

**Communicating Possibilities:
A study of English nursery children's
emergent creativity, exploring the
three to four-year-old child as an
artistic communicator and
possibility thinker**

TWO VOLUMES

1 of 2

Submitted by Linda McConnon, to the University of Exeter as a
thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education,
November 2013.

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VOLUME ONE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly and most importantly I want to thank my daughter Emily for her inspiration and love. Without you I would never have started on this journey of discovery. You have grown up watching me study over the last seven years and I hope that you continue to excel in your own education and that your wit and sense of humour will never fade... “There’s the salad!”

To my parents Richard and Audrey, thank you for all the times you have picked Emily up from school and looked after her in my absence whilst I was away for weeks on end collecting data, attending meetings, and travelling to conferences. Without your continued support I would not have been able to carry out this research.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the parents and staff of the host school in which “Communicating Possibilities” is based for allowing me the privilege of working with the children in your care for an extended period of time. And to the children- thank you for taking me in as one of you. For the many laughs and special times we shared over our “dinner schools”; may you continue to grow and I wish you all the best in life.

The greatest of thanks also goes to David Murphy of digital-mapping.co.uk for his kind patience and assistance in the production of the models used to demonstrate the methodology and findings of this project.

And finally my supervisors, Professor Anna Craft and Doctor Emese Hall- thank you for letting me run with this enormous project until I realised that there was not enough scope in one PhD thesis to accommodate the marathon that “Communicating Possibilities” has turned out to be. A special thank you for your continued expert guidance and support...I look forward to putting my running shoes on in the future to finish what I started.

This research was substantially funded by a studentship from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for which I am extremely grateful.

ABSTRACT

This research builds on previous studies that have documented evidence of Professor Anna Craft's concept of 'Possibility Thinking' (PT) as at the heart of creativity which involves children transitioning from 'what is this?' to 'what can I or we do with this?' as well as imagining 'as if' they were in a different role. My thesis titled "Communicating Possibilities" examines English nursery children's emergent creativity, exploring the three to four-year-old child as an artistic communicator and possibility thinker through a case study approach situated in one primary school in South West England. Three main research questions were posed concerning the '*what, how, and why*' of creativity when children communicated through art; as well as exploring the nurturing role of others, and identity manifest through voice and learning experience.

This doctoral study is essentially interpretivist in nature seeking to explain how people make sense of their social worlds, and is an exploration framed by culturally negotiated, shared meanings, and complex social relations. Data was collected over one school year, in three nine-week research phases by the following ethnographic methods: naturalistic observations; researcher diary; children's creative journals; and practitioner interviews. These methods were repeated for each phase. Inductive and deductive data analysis was conducted. Undertaken over time as the project unfolded, a grounded theory approach was applied in total to 27 episodes.

Micro event analysis of creative behaviours in action and narrative discourses of two kinds: peer-to-peer, and child-to-adult (teacher, early years practitioner, and my researcher dialogue) revealed four broad critical themes: Observing and documenting children's creativity; What children *can do* together- recognising differences; Pedagogy of possibilities- developing a role; and The value of artistic communication in the nursery classroom. Each is discussed in terms of the key implications these themes hold for theory, policy, and early years practice.

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