MAKING AND BEING MADE: WISE HUMANISING CREATIVITY IN INTERDISCIPLINARY EARLY YEARS ARTS EDUCATION

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This presentation focuses on understanding wise humanising creativity (WHC) in early years interdisciplinary arts education. It draws on Arts Council-funded research by The Devon Carousel Project (http://www.thecarouselproject.org.uk) and Exeter University's Graduate School of Education.

Across 2013/14 six researchers are exploring how creative arts practice supports Early Years children's development. Varied researcher groupings have asked different questions, one of which is: how is wise humanising creativity manifested within early years interdisciplinary arts education?

Theoretically it draws on AHRC-funded research (Chappell, Rolfe, Craft and Jobbins, 2011), which conceptualised WHC in the face of educational creativity/performativity tensions (eg Banaji, Burn and Buckingham, 2011). WHC articulates the interrelationship of creativity and identity – creators are 'making and being made'; they are 'becoming'. It occurs in spaces of possibilities where children can re-imagine the world and themselves differently via embodied creative dialogue. They are guided by ethical action, mindful of what matters to their community. Although, the idea has been applied with different ages (eg Craft, 2012), this is the first time WHC has been used to investigate early years arts.

Overall the Carousel project has used a qualitative methodology to create open-ended spaces of dialogue or 'Living Dialogic Spaces' framed by an adapted ecological model to situate the team's layered engagement (Chappell and Craft, 2011). This strand uses a predominantly interpretivist methodology acknowledging the social construction of reality. Data collection includes traditional qualitative techniques (eg observation and interviews) and arts-based techniques (eg reflective drawing). Data analysis involves inductive/deductive conversations between existing understanding of WHC and emergent themes surfacing from this new context.

The research is in progress, but analysis indicates that WHC's communality resonates particularly with Carousel practice's child-family-artist relationships. This practice also provides space for arts-based inside-out/outside-in creative dialogues that contribute to children's journeys of becoming. This suggests that the WHC concept can help develop understanding of how creative arts practice supports Early Years children's development, and the role of the creativity-identity dialogue within that.


