are made on us on our minds on our abilities. In fact we are more complex than the label implies. We are both gifted with different ways of seeing the world and judged for these differences."



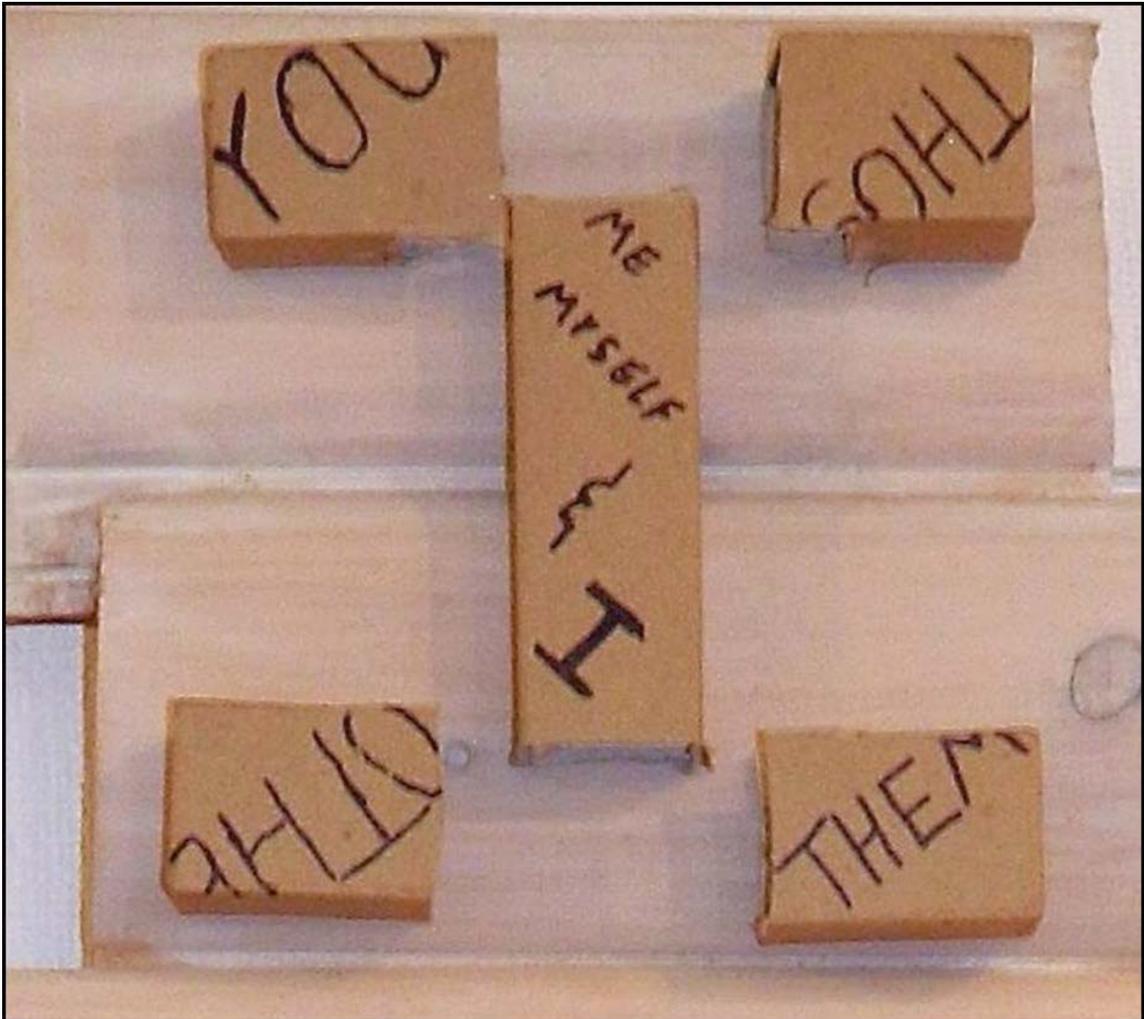
Taylor: "Words are two things. You've got the side which is beautiful and can make words exciting, but they get locked away from me which is the other side."



Stephanie: "Um I think it's a bit of abstract work aye. You've got to look at it really hard to picture it as a word. It shows sometimes it can be fun and other times it can be boring. The paper clips are like a cage or a chain obviously this is what happens when you don't think things through before you do them. You're left on the spot. I just went with what I felt. ."



John: "I've done the M. This is like this pre-reading because some people think I might be crippled and it's ok to be bright when you're colourful. People might think your ruff like the barbed wire. So it's the contrast."



Michael: "I just couldn't think of anything else. It's just what I thought when I saw it"



Luke: "The keys and the string represent that words are locked away and the words here are scrambled so it's hard to focus and the plasticine is just because."



Alistair: "it has to be on the side because words move. They are locked away from me and that's the keys to unlock it. The word has holes." Sarah: "you just did that because you wanted to." Alistair: "I did like doing it. And the magnets are just because, because I like magnets."



Teresa: "So pretty much what I've got is the background based on what I like and what I've seen in my mind like pretty stuff and then it's kind of trapped which pull be back from what I can't see like for example time is like is a really big problem like for exams as you don't really have enough of it and there are things like the rope here to express that I feel really held back kind of trapped. I can't get at the beauty because of all of the stuff in the way."

Language as performance and consumption recognises it as 'bodied' by persons. The artworks connect with this bodied experience of words; representing them as sensorially complex. The dyslexic alphabet letters are themselves metaphors of language through "... the meaning of metaphor [which] lies in its disclosure of the interdependency of body and mind, self and world" (Jackson 1997:9). The letters show language as unstable but also embodied beyond its symbols on the page or tonal constructions. Instead of words realising unities through intersubjectivity as Jackson suggests (1997:9) they challenge them. Philpot, drawing on phenomenology, states that language is an "unstable horizon on which communication depends" (Philpot 2000:101), but as can be seen in the work it is layered with complex information which may add to its instability.

### **Corporeal reality of Words: "I'm Not Allowed To Read Them There."**

My collaborators are told by teachers, friends and strangers as well as family members that language must replicate, as suggested by Levi Strauss, the "unconscious foundations" (Tremlett 2014:11) of the performance of reading, writing and speech. The pressure to achieve and perform language was described as perpetuated through various remedial therapies they had gone through. Text and its individual parts (letters) exerted the power to inscribe onto bodies' judgements when this consistency was not attained. Words are expressed through different genres, including speech and listening as well as through text in writing and reading. Written words are constructed through letters, the letters are organised in a specific way, and this order of symbols has an intersubjective purpose of supposedly creating access. However, as Folb explains, "It is as if words themselves bulldoze a fluid, perfect idea" (RASP 2013). Language comes with expectations of being attained (Davis 1997:12) and when this does not happen easily or quickly I was told this results in judgement. Mark explained, "It still bothers me and gets me down. I feel like a loser. My friends' text me back asking what I had written because they can't read it. The letters are wrong" (Mark). Granger describes how words are used against dyslexic bodies (2010:14) with the result being text is given priority and "bodies becom[ing] instruments like crutches for broken brains that we conquer and discipline" (Granger 2010:11-12). Words are given prevalence over bodies as their order and rules are sought. For those who saw dyslexia as disability, words were also the point where they felt left out by society, "I can't read that - I am disabled" (Barry).

Crapanzano in the silences between words (2004:54), and Taussig's words limiting expressing bodied experiences (2011:13), each explore different expressions of the ways words are embodied and how they can both create and withhold embodied knowledge. My difference collaborators need these sensory engagements which evolve out of bodied

experience (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:14) and provide significance to words. Sennett (2003:1113) states that language cannot exist without the body and bodied knowledge, and Ingold comments that words bare traces of bodily “performance” (Ingold 2011a:12). The body and mind are therefore, intimately linked in making and remaking of word values, importance and ‘wisdom’. Lakoff and Johnson suggest words carry with them the ghosts of lived experience through metaphor (2003). Words such as “up” and “down”, they state, are relevant to language because they are understood through body practice (Lakoff and Johnson 2008:16-19). While the word ‘up’ is understood broadly, this happens only through an individual’s experience and is layered with different bodied knowing, influencing the term through the context of the lifeworld. For example ‘up’ has a different bodied meaning for a child and an elderly person as their bodied knowing influences the meaning and experience of the words along with the context it is used in.

Context alters how words are consumed, project out from, or into, the body and as I have begun to show, they also have the potential to engage the body in moments of coherence and incoherence. Consequently, experiences gather into and around the meanings of words, which can exist outside them. DysleXic persons perform language (Smith 2010:130) and this bodily performance takes a variety of different forms for my collaborators. The signifiers of written language are here expanded to include other experiences of the page and these different engagements with words add meaning to the letters themselves.

The different spaces between personal need, social expectations, and the intimate space of reading a book, can alter a person’s relationship to the text. The position of the words in relation to the body can also alter the way they are accessed. Proxemic relationships can influence access to written text as the page is not a static surface. Where we hold the book or page may be affected by whether or not we can see the words; perhaps having forgotten glasses, we need to move the page backwards and forwards until the text comes into focus changing our relationship to the page to access the text. For many dysleXics, this becomes important on a word-by-word letter-by-letter basis rather than the page or book itself<sup>7</sup>. The page, was described by some as a landscape where letters can become mountains separated from the valleys or like clouds floating above the page. Words could bend and flex, they were inconstant and unfamiliar; emotional and painful but also beautiful and expansive. Maria described words floating off pages, Mathew, of individual letters lifting off the page surface and Beth, at the Installation, described the

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<sup>7</sup> This is sometimes attributed to Scotopic Sensitivity (also known as Mears-Irlen Syndrome and Irlen Syndrome). This sensitivity is believed to be corrected using coloured lenses. Whilst some of my collaborators found coloured lenses altered their relationship to the page and were useful others did not. In all cases, however, they related it to their dysleXia and not to other syndromes.

experience of letters looking like they are on a musical score. It alters the aesthetics of language where “what is apprehended was unintentional, in the sense that it resisted intellectual comprehension” (Buck-Morss 1992:15). This altered engagement privileges the sensory cognition and perceptive interaction with written language rather than their intersubjective purposes.

Letters or symbols like punctuation can alter the proxemic relationship to text as they travel from the physical page. The body senses these different spaces that can be accompanied by sensations more familiar to when someone is in our personal space or feels too close. The person’s position to the text may need to change, similar to taking a step backwards to re-establish a sense of space between persons (Hall 1968:83). The external out-workings of language and the internal dialogues that take place create ongoing juxtapositions between expectations, related to accessing words on a page, and lived experience, where the letters do not remain on the surface. It challenges language, specifically text, as a form of consistent intersubjective communication when the background and foreground take on extra dimensions expanding above or below the page.

Proxemics focuses on our relationship to other bodies, but it is useful here to include a proxemic relationship to text, speech and handwriting particularly when looking at language and dyslexia. As with our interactions with people and the way we sense a space or invasion of another person’s space, letters can be an invasion through the embodied proxemic nature of words. The semantics of the word becomes associated with its situatedness on the page. As Mavis explained “My letters are like trying to read something alive, it’s changing colours and making sounds” ( a woman in her late fifties who attended the installation). The relationship to the page and relationship to words confront personal space as the letters move towards the body. Colgin describes how certain letters will come off the page and hover, they “won’t be forced back into line with the others” (2009:31). This overlaying of experience with intersubjective requirements of reading and writing adds further dynamics to the sensory information of the text in the montage of language. It shows the body as situated between signifier and signified (Crapanzano 2004:21), between the words and the page.

Language as an active interaction depends on relationships to the words through the position of the body and proprioception, e.g. the external and internal embodied experience. The ability to recreate proximity and distance to control the words on the page is both desired and avoided by my collaborators as they impact on the relationship

to words through the environment, stressors, and expectations. Beatrice and others alter their position in relation to the text by chasing letters around a page or trying to move between letters, which sit above or below the page surface. These moving words and letters affect interaction with text and body as both are changing and being changed. Beatrice was criticised by her teacher, “I was reading them, they just happened to be on the floor, but I’m not allowed to read them there.” Beatrice learned that words are connected to the surfaces of books and to show reading was to look at the book. She was not allowed to access the words her way and this expectation of the correct position to read a book challenged her sensory experience of the words and, she explained, challenges her right to see the words her way.

The internal experiences of text are not ones that my collaborators, who see text this way, thought were particularly problematic. It was where concrete interpretations required black and white flat text, for example, work or school, that they found clashes. These formats have requirements; I was told “you have to leave things out” (Elise) and to narrow down essentialises an object to a specific purpose, no longer one with movement, but static and assigned a single meaning. As Ong (1988) suggests, through ordering boundaries emerge and these include bodies performances of words.

Words exist in the everyday as symbols which can trigger embodied responses, be altered by daily life and as Jean explained, influenced by the forms and colours the letters take. Due to her busy schedule Jean and I met at the airport before she flew out. We sat talking in the café, watching people walk by and looked out at the signage of the various shops and stalls around us. As we talked, she began to point to various signs explaining,

That red works quite well. The sign over the visitor's centre is very confusing because I don't quite know what I am supposed to take note of, and it took me a while to work out what it actually said. The sign on the green wall, the Bar, - Alehouse with whatever else is behind it is confusing. It took me quite a while...the middle word is house. That is phenomenally difficult to decipher because all of the other information with it distracts and confuses. Then I think, just do the letters, but I can't do that I must focus them down. I much prefer clarity. (Jean)

Pointing to one of the signs close to us she explained.

That's very clear, but the other sign is less clear because the font and the characters roll it all together and you've got to work much harder to unpack

it....You've got to think more, so you can't consume it quickly.... This one here for the car with the yellow swipe underneath it, I'm sure it's very good for branding, but that yellow swipe is confusing because I am trying to work out what word is that? (Jean)

Laughton King commented that words needed boundaries in particular environments. He explained that he would draw barbed wire fencing around the edges of his books to keep the words contained on the page (2010:65). King found words were not isolated objects that always communicate cohesive meanings, but needed to be controlled. The figure and ground for Jean became a mass of information, not distinguishable from each other. The sensory information interpreted by Jean is complex and as she explained, it was necessary to narrow down to attain a specific meaning. Many of my collaborators attached narrowing down to both spoken and read and to a lesser degree written language. Its expression can also require reduction of the aesthetic that words and letters provide to dyslexics. Words with the body manifested in different ways from King from his "barbed wire" to Elise's "leave things out" as words hold more information than just their communicative work. In the intersubjective purpose of words it is more than the shapes and symbols, there can also be valleys and mountains, contradicting the expectations of what and how words communicate information.

Looking at the performance of words returns the discussion to the difference versus disability debate and the point at which the debate is most vocal. For Barry, Peter and Mark words are the cause of their disability and the difficulties they experience in their lives. For the key collaborators, and interestingly for the younger people involved, they see the way in which they are taught to access words as problematic rather than being an issue within their bodies. What is missed in the focus on attainment is how, for my collaborators, the body expands words and that this embodied engagement is seen as needing to be controlled to access written information. The narrowing of words from this perspective shows the difficulties between an expansive relationship with words and the ways my collaborators are taught to attain words by shutting down. Multi-sensory methods (Birsch 2011, Blachman 2011) which are supposed to diversify the reading experience were described as *using* the body not engaging in dyslexic connections to language. Elise described remedial teaching with flashcards.

They would show the word and the image of it on the other side. I remembered it, absolutely, so much so that now when I read the word tree the picture I see in the world in my head has that tree in it. It looks a little strange in amongst the vibrant

world around it. Just the strange little black and white tree; it blocks the story. (Elise)

The teaching about performance and consumption of words perpetuates a particular model of language acquisition.

I am absolutely sick to death of being told how we should learn and what we should do. It's just what are we doing? What are we doing? And why do we let it happen is more to the point. There's enough of us now to just stand up and say no. (Sally)

Saying 'no' relates to the assumptions made about the body and mind in language and not recognising this dynamic sensory engagement of words with the body forms language acquisition away from the persons who live the experience.

Persons are "made in situ through the full spectrum of sensory phenomena with which actors engage - from what can be seen with the eye to what can be heard, touched, smelled, tasted - but also reverberate within webs of signifiers beyond the immediacy of unfolding interactions" (Hurdley and Dicks 2011:278). These reverberating webs do not always bring everything into alignment as the separate strands imply but instead supply multiple forms of information on each and every strand triggering connections with seemingly disparate information including language. This place of disparate and multiple forms of sensory and cognitive information through montage are a normal part of dyslexic experience. Sensory perception impacts on the world outside the body, but also within it and the sensory information can be "silenced" as expectations become more important. Granger explained,

I don't think I ever used my body as an excuse, instead it became something to conquer and mutilate, so that I could succeed like those other selves that don't even have to think about their bodies... I'd mutilate my body with sleeplessness, starvation, and speed. No matter what was going on in my body, I just needed to read ten more pages (Granger 2010:10).

She also continues to say that "I didn't want to know, but I did and still know that my body was stolen from me and I did it (Granger 2010:11-12). This adds another layer to the meaning of words through how language was carried in her body through the work she did to attain it.

Through the fieldwork, it has become evident that language as written/read and oral/aural intersubjectivity requires the editing of sensory information to privilege certain senses and in so doing privilege the words themselves. I suggest that the editing process by which people

are taught to read and write informs language and a person's relationship to it, whilst at the same time, defining dyslexic persons through failing to attain language this way. The process of editing is different for a person with dyslexia and involves more than context to decipher language. For example, non-dyslexics, reading uses senses related to vision but at the same time other senses slip into the background, such as smell. For dyslexics, however, smell may be an active part of the reading process. This different way of paying attention to words showed when I heard a child being told "that's not relevant, now just focus on the words." Paying attention beyond the words into lived sensory experience results in fuzzier (Aitchison 2003:40-43) edges to the meanings of words. They become like atmospheres that "can remain ungathered into meanings and may not signify at all" (Stewart 2011:452) as a word but be sensorially charged entities (as will be seen in the creation of new words shortly). The recognition of words with fuzzy edges enables acknowledgement of the multifaceted montage of lived experience, enabling an expansion beyond the prevalent dichotomy of words as attained and not attained.

### **Intersubjective Storytelling: "It's Waffull."**

<sup>8</sup>Lakoff and Johnson (2003) suggested that words are bodied metaphors but when I came to write up my collaborators experiences, there were no metaphors to match the experiences that were described to me. I approached my collaborators to find new words to express their experiences, as language is used as a way to develop mutuality and this intersubjectivity, and then used to create meaning and understanding (Philpott 2000:190-196). As with all our other get-togethers, there was a lot of laughter and discussions throughout and after the meal as we tried to make the new words. I had written in red on a piece of paper the words I needed, which were then taken over by Amanda and Elise. Shapes, thoughts, doodles, and explorations relating to experience, covered the pages and flowed through our conversations. Through the new dyslexic words, the sensory montage connects with the act of meaning to wording experience.

I found that for a person with dyslexia the flow of verbal conversation reflects sensory montage. Sharing experiences through verbal storytelling is part of the lifeworld through the flow of dialogue, body language and tone of voice which all impact on the way they are understood (McLuh 1996). Over our dinners, stories were diverse and complex, including narratives about family or friends, how they first met the friends, the importance of colour, the weather, the sensory space in which it took place, discussions about Dr.

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<sup>8</sup> I return to a more traditional format for this section to focus on the words themselves and not their format.

Who and on one memorable occasion phones being used to play songs as part of the conversation. These complex exchanges appeared to have side stories which I thought were not particularly relevant, but they turned out to be the fragments (Buck-Morss 1992:34) necessary to the montage of the story. The stories and experiences of words through montage became oral aesthetic expressions of everyday experiences. It was for me a cacophony of information that I had to learn to interact with as, for my key collaborators, all this information was necessary and seemed to develop conversations which were exciting and invigorating for them.

I began seeking to understand what I was interpreting as the additional parts of the stories, which led to a discussion about why they had chosen to share this way. "It's about bringing you along with us, we want you to be part of it, and you can't if you don't know how it came to happen in people's background stories. How can you be part of the story if you don't know?" (Elise). It was about the journey, and not until the listener's chronoception produced a challenge to the way the story was being told did they change their pattern. Elise's comment was met with enthusiastic agreement, followed by stories of peoples', mostly negative, and non-dyslexic, reactions to this method of storytelling and "The blank stare" (Elise). Philippa explained "It isn't waffle; we just want to tell you what you need to hear." When I mentioned a quote from Anne of Green Gables where she says 'if only you knew what I don't say' they all laughed and agreed. "There is so much we can share, we just give you the minimum" (Amanda).

When I came to write up this intersubjective conversational space, I could not find a word which expressed this way of storytelling, so I added it to the list of new words needed for writing the thesis. After a lot of discussion it was decided to alter the word used as an accusation, waffling.

Philippa: My teacher always accuses me of waffling.

Craig: It's like when you're in a conversation with someone and they're expecting to get a simple answer ....and then you come in with a stampede.

Amanda: It's the thing that you need, but they don't want. It's that momentum you get when you're thinking, that's the explosion in your brain, right?

Elise: waffleyness?

Amanda: To waffle, because it's full, yeah the fullness of it.

Craig: Maybe we need to make it a different spelling of waffle.

Elise: W. A. F. F. U. L. L.

Craig: Yeah *Waffull* because it's full.

As everyone agreed, the decision was made to “claim it back” (Amanda) making it rich with their meaning. The montage of storytelling was given the name *Waffull*.

*Waffulling* contains layers of information being placed over and around the main theme particularly in speech and “sometimes writing” (Philippa). *Waffull* is dense with information where a story about driving somewhere can involve the buying of the car, a journey in another country, a new person they met the previous week or a programme they had watched on television as “It all counts” (Craig). Added to this is the position of the body the movements of hands and arms, somatosensory expression, the subtle changes in tone and pitch as they draw out the story to *waffull*. It is vital to be able to create the sensory picture and to “bring people along” (Elise) on the journey and I was told that these techniques were not memory devices “which we are always accused of” (Elise), but bring perception with feeling to the montage necessary to tell the *full* story.

The other side of communication was when my key collaborators described non-dyslexic story telling as being “waffull-less” (Elise). “They leave out all the important things,” Philippa explained. “How are we supposed to know how they felt if they leave all of the important things out?” (Amanda). As our discussion continued, the “important things” became the embodiedness of the story. The lack of words in this intersubjective relationship resulted in them feeling it was incomplete, differing to the way they communicated with other dysleXics. “It’s not like that here,” Craig said. “We get the whole story” Amanda agreed.

An example of this intersubjective storytelling and listening for dysleXics by a dysleXic was the mysterious door, mentioned in the previous chapter. As Amanda *waffulled* mutuality was reflected in my collaborators faces in their response to her pain. They flinched as she told about her injury and laughed with her in agreement as she spoke about the mysterious door above the stairwell and echoing her question with her “why was it there?” Later they explained to me they had joined her in an embodied journey through her story, sensing the pain and the wonder she had felt. These embodied responses were reflected in body movement through echoing some of Amanda’s gestures, like rubbing their leg after she described her fall. It was explained to me that when a story is well told they become part of the experience in a visceral way, and embody the story themselves. “That’s why, when we tell your story to someone else, we use the word we - not I or you - because it is as if we went through it with you and we tell it that way” (Amanda).

Waffull is about joining in and this can happen in other ways as well. Mathew and I sat in his house talking about friends we knew and experiences from our teenage years. We were laughing about some of the things that had happened and as I finished a sentence, Mathew finished it with me. The words were just fractionally later than mine and were like an echo, beginning after the first syllable I pronounced. I remembered him doing this when we were younger, and it happened several times as we talked. When I met with Janine in the UK, she said, "Sometimes I finish peoples' sentences or say the words they were going to say. People think I'm weird or strange." Jack also finished several sentences with me as we sat talking quietly in the library. He explained that he did it a lot and asked, "do you think I'm clairvoyant? I know stuff. I finish people's sentences; even tell them stuff I know they hadn't told me. I think all dyslexics are a little like this." Conversation echoes took place after we had been talking for a while or with someone I had met previously, but it did not happen with all of my collaborators. When I spoke with some of my key collaborators about this experience, they explained that it was just because they were becoming part of the conversation. It was about "joining in," (Craig), an act of mutuality to be part of the storytelling. *Waffull* as montage can also result in verbal echoing.

*Waffull* can be verbally communicated, or it can run through embodied thinking in a complex internal discourse. Amanda described how ideas would rush through her head with thoughts, possibilities, ideas and questions that could result in problems for listeners. Elise agreed, "Pictures and ideas can create *waffull* through your head and you're communicating all that" (Elise). Amanda described how intersubjective spaces of questions and answer influenced the way that she *waffulled* and she explained that what came out of her mouth could miss the complexity going on in her head. She was surprised to find that the other key collaborators understood what she was saying.

Amanda: So *waffull*..... Do you find with new things you have lots of ideas?  
I found out from a friend there was this farm in Wellsford and they had giraffes. My head just ran through with all of these questions – Hundreds and hundreds of them - and the one that came out of my mouth was 'do you think they wear scarves'?

Everyone laughed and agreed it was the right question to ask.

Elise: Well, of course, winter.

Philippa: They're from Africa!

Amanda: Yeah, and their necks would get cold, they're vulnerable.

Elise: I've done that a few times and people look at you and go 'that's not the obvious question.'

Amanda: My friend, because she is amazing, when I said, 'do you think they wear scarves?' she said, 'no and now you can ask me all the questions you have going through your mind.'

Waffull was assigned not only to spoken conversations but also to interiorities rich with complex possibilities.

### **Playing With And Losing Words: "Powlf-Ulm"**

We sat around the table talking about the transient nature of words and began discussing words about words. Craig, Philippa, Elise and Amanda tried to sound out their experiences and as the first word began to evolve, tripping off and over people's tongues, Amanda started writing on the page. "I'll show you what it looks like first because that's important. It has three consonants, and that feels weird but right. It's *powlf-ulm*. To make it you put your tongue on your teeth *powlff* and then it peters out on the breath, *ulm*" (Amanda). Powlf-ulm refers to written, read and spoken words. It was the closest my key collaborators could come to spelling their experience of playing with and losing words. Although the physical experience could not be written down "you can't write that down, you can't spell it" (Philippa). It represents the liminal state of language for dyslexics. It begins with understanding *Powlf*.

So - this is when the words have meaning and you're moving it around (moves hands around) I go like this because we are doing this in our brain by spinning it and playing with it feeling it and you've got it and you're like yeah!! And then gone. (Amanda)

Represented through the *-ulm* (pronounced ahlmm) is the intersubjective crash where a conversation may be lost, or an idea bulldozed as Folb stated earlier. *Powlf*, with lots of information and the disappearing *ulm*, expresses loss of words and experience. The *ulm* is pronounced on an exhaling breath engaging the body sensorially in the experience and the expression of loss of words.

Powlf-ulm expresses performing words as sensorially engaged, both affecting and being effected, by words within the body. It shows how persons are vibrant, corporeal, thinking and creative, existing between, around and within the experience of words. In speech,

intersubjective engagement can initiate a variety of bodied responses and waffull covers these spaces through what is said and not said, but powlf-ulm represents the excitement and the losses that can happen in these conversations or writing. Philippa and several of my other collaborators talked about the experience of talking too fast and waffull becoming powlf-ulm. “Sometimes when I’m just talking, I will talk really fast and get muddled up, it’s blahh, and everyone’s like ha ha, and I say I’m dysleXic, I’m allowed” (Philippa). There is a loss of breath as the words and speed take over, and then ‘blahh’ restores the bodies balance and breath again. The flood of waffull alters the body’s oxygen balance taking away breath as the words are spoken. The pleasure of powlf as waffull and then the loss, ulm, that words generate embodied experience.

### **Transrobe: “I Have To Watch Myself Because I Get Lost In Books.”**

The complexity of dysleXic language is revealed in both its difficulty and in the pleasure several of my collaborators take in words, particularly in reading fiction and poetry. Reading is, for many of my collaborators, both problematic and enthralling as it generates sensory spaces where words expand beyond the initial meaning, by initiating a montage of somatosensory reactions, as Elise explained, “words can create explosions of information.” Conversely, letters and words, can become difficult when they do not inspire embodied reading, as the words are missing information for the montage. Many dysleXic persons do read (Folb 2011), and many of my collaborators have described the pleasure they can get from reading, however, embodied reading can be either an active process or one of confusion

Montage as embodied reading represents when the person can “travel inside the book” (Craig), creating a sensorially engaged world existing within the book and outside it. The words cease to exist and the story takes over. Elise explained, “The words get in the way” (Elise) until the book world becomes a dynamic and sensory montage where the somatosensory system is engaged in the book. DysleXics are described as listening for meaning (Beresford in person 2014) but I would suggest that it is more than meaning, it is embodied sensory engagement. Jean spoke about her images while reading Lord of the Rings.

My view of the world was the pictures I had whilst reading them. They were so rich that watching the movie was always going to be a disappointment, and I did find it to be so.... I prefer people who write in such a way that lets me create my pictures. I need to be able to do that. As long as it leaves you room (Jean).

Elise described needing time to get lost in books.

I have to watch myself because I get lost in books. I create my own world, and it surrounds me and I step into the book, the sights, sounds and smells. I hate books where the author tells me what it looks like. It just stops my picture in its tracks, and I struggle to move on. They need to give me room (Elise).

Dyslexics as visual readers are discussed in the literature (West 2010, Shires-Golan 2003) describing the need to create a picture for words, similar to watching a movie. However, what my collaborators described is more vibrant and engaged embodied reading not limited to images. Creating a dynamic world with a book is not an experience I have found when looking at the literature about dyslexia as the focus remains on creating readers rather than asking how dyslexics access language. The meaning of words and how they create these rich experiences of the written word may be hard won and require time for an individual to engage with the world of the book, but this is not surprising, as the world they describe is sensorially rich, where words create embodied thinking. "As you walk alongside the characters, you're even smelling the grass as it's crushed under your feet," Amanda explained. Elise and Craig described their experiences of reading at the artist tours.

A book is a complete world of its own. It still exists in my head I can still go back to books that I've read and be back in that place, although it helps to have the words in front of you to get the prompts, but it's always there with you because it's a lived experience. It's more than just reading (Elise).

Craig picked up from Elise.

The first few pages are routine reading and then I get absorbed in the book and the world around me disappears, the world inside your head just explodes outwards....kind of like a movie but it's more intense, we will get into a book and we are locked in that world, when you get to the end of a series it's hard.

Reading was very personal and active. A book was not picked up and put down, but it was an embodied experience of placing themselves within the book and removing themselves from the book. In traveling into the book, my collaborators became part of that world, breathing in the same air, hearing the voices and sounds of the space, surrounded by both the written and unwritten elements of the story. What follows is a partial transcript of one of our discussions as we looked at ways to create a word which

represented this experience of reading.

Elise: It's hard to get the right word isn't it?

Amanda: That's what I was about to say. It's an out of body experience.  
But no 'cause you're still you.

Elise: You feel it within the body.

Amanda: You're you, you're taking your whole, it's not you in your body,  
but your you outside of your body.

Craig: It's like your conscience ness<sup>9</sup> becomes one with the book.

Amanda: Yeah well kind of. I guess so because somehow it's like you  
invent you as a character that fits into the story somehow. It's  
without even thinking about it. You must fit in so that no one  
notices you because noticing is so important and could interrupt  
the story.

Craig: It's just like sliding into the book.....you know how people go into  
the middle of the bush and just commune with nature, it's kind  
of like that reading a book.

(everyone murmured agreement).

Amanda: That's exactly right. Perfect you've hit it right on the head.

Elise: To become one with the book.

Amanda: But what's the word for that?

Craig: It's like fantasising

Elise: No it's not. You take your entire body into it.

Amanda: No, no it's not pretending. It's kind of on the same lines as  
fantasising but it's more....I think the word trans has to be part of  
it.

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<sup>9</sup> He was drawing here on the creation of another word *ness* created to represent sensory objects and persons communicating information.

Elise: So what? Transbookieness

Amanda: Trans what?

Craig: I like transbookiness

Elise: The only thing is it sounds like transboggieness

Philippa: So like transcend?

Amanda: Yeah, yeah. It's going down isn't it, like your shrinking into it well not shrinking, shrinking's a bad word.

Philippa: It could be both ways. You could stretch out and go in.

Craig: For me it's just like the book explodes outwards and its surrounding me .... Like in Star Wars 2 how they got that map of the galaxy that would just expand around them. Like that.

Elise and Amanda together: *Transrobe*

Philippa: *Transrobe*

Amanda: Oohh

Elise: It's like the wardrobe.

Craig: Narnia!

Philippa: Yup transrobe. It could be like you transcend into the wardrobe like we wear the story.

Amanda: It gives so many options.

Philippa: *Transrobe!* It works!

*Transrobe* represents an embodied experience of words. It shows that words can be thick with sensorially rich meanings not directly related to them. To *transrobe* is to connect words with the body affecting their meaning. Dyslexic relationships with language show how the symbols, words, hide "multiple experiences waiting to be told" (Paskow 2004:101). My key collaborators show it results in an overwhelming amount of information. For these and

several of my collaborators taking their corporeal being into the world of the book, could also result in tangible senses of lost relationships when the book came to an end. *Transrobe* shows words not as something simply waiting for the symbols of sounds to be interpreted but sensorially rich wardrobes into possible worlds.

The overall assumption is that there exists, somewhere, a basic meaning for each word, which individuals should strive to attain. We can label this the “fixed meaning” assumption. There is, however, an alternative viewpoint, which argues that words cannot be assigned a firm meaning, and that ‘natural language concepts have vague boundaries and fuzzy edges. (Aitchenson 2003:41)

The fuzzy edged words for my collaborators lead to more meanings and sensorially rich worlds, as the body creates and becomes part of the story through montage.

Language was expressed through embodied experience as my reading collaborators take their visceral experiences into the book. Words do things in the body and the body does things to words. “... it is shaped to a significant extent by the common nature of our bodies and the shared ways that we all function in the everyday world” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:245). How this is outworked through reading can impact on the purpose of reading as these experiences are then acted out or *transrobed*. Embodiment of language, through paying attention to the world, highlights differences in the everyday of speech and text, whilst recognising the place of the body in consuming words.

To *transrobe* becomes a valuable way of engaging in reading when looking at fiction, but when layouts or writing contradict this expansive experience it creates a conflict. I asked if *transrobing* only referred to particular types of reading. *Transrobing* a menu or a road sign seemed difficult to me “hmmmmm, but it could be possible” (Amanda) and Mathew explained “I do this with car manuals.” Debbie highlighted the problems when the words and images on the page clouded *transrobing*.

We had a new book this semester and our lecturer asked us what we thought. I told him as a dysleXic, that it was badly formatted as the images and words were not in the right places on the page, and some places weren’t even on the same page. Do you know, he came back to me and said it didn’t matter, that it wasn’t important, but he didn’t get it. The images, and the words I was reading didn’t match up. I was really angry. How dare he say my way of reading doesn’t count! (Debbie)

To *transrobe* was described by my key collaborators as an active moving into stories, but

this was not accessible all the time nor for all of my collaborators. Peter, Barry and Martin would be horrified at the idea of *transrobe*. They do not regard themselves as readers and at times became angry about other people's expectations of them reading. Peter saw himself as profoundly disabled, and language situated him in this state of disability.

### **Summary**

Language is a part of our being-in-the-world, linked to cognitive and bodily movement. My collaborators have described language as linked with every part of their being in a vibrant, complex, frustrating and discursive relationship. They showed through the creation of new words that words contain a multi-sensory montage of information. Sometimes this paying attention to words can cause problems with editing their relationships with language as the cross fading, echoing and focusing of montage adds to the complexities of everyday language experience. Language, for my collaborators, was described as inconstant - an ongoing, frustrating, vibrant and erratic relationship, particularly between text and the written page. In looking at words, I have discussed bodily performances and how words are more than what is contained on a surface; as my collaborators add depth through their embodied experiences. Written, read and spoken language is complex, a person can *transrobe*, *waffull* and *powlf-ulm*.

Through this chapter, I have sought to show how words exist but are also in the process of coming into being through their relationships and engagement with them. For my collaborators, awareness of the senses beyond the act of writing, reading and speech is a normal part of their everyday engagement and language is no different. The density of words through their performance, both internalised through reading and externalised through speech and writing, reveal different dimensions of information through dysleXic interaction. Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 56) have suggested persons shape language through their everyday engagement with it, but this also has the potential to impact on persons' lifeworlds. Judgements about how words should be accessed and the pressures to perform language, has for several people, caused them to question their judgement.

When I opened this chapter, I stated that language is part of the everyday and dysleXics have a complex relationship with language. I have shown that to reduce dysleXic experiences to difficulties with language, shines a monochrome light on experiences, missing the full spectrum of colours. Just as using a prism shows the spectrum of sunlight, using sensory lenses and montage reveals diverse interactions between words and body. Doing this enables the complexity and multi-faceted symbols of written and spoken language

to be incorporated into sensory embodied processes (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:148) which are seen in the images interlaced in this chapter, the stories I have shared, and artworks. Letters can be complex and changing, they can move and loosen from the page or change colour and shape, revealing hidden dimensions to text. At the installation I was told by teachers that reading and writing require specific shapes and stillness to be accessed easily. My key collaborators contradict this through their term *transrobe* revealing the complexity held in words. Words, whether written, spoken or heard, have expectations in the way they are performed (Philpott 1988:4) and my collaborators are told they “do not understand” or “got it wrong again” because their performance does not match that required by mainstream expectations of a literary-focused culture. I often wonder how teachers would cope if students got off of their chairs and lay on their backs putting their feet up the wall, as Elise did, as their performance of reading rather than sitting still and quietly in their chairs. Spelling, pronunciation, clarity of shape, structure and movements create specific ways in which words are accessed, but my collaborators sensory information contradicts these requirements of words, as was seen in Barclay’s (2014) work and *transrobing*.

Spoken and written language involves montage which can both sculpt dyslexic experience and be an expression of embodied dyslexic knowing. Sensory connections to language within dyslexia are influenced by expectations, historical constructs, formatting and tactile engagement with language. The scratch of chalk and falling dust or the squeak as the pen runs across the white board adds sensory information to words. The sensory experience of the words become enmeshed with the written words, altering how they can be accessed. Words have shapes, symbols and sounds that have overlapping sensory interactions, which are part of the creation of the exchanges with words. Words themselves, when put into text, can also lose sensory information as they fail to represent the depth and breadth of lived experience (Taussig 2004:53). However, words for dyslexics have the potential to *waffull*, *transrobe* and *powlf-ulm*. In the following chapter, I further explore sensory experience and expand on montage as paying attention to the world.



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## CHAPTER 6

### The senses as embodied worlding: “It’s Ness!!”

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The senses in dyslexia research are predominantly linked to vision and Multi-sensory learning for remedial teaching, and to a lesser extent as a need to learn differently or as a different learning style (La France 1997, Dymock et. Al 2012, Davis 1997), thereby limiting dyslexic sensory experience. Multi-sensory teaching methods begin to recognise the importance of the senses to dyslexic being-in-the-world, but they do so only for the purpose of learning, often limiting the senses to sound, touch and vision. By limiting the body to these senses, it has the effect of privileging the mind, over the body, limiting dyslexic ways of embodied knowing. The body then becomes the second class citizen surpassed by the importance of the brain. In this chapter, I aim to reinstate the body within everyday dyslexic knowing of the world. I argue that dyslexia represents different somatosensory interactions of being-in-the-world resulting in a unique sense-consciousness; going beyond suggestions that dyslexic’s need multi-sensory learning. I approach the body as informed and active with the world, not limited to the brain, but immersed in sense consciousness with the world. As I said in my initial statement in chapter One dyslexia is fundamentally a way of being-in-the-world that exists across different modalities of perception. In this chapter, my aim is to explore these different sensory engagements through the artworks created as well as during our discussions. Using the process of making the works, and aesthetics as discussed by Buck-Morss (1992) and Eagleton (1990), I look at aesthetic engagement with the everyday as impacting bodily on moving through the world and develop montage through the collage of lived embodied experience. As the works were formed and moulded through sense-conscious embodied thinking, they have unique ways of expressing experience. To engage with this, I use the representations of the experiences to ‘speak’ for themselves as concisely and ambiguously as they can. They are used to generate bodily sensory responses as “empathic moments” (Ravetz and Grimshaw 2005:26) to reinstate bodied perception into the discussion of dyslexic sensory experience.

To enter into its world, visually and quasi-corporeally, and with our imagination and uninhibited emotions, gradually allowing its content.....to be blended with those of our own world... (Paskow 2004:175).

The works are placed throughout the chapter to focus on specific types of sense perception relevant to the text around them. Through the intentionality of the artist and the viewer, they have the potential to communicate beyond what text alone can do, about sensory and affective worlding of my collaborators. I will also introduce two new words: *ness* which is an

experience and expression of sense-consciousness and *noshush*.

### **Anthropology, Dyslexia And The Senses**

Sensory research has become popular in the last twenty years (Howes and Classen 2014:2). In research on dyslexia the senses have been predominantly reduced to vision, kinesthetics in practice to multi-sensory learning as a remedial issue, and to a lesser extent as a need to learn differently or as a different learning style (La France 1997, Dymock et. Al. 2012, Davis 1997). Within anthropology, the exploration of the senses has been undertaken from different perspectives, including the hierarchy of the senses within different cultures (Howes 2005). The broad strokes of the hierarchy can be useful (Howes 2012:7) but, by privileging particular senses in a cultural group, for example, Howes states western culture is vision dominant, the complexities and interactions of individual sense-consciousness become overshadowed. The focus on vision as deficit as well as gift in dyslexia could be seen to support the premise that the West is vision dominant (Raphael, Salovesh Et.al 2001, Davis 1997:50-55, Shires-Golan 2008). However, as my collaborators will show, vision was enmeshed with all the senses in embodied cognition (Shapiro 2014).

The intricacies of individuals' interactions with places and spaces, and the impact they have in worlding, is diverted to overarching ideas of the senses and need, as Pink and Ingold have suggested, expanding into individual perception as sense consciousness (Pink 2010:12-13, Ingold 2008:263-265). To open up this sensory space as a multifaceted experience is a valuable way of looking at sensory knowledge with dyslexia. I am, therefore, expanding out from the cultural mores, suggested by Howes and Classen (2014:3,165), into the complexities of senses in the enmeshed composition of worlding (Buck-Morss 1992:15). I do discuss vision as a sense but as embodied and linked through the senses to lived experiences of persons so that in focusing on the senses, bodied knowledge is privileged and thinking is not restricted to the mind (Shapiro 2011:393). Recognising sense-perception as having an active role in interpreting the everyday, as perception with feeling, opens possibilities for discussions about aesthetic awareness and the role of the senses in paying attention to the world.

Through our discussions and the artworks, my collaborators, have expressed that the senses do not always concretise into understanding, but remain, at times, in liminal spaces. They are types of resonances which rebound off of each other, both formed and unformed expressive of becoming rather than necessarily an achieved destination. The senses reach

toward other nerve cells at points called synapses, where electrical charges pass

through the space between them. Whereas in blood vessels a leak is lamentable, in the networks between nerve bundles everything 'leaks' (Buck-Morss 1992:13).

These leaks link the body to the world where charges travel across and through the body, generated with the lifeworld; they are embodied thinking in the act of worlding. 'Worlding' then is the process of making and unmaking the lifeworld through everyday experience in embodied engagement with the world (Heidegger 2010:1081). This worlding is an interaction with an "ongoing generative state of attunement through sensory experience and perception" (Stewart 2011:446).

The world and our place in it engages in making and being made in continual interaction with our physical, created, sculpted and imagined world (Jackson 1997:21-22). It is a complex, multifaceted interrelationship with our environment, our bodies and intersubjectivity.

...the external world must be included to complete the sensory circuit. (Sensory deprivations cause the system's internal components to degenerate.) The field of the sensory circuit thus corresponds to that of "experience," .... In order to differentiate our description from the more limited, traditional conception of the human nervous system which artificially isolates human biology from its environment, we will call this aesthetic system of sense consciousness, decentred from the classical subject, wherein external sense-perceptions come together with the internal images of memory and anticipation, the "synesthetic..." (Buck-Morss 1992:13).

Dyslexics are often described as visual people and one of the tests given during the assessment focuses on visual-spatial skills, which must be a 'strength' to gain a diagnosis of dyslexia. Vision is a complex sensory engagement and to look at sight as only what is seen limits what can be understood of vision as a sense (Ingold 2000:287). Ingold (2000:247-248) challenges the essentialising of vision, adding the touch of light on the body and the eyes. Touch with light differs in the way it interacts with the skin and eyes, impacting on the sensory- cognition it corporeally presents to persons. Bal also focuses on vision stating that in looking an "untameable mixture of the senses is involved, but also the inextricable knot of affect and cognition that every perceptual act constitutes" (2003:11). Therefore, vision, like the other senses, leaks across the body in embodied engagement with the world.

Focusing on individual differences recognises, that the senses do not happen in isolation but

are experiences and expressions of perception with feeling, aesthetic,<sup>1</sup> being-in-the-world.

...a form of cognition, achieved through taste, touch, hearing, seeing, smell – the whole corporeal sensorium. The terminae of all of these – nose, eyes, ears, mouth, some of the most sensitive areas of skin – are located at the surface of the body, the mediating boundary between inner and outer (Buck-Morss 1992:6).

I would add to this list other senses within the body: equilibrioception, proprioception<sup>2</sup>, chronoception<sup>3</sup>, introception<sup>4</sup> and peripheral chemoreceptors<sup>5</sup> as these somatosenses are active in worlding. The vibrant corporeal interpreting which takes place enables the complex aesthetic dynamics of dyslexic interaction with the everyday to be recognised as dynamic and active. Interacting with the senses and perception reveals “potential and dyslexic ways of knowing” (Granger 2010:9 ‘X’ added). As with other areas of this research, disability or difference influenced what was assigned by my collaborators to dyslexic sensory perception. For those in the disability end of the spectrum, it was linked purely to vision and for the difference end the senses were a dialogue crossing over the boundaries of the skin.

Within dyslexia research the focus on cognitive processing of dyslexics reduces embodied sensory experience to a place where the brain can be rewritten or controlled through embodied actions<sup>6</sup> (Davis 1997, Davis and Braun 2010, Bishop 2007, Granger 2010, Reid 2011, Laughton 2010). Drawing on sensory anthropology, phenomenology, embodied cognition and the imaginary, (as proposed by Crapanzano 2004:6-7), the senses can be recognised as active embodied dyslexic worlding. Through everyday interactions, communication, interpretation and assumption, in choices made and not made, worlding becomes active attunement through knowing; as the senses reach throughout the body and into the world. Therefore, the lifeworld is experienced and expressed through person’s sensorially and cognitively complex interactions with the world (Stewart 2011:452).

The importance of the senses surfaced early on in the research when I was told about crossing thresholds.

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<sup>1</sup> I am continuing to use aesthetics in its original meaning of perception with feeling.

<sup>2</sup> Sense of motion, acceleration, awareness of position of body

<sup>3</sup> Sense of time within the body away from the clock

<sup>4</sup> Senses within the body and body function

<sup>5</sup> Sense related to awareness of oxygen levels in the blood triggering breathing and exhalation.

<sup>6</sup> One example of this is multi-sensory learning which uses the senses as a way to focus on the body which can result in the body becoming a type of exercise equipment for the brain (Dymock et. Al 2012:23).

**The first 'moment' is on the following page and is a film.**

Please play “When I Walk into a Room....”



In making the short film using people's stories, the complexity of this experience was able to be explored further. I was able to work with two people,<sup>7</sup> Elise was one of them - the graphics were created with her and her children's help. After a short lesson in Photoshop, they altered the classroom photograph, we had taken, and we talked in detail about how to use the images. As they were combined, Elise checked them against her personal aesthetic (sensory perception) experience and described the embodied senses she was trying to create. She was using the visual as an exploration of her experiences but expected the visual to create responses in people's bodies, linking vision to proprioception and introspection in bodied sensory knowing.

I also found that sound had information that it gave to other senses. When I looked at the completed film, with the various contributors, I explained that I wanted to clear up some of the extraneous sounds. Everyone made it clear that I was not to do so as Hayden explained, "The noise of the kids, the smell of the coffee that's all vital. It was part of it; it has to stay." I had been told that people tolerate bad pictures longer than bad sound and the importance of these peripheral sounds contradicted this. For my collaborators, altering the soundtrack removed important information as it would lose the moment of our conversation and without it would "lack part of the rest of the story" (Elise). The sensory aesthetic connection with the work was more important than the rules of film and sound. Through collaborating I had begun to explore, without realising, dyslexic aesthetic sense-consciousness,<sup>8</sup> eventually called *ness*, by my collaborators.

Through the stories and artworks, my collaborators have reflected on the world as both present and unfathomable in an ongoing relationship with environments, atmospheres and intersubjectivity. *Ness* was created to represent these experiences and their sense-consciousness. *Ness* is an ongoing sensory and perceiving relationship with worlding and by bringing into Merleau-Ponty's (2012:36) perception the dyslexic *ness* it draws in the material, unreal, irreal, the imagined, the considered and the physically created. *Ness* represents worlding as an active, constant process. *Ness* recognises

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, due to the short time frame, I wasn't able to sit down and work with everybody on their animations.

<sup>8</sup> Since creating this work, I have come across Andy Glynne's animations where he collaborated with artists and people with mental health issues to create representations of experience. As in my work, some of his are more accessible than others and I wondered how collaborative and engaged the people who tell their stories were in the creation of the animations. He explains receiving approval but not how much involvement people had in the design process.

the world is never something finished, something which thought can bring to a close; the world is always in the making, and our thoughts, like our actions, have meaning only in relation to the practical and social life in which we are engaged. (Jackson 1996:4)

*Ness* is about places which are not always brought to a close but are always in the making. It happens throughout and beyond the body across “the interface, between outside and inside” (Ingold 2000:243) as sense-consciousness negotiates the lifeworld (Crapanzano 2004:21). These connections result in *ness* between real and unseen, sensed and perceived experience in which seemingly unrelated objects and senses overlap. Through my discussions with collaborators, *ness* represented embodied sense-consciousness which was used to understand their corporeality as persons; recognising that their whole body impacts on their understanding of the world (Shapiro 2011:389). *Ness*, therefore, represents a montage of sensory experience.

### **The Montage Of Embodied Thinking Through The World: “You’ve gathered it all together.”**

Throughout the fieldwork I found my collaborators’ perceptions of the world were individual, made from histories, biology, social interaction and self-interpretation. To engage with this dyslexic sensory worlding it is helpful to look at montage (Irving 2011) as a collage of information. I suggest collage as it was used by many of my collaborators when they expressed their experiences through their artworks. I began in the previous chapter discussing montage in relation to language, but here I take this further using collage. The overlapping interplay of collage was initially used in surrealist art as a way to represent experiences beyond the boundaries of the frame (Breton 1936). This was done through tapping the resources of the conscious and unconscious (Adamocicz 1998:7) mind and the different juxtapositions that came from collage became part of its communicative method. The collage of dyslexic sense-consciousness between the body and environment recognises multidimensional layers of experience running concurrently and over the top of each other.

Montage keeps the storyline that is a person’s life, but collage intertwines complex and disparate senses which tumble around and over each other. Merleau-Ponty described being-in-the-world as snapshots which cannot be superimposed on each other (2012:547) but for dyslexics the snapshots are rivers of film caught up and intertwined with the current of lived experience mounding up, over, and around their lives. The paying attention to “more, I think we see more” (Sophia) does not agree with the current cognitive work on

dyslexia. The studies that focus on reading state instead that it is a problem with paying attention to reading and, therefore, to pay attention at all that signifies dyslexia's problems (Shawitz and Shawitz 2008). Eide and Eide, through looking at mind strengths, begin to explore the mind as engaged in the world in active ways, but what is missed in both perspectives is the emplaced bodied being-in-the-world with diverse and complex information.

Embodied thinking, in the artwork "Reflections," explored the collage of information related to paying attention. The mirrors wrap around the body reflecting the world and reflected by the world. They run down the spine connecting the nervous system to the body and the world leaking information across its surfaces and into the room as light and reflections rebounded off of them mingling diverse information onto and off of surfaces. The mirrored torsos symbolise the body gathering information and experiencing information. They supply multiple forms of information on each and every strand, or mosaic of mirror, which produces connections with seemingly disparate images. The senses' corporeal reality in the world, through the collage of mirrors, pays attention to the world by rolling "forwards and sideways, allowing one to touch on further meanings" (Sennett 2008: 2902).

Embodied sensory thinking is an attuning of space engaging with the world as full of information. For Mathew, it represents that, "I have no barriers between me and the world - it just all comes in. It can be a problem as everything is all at once." Sensory-perception impacts on the world outside the body but also within it. "The brain is thus not an isolable anatomical body, but part of a system that passes through the person and his or her (culturally specific, historically transient) environment" (Buck-Morss 1992:12). The senses are a corporeal reality of engaging with the world elicited by everyday moments; expressing embodied knowing through people's paying attention to the world.

**The next 'moment.'**





Amanda explained.

I need a lot more information to feel part of the space and when you're in it, you get to have all the information. You've gathered it all together and in seconds you know, everywhere you go you're making. You're experiencing, like, you're seeing, hearing and everything about the space you know what it smelt like, you know the sound your shoes made on the floor. As I was walking around my shoes, because they're loud. They're my power shoes because you have to be quite confident to wear shoes that are loud... I noticed about the noise when we got to places that were like mezzanine or outside, not part of the standard foundation, that it made an echoing noise. But when we were in the first room the part that went down the middle was solid and then when you went over and passed the doorway it sounded all hollow. There must be something under there or a gap or another floor something that makes it sound different. So I had to test it when I was going round to work out where it ends.

Sensory awareness is a way of being-in-the-world, through the way things are paid attention to and used in worlding. The need for this complex interaction opens possibilities for embodied knowing. I mistakenly thought that in going to the gallery Amanda and I were looking at the art. For Amanda this was a multi-sensory exploration of space, which I had not noticed beyond her shoes ringing through the gallery and the looks of disapproval on the faces of some of the other patrons as they did so. The sound bounced back on her sense consciousness helping her to be in the space and our different experiences at the gallery expressed our ways of paying attention to the place. Amanda seemed to be more aware of the depth of sensory information around her, whereas I was missing information or discounting it. The use of sound and other experiences described by my collaborators showed the importance of sensory engagement and the importance of sensing 'with' spaces. Extended mind hypothesis is useful here, as it begins to approach ideas around thinking with the whole body, and with the things in our environment. While people have been critical of Clark's theories, his work here has value in relation to the sensory engagement my collaborators have with the world. The extended mind hypothesis (Clark 2011) suggests that we think with spaces, but for Amanda it was about sensing with space through embodied connection with it – sensing was thinking. When put together with literature on theories of paying attention it opens the body and mind to the diversity of human sense knowledge. Her bodied experience is linked to the ways she pays attention to the world.

If the centre of this system (the senses) is not the brain, but on the whole body's surface, then subjectivity, far from being bounded within the biological body, plays the role of mediator between inner and outer sensations .....” (Buck-Morss 1992:13)

Many of my collaborators described a lack of differentiation between inner and outer. The body was instead described as porous, with “continuous sensory exchange between body and world that encompasses different kinds of stabilising and destabilising effects” (Irving 2011:2). Adam described it as full awareness.

It's definitely an awareness you have all around you. I work in a bar for example so obviously I walk into a room with four hundred people and I suppose it's just there. It's an experience where you hear and you see everything it's a blur of intake. You take it all in. I don't really take in any specific thing it's an experience.

Paul, who had worked with dysleXics, recognised this awareness through a theatre technique he used. He was the theatre director I met at Dyspla and was not dyslexic. As we talked, he described using Stanislavski's theories of tempo-rhythms and he showed me one of the exercises which involved choosing an object or emotion and working out the tempo-rhythm. He beat out on his leg the rhythm of anger and then of fear. “It was pretty much instant, they were just there,” he explained. “I don't know whether it is because they weren't confined by schooling or if it is just a natural part of being dysleXic, but they found it so easily. They could plug into the rhythms of feelings and places.” As we kept talking, he said he believed that people with dysleXia were more aware of what was going on around them and that this was expressed in the technique he used. He saw their gestures as connecting with the world and engaging with the unseen to the environment as well as awareness of themselves as a positive and desirable connection with the world. The ability to connect with the tempo-rhythm technique was accepted by my key collaborators. They explained that it is possible to connect in that way because it is “normal” (Craig). Hearing and feeling the rhythms of the environment, of emotions and through intersubjectivity was described as “connecting with life, it's just normal” (Craig). The complexity of sensory and perceptive experience reveals dysleXic ways of paying attention to the world and their ability to express this knowing through the Stanislavsky Technique..

### ***The World as Porous: “I Sense Out A Space”***

The world and the body are in continuous exchange, and described by my collaborators, as porous. Surfaces are “solid but not” (Philippa) they are paid attention to through this porosity of sensory information. Physics would agree with Philippa. The protons, neutrons and

electrons of the chair that you are sitting on are more space than substance on a nanoscopic level. The chair is, therefore, not a solid surface but instead a relationship of forces which hold it together full of inner space. The senses through vision and touch reinforce the solidity of the chair, but what is solid can also be made up of space. In fact, I was told by one person that the chair is not a stable surface. It is making a leap but the porosity I have been told about with surfaces makes sense when attached to “it’s being through things, I don’t really do surfaces because I sense through them” (Sophia). The embodied thinking as sense consciousness for my collaborators may be sensing the ‘gaps’ - picking up leaks of *ness* that come from these spaces and forces.

*Ness* was the word created to represent these sensory pauses and “temporal suspension[s] animated by the sense that something is coming into existence” (Stewart 2011:446). *Ness* gives layers of sensorially rich information into the montage where the different aspects of the lifeworld leak into each other and enrich the everyday. Bringing into this concept Sennett’s (2008) theory of the way crafting is moving backward from the senses, inscribing the body and senses with experiential wisdom expands the body as wise thinker. Sennett, discussing musicianship, suggests “instead of the fingertip acting as a mere servant, this kind of touching moves backward from sensation to procedure. The principle here is reasoning backwards from consequence to cause” (Sennett 2008:2378). He is suggesting that the leaking nervous system (Buck-Morss 1992:13) empowers moving bodied acts before necessarily being fully cognisant of them. As a musician myself, the process of learning to feel certain vibrations as strings are plucked or notes, when sung resonate through the body privileges the senses. It alters how I pay attention to my body and the world in the act of crafting the music. Sennett’s proposal of reasoning backwards from sensory experiences opens possibilities to engage with the dyslexic body as a crafting thinker attuning resonances generated through embodied knowing. Just as a musician pays attention to more than the sound, Sennett opens a place to explore the senses as an ongoing dialectic with the world in a constant flow from and towards bodies in worlding. The senses, can then be recognised, as moving backwards to consciousness, or as another type of consciousness; not necessarily a considered act fully understood but a sense of knowing something is right. Elise explained this experience in her work as an engineer.

When I go out on site, I have things I have to do. I used to think that I would have to be there for half an hour but after fifteen minutes of being there I get bored. I have everything I need and I’ve found in the past that I pick up more than other people do. Before the research I thought I was doing something wrong. But now I get it, I am sensing the space. One time I found this with a work colleague. He’s dyslexic but

doesn't know it, and he asked me to go out on site with him because there was 'something off' about it. He'd already taken our boss who said it's fine but when we went back together, we worked out that the land structure had been altered and hadn't been recorded. I later found one of the neighbours who remembered it being done several decades ago. I don't seem to miss things; I pick up on more than most people do and it always surprises me that they don't feel it. So now I give myself that time to just take in the site and to trust myself, well I'm learning to. Now I know it's just I'm picking up on *ness*. (Elise).

Elise described the sensory as coming before conscious perception and learning to allow her body to know before she perceived it. She felt that because of her age (she is in her late 30's) she was learning to trust the way she sensed the world rather than questioning her experience of the world. The *ness* for Elise was about embracing her view of the world and the "plasticity and density of lived compositions" (Stewart 2011:446) that she could sense. Her awareness was, as Sennett suggested, embodied knowing.

Pink (2010:26-28) has suggested it is important to link senses with perception and what is paid attention to impacts on perception. *Ness* links senses and perception, illuminating the "creative interweaving of experience" (Ingold 2000:285) with things seen and unseen, felt and heard. It is a somewhat awkward subject to approach as it is not always clear what is happening in the spaces of the unseen. However, many of the artworks engaged with this unseen space, aiming to create mutuality by communicating across sensory bodies. My collaborators showed attunement is more than what is brought into decision making and highlighted their experience as divergent, rich, complex and intricate. Sense-perception was described as multifaceted and multidimensional. My key collaborators explained that perception does not result in narrowing down sensory information, but opening up to sensorially rich communication, as described by Elise above. These unseen spaces of their experiences and representations, trigger thoughts, ideas, images and sensory information, which engage with the world between the inner spaces and forces they recognise. This montage with its affective and attentive atmospheres brings the body to the world as "all at once intensely present and enigmatic" (Stewart 2011:447).

***Paying attention: "You're in it and you're part of the things in that space."***

Merleau-Ponty, in looking at the perception of the everyday, stated that the world is a woven fabric.

The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before

incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination. Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them. (Merleau-Ponty 2012:37).

I was told perception is an ongoing, porous and generative experience rather than a finite conclusion. Words like “flow,” “ongoing” and “movement” were used when describing interacting with people and environments. Sensory perception was an engagement with porous rather than solid interobjectivity or intersubjectivity. I was frequently told during interviews about this awareness. It was described as “no barriers,” (Mathew) and becoming part of a space “not like a chair or something, you’re just there, you’re in it and part of the things in the space” (Amanda). “You become part of the environment, and the environment becomes part of you” (Elise). Merleau-Ponty’s “real woven fabric” unfortunately creates a defined ‘thing.’ For my collaborators it would be more accurate to describe intricate overlapping designs, frayed edges, colours extending into each other and over-sewing in an ongoing process of making, or rather, worlding. By taking Merleau-Ponty’s weaving metaphor further, outside of the cloth into its making, sense-consciousness becomes more than the cloth. It includes the rhythm of the shuttle as it travels between the threads, the feeling of the threads as they are tightened, the caught breath as mistakes are made, the sounds of the shuttle as it moves back and forth. The real becomes an unfolding bodied happening, rather than just the finished product, made and overlaid with being-through-the-world. The process represents the collage and webs of information, the rhythms paid attention to and the importance of *ness*.

Looking at sensory paying attention enables interconnected sensory, disparate sensory, emotional and thinking processes to be recognised as an enmeshed corporeal reality. Dyslexic engagement, as my key collaborators said is about being-*through*-the-world rather than *in* the world. Therefore, from this point I will use *through*-the-world as people with dyslexia engage in intersubjective and interobjective relationships between animate bodies and inanimate objects through sensory engagement with the world. The world is, therefore, porous and leaking sensory information, and how and what is paid attention to then influences worlding. Wherever my collaborators were on the continuum between disability and difference this multi-dimensional engagement with the world was intertwined with their stories and expressions. “We are very aware of our world and everything that is going on around us. It’s normal, we have everything at once” (Elise).

Mathew spoke about paying attention in the way the world “presents itself” to him when

driving. He explained certain objects would “present themselves” and “sometimes driving along something will pop-up, and you just go, oh, okay, that’s that, and you keep driving. It’s not a big deal.” When I asked what he meant by this, he said, “it is not something that comes into your total vision it is something extra the environment adds” to your driving experience. He felt that it was a benefit, getting to see more of what was going on. The objects could be anything from the chimney of a house in the distance, an animal under a car parked on the side of the road or a bolt on a road sign. The images did not superimpose his vision but became part of the somatosensory system in the process of driving and several people shared this experience. In this relationship to the environment and the activity of driving, they were often projecting into an unseeable place while co-existing in the present bodied space of the car seat. “He sees things” his wife explained “that I completely miss.” This engaging with the world was a normal part of the daily process although not as recognised in walking as in driving, which was attributed to the difference in speed. We talked about creating a film about it and in my driving I altered how I saw the road trying to understand what he was saying. I found there was a lot of information that I was filtering out, for example, I don’t remember the last time I looked at how the road sign was made as well as the sign itself.<sup>9</sup>

### **Sense-Consciousness: “Dyslexic-Ness.”**

The making and remaking through embodied engagement is *ness* as “you pick up on so much” (Jean). *Ness* represents embodied being and philosophical thinking as a juxtaposition of sensory and cognitive information related to paying attention to the world. Its creation came from a discussion of lived everyday interactions and sensory experiences. *Ness*, as it was created, was ascribed meaning relating to intersubjective, interobjective and environmental atmospheres and each manifested in body movements, conversations and placement of themselves in different environments. Its creation began with a conversation about Plato and his theory of the cave.

Plato, at least I think it was Plato, said everyone is staring at the back of the cave and the worlds going on behind us and it’s the shadows of the perfect thing that you see, so there’s the world of shapes. The tree that gives everything the essence of trees exists in a different world back here and everything that we see is projected onto the back of the cave of the wall. So everything has essence of a thing and that’s how you know it’s that thing. Like I know it’s a light because it has got lightness. .... He

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, due to timing commitments the film was never made but it highlighted a perceptual difference, showing the experiences described above.

was saying if you just turn around there's more. It's like the essence of dyslexicness. Because if we were always just going along with everyone else we'd stare at the wall at the back of the cave. It's not just that you want to look at the wall. (Amanda).

As the conversation developed around knowing and sensing the world the *ness* of the world as an essence was discussed. *Ness* became "things as lived experiences, intersubjective and interobjective relationships... [representing] qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements" (Stewart 2011:445-446). These *ness* engagements with atmospheres threaded through a person's moving through the world. It played a part in everyday actions, where something as mundane as walking into a room generated embodied thinking, as shown in the earlier animation. *Ness* was ascribed to embodied knowledge, histories, experiences and sensory expectation.

In a room, you pick up on so much. Like your bathroom it's not just about the glass sink it's the glassiness of it. It's the blue, it's the cold, it's the hardness. But also the flow of it, the everything about it. The glass is the most important thing especially as it's see-through. Glassiness of water, Glassiness of ice, it's that big picture, every experience you've ever gathered about a thing. It stays with you. I didn't have to touch it I just knew how it would feel. (Amanda)

Amanda described how objects could be experienced with past embodied knowledge drawing previous sensory experiences into current thinking. As she described the experience she used her hands to shape the glass and the water, adding information to her story. The key collaborators, who were part of this discussion, agreed with the sensory information she was sharing and they explained that the tap did not need turning on because they could already feel the flow of the water, how it would look and sound as it rebounded off the sink. Above, Buck-Morss stated that the senses begin and end in the world and this world engagement did not need to be recent to trigger embodied responses or orchestrate worlding.

The interpretation of the experiences represented by *ness* were affected by whether my collaborators viewed dyslexia as difference or disability. For those in the disability end of the spectrum it reinforced their perspective of needing help, "the world isn't set up for us. We need help to cope with everyday stuff like catching buses. Sometimes we mix up the platform or bus number because so much is going on" (Peter). For the difference people, it was part of their everyday awareness and was described as both positive and negative. The negative effects could result in misunderstandings between *ness* and socio-cultural

expectations. However, my key collaborators explained that they valued the complexity of their sense consciousness more than the “hiccups” (Elise). *Ness* was sometimes overwhelming, but they valued their sensory engagement because it held rich information, responding that people missed out not having their awareness. “It must be so boring not to have all this information about the world” (Amanda).

### **Third ‘Moment’**





***Ness is Between: "It's normal for us."***

*Ness* exists in the *between* (Stoller 2009:96) as it is generative and creative. The *between* is not always something concretised, it can be liminal, it can be an unextinguished or unacknowledged flow of information across synapses and corpuscles. The places of the *between* are difficult to explore but are an important part of the lifeworld (Jackson 1997:27) as, Stoller suggests, the *between* represents a space where information, knowledge and experience flow through the lifeworld and learning to live in the *between* celebrates "the creative air of indeterminacy" (Stoller 2009:100). The embodied nature of this indeterminacy, through the world, creates *ness* through sound, interoception and equilibrioception.

The *between* is generative, but due to this it can result in dissonance amongst bodied experience and societal expectations. It can result in challenges to a person's corporeal reality, as Anne suggested, there are consequences "to grow up constantly with your legitimacy brought into question. It must have a lifelong effect." It comes with a challenge around "conforming to what people expect" (Craig) and this was often discussed at the dinners expressing they did not feel the need to alter their expressions of lived experience with other dyslexics. The possible conflicts concerning embodied sensory experience and social expectations have been part of the sensory journey throughout the fieldwork. The more time my key collaborators have spent together, the more frequent the discussions have become about societal expectations and its conflict with their worlding.

The liminal and creative *between* is the generative place of the senses with the body in the world but it is not always a place of transformation as Turner suggested (Turner 1969:95). For my collaborators, it was being-through-the-world and not predicated on exiting the liminal. Concerned that I was putting my interpretation onto my collaborator's experiences, I spoke with them and described liminality as Turner defined it, asking them their opinion. Being liminal was assigned to everything being in a constant state of flux rich with information and Amanda explained, "We live life in the liminal." Potential existed within these liminal and sensory spaces, for creativity and generating possibilities, described as "normal dyslexic experience" (Amanda). The place of the *between* and liminal, whilst rich with creativity and information, and the feeling that "your feet rarely feel like they touch the ground" (Craig) was seen as a problem when spending time with non-dyslexics "as all they want is for you to be still" (Craig). The still was related to being physically, mentally and sensorially still.

The liminal was assigned to dyslexic worlding and the spaces between information and

action were sensorially rich with information, for example language mentioned earlier. Perception for my collaborators, is between the body, world, senses and socio-cultural practice, however, the place of the between often resulted in my collaborators feeling out of place intersubjectively. They described moments of feeling like they did not understand what was expected of them in relation to what they were gaining sensorially from spaces and people. The need to control their sensory information created dissonance between embodied practice and cultural expectations, often resulting in my collaborators saying they felt out of place. My older collaborators who saw dyslexia as difference said they had to learn to attune the liminal-ness. “Ness, when I was younger, was like being in a boat on the ocean tossed around. I now have sails and an anchor and I decide where it takes me... well, most of the time” (Elise).

Ness connected the present, past and future with intersubjectivity including the unseen senses and imagined experiences stepping beyond Ingold's (2000:243) thresholds between the inside and the outside. Worlding, as intersubjective engagement, was described by Craig as sensing people within the first moments of interaction. He described in detail using visual, tactile metaphors, and particular experiences where people put up a brick wall, giving him the experience of a sensory rebuff. He explained, “There are those people who are just that guarded that it's like a rebound” (Craig). Craig and other collaborators described this experience of ‘reading people’ as being more than picking up on body language. My collaborators who had this experience said that it was picking up on unseen information.

Several other collaborators also discussed the experience of rebound and explained that their perception of the person impacted on the way they interacted. “You sense someone,” Amanda explained. Discussion about the rebuff at dinner showed a variety of responses. “Sometimes you just don't leave them alone, it's kind of fun to push them, and other times you know that's what they actually need” (Amanda). “If you're tired you just keep out of their way” (Elise) and “Sometimes they actually need help but aren't ready to ask for it” (Philippa). Sensing of the unseen *ness* impacted on perception and their expression of intersubjectivity. How intersubjective *ness* was negotiated was also affected by people's histories and their ages. For Craig, it was about being able to read the people as well as their problems with knowing what to do with the information. For my younger collaborators, they used terms like “overload” in relation to intersubjectivity. Conversely, for my older collaborators, they discussed negotiating the intersubjective space and learning how to express this knowledge. Elise explained “You learn what people want you to be, yeah, you sense it and you shape yourself to be that.”

Ness could create conflict between societal expectations of behaviour and intersubjectivity and Several collaborators described making choices about whether they followed the “social rules” (Heather) or focused on the intersubjective space. Amanda, Sophia and Heather described focusing on the people rather than societal expectations. “The shibboleths of polite society tell you to do this, this, this and this, but I go with where the people are at” (Sophia). For Sophia sensory intersubjective information, takes precedence over the socially expected behaviour. My collaborators who described this connection with *ness* spoke about feeling out of sync with society and being misunderstood. Heather struggles with this more than Amanda and Craig, who spoke about feeling awkward but balance this against having friends who understand their “weirdness” (Craig and Amanda). The knowledge and expression of “reading people” (Craig) impacted on intersubjectivity and affected following routine social rules.

*Ness* resulted in both positive and negative experiences but always impacted on being with people. In a group it could be overwhelming “it can become too much. I have to try and not look at people” (Craig). A response to *ness* could be removing themselves bodily away from people or places to create boundaries for self-care. Philippa had talked with me about seeing potential in people that other people seem to “throw away.” It was a concern for her family as she had some “unusual friends and she’s dressing like them. It’s not her...She identifies too deeply with them,” her mother had explained to me. Amanda discussed this with Philippa at the artist tour.

Yes, we can see the potential in people, and there can be a lot of potential but if they don’t see it themselves they will just take from you. There has to come a point when we let them go. I have had to learn that if a person is not interested in the things I am doing, but I go to all their things, then that is probably an unequal relationship and I have to give it away. It’s normal for us. We see things other people don’t. We usually learn the hard way that people don’t see the same potential in themselves. You have to be careful of people who just take because we will just give and that can get dangerous. (Amanda)

Elise expanded “you have to learn to manage it, but if you’re like me you will keep making mistakes occasionally seeing more in a person and getting burned.” Philippa was surprised but has since started to look at her relationships and through this discussion she explained “I feel more confident now.” Her family have also noticed a difference telling me that she was looking after herself. Elise and Debbie, who are in their late thirty’s, said it was a process of stumbling through intersubjectivity as no one teaches “dyslexic’s about this stuff” (Elise).

Negotiating expectations within *ness*, could further enforce a feeling of not belonging and failing to grasp societal expectations.

*Ness* is an experience and an expression of everyday intersubjectivity it is intersubjective aesthetics' in a form of "cognition which can clarify the raw stuff of perception disclosing the inner structure" (Eagleton 1990:16). The complexity of intersubjective expectations and the way in which the *ness* influences experiences have been discussed with all the age groups I have spoken with. The overwhelming-*ness* of sensory information from people can be "physically draining" as Elise, Janine, Debbie and Mathew explained. "You have to be careful they can be draining" (Amanda).

### **Montage Overload: "When It Happens You Just Have To Let It Go."**

Being sensorially exhausted was described predominantly by my collaborators who were over 30. Jean described how she had learned over the years to negotiate these sensory overloads.

I have learnt that I have to let go, there is no point in forcing it - you can't put anything more in and if you try it just gets worse not better. It's quite an abrupt on-off switch so when it happens you just have to let it go. It is an acquired skill to pace yourself and to know what your day will look like and make sure you know when it's going to happen so that it doesn't happen when it is going to impact on your functionality. So for young people who don't know that it happens, when it happens you have to live with it and if it happens in the middle of an important thing that important thing is trashed. Whereas when you're aware of it and when the loading will occur and what features of your day will provoke it to occur more quickly, then you can manage your day. I think now though that I do it subconsciously because of all of the years I programmed it in consciously. (Jean)

As we talked about going through the day, Jean described how certain activities required more and resulted in reaching sensory overload faster. The ability to know what was happening in the day and feeling "in control" was a recurring theme for my older collaborators along with descriptions of being able to balance a day or week. In our times together I often witnessed the moments where the switch flicked in several of my collaborators. One example was the sudden loss of energy which happened in the focus groups. I watched as one by one my collaborators would suddenly stop where only seconds previously they had been engaged in creating the artworks and talking animatedly. In other

situations, I would be talking or working on an artwork with one them and suddenly they would fold in on themselves drawing their bodies back into their chair. Elise explained, “ I used myself up” (Elise).

When I noticed these changes in behaviour, I would draw everything to a close. As happened with Amanda. “You said that to me in the museum you said I think you’ve hit sensory overload I think we need to go and get a coffee and I was like (blank facial expression and slow nodding).” For the younger collaborators, they would try to keep going, pushing to complete what they were doing finally they would “shut down” and “check out” (Sarah). As I became more aware of sensory overload, I learned to look for signs, as described by Jean, this can be abrupt but I learned to look for other signals. I found that speech rhythm and pitch changed, words could become difficult to pronounce, or speech could speed up with words tripped over and hand movements could slow over their work.

*Ness* in impacting on and with the body can create pressure. Using Philippa’s artworks metaphor, think of it as a spring between two boards where more and more weight is piled on the top board adding more pressure to the spring. At some point the spring gives - it loses its ability to stretch out compressed by everything else. Most of my collaborators, predominantly those in the difference end of the spectrum, described sensory overload. They did not express a desire to be less aware of *ness*, although “sometimes it would be easier” (Craig, Debbie, Paul). *Ness* was their everyday - a part of their whole life experience and imagining themselves away from that life was not what they wanted. Learning to manage *ness* was another part of their being-through-the-world. The impact of it within the body often recognised through moments of overloaded-*ness*. There could also be specific moments during the day where overload could be triggered or be part of the sensory richness of experience. In the short story that follows, drawn from various collaborators’ stories, I share some of this complex experience. The text has also been altered to represent these enmeshed senses.

*As the door opens a wave of voices mingle with the night air, background music sits under the conversations as odours and shifting chairs overwhelm the sounds of parking cars and car doors closing. The discussion started in the car park*

becomes more difficult to continue as the voices of other conversations force themselves in a cacophony of words and tones around and through the conversation. In walking past other tables snippets of conversations crowd in requiring more concentration to tune them out. The waiter rushing through the specials disappears in a blur of other voices, smells and movements. Looking down at the menu, the colours blur into each other as the rustle of paper and murmured conversations begin as people discuss their possible orders. Looking down the menu is a fuzziness of unformed shapes and colours there is too much else happening.<sup>10</sup>

The montage of enmeshed embodied thinking overwhelms the body with information. Sensory overload could be from an environment which provided too much information, such as a café, where the noise of the barista, the conversations of other people, the discomfort of the chair, the clink of cups hitting the saucer, knives on plates, spoons tapping cups, the wind as the door opens and closes and the movement that follows through the cafe from fluttering napkins to people shivering against the wind gust. They inform the senses all at once, not listed out as I have just done, and within these moments the senses overwhelm the body and the intersubjective spaces become subjugated as the body exerts its dominance. Jean stated

Some days can just be exhausting, just exhausting. You can't take any more in - it's like I must shut down now! I must not receive, must not. No more data, no more

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<sup>10</sup> Description written using various collaborators accounts of walking into a restaurant.

data for a while. That is exactly what it is there is no more storage space, the cd's full the flash drive is full whatever it is full. It's beep, beep, beep overload and you've got to pull back from that. Like your email box is full and won't take any more or transmit anymore. That's exactly what it is sensory overload (Jean).

The outworking of these sensory moments in my younger collaborators differed. For the teenagers, they increased the volume of their conversations and amplified their body movements. This was particularly the case when waiting to go into a classroom. They were noisier than the other students around them and moved around in response to the environment and intersubjectivity. They were constantly being told by teachers to be still but responding to the command and the stress by becoming less still and more active.

Overload happened in a variety of different ways from there being too much or too little information. A simple question or a word like "it" could create sensory and cognitive overload. Granger described this experience.

That question 'what do you think?' Causes a flood of ideas from this hurricane.  
'What's the point?' A chaotic mess just sent me into sensory overload, and for a moment, a small tidal wave just disorganised anything I have to offer. There is not a single answer that could possibly sum up 'what do you think' because I can't think about things right now, I have a hurricane on my hands (Granger 2010:14-15).

Granger shows how the cognitive and sensory provoke responses through a dialogue of overwhelming-*ness*. Her description is sensory as the metaphor invites us into her whirlwind as Granger shows interoception moves into the place between perception as body and mind are dominated in the moment.

*Ness* was also about de-stressing the moments of *ness* overload. Through sensing and perceiving with these different spaces, individuals had the opportunity to engage on a different level with information not seen. Elise and Philippa showed through their reactions to the mall that overload and relaxation with *ness* was individual. "I love the mall. It is the most restful place I can go to" (Philippa), but for Elise "I can't be there for too long, there is too much going on I feel like I am going to explode" (Elise). Those who were very aware of environments, move through them conscious that they impact on themselves and their body and these choices of moving through-the-world represent corporeal engagement with place-*ness* and people-*ness*.

Sensory overload related to the body being overwhelmed by *ness* with a variety of responses. Granger describes silencing the sensory through dominating her body.

I don't think I ever used my body as an excuse, instead it became something to conquer and mutilate, so that I could succeed like those other selves that don't even have to think about their bodies... I'd mutilate my body with sleeplessness and starvation (Granger 2010:10).

Granger, in dominating her embodied experiences, describes ignoring her needs, overtaking her sensory knowledge and in so doing devaluing her ways of knowing. "I didn't want to know, but I did and still know that my body was stolen from me and I did it..." (Granger 2010:11-12). Granger's experience differs from Mathew's where he described "everything just comes in" and while both are very different they represent the diversity of individuals' responses to dyslexic worlding. Granger and Mathew have in common histories of being taught that the body is at fault, which was experienced by many of my collaborators. Their sensory knowledge of the world was regarded as "faulty" (Elise) and for those in the difference end of the continuum learning to value their dyslexia became linked to valuing their montage of *ness*.

"Right, so sensory overload. So when you get home tonight that feeling. That's the word we need" (Amanda). As we tried to find a way to word this experience it began by being associated with intersubjectivity. One of the words discussed was suggested by Phillippa, She described being in a conversation and altering the intersubjectivity "sometimes it's just *no..shush*." When Phillipa said "no shush" she put her hand in front of her, palm facing out and pushing away from her body. After discussion, the word for quieting sensory overload became *noshush*. *Noshush* predominantly represents agency, with Elise and Amanda describing it as an awareness of needing to "decompress" (Amanda). *Noshush* happened in a variety of ways. Mathew explained the importance of jigsaw puzzles and Elise spoke about using television and doing Sudoku at the same time. "I can't do one thing at once - I'm dyslexic - I don't do that" (Elise). Most of my collaborators shared the description of sensory overload, although those who saw dyslexia as extreme disability felt they needed external help to deal with the experience as it was beyond their control. I have yet to find anything in the literature that describes these moments or the types of adaptation described by my collaborators. *Noshush* did not mean that the sensory became disengaged or that sensory engagement was necessarily avoided. From Mathew's engagement with the jigsaw puzzle to other places and activities *ness* was used to *noshush*. Strategies for *noshush* involved moving to different spaces, where there was an embracing of different sensory-

ness. For Janine, both the way she decompresses and her stressors were linked.

Even something as simple as tyre marks on the road out there I noticed made this shape of a snake. I do that when I'm walking, it's something to do. This is probably strange to other people, but that's what I thought.

She later added to this perceptive and sensory engagement explaining an experience with her sister.

My sister looked out the window, she wondered what I was doing as I was changing all the pegs around because the colours were different. I like the same colour pegs on the same colour clothes... It's too much stuff, I have to cut down on all the busyness (Janine).

How Janine paid attention to her environment impacted on her through pressure and release in her body. When there was too much information from the montage it was *noshush*. Even as she described this experience she let out a contented sigh as she remember her actions and released tension through the reimagining and retelling of the story.

**The final 'moment' explores *noshush*. The film over the page is on the usb stick in the chapter 6 folder<sup>11</sup>.**

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<sup>11</sup> The film is a clip which focuses on *noshush*. It is not the full film.

Please play "Sound-Fall." (2)



“Download moments” were different for everyone. Jean described sitting in her bath as one of these download moments.

It’s to get rid of all of the stuff that’s going on. So I guess for me there is great value for me when I just have a hot bath. I don’t do anything but lie in a hot bath, and do it for 10 or 15 minutes and it’s just the fact that you’re doing nothing in a very blank environment, so that is very calming.”

Jean described it as a blank space however, it was not sensorially blank, but a changed bodied experience through the water. Jean also described water as important to what she called “big download moments.” “So I like walking on beaches but those are big download events” (Jean). For Amanda and Elise, the ability to draw the sensory information into themselves and then to expand themselves back into that space was central to the way they described *noshush*. The experience of going to one of the West Coast beaches in New Zealand was a space that Elise also described as reinvigorating. The *ness* of the beach Elise used as a place to “let go and stretch out” and my key collaborators agreed as she described this experience. Elise’ house looks out at the sea and as everyone stood on the deck “we just relaxed and let go into its expanse. Everyone was happy and just wanted to stay there” (Elise) and Amanda explained it was “being able to let go” (Amanda).

The beach as a place for *noshush* surprised me as my experience of it is a sensorially charged space and I asked for clarification. “The *ness* is all about one whole experience. Normally we have to keep ourselves in such tension but there I can let go” (Elise). It was not holding the body in tension but letting the body sensorially engage with the montage of the space and it was better when there was hardly anyone on the beach because “people clutter the space” (Elise). The sensory space was cohesive in its communication of *ness* rather than being the disparate sensory experiences that my collaborators described as creating overload. The montage, rather than juxtaposing experiences of multiple types of sensory, personal and intersubjective information became an abundant cohesive experience. As Amanda explained “it is *noshush*, you just feel relaxed and there is room to stretch out” (Amanda). Embodied thinking as sense consciousness with the space became a way to decompress.

The cohesive-*ness* for *noshush* also related to practical activities and physical movement. For Mathew, it is jigsaws and a quiet place, it was not something he did regularly but a once a year “major relaxation moment. I can just focus on one thing, there’s no noise around me,

no demands on me it lets me download” (Mathew). I asked him about what he meant, and he described twisting the pieces through his fingers, the smell of the cardboard and finding where they fit. “It’s something that comes together. I don’t do anything else when I go away, no TV no nothing it’s just quiet. Me and the puzzle.” The movement of the pieces through his fingers and a particular atmosphere made it possible for him to deal with the sensory overload he experienced during the year. For my younger collaborators they said they had no understanding of the sense of feeling overwhelmed. However, some spoke about times when they felt they could not cope anymore and others spoke about “overreacting to stuff that really shouldn’t matter” (Luke). *Noshush* was not an experience my younger collaborators or those in the disability end of the spectrum related to. However, for those from the difference end of the spectrum it represented moments of empowerment and awareness in their engagement with their world. For all of my collaborators, their sensory environment impacts on the way they accessed and interpreted the world. These sensory experiences could both overwhelm or inform through embodied sensory engagement.

### **Summary**

In the dominant dyslexic literature the senses are linked to remedial work and literacy (Davis 2010, Birch 2011, Wise and Wolf 2009) missing person’s lived, complex engagements with the world. As stated at the opening of this chapter “the circuit from sense-perception to motor response begins and ends in the world” (Buck-Morss 1992:12) and dysleXic experience highlights articulate-senses through the interface between inside, outside, interoception and proprioception crossing porous boundaries. Internal sensory experiences can be conveyed through bodied expression and through this embodied thinking, as sense consciousness, it engages with the matterings of the everyday.

Dyslexic persons, as embodied thinkers, venture into environments and intersubjective spaces on multiple levels, actively engaging with the seen and the unseen. My key collaborators have explained that, as persons, they live in the spaces between experience and perception. They have described being-through-the-world is part liminal and part being *between* which enables recognition of “provocative linkages...” (Stoller 2009:126) where flows of information are not always gathered into making meaning but still impact on the experience of being a person. They explained dysleXic being-through-the-world results in a complex engagement with physical, atmospheric and intersubjective relationships. These leaks of information across the body with the world expand the current understanding of the senses and dysleXia as *ness* shows sensorially and perceptively rich entanglements between bodies and the lifeworld.

*Ness* is central to dysleXic experiences as a corporeal reality and an aesthetic attunement of worlding. The collage of montage is enlivened through perceptive feeling and aesthetic engagement, with the world and connected with *ness*, it constitutes everyday engagements through interactions with people and places whilst moving through the world. Eagleton asks, “must the life of the body be given up on, as the sheer unthinkable other of thought, or are its mysterious ways somehow mappable.... in what would then prove a wholly novel science.... of sensibility itself?” (1990:14). I would suggest that through the artworks, and the new words, my collaborators have begun to create the map of this unknown country for dysleXia. On this map next to *ness* was the land of *noshush*. *Noshush* was not simply an expression of an experience but a desire to change spaces and quieten them, whether intersubjective or environmental. *Noshush* was part of the dysleXic experience with *ness* which could be triggered by going to a new place, walking into classrooms, going for job interviews and being in large groups of people. *Noshush* can become a place to navigate the *ness* of intersubjectivity and environmental materiality and represents agency in “so much *ness*” (Amanda). *Ness* and *noshush* represent sense consciousness of everyday dysleXic experience as paying attention to the world and negotiation of lived sensory worlding. The world is thick with *ness* requiring somatosensory perception with embodied thinking and in the following chapter, I look at one of the expressions of this paying attention and expression of *ness*, that of gesture.

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## CHAPTER 7

### GESTURING AS EMBODIED EXPRESSION:

**“To create more to create *ness*.”**

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In the literature on gesture, specific parts of the body are focused on including hands, eyes and arms, (Alibali, Boncoddò and Hostetter 2014:150) rather than their interrelatedness in expressing gesture. In gesturing, tendons, muscles, nerves, ligaments, connective tissues flex and move throughout the whole body, which appears to be forgotten in the desire to give meaning to the movements made. Gestures, I suggest, as movements do things through and for the body, they are whole bodied movements even though at times particular parts of the body are more recognised as taken up in this activity than others. Gesture in dyslexia is often limited to speech, particularly movements of the mouth, but what is dyslexic body gesture is yet to be explored. In this chapter I look at gestures as dyslexic sense-consciousness of embodied worlding. Gestures here are taken up in acting on, and with the world, as expressions of embodied cognition and active knowing. I argue that movements are part of a dyslexic person's sense-consciousness and that this embodied knowing is experienced and expressed through gestures and not limited to language and thinking. I look at gestures which come out from and towards the body, as intersubjective, expressive of the world, used against bodies and socialised control of gesture. Using conversations with my key collaborators, participant observation and artworks I focus on gesture for and against bodies. I concentrate on these conversations as we had more time to get to know each other and it was not until my collaborators trusted me that these differences were discussed in any detail. Part of these discussions happened during the creation of the group works and particularly in relation to thinking and permissioning to process information in ways that they found valuable. Gestures, I show, are embodied expressions and embodied engagement triggering responses over the somatosensory system. Therefore, I have also included diagrams of gestures which I ask the reader to follow to gain a sense of what gestures do *with* the body as they are performed and how they inform knowledge. Gestures then are explored as an experience and expression of embodied thinking, places of challenge and attending to the world.

#### **Gesturing with the world**

Gestures, McNeill has suggested come under 4 types, Iconic (gestures that directly illustrate speech), Metaphoric (abstract gesture based on iconic gestures), Beat (similar to beating

time in music) and Deictic (pointing gestures) (1992 in Goldwin-Meadow 1999:422). What needs to be added to this is how gestures reflect the corporeal reality of embodied knowing away from language models of gestures. Embodied cognition (Shapiro 2010:3216) begins to give a place to explore gesture, beyond the boundaries of causal relationships with the mind, as both communicative and expressive of material reality. I therefore look at gesture<sup>1</sup> as containing expressive implications of everyday experience particularly in relation to moments of embodied knowing, intersubjectivity (Sennett 2008:4356) and *ness*.

Through gesturing my collaborators described, inscribed and represented their engagement with the world intersubjectively and with *ness*. Gesture was not always a conscious decision but a response to *ness* and sometimes resulted in an unknowing of the body in moments of dissonance. Movement as gesture described by my collaborators, comes out from the body and is representational of embodied knowledge. I am not situating gesture in the mind or as constitutive of mind practices, I instead situate gestures within the whole body as bodied knowing. I do this not to devalue the mind but to suggest that there is more about the body outside of the mind that also needs to be considered. Drawing on a variety of sources from philosophy to psychology, I am using the term gesture as active movements which are personal, complex, forming and informing thoughts, senses, images, past experiences, future imaginings and knowledge about the world (Kendon 2004:159, McNeil 1992, Merleau-Ponty 2004:323 ).

Gesture operates at the intersection of (put abstractly) the physiological and conceptual, i.e. the lived body. Indeed, the gesture is the signifying capacity and mark of the lived body. (Philpott 2000:168)

Gesture both informs and performs our relationship with the world taking place in intersubjectivity and away from other bodies (Shapiro 2010:174). Research on gesture links these movements to acts for thinking connected with speech or as a way to think away from speech. They are usually linked to specific types of gesture rather than looking at gesture as bodied responses to people and places. Alibali, Boncoddo and Hostetter (2014) explore gesture for “producing or comprehending language” but I do not limit gesture to language as the experiences of my collaborators describe gesture beyond these boundaries as embodied expressions of being-in-the-world. Here I expand gesture into these places of unseen but bodily aware moments rich with *ness*. Drawing on Amanda, Mathew, Philippa, Elise and

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<sup>1</sup> I am not focusing on the shapes and positions of vocal processes in communicating words which are the main focus within the dyslexia literature on gesture (Fawcett and Nicholson 2002, Fawcett 2002).

Craig's descriptions I am calling these movements gestures as they are embodied thinking - not limited to words but expressive of bodied knowing. Jackson, quoting Merleau-Ponty, states gestures can contradict the words spoken. "It is, moreover, often the case that gestures and bodily habits belie what we put into words and give away our unconscious dispositions, betraying character traits that our verbal and conceptual habits keep us in ignorance of." (Merleau-Ponty in Jackson 2012:1194). Consequently gestures can be expressive of experiences and bodied knowing outside of language models and even outside of our own understanding.

The fieldwork has also raised questions for me about the unrecognised movements which can take place between recognised gestures, betray "unconscious dispositions" or simply be without words. The crafting of Amanda's artwork directly addresses gesture as communicative and expressive of bodied experience. As we began her movements were awkward, and she apologised for her "ineloquent hands, they need time to begin to flow." The gestures were expressive of her nervousness rather than the poem she wanted them to show. Over the session we spent together, I took over 200 photographs as she 'performed' her poem. After we had taken them she sat down at my computer and went through all the images to choose the ones she wanted to use. She kept saying she had to find the gestures that matched with the words of the poem. As she carefully chose the images and we arranged them in the correct order for the poem many were discarded and labelled the wrong gesture for the words. She went through limiting her gestures to defined shapes, even though all of the images were gestures that had been created while she spoke her poem.

The photographs had to say something - there had to be a clear beginning and end, and she filtered her gestures to do this. Her hands "had to speak" (Amanda) for themselves. In her process, she removed the grace from her gestures, focusing on the main simple shapes. It had to be clear for people so they could access what she was communicating. She said that her dyslexic gestures would "be too much" for non-dyslexics. In her artwork she focused on gesture as intersubjective performance rather than expressive of the process. Drawing on her own history of intersubjective gesturing she chose the images she thought people would understand. In doing so she was reflecting the dominant literature on what gestures do (Mc Neil 1992). However, in doing so, she also discounted almost two hundred other images which were gestures as well. These were movements of her embodied knowing and thinking which sat outside of the artworks intersubjective goals.



Sophia expressed the complexity of gestures that Amanda was leaving out. She described gesture as “subtle and complex. I think we see the minute details that other people miss.

The small gestures people make, the changes in skin tone, the direction of lines on the face, the dilation in their eyes” (Sophia). Her comments reveal some of what was removed by Amanda. Gesture is, therefore, a symphony of information involving complex interplays of different rhythms, counterpoints, harmonies and clashes. Sophia reflected the complexity of information within gestures and revealed the level of simplification Amanda felt was necessary to “simplify for non-dyslexics.” In removing the images she made choices about her bodied communication but at the same time revealed the complexities of corporeal reality taken up in the act of gesturing.

Gesture, when approached as embodied cognition gives an opportunity to expand into spaces and to draw into communication that which is experienced. I would add that it is also the place where half-formed ideas, *ness* and aesthetic sensory cognition can escape reasoning and interpretation, but be articulated through the body. Gestures can then be recognised as found

in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:1).

Gestures when looked at beyond the suggestions of McNeil as Iconic, Metaphoric, Beat and Deictic reveal a dyslexic person’s expressions of worlding and *ness*. As I will explain gestures are “discussionnessness.”

### **Communicating Embodied knowing of Ness: “ It’s Discussionnessness”**

A person is at all times surrounded by and intertwined with objects, environments and other human beings (Merleau-Ponty 2004:193) forming an ongoing, embodied dialectic of person and world shaped through the senses, movement, language, materiality, intersubjectivity and *ness*. *Ness*, as described in the previous chapter, is a specific mode of embodied experience, expression and engagement that will be further explored in this chapter in relation to people’s everyday actions and movements. *Ness* comprises a specific amalgam of thoughts, feelings, senses and history that emerge as part of a “practical, corporeal engagement in, care for, fabrication with, and consumption of material reality” (Smith 2010:165). It is expressed through movements, gestures and words that comprise a person’s everyday lifeworld.

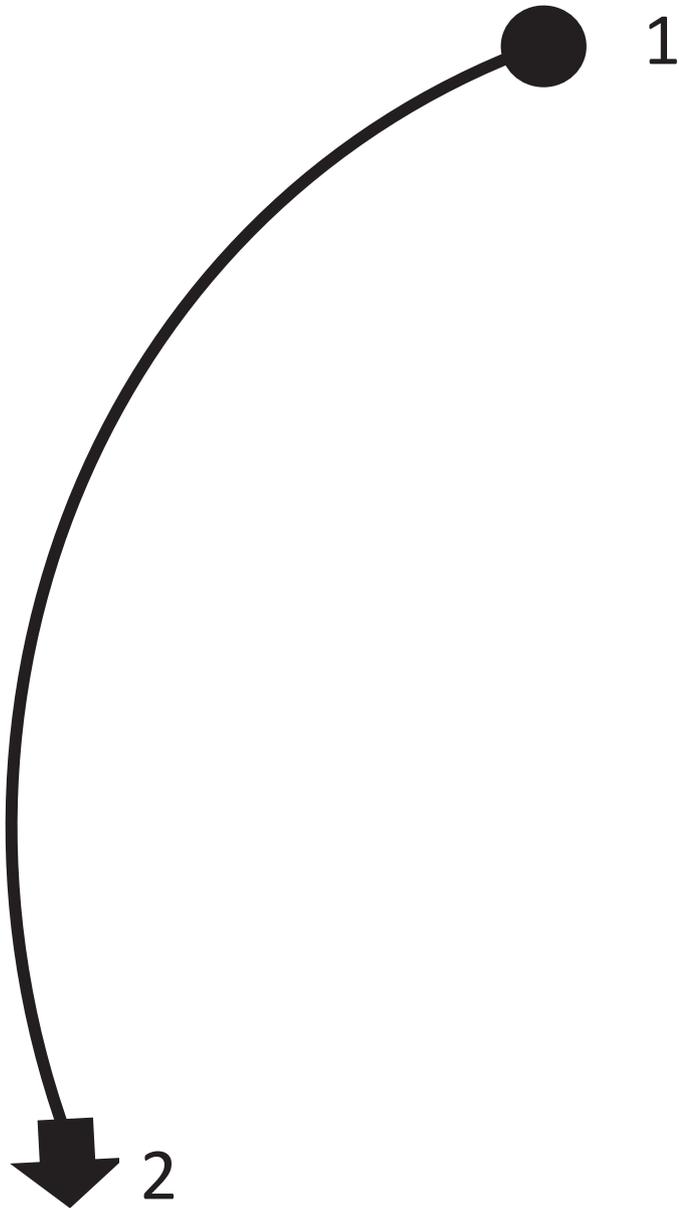
From the perspective of my key collaborators, gestures express aesthetic thinking processes beyond words. They inform the body and perform the world of experience of an individual

and within intersubjective relationships. As Elise explained, gesture is about communicating the complex world, “we draw into our conversations the *ness* with our hands. There aren’t words to use. It’s what we know and what we can bring” (Elise). *Ness* and gesture expresses worlding and thinking-through-the-world by influencing bodied experiences and performances. The connection with the “flows of the universe” (Craig), the ability to “read people” (Jacob, Elise, Michael) and “triggers” from around them (Amanda, Philippa and Mathew) all related to expressing paying attention to the world. These rhythms and tempos were a part of everyday relationships with the environment and people. Gesture, therefore, became a way to express what existed in bodied knowing and relied on bodied telling. “Gesture, then, is a “‘material carrier’ that helps bring meaning into existence” (McNeil 1992), they are “not noise in the system: They are part and parcel of it” (Gibbs in Seigworth and Gibbs 2010:199).

Gestures point to how we engage with the world, where we are focusing and how we are communicating. Through embodied thinking, it appears that worlding is expressed through movement as gestures (Ingold 2010:310) and embodied knowing reflects the vast experiences in a diverse, multifaceted, dialectic with the world. Gesturing is then a manifestation the world formed, informed and unformed through embodied thinking. For my key collaborators gesturing reflects *ness* through hands and body in intersubjectivity. Kant has proposed “the hand is the window on to the mind” (in Sennett 2008:2250) and certainly hands are complex and agile - capable of multiple types of movement as hands vary in “ways of gripping and the sense of touch, [and] affect how we think” (Sennett 2008:2254). Hands connected through the body therefore create and are expressive of embodied knowing. Hands as bodied expression are a complex site of representation in dyslexic movement. In gesturing the hands move between specific and recognisable representations, such as the gesture for “come” - triggering movements and responses throughout the body.

# Come

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<sup>2</sup> To gesture come. a. Flatten palm. b. Place side of palm on little finger on point 1. c. Follow to point 2 bringing palm towards body. The reason for asking that you do this is to recognise the body's response beyond the hand movements. Gestures trigger movements throughout the body.

Other gestures are more abstract or are amorphous flows between recognised gestures, such as those removed by Amanda. The way hands were used and the value placed in hand movements in particular varied for my collaborators. However, hand gestures with whole body gestures, such as turning the body towards or away from an object or person, were central to the way they were engaging intersubjectively and inter-objectively with *ness*. My collaborators explained they draw “into” conversations their experience of the world which was shown through our discussions and in the artworks created. The unseen permeability of the world as sensed-perception (Morss 1992:12) was included with gesturing as thinking and expressing unseen experiences. Hands as expressive of this knowing were discussed further when we debated *ness*. Through our discussion, comments arose around how experiences needed gestures. As Amanda, Philippa and Elise explained.

Amanda: I guess it’s the whole point to why we draw with our hands.

Elise: to create more, to create *ness*.

Philippa: to create the *ness*...

Amanda: well yeah. It’s another part of the discussion.

Philippa: It’s discussion*nessness*

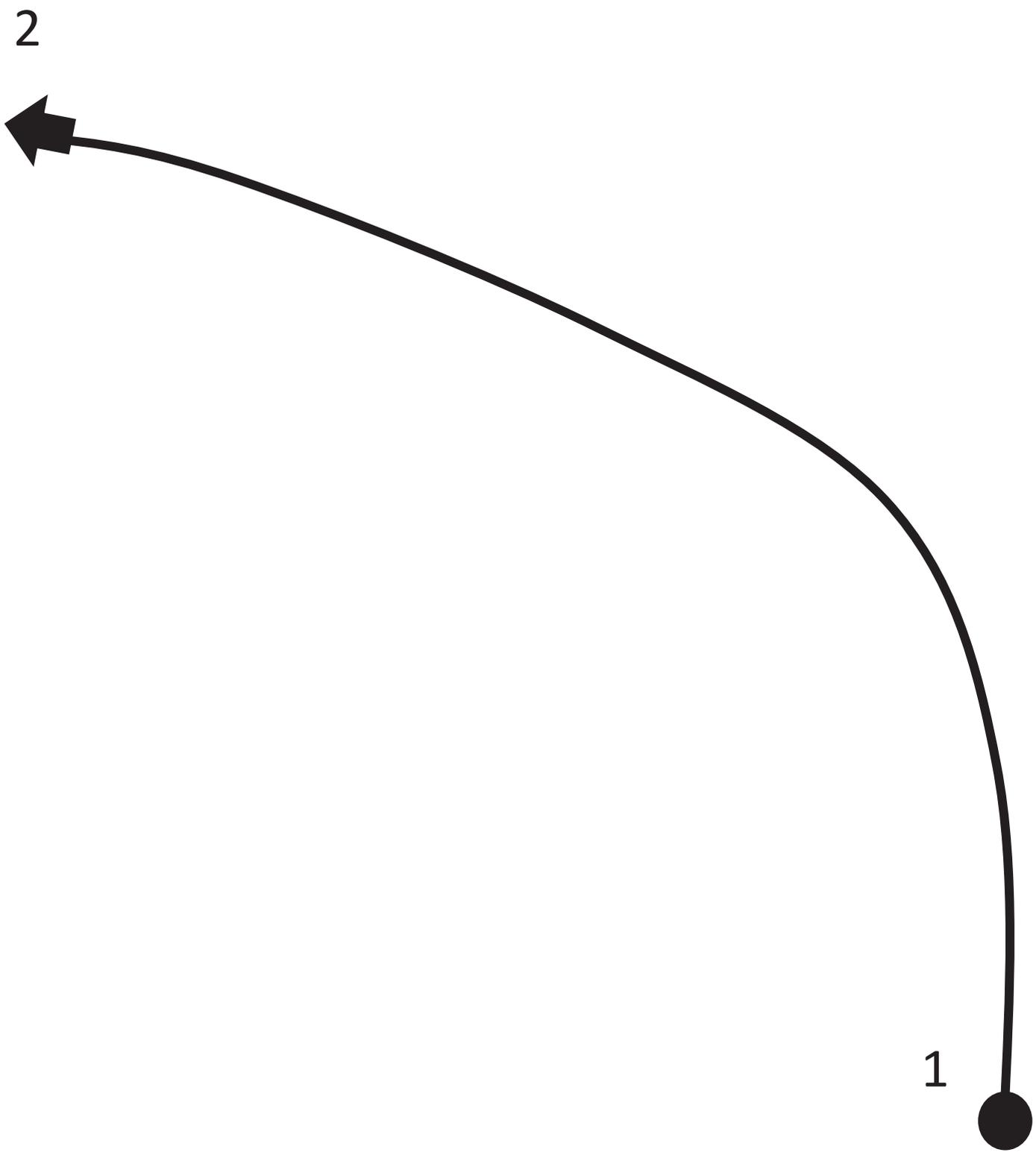
Discussion*nessness* emerged through drawing in and creating *ness* in the conversation and giving information to the listener, enlarging the meaning of spoken words. Gestures were cyclical - made by the body within the world and made by the world in the body in embodied cognition. Gesture was not always a word associated communicative act, it is discussion*nessness*. It was a bringing together of ideas where words were incapable of communicating the information of bodied experience. “Words don’t do it. There is so much more to say. We have to gesture. It’s how we can make it more, its discussion*nessness*” (Elise). Amanda also explained that the gestures had to be larger to get across the whole emotion and embodied information. “It’s here. It is this (she gestured pushing out from around her body towards me) it is what we give to you, we are giving you all this information.” Gestures included getting information out of the body, communicating to another body or “sometimes it’s just about putting it out into the universe” (Craig).

Gestures, therefore, are an expression of embodied information articulating sensation, material reality and words. As my key collaborators have said, gestures fill in what words do not say. In discussion*nessness* gestures become like an electrical signal jumping a gap between two wires, it is a giving of the *ness* acquired in their bodies into the intersubjective relationship. These gestures are not emblems nor codified equivalent to Deaf sign they are not emblematic of the seen but draw in the unseen embodied knowing into intersubjectivity.

It is a bringing together into communication knowledge of the communicator that may not be understood by people outside of their experiences.

Communicating bodied knowing was specifically discussed on the night when the word *ness* was chosen. Philippa, Craig, Elise and Amanda tried to express *ness* initially with gestures as we sought to find a way to word the experience. "It's all of this" Amanda explained, as she flung her arms back, extending her ribcage, taking in a deep breath and finishing the movement by waving her hands up and down. The movement expresses how gesture, for my collaborators, pulls in the world communicating *ness* as they communicate facts, stories and even directions. "When it accompanies speech, gesture allows speakers to convey thoughts that may not easily fit into the categorical system that their spoken language offers" (Goldin-Meadow 1999:422). However, when they sit completely out of a categorical system and are not recognised this can create dissonance between the body gestured and the one gestured to. The gestures carry the information into intersubjectivity, but do not necessarily guarantee understanding. They are in fact quite complex as Amanda and Elise explained "we are trying to tell you something" (Elise).

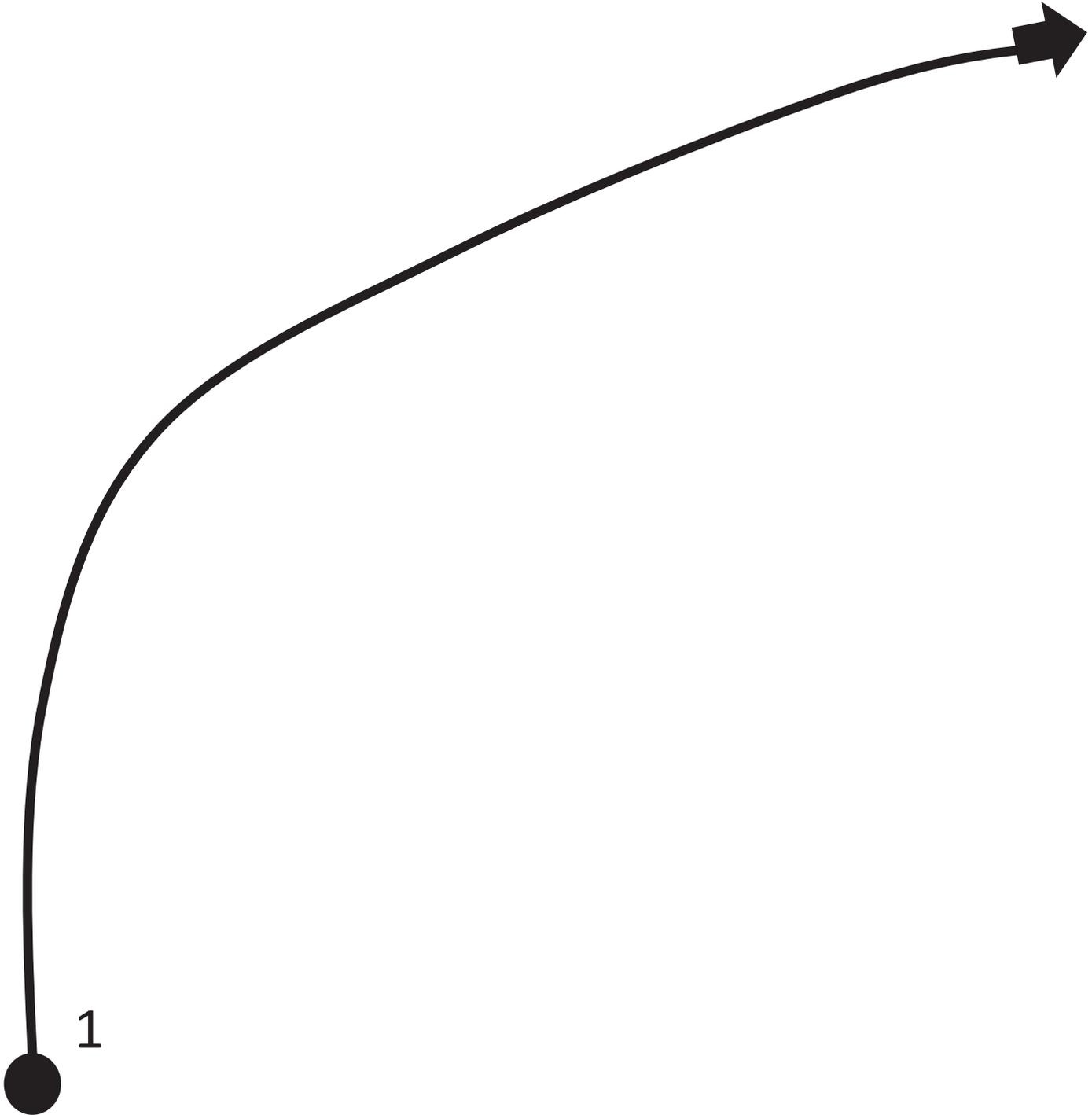
Gestures are not purely representational - they do things in the world and the body. The body, particularly hands, both create and trigger sensory information (Sennett 208:188). Unlike other sensory engagement with the lifeworld, which travels between the inside and outside (Ingold 2004:246), hands, both create sensation, through interacting with objects, people, *ness* and things and reflect thoughts, feelings and sensations. Gestures, including hands, are therefore aesthetic expressions of *ness* and mould *ness*. Amanda showed this in her artwork as she chose to place her gestures above the words she had written. She spoke about the flow of her hands and arms through space, and when we came to join the words and gestures we accentuated this movement through blurring and dragging the background of the images to represent this drawing in of the world. Gesture was represented as affecting the world through *ness* contradicting Alibabi et. Al. (2014) statement that "gestures are not produced in order to act on the world" (150). Amanda's discussion of the sensory flows of *ness* clarified how gestures are not always able to be expressed through language but her movements can be eloquent as they travel through *ness*.



3

# Ness

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<sup>3</sup> Gesture for *ness*. a. using the outside of both hands trace the line from point one to point 2. B. continue the movement beyond the page until arms are fully spread out. C. whirl arms and hands around in quick circular motions. This gesture is made on an inhalation of breath and as the hands and arms extend the body is opened out and the rib cage is stretched. Not only is the gesture one of expressing more it is one of opening up the body to more.

### Gesturing Intersubjectivity.

Merleau-Ponty has suggested that gesture is about communication through recognition by creating mutuality.

The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his....there is a mutual confirmation between myself and others...the act by which I lend myself to spectacle must be recognised as irreducible to anything else. I join it in a kind of blind recognition which precedes the intellectual working out and clarification of meaning." (Merleau-Ponty in Jackson 1992:1466).

Gestures can be representational, for example lifting an arm to point in a particular direction to aid the listener who has asked for directions, as well as abstract and unexamined as expressed in my collaborators interactions with *ness*. There is not always mutual confirmation between persons in this gesturing, as how the world is paid attention to influences what gesture can communicate and what they need to express. Gesture is an active and engaged processing through the world taking place through motility as communicative and expressive acts.

Gesture is influenced by expectations of types of movement in different environments, social spaces and intersubjective proxemic relationships (Hall et. Al 1968:84). Gesture is a response to the world which takes place, not exclusively but predominately, in intersubjective relationships (Kress 2010:2287, 2408, Merleau-Ponty 2004:1367). For many of my collaborators this involves the unseen *ness* which communicates collaged montages of experience. If gesture, as McNeil (1992,1999, 2000) has suggested, is about thinking and communication, then it simplifies gesture to substituting and accompanying speech. Gesturing intersubjectively is not limited to speech and thinking as it is also bound to social expectations in making movements (Mc Neil 1999).

Gestures are responses to spaces and can reflect or contradict the intersubjective expectations of the environments in which they take place. Embodied consciousness through the *ness* of environments and people impacted on the body physically with the outcome being gesture. As Elise explained "you become part of the environment, and the environment becomes part of you. There are some spaces where it's comfortable and other places where that is not!" (Elise). Gesture can also be used as a way to control to the place, as Elise explained about the importance of bodied movement. These relationships to *ness*

can trigger responses such as leaving the room or through other strategies such as using embodied awareness to control the space. *Ness* triggers responses in bodies. It “can serve to drive us toward movement, broadsword and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force – relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:1).

***Gesturing Listening: “Everyone Else Feels Better, But We Have No Idea What Was Said”***

Goldin-Meadow has stated, “speech accompanying gestures have the potential to reflect thoughts that may themselves be relatively unexamined by both speaker and listener” (1999:419). However, there are also those points where there is a conflict between embodied gesturing of what is needed and what is expected in intersubjectivity. Gestures in intersubjectivity have boundaries created by the social rules of particular spaces and relationships and not performing the right gestures results in censure. In closer intersubjective relationships the smallest movement such as the direction in which we are looking become tools of communication or engaging with our processes of thought (Kendon 2004:111) and the lack of this performance can create conflict. Elise explained,

It’s ‘will you just look at me,’ ‘will you concentrate on what I am saying’ and to concentrate on what you are saying we have to put on our listening face. So we go like this (nods head) yes we understand. We didn’t hear a word you said, but we are saying (nodding her head) yes we did. Everyone else feels better, but we have no idea what was said unless we are looking at the floor and we don’t have that other stimulus going on around us. (Elise).

Elise expressed the importance of looking at faces and looking people in the eye as intersubjective listening. The experience of looking into someone’s eyes while talking with them shows, through gesture, that we are usually listening to them and giving them our full attention (Ingold 2000:55). For many of the collaborators this was not the case. The gesture of listening is perhaps the most important intersubjective gesture, however as Philippa explained, “It’s like when someone is literally demanding I look into their eyes it’s like, yes, I can see your eyes they are brown and then I look away again. It’s too much.” (Philippa). Looking at faces holds specific types of information for my collaborators which contradict the expectations related to gesturing listening. Elise continued

You’re reading a lot in a face, there is so much going on in a face and I think (turning to Craig) you and me are the same. We look at someone, we read them. What other

people would read in a book we read in a face. So it's hard for me to look at a face which is why I'm not looking at any of you. (Elise)

As Elise spoke, she looked about her using her hands as a way to mediate her feelings and help with her thinking. Her nervous laughter, and lost train of thought, when she caught somebody's eye further illustrated the complexities of looking at people - in particular circumstances. This experience was later given the word *unness*, associated with being told how to behave in a way different to embodied knowledge. Unness represented dissonance between embodied needs and social expectations.

How people arrange their bodies and how they orient them and place them in relation to each other, or to features of the environment, provides important information about how they are engaged with one another and about the nature of their intentions and attitudes (Kendon 2004:1).

Listening, it appears, is linked with vision within intersubjectivity. Learning when to look, as a dyslexic accompanied a discussion of where to look to perform the needs of the other person. Elise in her late thirties felt that the mouth told her more information and often people did not notice if she was not looking at their eyes because she was focusing on their face. "I actually focus on peoples' mouths because that gives you more information, it doesn't eliminate hands and the rest of it." (Elise). My older collaborators learned to look at people's foreheads, mouths or at their nose, giving the impression of looking at people while being able to keep track of required information. For my younger collaborators, especially those in their teens, they described constantly forgetting important information and being told off for not concentrating. "I just don't remember stuff. I look at them and try to concentrate but no matter how hard I focus on them I just can't" (Stephanie). Stephanie, unlike older dyslexics, struggled to explain what was happening. However, using older collaborators' stories it shows a dissonance between focusing on faces as paying attention and what is being paid attention to. Stephanie did not state there was too much information, as my older collaborators did, concentrating instead on her intersubjective failure. The difference in the age groups reflects learned expectations of gesture and balancing the corporeality of *ness* with non-dyslexic expectations of gesture.

The experience of *ness* and *unness*, where information is lost through gestures, further complicates gesturing as personal need or act of mutuality and looking at faces resulted in specific types of information. Craig, Amanda and Philippa deliberated over the problem of looking at faces to gesture paying attention.

Craig: You'd miss getting to know their mannerism.

Amanda: Well yeah, and more than their mannerisms their essences, their *ness*.

Philippa: Yeah their *ness ness*.

*Unness* related to losing other information and the difficulties between the social and informational role of intersubjectivity. Craig explained, "When you focus on the face you miss out on all of the other little triggers, the rest of it the hands, the body, and the *ness*. At the same time you can be overwhelmed by other stuff too about the person if you focus on their eyes" The gesture of listening resulted in loss of information rather than gaining it. Having had the opportunity to be part of conversations with groups of dyslexics and conversations between non-dyslexics and dyslexics, I found different types of interaction taking place. In dyslexic conversations eye positions were not discussed and persons can look anywhere without censure. In the mixed conversations I was told and noticed that non-dyslexics can become distracted by body movements of dyslexics and can censure the individual. The censure happened in different ways from questions, "who are you looking at?" turning to follow the gaze of the dyslexic and the non-dyslexic appearing bored or unsettled, which was interpreted through their gesture of moving from one foot to another or the "blank stare." The gesture of looking away from faces, therefore, propels one message to the speaker and another to the listener creating many occasions of conflict and rebuff, "Will you just look at me!" Gesturing became about a performance for intersubjectivity and to avoid censure. Amanda explained,

A lot of being pushed down being dyslexic is always being demanded to do this and to do that in the right way and the wrong way. It's the yes and the no's. You always need to know when the queues are. It's constantly, right look at the eyes, right, listening listening, ok look there, ok, they are going to say this now so I nod ummhm. There are so many little different tips that you cue on

Only my collaborators in their mid-twenties discussed this learning of expectations and the queues to give these gestures to other people. Above I quoted Merleau-Ponty "as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his." Intersubjectivity and gesturing for my collaborators was not about inhabiting the other person but about performing what they believed, by drawing on previous experiences, the other person needed. Gesture could therefore create dissonance between embodied experience and social expectations, resulting in a sense of feeling alien (Heather, Philippa). For my key collaborators finding

other people who had the same gestures as themselves resulted in finding connection with each other.

Alongside this discussion were the misunderstandings that happen outside of this dyslexic intersubjectivity. My collaborators were interpreting their gestures as frequently not recognised by the non-dyslexic listener. These movements relating to *ness* were described as causing discomfort for other people. My collaborators try to control their hand, eye and body movements, as much as they can, recognising dissonance between what they needed to communicate and what the other person needs to 'hear.'

Not expressing *ness* through gestures, impacted on the way an environment was engaged with. For Jean, she had learned over many years that when speaking in public people would "listen to me when I wasn't moving so much... People don't like it." Jean described holding her body in tension when speaking in public and concentrating herself into a limited space within her skin rather than being aware of the whole room in which she was speaking. This resulted in her limiting her hand movements and trying not to draw in the *ness* of the space. To be part of the room would mean that she would not be listened to as she felt her gestures would betray her words which were more important. To do this she would stand in front of her mirror practising her speeches and her gestures so that everything was well rehearsed so she could "switch to automatic" - limiting her gestures to what other people needed and shutting down her own attention to the space so that she did not embody the *ness* of the room in her gestures.

"Mutual confirmation" (Merleau-Ponty in Jackson 1992:1466), through gesture, is a gift that enabled the speaker to feel heard but was not necessarily one reflecting my collaborators' needs in the intersubjective space. The difference between ways of using eyes and gestural issues relating to paying attention created confusion. For my collaborators, looking away from the eyes altered information and the movement was intended for themselves rather than for their listener. There was also an apparent contradiction which was questioned both before and after the artist tours with confusion between looking away and the fact that my collaborators had said that they require plentiful information to inform understanding. The tension remains as part of the communicative needs of dyslexics. Gesture is not simply about gaining meaning but a re-imagining of what constitutes relevant content to communication and how this is communicated. The person speaking's *ness*, through their eyes, can add too much information but the need to perform the gesture of attention means learning how to both limit the information and show attention.

### ***Gestures Puncture Proxemic Space: “It Was Like Poof.”***

Expectations of gestures of proprioception, relating to proxemics, were part of this intersubjective space in the everyday. While out with one of my collaborators and her children she had to explain to her (dyslexic) child that he needed to give people more room when walking past them. “But I’m not going to hit them,” he explained. “Yes I know,” his mother responded, “But they don’t know that because they don’t know you,” Alan, who was 10 years old at the time, was aware of his proprioception and did not see these proxemic relationships as relevant, he was only responding to the *ness* without an understanding of what this meant to other people. He knew his body and could not see the difficulty and he thought he was far enough away from their physical body. Proxemic (Hall 1968; 4-6) space and gesture belong together as gestures move in and out of public, social, personal and intimate zones but where the gestures cross over these zones they can be perceived as an invasion across personal space.

Proprioception for dyslexics, and its relationship to proxemic zones, appears to be different to those of non-dyslexics. *Ness* does not respect these zones and it appears that this may affect how they are perceived by people with dyslexia. Perhaps due to this multi-sensory awareness the dense information negotiated through gesturing does not recognise these boundaries. I first experienced the difference in proxemics when I met Mary at a café where a stranger told her to “stop it,” as she was getting in his way. She immediately stopped moving her hands and folded her body into the smallest space she could. It impacted on our conversation which became stilted and quiet rather than exploding with ideas and gestures as it had done seconds before. This happened in other situations between dyslexics and non-dyslexics where individuals objected to the perceived invasion of space. The collaborator told to stop moving her arms and Alan told to give more room, show how gestures can puncture proxemic spaces. The understanding of social expectations for giving room, altered as people grew older and learned to find a balance between what they needed and what was expected of them. Learning the expectations often resulted in a lessening of gestures through learning how to “dip in and out of *ness*” (Amanda) but there were times when *ness* “demands” (Amanda) recognition and gesturing. Gesture for my older collaborators was rationalised with learning to create separation between corporeal reality and intersubjective expectations. “I’ve learned over the years that people don’t like hand movements but I think now it is also about my arthritis and not being able to move my hands easily” (Sophia).

Proprioception and gesturing was connected to colliding with environments and people and was seen as a consequence of making gestures. Arms flung out and drinks tipped over

through someone being “over enthusiastic” (Amanda) were common within intersubjective gestures. The embarrassment and the lost conversation became a shared dyslexic experience.

I think I punched one of my primary school teachers in the face once. It was just like poof (flinging his arms out to the side). I know I was talking to one of my mates. I think she was standing behind me. (Craig).

Containing movement was problematic. His was not the only story about gestures which had consequences. Elise countered with a story of tripping her teacher. “I was leaning forward on a chair and she tripped over the back of my chair and she took my chair away.” She explained she often rocked on her chair because it made it easier for her to concentrate. Her rocking gesture responding to *ness* took precedence over the intersubjectivity of classmates and teacher. The consequence of the invasion of her teacher’s space was kneeling on the cold floor. Gestures were a contradiction between intersubjective expectations of moving through places and embodied knowing.

### **Dyslexic Gesture**

Gesture includes expression of interior knowledge through an outwardly visible expression of the person’s worlding. Therefore, gesture is also a response to the unseen as well as amorphous thoughts and experiences of the lifeworld.

The precise content and character of each person’s individual lifeworld necessarily remains undetermined and unspecified but has the potential to encompass a broad synchronous assemblage of streams of internally represented speech, emotional and imaginative reverie as well as half-formed ideas, inchoate urges and non-symbolic modes of thinking. And while it may be impossible, even for the person themselves, to delineate and define the multiple, transient strands of conscious activity that simultaneously shape their being in a particular moment, without a better understanding of these forms we cannot understand what it means to be human (Irving 2013:218).

Through gesture these various forms, as both experience and expression of a person’s engagement with the world reflect embodied thinking. Dyslexics through gestures influence and engage with their lifeworld through these experiences. Bodied expression through hands, eyes, torso and breath were seen as important ways to think through the world. At the second dinner, what Mc Neil (1992) would describe as iconic gesturing, became

embodied drawings manifested through discussions of buildings. The gestures of building the map were straightforward and easily understood, well connected with their conversations but layered with extra embodied knowing and engagement through their movements - beyond simply being iconic. Here hand gestures became complex expressions (Wagner-Cook and Tanenhaus 2009:98) of storytelling with the body.

Philippa began by stating, "At my school." As she talked about the layout she used her hands on the table to outline each of the buildings she was describing pulling her hands up to show the two story buildings and keeping them low for single stories. As she described the layout Elise, Craig and Amanda started talking about the school, having also been there for other activities. As I sat watching, they all began to build their 3D versions of the map in the air above the table. Walls were built to show the various rooms they had been to and hands travelled through the maps along the various routes they had taken. Elise began building a staircase between the single and second-storey building and walked two fingers up the imaginary stairs. Both Amanda and Craig echoed this action as they walked up the imaginary stairs - they were building on their own maps.

The layouts grew along and above the table along with the discussions about the different perspectives everyone had taken. Philippa, Craig and Elise leaned across the table to show where they were standing in each other's maps, resulting in gesture cross overs as people aesthetically engaged with the different designs. The maps were open and they were allowed to cross over into each other's spaces, even though this was never verbally stated. As they leaned across the table plates and glasses were moved out of the way so the gestures would not be impeded. I was told, "We can do that here" (Amanda). This interpretation of dyslexic intersubjectivity was different from that with non-dyslexic's where "they get offended" (Philippa). It began to show how this engagement was accepted as appropriate in this setting by interpreting this gesturing as 'hanging out' with dyslexics. They describe it was possible to use these gestures with dyslexics, as Amanda explained. "When we tell stories we can so go there. We understand it's okay here we don't get weird looks or strange questions." "Or shooed away," Philippa laughed.

Dyslexic gesturing also became visible at the opening of the installation as Mathew, Elise, Craig and Amanda gravitated towards each other. Within 5 minutes, their conversation filled the gallery. Their voices and body movements relaxed and they physically and sensorially began to fill the space through their gestures and voices. Words and laughter bounced off the walls, arms, legs, feet, eyes and bodies fully engaged in conversations about what it means to be dyslexic. The non-dyslexics who were part of the conversation

responded in the opposite direction becoming more contained holding their bodies in tension, keeping their arms by their sides and their feet together. The proxemics around the conversation became owned by the dyslexics as they freely expressed their entanglement with the atmospheres of the place through their movements. Periodically as the conversation continued Mathew would turn to his wife trying to explain what was happening. Later Elise, a friend of long standing, explained what this movement meant.

I think my favourite part of the exhibition was when we were all talking and Mathew would turn to his wife and translate for her what we were saying. His wife usually does that for him but he had to translate for her. It was priceless.

The translation included mimicking some of the gestures used by the others, slowed down and simplified, to help clarify, missing out the flows and complex movements initially used by the others. Whenever he returned to focus on the group, his gestures, like those of Amanda and Elise became larger and more complex. His choice to filter the information for his wife showed how he used gesture both as a dyslexic, and his interpretation of non-dyslexic intersubjectivity in relation to gesture. He responded to the dyslexic ways of gesturing experience through dyslexic dominant intersubjectivity.

Gesturing with people with dyslexia was seen as different to non-dyslexics. As we sat around the dinner table discussing ideas of what represented *ness*, within the laughter and discussions Philippa leapt up saying, "Oh I know." She began rocking from foot to foot resembling swaying to unheard music. As she swayed, her hands lifted and fell expanding out from her body and drawing back into it. She repeated, "I've got it" as she smiled pointing towards the group. She began laughing again "its awarenessness." Her enthusiasm was expressed through all of the movements in her body. She could not contain them by remaining seated at the table, instead the whole experience of her idea, the laughter, and excitement at the table overwhelmed her still body, expressing itself through leaping up and gesturing. Gesture was an expression of her embodied thinking. No one else moved or responded to her movement but continued as if she was still at the table.

Philippa later explained that she felt comfortable being on her feet with other dyslexics as non-dyslexics, "Don't get it." Her interpretation of how the other dyslexics would respond appeared to be correct as no one at the table reacted in any way to her movements, "it's just drawing *ness*" Amanda explained. For Philippa this movement was allowed to be expressed because other dyslexics wouldn't see it as disruptive. This different intersubjective space resulted in her feeling free to express herself through her gestures. She explained how non-

dyslexics “look at me strangely, I’m seen as weird.” Non-dyslexics regarded her need to express information through gestures as inappropriate, resulting in labelling her “a little crazy” (Philippa). Philippa’s gestures reflect her bodied engagement with *ness* and the other dysleXics at the table accepted her desire to communicate this way. “I find with movement we have to, whenever we are talking we have to do this” (Philippa). However, this need for movement differed with the support group I met in the UK had less elaborate movements and gesture was less frequent. The most performed gesture was to lean back in the chair<sup>4</sup>.

### ***“It looks dead”***

I stated above that proxemics and proprioception are places that dysleXics cross over in gesturing. The issues of crossing proxemic zones and their relationship to proprioception altered with other dysleXics. When my key collaborators and I walked into the lounge leaving dinner to finish cooking we stood around the second cloak I had been working on, which explored the experience of learning. Amanda, Philippa and Elise looked closely at the cloak moving the fabric and unpinning the ribbons. “It has to move” explained Amanda “it looks dead.” Craig agreed and said “it has to be taller than the other one.” Amanda lifted her hands up showing how much higher it needed to be. Debbie followed this movement agreeing with her as they both continued to talk lifting their hands and stretching their bodies into different positions trying to decide where it needed to be. Then Elise said it has to “go up and out.” As I watched, Elise and Amanda flung their arms to the side narrowly missing each other as Craig and Philippa followed their movements.

No one flinched or ducked. Their arms flung up and out to the sides to show the way that they wanted the cloak to expand up and out. I stood there trying to take on this information as at the same time I worried that they were going to hit one another, as they were standing very close together. Their arms were being flung in many different directions to express what they were trying to communicate as their words were unable to express what they were wanting. As the discussion went on their hands continued to participate in the description and I began to see it as a type of dance in which they were very aware of each other’s proximity and themselves in the space. No one flinched away from each other when fingertips brushed within centimetres of their bodies as their arms and fingers danced around each other’s gestures.

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<sup>4</sup> To understand the reason for this difference will need a detailed study of gesture, from a dysleXic perspective, between the two countries which was not possible for this project. Perhaps if I had known them as long as my key collaborators their gesturing may have been similar.

*Ness* required gesture, when gesture was limited, it impacted on their bodies. Like a rubber band being tightened, the lack of gesturing created pressure within my collaborators bodies and frustration grew at being unable to fully express themselves. “You try to control your hands, because some people can’t take it, and then they explode in some big gesture and the other person takes a step back from you, looking at you like you’ve grown an extra head” (Elise).

*Ness* as embodied experience is “lived affects with tempos, sensory knowledge’s, orientations, transmutations, habits, rogue force fields etc....” (Stewart 2011:446), which are expressed through gesture. Dyslexic gestures can confound and inform, turn away from bodies or towards them, pointing to embodied engagement with *ness* and worlding (Stewart 2011:452). *Ness* triggered movement particularly in childhood for all of my collaborators. For example, all of my collaborators remember numerous occasions throughout their childhood and early teens of being told to sit still and stop fidgeting. “I was constantly told to stop fidgeting, just sit still” (Sophia), “I remember going to my Dad’s music teacher, from when he was young, and being told off because I wouldn’t sit still, but I couldn’t sit still” (Elise). Heather, explained “I get told off for not sitting still all the time” (Heather). The lack of movement, gesturing attention through stillness, was seen as required to show paying attention and focus. *Ness* resulted in bodied responses and the need to control them to perform paying attention contradicted embodied experience. Their bodied responses were devalued as this performance was for them the point where they lost focus, but, where possible, performed it for the other person. Gesture, as they have gotten older, has meant learning to make allowances in the intersubjective space for the other person to feel that they were being attended to, which often was not the case.

The relationship to embodied thinking and paying attention to the world contrasted with interaction with non-dyslexics who did not share their experience. These bodied movements and sensory awareness when misinterpreted, created separation and dissonance in the conversational process. Hands, in particular, could become a place of tension, capable of beauty and of disasters, and where with non-dyslexics my collaborators described being awkward with their hands, this altered with dyslexics. With non-dyslexics they would even sit on their hands because people would watch their hands during conversations. Alistair said “one guy’s head I thought would snap off because he was following my hands as I talked” (Alistair). The gesturing needs of the body were not misunderstood by dyslexics as they “just let your hands do what they need, you don’t have to worry about them” (Amanda).

Dyslexic gestures can have “consequences. I was just talking and whomp the glass went

flying. Thankfully it was almost empty” (Elise). Almost all my collaborators assigned dyslexic gesturing to clumsiness; for example doing things the wrong way around was frequently mentioned, but this was not something I witnessed. I did witness the non-dyslexic’s struggle with the way that dyslexic people were moving through the world. In public I noticed my collaborators were often cautious when eating and drinking, taking longer to lift their cup or extra care when eating a meal - it was particularly the case for people in their twenties. These cautious movements were not evident in the meals at my home, where they shared stories about klutzy experiences, such as being out for a meal and knocking a drink over because their hand movements were too “generous” (Mathew). They spoke and laughed about situations such as tripping over their words or over their own feet and dropping things when they were “trying to do too many things at once, as usual” (Philippa). Over the two years of my fieldwork, I have seen little change in gesturing as we have become more familiar with each other. Some of the gesturing has become more complex but I have not seen the klutziness they spoke of. In other cases gestures have disappeared, I was told “you don’t need all that information now you know us better” (Philippa).

***With Objects: “Everything just flowed.”***

Gestures are crafting thinking (Sennett 2008:2731) and experience of being-through-the-world. If, as McNeil (2000) states, gesture is the way that we think, then these movements and the ways in which they are acknowledged need to go beyond the body (Clark 2011:644). Embodied thinking with gestures also exists with objects used, such as pointing with a pen, or using abstract objects, such as plasticine.

Craig and I met for a second time to talk about what he wanted to create for the exhibition and we sat down by the coffee table to chat about his artwork. Whilst at the first session he had talked freely, this time he was struggling. “I don’t know where to start” he explained. I tried asking a few questions, but we made no progress and he sat tensely on the couch saying he just did not know. I asked if he wanted to try drawing or sculpting something and he picked up some plasticine and started talking about the clay his mother used to get for him. As he pressed and rolled it through his fingertips, he started to suggest a variety of different ideas and the more he manoeuvred the clay, the more his ideas formed. As he pressed and shaped the small piece of plasticine through his fingers he became more animated, firing out ideas of possible artworks that he could create. As he talked, the plasticine continued to be moulded, not into a specific shape or object, but being moved along with his thoughts into speech.

His movements were gestures placed into the plasticine and helped with his process of

thought. His moulding stopped when he ran out of ideas and he placed the plasticine on the table and said, “I don’t know what that is or what it has to do with anything.” At the artist tour, Craig struggled with knowing what to say and tripped over his words and I offered him plasticine to shape whilst he talked, and he again found it helpful. It changed his ability to speak and through the gestures he put into the plasticine his embodied cognitive movement became more fluid. At a later dinner he explained, “that time we had a conversation and I sat down and I was struggling to come up with words and you handed me a block of plasticine and everything just flowed from there.” Craig, like many of my male participants, did not use many gestures, however, in using this tactile gesturing he found a way to think through ideas (Sennet 2008:188). The gestures were not ones specifically for communication but were his body’s need to engage in active thinking (Alibabi et. Al. 2014: 150-154).

Mathew, a drummer, found movements, gestures, sounds and *ness* made new rhythms accessible and made it possible to take them into his ways of knowing. As can be seen on the film “I don’t count...” The way Mathew gestures towards the screen shows his engagement with it. The way he holds the sticks and changes his focus between the drummer on the screen and his own body movements, is both mimicking and gesturing towards the screen. From the movements of his sticks, between hitting the beats in mid-air, through to holding them in his fists and resting them on his thighs, he connects with the screen taking into his body through his gestures the information he is gathering. The music and the words are similarly part of this sensory engagement, but it is not until he sits down at his kit that he uses his whole body in the process. He returns again and again to the clip, focusing on the small details of gestures made by the drummer, learning them to correct the problems he is having. His hands and eyes reflect his attention to the details on the screen and sounds through the speakers. This gesturing creates phases of embodied sensory cognition as perceptual engagement between himself, the music, the screen and his drum kit.

Please go to the accompanying usb stick and play the clip from “**It’s more of a feeling**” in the file for chapter 7 to emphasise the movements I have removed the sound and edited the original clip.

### **Gesturing against bodies: “They Have To Be Uncomfortable”**

Gesture, as intersubjectivity, is not only something which extends out from persons but also towards persons. The differences in the way gestures were used between people with dyslexia and their interpretation by non-dyslexics was made visible in the artworks. The impact of gesture was expressed through the Education cloak, where looking became aesthetic representation in the eyes. It used the gesture of looking to express the gesture of judgement. The eyes, designed to create discomfort, illuminated the feeling my collaborators experienced in the gesture of being looked at. The eyes stare out unblinkingly, challenging the ways in which they saw themselves. This judging represented peers, teachers and others, looking at them and seeing failures resulting in the act of looking calling into question their self-worth. As the eyes were formed for the cloak, all were made staring out, none were blinking, and a variation in skin colour was important to cover the variety of people and gestural expressions that eyes can perform.

The volume of eyes was discussed in detail as it was important to communicating the experience of the gaze. They are staring wide open, the colours vary, and they are attached to the cage representing holding back thoughts and ideas. Here, looking is judgement. The placement and the number of eyes became important, as a way to represent being looked at. “We need to add more - it’s not enough yet, they have to stare out at you. They’re supposed to. They have to be uncomfortable” (Craig). It was immensely important that the gesture of looking communicated discomfort. While the eyes are predominately on the cage over the head they are also placed on the barbed wire, wrapped tightly around the cloak, holding the body still. Connected to looking was the feeling it caused in the body. “That looks great - they make you feel uncomfortable and that’s how it felt” (Elise). My collaborators also talked about the negative comments that sometimes accompanied looking but chose to focus on the eyes rather than the words spoken. Looking, in the cloak, is silent and unmoving, designed to wordlessly gesture towards bodies the feeling of being stared at and the experiences of personal challenge to embodied knowledge.





The people present, the gestures they make, to the furnishings and sounds of a room, classrooms, and offices, all have *ness* and these “require gestures” (Elise). My key collaborators explained dyslexics do not exclude the information within a space as they pay attention to it all. This can create intersubjective tension between the expectations of a particular space and bodies within that space. One performance of their body through other body’s expectations was shown in the cloak ‘Education.’ The emphasis on trapping the body, or of having external pressures put onto them, which the barbed wire, rope and stones represent, were crafted into the representation of being in a class room. As we were working with the wire, discussing where it needed to go, a conversation began about the arms.

Amanda: You have to put lots on the arms they HAVE to be tied down.

Elise: You have to know that they are there so people know they are tied down.

Craig: Make sure the arms are wrapped as well.”

Amanda Yeah, they need to be put tight into the body too.”

Debbie: What about rocks holding it down?

Intersubjective tension, between the need to gesture and the control of gesture, discussed above, was carried through the cloak using the barbed wire and stones. These were added as suggested to both the arms and to the bottom of the cloak to represent being held down and kept from needed movement. The discomfort of this way of being is aesthetically expressed through the care taken to sculpt the experience using the wire, rope and rocks. It is contrasted with the cloak ‘learning’ where nothing was to hinder movement and represented the gestural dance, mentioned earlier, through the stretched out arms, ribbons and feathers which flood and explode out of the cloak.

The difference in gesturing, as embodied thinking, is expressed through these two cloaks by revealing the expectations of others on the body, resulting in a disjointed interaction between the needs of many of my collaborators and the rules of intersubjectivity. My collaborators who saw dyslexia as a gift, described the movements they were making as necessary for them. The loss of gesture through learning the rule to sit still too well, was also attributed, by Debbie and Elise, to a variety of different issues; including difficulty concentrating and weight gain. Gesturing and lack of movement shows a tension between experience within dyslexic personhood and cultural expectations of body gestures, which is clearly articulated through the cloaks. My collaborators explained their responses to being in the class room were expressed through their movements expressing *ness*.

Gesturing attention through being still was described as required and highly regarded for “becoming educated and not disturbing other people in class” (Amanda). However, as can be seen in the animation of walking into a school room, created with Elise and Craig, being still within a classroom is problematic; the room itself contains sensory, intersubjective information including *ness* to which they respond. Shaping the body into a good student results in lived experiences becoming problematized (Brady, Levinson, Foley and Holland 1996:3) as my collaborators’ need for movement contradicted the societal gestures of awareness and learning. If, as Crapanzano (2004:77) states, “bodies perform for and through other bodies” the expectation of non-movement, or not gesturing, is a performance of bodied expectations. The body’s performance is then not about its own corporeal reality but a performance of intersubjectivity. The need for lack of movement shows being still is an important gesture in intersubjective relationships.

Intersubjectivity between the listener and gesturer create complex interplays between social expectations and gesturing of *ness*. On numerous occasions, my collaborators have talked about problems relating to communication and gesturing with non-dyslexics and the clash between their expectations and the non-dyslexic expectations of gestures of listening. From feeling the need to sit on their hands to explaining how they trained themselves not to use hand gestures they reveal complex interplays of intersubjective communication and performance of listening. Therefore gestures are more complex than performing socio-cultural communication - they are also negotiating embodied knowledge.

### **Summary**

A person is both conscious and unconscious of their movement through the world (Merleau-Ponty 2004:190) and my collaborators have shown that gestures are bodied movements of the everyday reflecting attuning the world. Wagner-Cook and Tanenhouse (2009) suggest that the small movements, previously regarded as unimportant, play a role in the communication of information. I would suggest this needs to go further, as my collaborators have suggested that gestures are about drawing in more, about drawing in *ness*. It highlights a difference my collaborators found between dyslexics and non-dyslexics. As we talked about *ness* and gesturing they were surprised that non-dyslexics did not have the same need to gesture *ness* “which when you think about it, it’s a little weird” (Philippa).

Gesturing and *ness* engages with bodies and spaces through arm, hand, eye, somatosensory system, breath and finger movements. Amanda and Elise explained, how in

using their hands to talk, they were not trying to draw out what was being said but to draw into it other aspects which words were not able to express. For the males involved, these movements were often less pronounced than with my female collaborators and there was also an age difference. Collaborators in their sixties described a different relationship to *ness* in the aging process and the senses not being as aware. There was also the element of learning that “people don’t like you to use your hands when you’re talking, you just learn you have to stop so people don’t think you’re stupid.”(Carol).

The meanings of gestures need expanding beyond what can be recognised and interpreted. They can then be acknowledged as covering more than the who, when, why, what of conversations into things said or not said, incomplete thoughts and, as Irving stated, “inchoate urges and non-symbolic modes of thinking” (2013:218). Gestures can then be seen as representing attuning the world and expressions of desire for mutuality, as my collaborators have expressed. Gestures, unlike linguistic information are often less precise and just as the spoken word has its forms of intonation, which influence how a word is expressed, so do hand, eye and body gestures, reflecting their own intonations, tones and expectations in the way they are used. Gestures differ between cultures (Kress 2009:576, 591) and this is also the case for the sub culture of dyslexia.

What is regarded as appropriate gestures within a space, and how these are drawn through the body into conversations, become complex interactions between dyslexic and non-dyslexic intersubjectivity, mutuality and expectations within places. For my collaborators their gestures expressed embodied knowing and when they were together these gestures were understood between themselves, as can be seen in the lack of reaction to Philippa’s leaping up from the table. Gestures are crafting of *ness*, containing movements more reminiscent of a musical conductor who works with the unseen rhythms and vibrations in the forming and shaping a piece of music. For my collaborators, they reflect resonating *ness* through an aesthetic awareness which they draw into their ways of knowing and communicating the world. It is through the sense-consciousness that gesturing expresses the symphonic landscapes of *ness* in the everyday.

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## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

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Dyslexia research predominantly focuses on the problematics of the experiences of dyslexia, including language, memory, time and self-esteem (Marshall 2005, Shessel and Reiff 1999, Rosen 2006, Riddick 2000) as well as giftedness and neurodiversity, which all primarily accentuate the mind. In this thesis I have sought to step outside of these foci on the mind and change my focus to what people with dysleXia say about their own experiences. I have discussed dyslexic ways of “bringing near” (Heidegger 2010:1631-1636) the world by focusing on the everyday through sensory experience, gestures and language looking at dyslexia as a term inhabited and outworked across different modalities of perception. I have discussed language as being with the body, sense-consciousness as embodied thinking and gesture as an expression of embodied thinking. Using art I have approach dysleXia as an active bodily practice which engages in negotiating the matterings of the everyday. In focusing on everyday experiences, intersubjectivity and personhood from a dysleXic perspective, I have explored dysleXic worlding as an active being-through-the-world. Using art and participant observation I have found that my collaborators pay attention to the world through the corporeal material reality of worlding. Focusing on the complexities of dysleXic sensory cognition as embodied thinking, as both an experience and an expression of worlding, opened a space to explore and discuss everyday experience. I began by highlighting the differences between collaborative sub-cultural knowledge and existing interpretations of dyslexia through capitalising the X. I did this to place the focus on the stories shared rather than on the psychological, educational and medical interpretations of dyslexia. I did this to firmly situate the research as coming out from my collaborators’ stories and artwork - looking at what they choose to say about their experiences and how they gave those experiences meaning. Through the artworks ways of knowing dysleXic experience were explored as “situated in [a] particular place and moment; that it is inhabited by individual knowers and that is always changing and emergent.” (Rapport et. Al. 2007:4).

If the aim of research is “to depict and understand, then we must not only construct hypotheses’ that explain facts but we must also continue to expand the universe of facts we are ready to confront” (Tuan 1989:235). Through the use of artistic methods engaging persons in the exploration of their lifeworlds I moved beyond and challenged existing facts around what it

means to be dysleXic. In expanding beyond preconceived facts about dyslexia, I have considered dysleXia as a way of knowing the world, as an ongoing active engagement that both hides and expresses individual experiences and practices of being-through-the-world. Moving away from the 'difference' and 'disability' debates, in every way except the ways my collaborators told their stories, I have sought to understand the 'village' of dysleXics. I have looked at how they know their world, their interactions with language, how they move through the everyday and outwork their ways of knowing the world. It was, of course, a complex undertaking, and one I believe needs more work, but I have begun to open a space to discuss dysleXia and to look beyond the dichotomies bought about through the language and creativity debates. To learn about dysleXic ways of knowing it is necessary to recognise people with dysleXia as active agents who live within their multifaceted worlds and should have choices in how their stories are told. In the research, this has begun to be addressed as my collaborators have themselves expressed their lived experiences, created new words and we have shared making and exploring the ways they inhabit the term dysleXia.

In asking about everyday experience, I began with the expectation that my collaborators would be the experts about their lifeworlds, and this was the case. I began with the perspective that people's experiences are valid ways of being-in-the-world, and this resulted in the project privileging bodied knowing over the focus on deficits or dysfunction. The people who were interested in the project in New Zealand were predominantly from the difference and giftedness ends of the spectrum, however in the UK people from all areas of the spectrum were involved. The reason for this difference may be because people in New Zealand were more comfortable coming forward and talking about their experiences if they saw dysleXia this way. However, even though most of my collaborators did see dysleXia as 'difference' this did not remove from them difficulties and struggles which will be recognised by many people in the dysleXic community, or feeling "alien" (Elise) because of differences in performances of worlding such as storytelling and gesture.

### **Art as Empathetic Evocation of Embodied Knowing**

Art is bodied practice which does different work to language and using art showed how "language struggles with depicting physical action..." (Sennett 2008:2708), particularly somatosensory perception, and creates specific types of research frontiers. I have found art provides a way of exploring the 'bringing near' of the world as a way to ask questions and

explore embodied knowing through its corporeal practice. Art methods are not the answer to all research issues as they create boundaries themselves, but I have found them to be valuable to collaborative fieldwork and exploring embodied knowing. Art has also made it possible to theorise with embodied thinking about dyslexic experience. Using art as both ethnographic provocations and as ethnography opened up spaces to expand the existing discourse in dyslexia. Through embodied engagement, created by using art, it became possible to explore sensory being-through-the-world and intersubjectivity; about language, gesture and expressing what is paid attention to in the lifeworld. I have learned that using this method shows the value in beginning from a multi-sensory approach rather than relying on one type of representation. Taussig (2011:13) and Crapanzano (2004:73) have both indicated that in speaking or writing of the body the body becomes a re-creation in words. “As we navigate the world using words, we may miss the subtle ways of being and ways of ‘being with’ that people use to re-experience their subjectivity in relation to others” (Taylor 2012:4). In limiting research to words and the brain (particularly in dyslexia), nuances of peoples’ lived experiences can become lost, and as my research has revealed hidden from discussions.

The differences between text and art became integral to exploring dyslexic experience and stepping outside of the body spoken, the body read and the body heard (Crapanzano 2004:16). In creating the artwork and its display through the Installation the first consumers of the representations of dyslexic experiences were my collaborators and those who came to see the work before it was written down. In writing up the field, often the work gathered remains in academic discourse away from collaborators in the way it is written and limited to those who can read. In the very writing down of my collaborators’ experiences, for many of them, I distance them from their own stories. However, I know that the images, sculptures and audio-visual representations remain a reachable treatise about dyslexic knowing. The artworks framed particular experiences and through the various mediums chosen highlighted particular embodied knowing and therefore just as words create particular forms of knowledge, so to do the artworks created.

Throughout my literature review, I found that dyslexia research focuses on specific age ranges rather than looking across generations, dividing people into school, teen and adults. Using arts methods with exploring language traversed these defined categories resulting in being able to include people from ten years to people in their sixties. It revealed complexities around *ness* and societal expectations which may not have been visible if I had stayed within a specific age

range. The method of the letters was able to be used in short term focus groups, but the individual works needed more time for people to explore the complexities of making meaning through a long-term project. The individual works had begun with my asking people to make their works themselves and evolved into working collaboratively, which resulted in an active corporeal practice. I found this way of working resulted in deeper and more complex discussions about sensory engagement and making meaning through exploring interiorities. I found it was rewarding and enlightening to be part of that creative process working with my collaborators. In working this way it challenged me to remain reflexive and in doing so opened conversations about individuals complex perceptions and embedded awareness of the world.

The artworks are productions of meaning making, as Stoller suggested, to create bridges (2009). "In contrast to other forms of consciousness,...[art] exemplify[s] the reciprocal interaction of body and world at the very ontological level which is most central to it..." (Crowther 2009:505). For some this involved representing their experiences beyond what they felt in their body and the use of metaphor to evoke bodied experiences. There was also an expectation that people without dyslexia would not experience the lifeworld in the same way. Just as words can be an abstraction from experience so too are art methods as they cannot replace the lived experience. However, they do evoke and require different engagements to words as the creation of the artworks "requires something more of its viewer" (Cox and Wright 2012:120) and I would add more reflection in its making from my collaborators and myself. As ethnography expands its methods, it can be said "there is now no standard way of doing ethnography that is universally practised" (Pink 2009:8). The flexibility of the process of ethnography provides opportunities for alternative ways of collaborating with participants, gathering information in the field and forming ethnography and theory.

### **The Senses and the Everyday**

When I began this project, I started with a focus on the everyday. I had a desire to understand whether different ways of representing embodied experience would expand what could be expressed about people's lifeworlds. In using a sensory focus, through the artwork, to explore the everyday and being-in-the-world, diversity of experience, as well as shared realities, became accessible. "The idea of a sensory ethnography involves not only attending to the senses of the ethnographic research and representation, but reaches out towards an altogether more sophisticated set of ideas through which to understand what ethnography itself entails" (Pink 2009:10). In working with creative practices and engaging in sensory projects with my

collaborators, I found new ways to explore being in the field. The sensory practice resulted in collaboratively considering knowledge and embodied sensory knowing as a shared explorative practice taking the research in new directions which resulted in needing to find create words about these experiences when writing up their aesthetic awareness. Through the artworks, the new words and our exploration of their understandings we have investigated their lifeworlds.

DysleXic personhood, intersubjectivity and the ways the senses engage with the everyday have both enriched and complicated my understanding of my collaborators and their experiences. Through working collaboratively, I found the lifeworld is woven through the senses in a complex composition of experience expressed through the everyday. In focusing on the dysleXic everyday aesthetic, perception with feeling, recognises the texture and density of everyday somatosensory perception “as they move in and through bodies and spaces, rhythms and tempi, possibilities likely or not. They establish trajectories that shroud and punctuate the significance of sounds, textures and movements” (Stewart 2011 448).

Through the fieldwork, I have found differences in the types of intersubjective relationships which exist between dysleXic persons and those outside their shared experiences (non-dyslexics). As Smith has stated, “personhood is dependent in emergent origin and continuation upon intersubjective social interaction, communication and communion with other persons” (Smith 2010:16) and this is affected by the persons that are interacted with. The intersubjective relationship with other dysleXics impacted on the research as many of my key collaborators had not spent time with other dysleXic people outside their own family circles. Spending time talking or being with other dysleXics was not part of their everyday but a product of my method. Through these collaborative exchanges, there were discussions about what constitutes dysleXic being-through-the-world. In the process of making and talking it revealed complex relationships with the world through sense consciousness and consequences of this engagement in intersubjectivity with non-dyslexics, through storytelling and gestures. The collaborative interaction, caused by the research method, created discussions that I have yet to come across in the existing literature. These discussions involved the everyday as a creative and generative place, revealing the importance of empowering dysleXic perspectives of the lifeworld. The everyday that was discussed and represented did not necessarily represent daily practices but embodied experiences regarded as part of dysleXic worlding.

### ***“The Wrongness”***

Language, particularly writing and reading, continue to be the main focus of dyslexia research.

The aims to find reasons for its existence or to look for cures dominate the debates about dyslexia. Representations of language through artwork and typography continue to focus on the problematic of language rather than its complexity. Barclay (2014) begins to explore this complexity through his work and I took this further through the altering of letters to represent lived experiences of language. By crafting experiences onto and around the 3D letters, my collaborators showed the layering of meanings associated with words. They challenge, through their experiences, the supposedly concrete stability of language. Through their expressions, they show the complexities hidden within the alphabet, phonemes and grammatical scratches that are commas and hyphens. The perceived instability in language was something to be avoided, and my collaborators described having “the wrongness” (Marie) of their relationship to words written into their bodies from the moments they first began to read. Language was expressed as both with and within the body in the way it was performed and consumed. DysleXia is a collaged montage of moving through the world which impacted persons’ relationships with language. Language is more than the printed text, the sum of symbols on a keyboard or the words written on the page; it is a way of connecting with Being-through-the-world via speaking, listening, reading and writing. For my collaborators, these different relationships trigger responses in the body that are valid responses to written language, even though the meanings layered on words may differ from the dictionary definition, which itself is an abstraction of words (Aitchenson 2003:40-43).

I have suggested language for my collaborators moves beyond the page or the screen onto the body both inscribing and hiding its meanings. The body in making and reading written language, challenges its consistency and finds its voice among the abstracted symbols. Ong suggested that text is the representations of speech, but this premise is challenged in the bodies of my collaborators (1988: 60,90). Language, and people with dysleXia have a complex relationship where the density of bodied experience (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), can overwhelm the words themselves. It can be divorced from the bodied forms of information through the way that they have been taught to read, but as I was told in learning dysleXic ways of interacting with language they can *transrobe*. One of the struggles in writing ethnography is that it is always involved in translation and as a writer it is about learning ways to bring people near to other peoples experiences. In the act of writing accessibility is created for those who can access this language and I can introduce people to my collaborators through the words written. At the same time I also withhold this information from those for whom language is difficult and add extra meaning for those who see words as multifaceted and layered with added embodied

knowing. Words can create opportunities to explore theories of being-through-the-world, just as art has ways of creating knowing so to do words. I find these boundaries in the dissonance I have with the writing process. The dichotomy created through written words for me is represented by their value as explorative tools but at the same time concerns me as I am separating some of my collaborators stories about themselves and other dysleXics.

With the letters, conversations and discussions about the creation of words, the complexity of what is language from a dysleXic perspective has been explored. It has shown how language *Powlf-ulm's* (creates information and withholds itself), *waffull's* (expands social construction of storytelling as an engaged practice) and *transrobes* (creates sensory information through proprioception as the body is taken through reading into imagined spaces). Reflecting how language and the senses are always actively engaged in creating knowing and unknowing of the body.

My collaborators have shown how language is both becoming and already exists, that we come into the world where language is already present, but our relationship with what is language is an ongoing becoming. Language is in the process of being made and remade, through ever-evolving bodied experiences that add meaning to words and new words such as *powlf-ulm*, *transrobe* and *waffull* come into existence. These words, like others, are influenced by context, tone, semantics and pragmatics. Through *waffull*, *powlf-ulm* and *transrobing* my collaborators have expressed their embodied experiences of words. Therefore, the overwhelming emphasis placed on the written word and dyslexia, specifically the lack of being able to read and write, should be challenged as dysleXic interactions are more than attaining words but the ways in which words are given meaning. I am not saying that words cannot be places of frustration, anxiety and stress, but that to find dysleXic language it is necessary to look at words as sensory, embodied experiential spaces.

### ***“It’s More”***

Within the context of this method, the territory of sense-consciousness in relation to personhood was explored through the artworks and the new words created. It opened spaces to explore the sensory as “nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together — the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on [or through] its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world” (Eagleton 1990:13). Through expression of personhood and sensory

knowing, experiences of dysleXia were expressed through the artworks representing these engagements. In representing lived experiences through crafting and artistic methods, it becomes possible to acknowledge ways-of-being which connect with “the densely felt textures of sensory worlding that fuel generativity” (Stewart 2011:451). *Ness*, described as an intersubjective and interobjective attending to the world opens new possibilities for exploring dysleXic worlding. Interacting with the world is complex as Amanda explained. “It’s all of the things that go on in your head at the same time... You learn from this other stuff too... So it’s about more than what is going on inside your body, it is about what is going on outside as well.” The result of this dense somatosensory information could also be moments of overload as the world was paid attention to and the response to *noshush*.

The senses leak through the body and synapses (Buck-Morss 1992:13) generating information, connecting with histories and affecting lived experience. The leaks challenge and comfort, as they engage us in activity and cause frustration as sensory movement through the world happens within the moments of the everyday. The senses, therefore, need to be expanded beyond the limiting five: sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch - if the mind-body dichotomy in dyslexia is to be overcome. Senses, for my collaborators, move between bodies and objects as a corporeal reality of *ness* and in these known and unfolding porous realms reveal complexities of the lifeworld. By engaging in embodied thinking the lived, the unreal and the real expand beyond the horizons of physical experiences into the *transrobe* of imagined spaces. The senses can then expand their purpose beyond being the extension of the brain into embodied cognition (Shapiro 2010:326).

### **Ever Evolving Field**

Since I began my research, representation of dysleXia has been changing. Of particular note in relation to my fieldwork is the self-representation of dysleXia through events like The Dyslexia Festival; Celebrating dyslexic culture, and DYSPLA, which both look at using dysleXic thinking and performance. Both these events take place in the UK, but little has changed within New Zealand in representing dysleXia outside of written representation and dysleXia remains focused on talk fests, the Dyslexia Foundations interactive dyslexia garden and a video created by a group of students. The focus remains on literacy rather than looking at somatosensory worlding of people with dysleXia.

While undertaking my fieldwork, there was the release of the movie “The Big Picture: Rethinking Dyslexia,” which focuses on successful dyslexics, and travelled widely throughout the world. As I complete my thesis, the debate about whether dyslexia even exists is traveling through New Zealand on the coat tails of Elliott (who co-wrote “The Dyslexia Debate”), as he speaks around the country. These two completely different discussions of dyslexia reveal the diversity of understandings and the vast numbers of questions around peoples lived experiences. Debates also rage about the use of different terminology, and whether the term dyslexia, is still relevant to describe people’s experiences. Neurodiversity is being used by some researchers which situates dyslexia within a biological framework and this is of concern to some dyslexic researchers (Folb and Watson 2012), and I would include myself in this list. The term neurodiversity returns experience back to the brain, missing the way the senses begin and end in the world (Buck-Morss 1992:12) or the potential of embodied cognition (Shapiro 2014).

### ***Questions For Ongoing Research***

When I first entered the field, finding places to talk with people about dyslexia and finding people who were willing to collaborate in the process was difficult. In beginning this project I had little contact with people with dyslexia in New Zealand, and this made it difficult to find people to connect with, who would be interested in being involved in the project. It encouraged me to follow the path that led to the UK which gave me the opportunity to speak with, and create art with, a more diverse group of people. It has also shown the difference between the two countries as to how dyslexia is approached and these differences warrant further study as dyslexia as a diagnosis spreads throughout the world and across different nationalities.

The research methods used and the information found through their practice will also continue to be questioned. How people with dyslexia tell their stories and represent their experiences through different formats of representation should continue to be connected with collaborative explorations about what it means to be dyslexic. My research was an exploration of dyslexic experience and looking for dyslexic ways of knowing the everyday and this exploration is just the beginning. The process of creating the project, I believe, has raised more questions concerning how people with dyslexia know the world and engage with the small and large moments of the everyday. *Ness* and *unness* enlarge the experience of dyslexia into sense-consciousness as paying attention to the world. Through representations and narratives my collaborators show the diversity of the everyday is drawn into “bringing near” the world, through its porosity and corporeality of being-through-the-world. In the very act of worlding dyslexic

persons actively move through the world navigating the everyday as both actors and acted upon. How this worlding is also affected appears to be influenced by intersubjectivity but unfortunately in the focus on problematics the complexity of the lifeworld is divided up and problematised, missing people's diverse and multifaceted experiences. For example, differences in intersubjective gesturing which needs more research as they require time and would benefit from comparative collaborative research.

### **Collaborative Research**

Over the course of the research, I have watched changes take place in my collaborators and myself. For those who saw dyslexia from the more giftedness end of the difference spectrum, they have described gaining a greater understanding of their own experiences. Others have described feeling more “comfortable in my skin” (Craig) as the research has progressed and are “honouring” (Elise) their different ways of knowing, that once they labelled as wrong. The valuing of their perspectives has developed through the artworks, getting together with other dyslexics and finding shared experiences in ways of being-through-the-world. My key collaborators have explained that in finding other people like themselves they embrace their experiences of everything being flexible. They have found that boundaries are not present in the same ways for people without dyslexia and describe this as being, in part, because of the way they engage with the *ness* of the world.

The discussions about feeling out of place, “Like there’s something wrong” (Mathew) or “feeling out of phase” (Philippa), became shared experiences as the stories unfolded and the artwork was created. The places of being *between* were embraced as sensory-cognitive knowing and as dyslexic being-through-the-world. Through the representation of sensory experience, an active and reflective engagement through conversations, representation, creation and interpretation, my collaborators explored and embraced their ways of being-through-the-world. Stoller suggests that within fieldwork the different peoples we work with have wisdom to teach us (Stoller 2009:343) and my collaborators challenged me to look beyond the boundaries to the way that I sensorially engaged with the world. They expanded my understanding of the complexities of what makes up the everyday by inspiring me to participate in their ways of worlding. In describing working collaboratively I was told they felt empowered to do things their way rather than following the way they ‘should’ do things. This inspired Philippa to say, about researching from a dyslexic perspective, “come over to the light side we stole the dark sides cookies.”

## **Final Comments**

Crossing the “border zones between art and anthropology” (Schneider and Wright 2010:1) opened spaces to explore experiences of individuals own knowing. Through collaborative practice, of art and anthropology, it was possible to share with the people I was working with in their explorations of interiorities and embodied practice. It revealed the importance of embodied thinking as an active practice of being through the world as we shared in these experiences of what it means to inhabit the term dysleXia. Embodied thinking, through making art, showed that to situate cognition and gesturing within the brain limits the possibilities of the body and unfortunately subjugates it to the needs of the brain (Shapiro 2011). Embodied cognition is a place to explore what it means for the body to be a whole thinking Being, with its own ways of thinking about, or as Clark suggested, “with” the world (2011). The everyday as a rich and complex embodied experience expands what can be understood about dysleXia and steps away from language deficit issues. Dyslexia, I have discussed, as a different somatosensory corporeality of being-through-the-world rich with complex information. I have drawn on a variety of different theories to explore this experience, and whilst not engaging in a directly critical approach to examining the theories, through the way I have used them I have deliberately chosen what it relevant and of value to my research. My approach has not been to critique their usefulness in a confrontational way but to critique them through their relevance to the project. The ways in which the world is formed and paid attention to, in my collaborators somatosensory dense way, needs to be better understood. The assemblage of the lifeworld can only be explored through peoples lived experiences, and stories and art, as empathetic practice, gave materials with which to do this. Through collaborative research methods, using art, it became possible to gather, share and explore these different puzzle pieces of the matterings of the everyday.



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## Appendices

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### **List of Fieldwork Undertaken:**

#### **New Zealand**

##### ***Interviews And Artworks***

- 6 Key collaborators, Amanda, Craig, Elise, Philippa, Debbie and Mathew.
- 5 dinners with collaborators who wanted to come.
- Discussions about artwork creation and collaboration in several individuals artworks
- 6 artworks which were created from the themes arising from fieldwork 4 were group works
- 1 art session as well as several discussions with key collaborators throughout the creation of theme works
- 1 dinner with key collaborators to discuss exhibition and my difficulties with writing up their experiences with the aim of creating new words
- People were also given the opportunity to walk and take photographs or/ and create a letter for the dyslexic alphabet.
- Interviewed 9 people who did not take part in creating artwork
- 2 Interviews with The Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand co-ordinator
- SKYPE interview with Sam Barclay who was not available when I was in the UK.

##### ***Dyslexic Alphabet***

- The alphabet began with my asking people to alter a blank 3D cardboard letter. I asked people from the age of 10 years to alter the letters to represent their experiences of language.
- Attended a high school which has a dyslexic stream and ran workshops with the letters

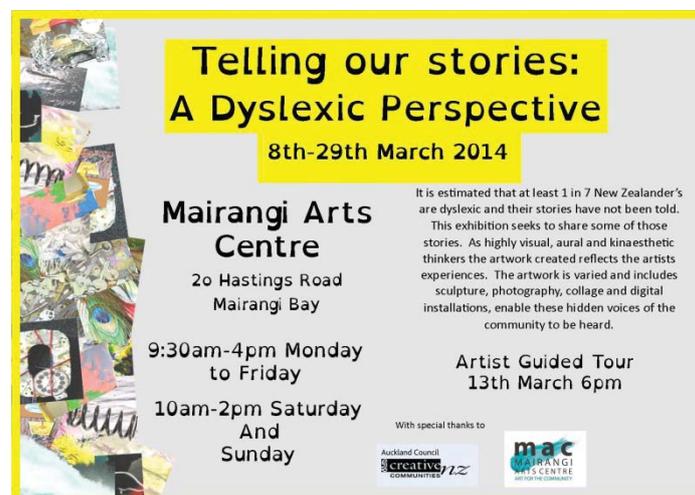
- 1 focus group to make letters in Auckland
- 3 of the key collaborators also made letters

## England

- Interviews with 14 People
- Meeting with a dyslexia support group for adults and attended their drop in centre
- Collaborated in artworks with Mark and Marie
- 3 Photograph sessions where people either walked off and took photographs or we walked around together followed by discussing them.
- Met with 3 people who have undertaken research on dyslexia who are themselves dysleXic
- Met with DYSPLA a group focused on dyslexic storytelling
- Attended a specialist boarding school which focuses on learning differences including dyslexia.

## Exhibition—*"Telling Our Stories: A Dyslexic Perspective" (New Zealand 2014)*

- Curated exhibition of works created during fieldwork.
- Collaborated in creating and then maintaining interactive spaces at exhibit



**Telling our stories:  
A Dyslexic Perspective**  
8th-29th March 2014

**Mairangi Arts Centre**  
20 Hastings Road  
Mairangi Bay

9:30am-4pm Monday to Friday  
10am-2pm Saturday And Sunday

Artist Guided Tour  
13th March 6pm

It is estimated that at least 1 in 7 New Zealanders are dyslexic and their stories have not been told. This exhibition seeks to share some of those stories. As highly visual, aural and kinaesthetic thinkers the artwork created reflects the artists experiences. The artwork is varied and includes sculpture, photography, collage and digital installations, enable these hidden voices of the community to be heard.

With special thanks to  
Auckland Council  
**creative**  
Auckland  
**mac**  
MAIRANGI  
ARTS CENTRE  
Mairangi Bay

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## Collaborative Art

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All these works began from themes which I had found during the interviews. Each of the works were initially began by myself with the plan of altering them as my collaborators told me to. However as the fieldwork progressed people began to work on the projects Attaining, Education and Learning. There are also a small number of photographs taken during the photograph walks. The rest of the work I created to address themes which arose during the fieldwork as a way to theorise and explore different themes with art.

### ***Attaining***

Recycled Keys, wire, wood, ribbon. 50x 56 cm.

The collaborators in this project all have different ways of negotiating their daily lives. The keys initially represented this adaptation. After the creation of the word *ness* this artwork also became associated with *ness*. These wings have been described in a variety of different ways by my key collaborators including being like butterfly wings which collect particles of the world on their wings as they fly. The keys represent the accumulation of thoughts and memories, knowledge and skills over a life's journey. The journey is not silent and to represent this the hanging keys were created to represent the sound of the flight.



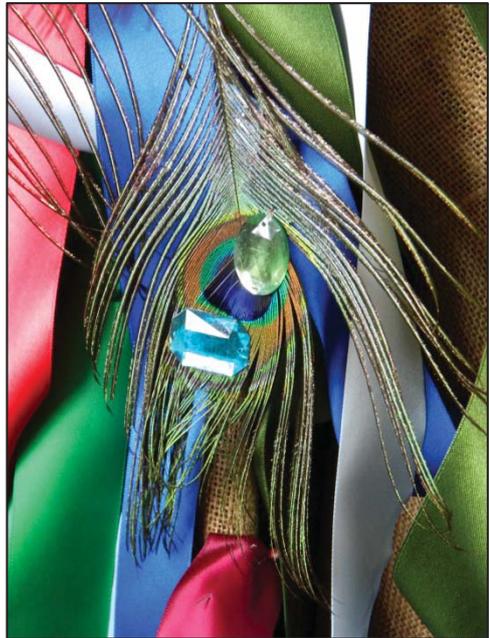
### ***Education***

1 Meter 57 centimetres tall. Made of a hessian cloak with plasticine, fabric, paint, wire, rope and rocks.



## **Learning**

2.2 meters high. Hessian, ribbon, paint, feathers, cord, plastic gems.



## **Reflections”**

56 x 1200 cm. Cardboard, silver leaf, mirrors.

*On reflection* represents the different ways in which the collaborators see and interact with everyday *ness* of the life world. The mirrors alter perspectives on objects to represent different ways of seeing the world. This piece represents a sensory experience of being dyslexic described by many people during the research. Seeing was described as being multi-dimensional and being linked with the body. The mirrors on and around the body represent reflection towards the self as well as away from the body towards the world.



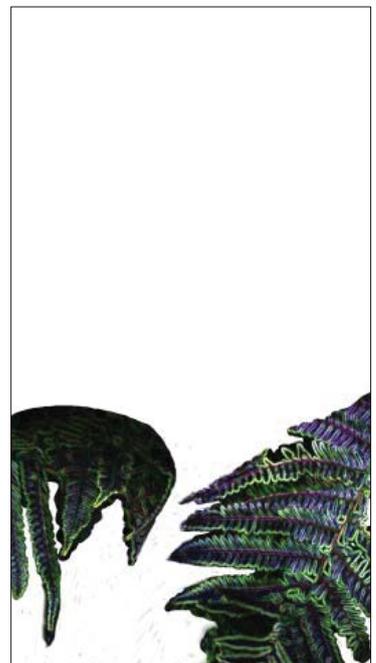
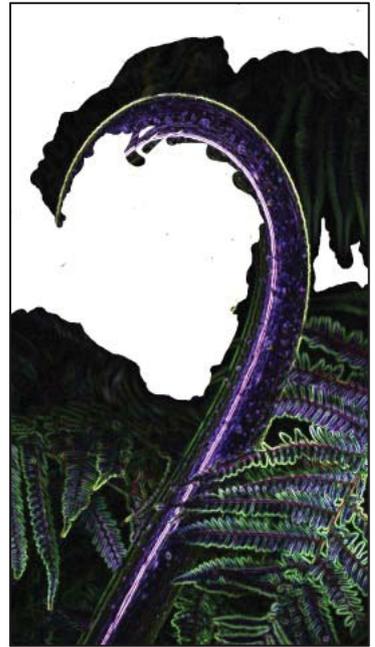
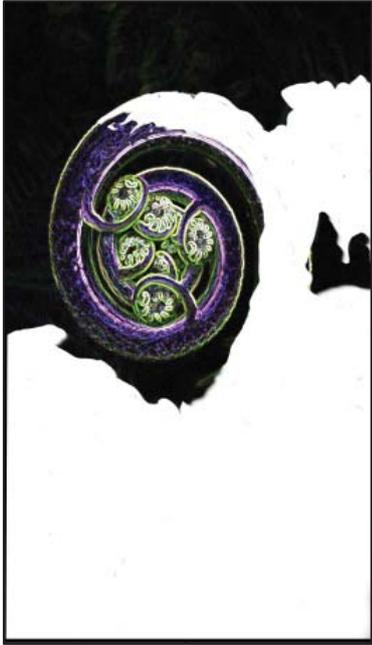
### **“It’s thinking”**

4 loosely hanging acrylic panels with separate parts of a single image. 50cm x 110cm.

The artwork encouraged the viewer to move around until the image came into view. The work was my exploration of dyslexic movement in relation to cognition. It was an attempt to catch the link between movement and thought. Each panel is a different part of the puzzle and it is through moving around it picture of the Koru is revealed. I chose to use the koru as it represents perpetual movement and symbolises that life both changes and stays the same<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/2422/the-koru>



### **'Outside the Box' Words are movement**

30x25 cm Perspex, ink and wood.

Like the previous work it requires movement but for a different purpose. This work was initially created as a single image when I was exploring dyslexic language. It was altered to this format to challenge ideas around language being consistent and accessible in the same way for all people.



## **Through The Looking Glass**

### Audio

The Three books held inside them mp3 players and headphones. The book was chosen by my collaborators and alterations were recommended to me. Each of the mp3 players had a section of text recorded with IVONA Voice. This was then digitally altered and played through the headphones. I used this format rather than altering text because listening alters the interior dialogue of the listener and can remove the ability to filter information as it is straight through the ears. When I did this with altered text it created a distance from it but hearing the alterations gave a different perspective of text. They are a collection of a variety of different experiences of language rather than a single person's. Each of the books represents a specific experience from the difficulties of accessing text, specifically words which have no meaning such as ' the' through to echoing of visual imagery impacting on the reading experience. The clips use sound to give an impression of an altered experience of reading. These differ for each person and there are very few similarities in the descriptions I have been given. The clips are in the appendices section on the USB.



The final piece in 'Through the Looking Glass' represents how speed and aural influenced the accessibility of words for many collaborators. Dyslexics described how speed made the information more accessible. The piece moves away from being tied to a book to a piece which enables the body to move around whilst listening to the words. Using IVONA Voice on one of its faster settings I recorded the same piece as was in the books. The choice of the book was made by my key collaborators.

# LOOKING GLASS



LEWIS CARROLL



### **When I Walk Into a Room.....**

This was one of the earliest pieces created. Alongside peoples narratives of the experience of walking into a room are animation which have been added to create another dimension to the sensory information given in the words spoken. Clip is available on the USB.



## **Possibilities**

Stop animation.

The piece was not collaborative but an exploration of my fieldwork and dyslexic worlding.



**“Wibbly, wobbly”**

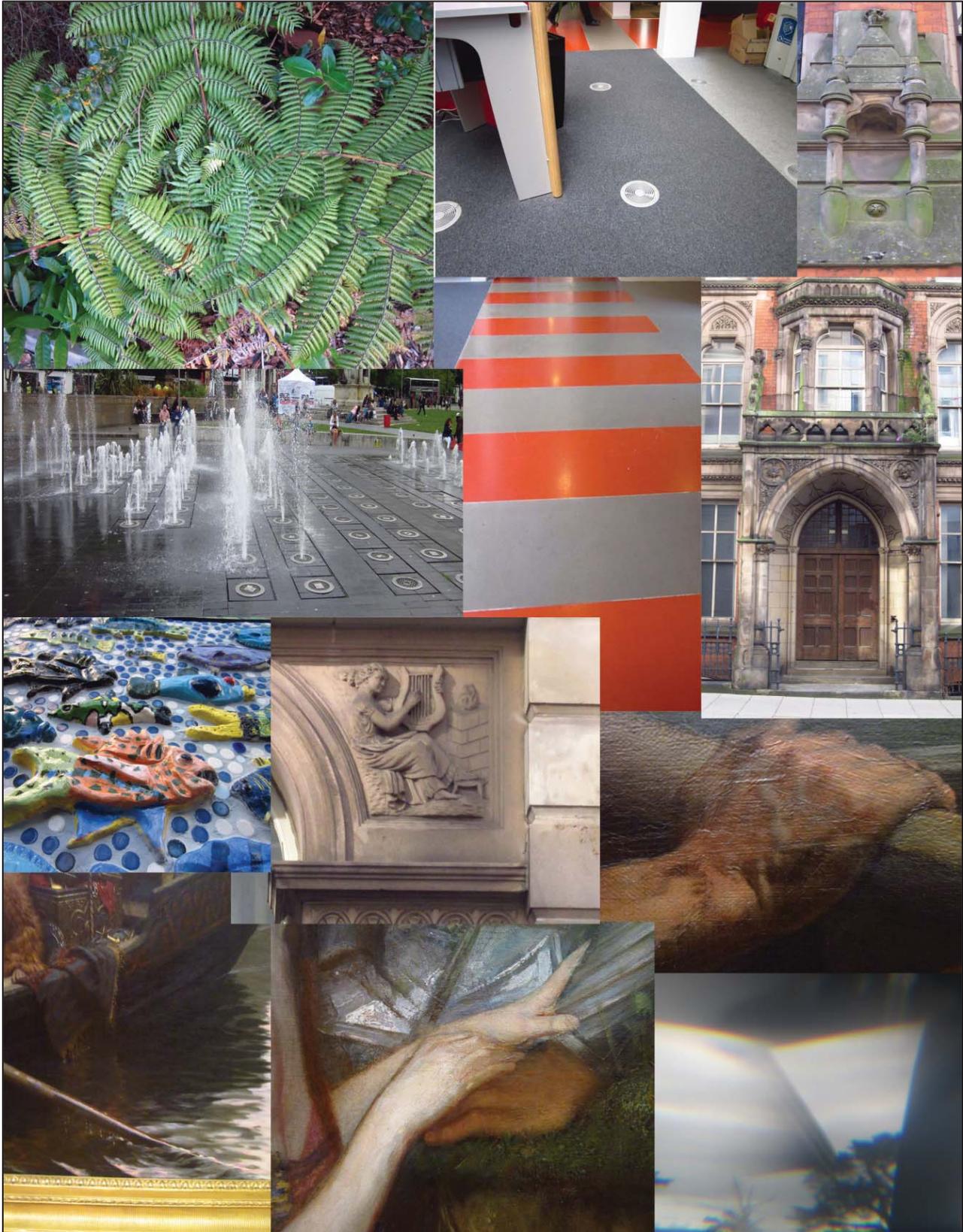
I created this working clock as a way to engage with dyslexic perceptions of time.





### **Seeing the World.**

The following photographs were taken by a variety of different collaborators in both New Zealand and the United Kingdom. People were given the opportunity to walk around and take photographs of the things that stood out for them. One thing all of the images have in common is the importance of close-up shots which focus on the fine details of particular objects.





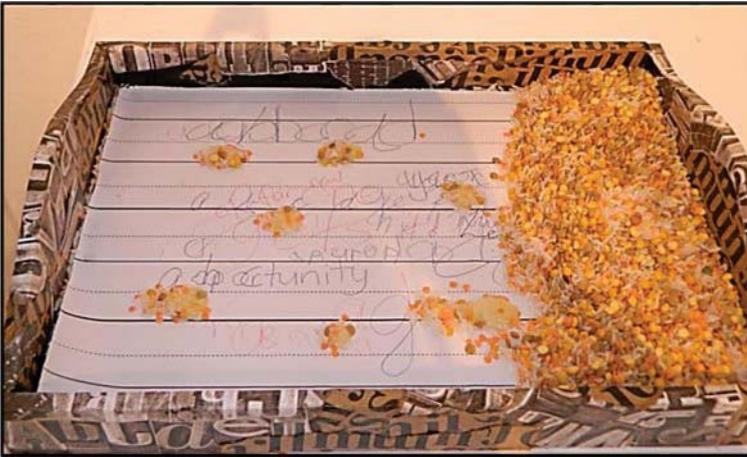
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## Interactive works at the Installation

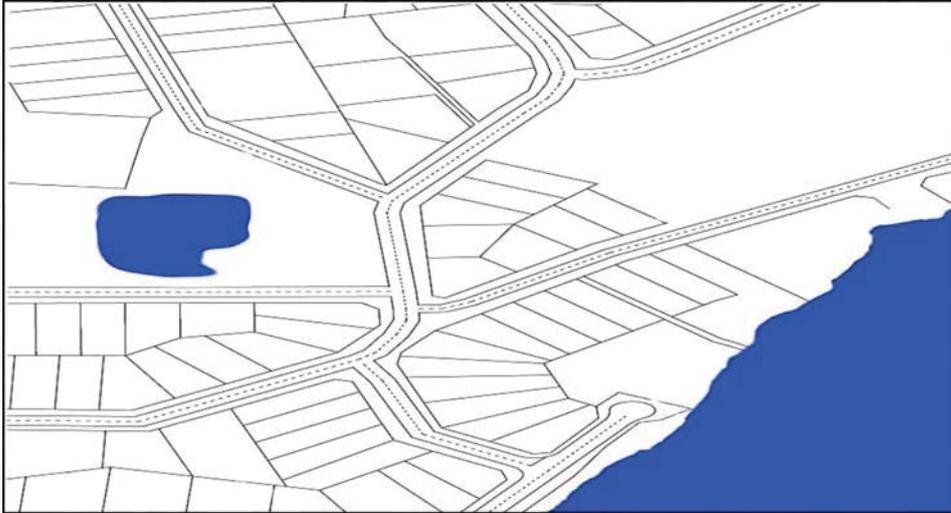
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As part of the exhibition it became important to include other sensory information about the experience of dyslexia to engage with body knowledge. The following are images of the interactive areas of the Installation.

These two interactive activities , on the following page, related to the experience of writing. The tray on the left used a writing learning technique of drawing through rice. Under the rice were hidden bumps to alter peoples experience of the pen. Below is a pair of gloves which had been stiffened to create a specific way of holding a pen. People were then asked to write whilst wearing the gloves.



This piece began as a blank map designed by a key collaborator and several blocks of plasticine. My key collaborator's wanted to have creativity as part of the installation. As with all of the pieces my collaborators wanted people to touch and engage with the artworks. They told me that they wanted plasticine in the exhibition and I discussed ways to do this. .



The final area held two large canvases positioned at the end of the exhibition. People were asked to write or draw their responses to the work they had seen.



