

**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
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VOLUME ONE

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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.

CONTENTS

Contents

<i>VOLUME ONE</i>	1
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	2
<i>ABSTRACT</i>	3
<i>CONTENTS</i>	4
<i>LIST OF TABLES</i>	16
<i>LIST OF FIGURES</i>	19
<i>CHAPTER ONE</i>	21
<i>Introduction</i>	21
1.1 Overview of the Thesis	21
1.2 Personal Rationale	23
1.3 Definitions of Creativity	26
<i>1.3.1 Big creativity, little creativity, mini creativity</i>	26
<i>1.3.2 The creative person, process, product, and environment</i>	28
<i>1.3.3 Creativity as Possibility Thinking (PT)</i>	30
1.4 Definitions of Art:	32
Realism, Idealism, and Expressionism	32
<i>1.4.1 Young children’s free art</i>	33
<i>1.4.2 Identifying with cultural symbols</i>	35
1.5 Creativity and Art in the English Early Years Curriculum and Classroom	38
1.6 Introducing Reggio Emilia in Practice	40
<i>1.6.1 5x5x5=creativity</i>	41
<i>1.6.2 Contrasting values of being an artist communicator in school</i>	42
1.7 Collaboration and Identity	44
1.8 Overview of the Study and Research Questions	46
1.9 Summary	49
<i>CHAPTER TWO</i>	51
<i>Literature Review</i>	51

2.1 Introduction.....	51
2.2 An Overview of PT Theory and Research.....	51
2.2.1 2006 <i>Characterising PT studies</i>	52
2.2.2 2008 <i>Question-posing and responding study</i>	55
2.2.3 2012 <i>PT studies exploring the role of collaboration</i>	56
2.2.4 2012 <i>PT and child initiated play</i>	58
2.2.5 2013 <i>PT and the role of narrative</i>	61
2.2.6 <i>PT in the wider research field</i>	63
2.3 Studies Based on Pedagogy	66
2.3.1 <i>Introduction</i>	66
2.3.2 <i>Questioning strategies to encourage young children to talk about art</i>	66
2.3.3 <i>Meddling in the middle</i>	69
2.3.4 <i>Creativity and classroom talk</i>	72
2.3.5 <i>Communicating artistic actions and narratives</i>	73
2.3.6 <i>The value of drawing, narrative, and pedagogy</i>	75
2.4 Studies Based on Peer-to-Peer	78
Collaborative Relationships	78
2.4.1 <i>Introduction</i>	78
2.4.2 <i>Social creativity</i>	79
2.4.3 <i>Transitions into formal education</i>	80
2.4.4 <i>The developing self and social understanding</i>	81
2.4.5 <i>Collaboration</i>	82
2.4.6 <i>Emergence</i>	84
2.4.7 <i>Transitioning from individual-to-collaborative-to-communal creativity</i>	86
2.4.8 <i>Identity development</i>	89
2.4.9 <i>Social identity</i>	89
2.4.10 <i>Identity in the context of the early years classroom</i>	90
2.5 Justification for the Research Approach.....	91
2.5.1 <i>Studies of PT</i>	92
2.5.2 <i>Studies based on pedagogy</i>	92
2.5.3 <i>Studies based on peer-to-peer collaborative relationships</i>	92
2.5.4 <i>Voice</i>	92
2.5.5 <i>Richness of data</i>	93
2.6 Summary.....	93
CHAPTER THREE	95
Methodology	95

3.1 Introduction	95
3.2 Theoretical Underpinnings	96
3.2.1 <i>Introduction</i>	96
3.2.2 <i>Ontological positioning</i>	96
3.2.3 <i>Epistemological positioning</i>	97
3.2.4 <i>Theoretical framework</i>	99
3.3 Ethnography	101
3.3.1 <i>Ethnographic data collection methods</i>	103
3.4 Children’s Participation	104
3.4.1 <i>The Mosaic Approach</i>	104
3.4.2 <i>Explore journals</i>	105
3.4.3 <i>Case studies</i>	106
3.5 Participants	107
3.5.1 <i>The school setting</i>	107
3.5.2 <i>Child sample</i>	107
3.5.3 <i>Focus sample</i>	108
3.5. 4 <i>Introducing the focus children</i>	110
3.5.4.1 <i>Rosie</i>	110
3.5.4.2 <i>Box Boy</i>	111
3.5.4.3 <i>Hot Wheels</i>	111
3.5. 5 <i>Focus sample rationale</i>	112
3.5. 6 <i>Practitioner sample</i>	112
3.5.7 <i>Researcher position- insider/outsider</i>	113
3.6 Ethics	114
3.6.1 <i>Access to the sample</i>	114
3.6.2 <i>Informed consent</i>	115
3.6.3 <i>Participant selection</i>	116
3.6.4 <i>Right to withdraw and debriefing procedures</i>	117
3.6.5 <i>Confidentiality and anonymity</i>	117
3.6.6 <i>Inclusive arrangements and cultural diversity</i>	118
3.6.7 <i>Deception and incentives</i>	118
3.6.8 <i>Engagement in research situation</i>	119
3.7 Method of Data Collection	119
3.7.1 <i>Ethnographic data collection methods</i>	120
3.8 Procedure	121
3.8.1 <i>Pilot Phase</i>	121
3.8.2 <i>School site visits</i>	123
3.8.3 <i>Recording the data- video, photographs, and voice recordings</i>	123

3.8.4 <i>Recording the data- diaries, journals, and interviews</i>	126
3.9 Grounded Theory	128
3.9.1 <i>The emergence of grounded theory</i>	128
3.10 Data Analysis	133
3.10.1 <i>Data analysis procedures</i>	133
3.10.2 <i>Layer One: Framing the context</i>	133
3.10.3 <i>Layer Two: Inductive modes of inquiry</i>	135
3.10.4 <i>Layer Three: Deductive modes of inquiry</i>	138
3.10.5 <i>Layer Four: Constructing theory and modelling</i>	140
3.10.6 <i>Constant comparative method</i>	141
3.10.7 <i>Theoretical sampling</i>	141
3.10.8 <i>Theoretical memo writing</i>	142
3.10.9 <i>Saturation</i>	142
3.10.10 <i>Final theory construction</i>	143
3.10.11 <i>Internal validity: Member checking</i>	145
3.10.12 <i>External validity: Peer checking</i>	146
3.11 Summary of Research Process	147
3.12 Additional Points for Consideration	149
3.12.1 <i>Reliability, validity, and generalizability</i>	149
3.12.2 <i>Statement of researcher’s experiences, assumptions, and biases</i>	151
3.13 Summary	152
VOLUME TWO	154
CHAPTER FOUR	155
<i>Findings RQ1: Emergent PT</i>	155
4.1 Introduction	155
4.2 Section 1: The Core of PT	156
4.2.1 <i>Visual model: The core of PT</i>	157
4.2.2 <i>Playful acted out explorations</i>	158
4.2.3 <i>Fluxing drivers: Process as well as outcome</i>	158
4.2.4 <i>Process: Unconscious, functional, therapeutic</i>	159
4.2.4.1 <i>Unconscious</i>	159
4.2.4.2 <i>Functional</i>	160
4.2.4.3 <i>Therapeutic</i>	160
4.2.5 <i>Outcome: Conscious, goal-orientated, design</i>	161
4.2.5.1 <i>Conscious</i>	161
4.2.5.2 <i>Goal-Orientated</i>	162

4.2.5.3 Design	162
4.2.6 <i>Self-determined sensorial infusion: Independence, looking for own stimulus, and gathering information through the senses</i>	163
4.2.6.1 <i>Independence, looking for own stimulus</i>	163
4.2.6.2 <i>Gathering information through the senses</i>	164
4.2.6.2.1 <i>Visual</i>	164
4.2.6.2.2 <i>Textural</i>	164
4.2.6.2.3 <i>Audial</i>	164
4.2.6.2.4 <i>Movement</i>	164
4.2.7 <i>Immersive action intention flow</i>	165
4.2.8 <i>Summarising the Core of PT</i>	166
4.3 Section 2: PT Features in Action	166
4.3.1 <i>Aesthetic acumen and acuity: Awareness and evaluation, embodied performance, dramatic display</i>	167
4.3.1.1 <i>Awareness and evaluation</i>	167
4.3.1.2 <i>Embodied performance and dramatic display</i>	168
4.3.2 <i>Question-Responding: Verbal and non-verbal investigative behaviour</i>	169
4.3.2.1 <i>Testing</i>	171
4.3.2.1.1 <i>Trialling</i>	171
4.3.2.1.2 <i>Piloting</i>	171
4.3.2.1.3 <i>Experimental exploration</i>	172
4.3.2.2 <i>Predicting</i>	172
4.3.2.2.1 <i>Knowing what will happen</i>	172
4.3.2.2.2 <i>Using knowledge to take action</i>	173
4.3.2.2.3 <i>Expectations</i>	173
4.3.2.3 <i>Evaluating</i>	173
4.3.2.3.1 <i>Have “I” got it right?</i>	174
4.3.2.3.2 <i>Comparing</i>	174
4.3.2.3.3 <i>Observing reaction to action</i>	174
4.3.2.4 <i>Undoing</i>	175
4.3.2.4.1 <i>Erasing</i>	175
4.3.2.4.2 <i>De-constructing</i>	175
4.3.2.5 <i>Compensating</i>	176
4.3.2.5.1 <i>Modifying for error</i>	176
4.3.2.5.2 <i>Replacing instead of</i>	176
4.3.2.6 <i>Repeating</i>	177
4.3.2.6.1 <i>Carrying out same actions</i>	177
4.3.2.6.2 <i>Using same words</i>	178
4.3.2.7 <i>Accepting</i>	178
4.3.2.7.1 <i>Agreement</i>	178

4.3.2.7.2 <i>Confirming</i>	178
4.3.2.7.3 <i>Happy with result</i>	179
4.3.2.8 <i>Rejecting</i>	179
4.3.2.8.1 <i>Discarding</i>	180
4.3.2.8.2 <i>Filtering materials</i>	180
4.3.2.8.3 <i>Refusing others' ideas</i>	180
4.3.2.9 <i>Completing</i>	181
4.3.2.9.1 <i>Concluding an action in order to move forward</i>	181
4.3.2.9.2 <i>Terminating on own terms</i>	181
4.3.2.9.3 <i>Failure</i>	182
4.3.2.10 <i>Summary of question-responding</i>	182
4.3.3 <i>Comparative question-posing study</i>	183
4.3.4 <i>Cross case analysis of question-responding</i>	184
4.3.4.1 <i>Individual differences in question-responding</i>	185
4.3.5 <i>Elucidation: Planning, Explaining, Rationalising</i>	186
4.3.5.1 <i>Planning</i>	187
4.3.5.2 <i>Explaining</i>	187
4.3.5.3 <i>Rationalising</i>	188
4.3.6 <i>Innovative imaginative declaration: Original and unique outcome/behaviour, artistic storytelling, experimental exploration, play props</i>	189
4.3.6.1 <i>Artistic storytelling</i>	190
4.3.6.2.....	191
The day the spider went to the seaside	191
Told by Rosie Aged 4	191
4.3.6.3 <i>Experimental exploration</i>	192
4.3.6.4 <i>Play props</i>	192
4.3.7 <i>Risk taking: Novelty, naivety, non-conformist, and combating fears* (*Phase 3 only)</i>	192
4.3.7.1 <i>Novelty examples</i>	193
4.3.7.1.1 <i>Using materials and tools in own way</i>	193
4.3.7.1.2 <i>Outcome not predicted by practitioner</i>	194
4.3.7.1.3 <i>Trying new ways of working</i>	194
4.3.7.2 <i>Naivety examples</i>	195
4.3.7.2.1 <i>Not respecting boundaries</i>	195
4.3.7.2.2 <i>Copying</i>	195
4.3.7.2.3 <i>Pushing boundaries of activity</i>	196
4.3.7.2.4 <i>Unsure of actions</i>	196
4.3.7.3 <i>Non-Conformist examples</i>	197
4.3.7.3.1 <i>Challenging rules</i>	197
4.3.7.3.2 <i>Behaving in a non-permitted fashion</i>	197

4.3.7.3.3 Ignoring authority	198
4.3.7.3.4 Not adhering to cultural norms of practice	198
4.3.7.3.5 Remaining silent	198
4.3.7.3.6 Deflecting adult's questions	199
4.3.7.3.7 Terminating dialogue with adult	199
4.3.7.4 Combating fears examples (Phase 3 Only)	200
4.3.7.4.1 Evaluating risk	200
4.3.7.4.2 Overriding self-preservation	200
4.3.7.4.3 Deconstructing barriers	201
4.3.7.4.4 Having a go	201
4.3.7.4.5 Provoking others	202
4.3.8 Cross case analysis of risk taking	202
4.3.8.1 Individual differences in risk taking	203
4.3.9 Augmented Accuracy: Modifying, Perfecting, Embellishing.	205
4.3.9.1 Modifying	205
4.3.9.2 Perfecting	206
4.3.9.3 Embellishing	207
4.3.10 Critiquing: Outcome, behaviour, of self and others	208
4.3.10.1 Outcome	208
4.3.10.2 Critiquing outcome	209
4.3.10.3 Behaviour	209
4.3.10.4 Critiquing behaviour	210
4.3.11 Problem Ownership: Patience, Persistence	210
4.3.11.1 Patience	211
4.3.11.2 Persistence	212
4.4 Summarising Chapter 4- Visual Model: The Core of PT and PT Features in Action.....	213
CHAPTER FIVE.....	216
<i>Findings RQ: 2</i>	<i>216</i>
<i>The Nurturing Role of Others.....</i>	<i>216</i>
5.1 Introduction.....	216
5.2 Part 1: Adults as Meddlers	217
5.2.1 Range of meddling: Nursery staff and researcher.....	218
5.2.2 Agentic Advocate	218
5.2.2.1 Allowing time and space.....	218
5.2.2.2 Respecting boundaries	220
5.2.2.3 Standing back and stepping forward	221
5.2.3 Learner/Documenter	222
5.2.4 Equitable Participation Negotiator	222

5.2.5 Supportive Facilitator.....	223
5.2.5.1 Guiding	223
5.2.5.2 Reflecting	223
5.2.5.3 Prompting	223
5.2.5.4 Reassuring	224
5.2.6 Play Partner	224
5.3 Part 2: Meddling in the Middle of Young Children’s Art Making: My Role.....	225
5.3.1 Role Reversal: Child as Artist/Owner, Adult as Learner/Documenter	226
5.3.2 Mirrored Behaviours: Repeating, confirming, sustaining, extending, evaluating	229
5.3.2.1 Repeating	229
5.3.2.2 Confirming.....	230
5.3.2.3 Sustaining	231
5.3.2.4 Extending	231
5.3.2.5 Evaluating.....	232
5.3.3 Child Narrative: Describing imaginative ideas in action, bringing art to life through storytelling, moving beyond what can be seen.....	234
5.3.3.1 Describing imaginative ideas in action	234
5.3.3.2 Bringing art to life through storytelling	235
5.3.3.3 Moving beyond what can be seen	237
5.3.4 Adult Narrative: Making visual and verbal connections, acknowledging, challenging and provoking, going beyond the realist vision	237
5.3.4.1 Making visual and verbal connections	238
5.3.4.2 Acknowledging, challenging and provoking	238
5.3.4.3 Going beyond the realist vision.....	239
5.3.5 Visual model: Meddling in the middle of young children’s art	240
5.4 Part 3: Peer-to-Peer Roles and Relationships.....	242
5.4.1 Classroom dynamics and creative relationships	242
5.4.2 Emotionally enabling context driven by provocation	243
5.4.3 Communal spectatorship.....	243
5.4.4 Collaborative creativity.....	244
5.4.5 Individual “as if” differences	245
5.4.5.1 Rosie: Teacher- and her Apprentice.....	246
5.4.5.2 Box Boy: Director- and his Assistant	247
5.4.5.3 Hot Wheels: Observer-Replicator- and his Artist- Demonstrator	248

5.4.6 <i>Tactical engagement</i>	249
5.4.6.1 <i>Aesthetic awareness</i>	249
5.4.6.2 <i>Nurturing</i>	249
5.4.6.3 <i>Intrude and invite</i>	250
5.4.6.4 <i>Seek out expert play partners</i>	250
5.4.6.5 <i>Use adult as gatekeeper</i>	250
5.4.7 <i>Individual creativity in a collaborative context through complementary parallel process</i>	250
5.4.8 <i>Visual model: Classroom dynamics and creative relationships</i>	251
5.4.9 <i>Tensions and blocks</i>	253
5.4.9.1 <i>Rejecting peers</i>	253
5.4.9.2 <i>Avoidance</i>	253
5.4.9.3 <i>Possessive ownership of materials</i>	253
5.4.9.4 <i>Non-negotiated roles</i>	254
5.5 Summary	254
CHAPTER SIX	256
<i>Findings RQ: 3 The Child's Identity as An Artist Communicator.</i>	256
6.1 Introduction	256
6.2 Personality	258
6.2.1 <i>Rosie</i>	258
6.2.2 <i>Box Boy</i>	259
6.2.3 <i>Hot Wheels</i>	260
6.3 Self-talk, and talk to others	261
6.3.1 <i>Rosie</i>	261
6.3.2 <i>Box Boy</i>	262
6.3.3 <i>Hot Wheels</i>	263
6.4 Boundaries: Personal and Physical	264
6.4.1 <i>Rosie</i>	265
6.4.2 <i>Box Boy</i>	266
6.4.3 <i>Hot Wheels</i>	267
6.5 Artistic: Style, Skill, and Schema	268
6.5.1 <i>Rosie</i>	269
6.5.2 <i>Box Boy</i>	271
6.5.3 <i>Hot Wheels</i>	273
6.6 Roles assumed	274
6.6.1 <i>Individual "as if" peer to peer relationship differences</i>	275
6.6.1.1 <i>Rosie</i>	276

6.6.1.2 <i>Rosie's Summary</i>	281
6.6.1.3 <i>Box Boy</i>	281
6.6.1.4 <i>Box Boy's Summary</i>	287
6.6.1.5 <i>Hot Wheels</i>	287
6.6.1.6 <i>Hot Wheel's Summary</i>	290
6.7 Visual Model and Summary:	290
The Child's Identity as an Artist Communicator	290
CHAPTER SEVEN	293
<i>Discussion</i>	293
7.1 Introduction	293
7.2 Discussing RQ1: How is young children's emergent PT manifest and evidenced in the nursery-school context?	293
7.2.1 <i>Core of PT</i>	297
7.2.1.1 <i>Playful acted out explorations</i>	297
7.2.1.2 <i>Fluxing drivers</i>	298
7.2.1.3 <i>Self-determined sensorial infusion</i>	300
7.2.1.4 <i>Immersive action intention flow</i>	303
7.2.2 <i>PT Features in action</i>	305
7.2.2.1 <i>Aesthetic acumen and acuity</i>	306
7.2.2.2 <i>Question-responding</i>	308
7.2.2.3 <i>Elucidation and Innovative imaginative declaration</i>	310
7.2.2.4 <i>Risk taking</i>	313
7.2.2.5 <i>Augmented accuracy</i>	318
7.2.2.6 <i>Critiquing and Problem ownership</i>	319
7.2.2.7 <i>Summary of PT- key findings</i>	322
7.3 Discussing RQ2: How is young children's collaborative emergent PT nurtured by the role of others in the nursery-school context?..	322
7.3.1 <i>Introduction</i>	322
7.3.2 <i>Part One: Adults as meddlers</i>	323
7.3.2.1 <i>Range of meddling: Nursery staff and researcher</i>	324
7.3.2.1.1 <i>Agentic Advocator</i>	324
7.3.2.1.2 <i>Learner/Documenter</i>	327
7.3.2.1.3 <i>Equitable Participation Negotiator</i>	328
7.3.2.1.4 <i>Supportive Facilitator</i>	330
7.3.2.1.5 <i>Play Partner</i>	331
7.3.2.1.6 <i>Summarising meddling styles</i>	332
7.3.2.2 <i>Meddling in the middle of young children's art making- my role</i>	333
7.3.2.2.1 <i>Role reversal</i>	334

7.3.2.2 Narratives	335
7.3.3 Part Two: Classroom dynamics and creative relationships ...	339
7.3.3.1 Emotionally enabling context driven by provocation	339
7.3.3.1.2 Communal spectatorship	341
7.3.3.2 Peer-to-peer roles and relationships in collaborative creativity	342
7.3.3.2.1 Parallel working	346
7.3.3.2.2 Tactical engagement, tensions and blocks	346
7.4 Discussing RQ3: How is the child’s identity as an artist communicator manifested through voice and learning experience in the nursery-school context?	347
7.4.1 Introduction	347
7.4.2 Case study summaries	347
7.4.2.1 Summarising personality	348
7.4.2.2 Summarising self-talk and talk to others	350
7.4.2.3 Summarising boundaries physical and personal	352
7.4.2.4 Summarising artistic style, skill, and schema	355
7.4.2.5 Case study summaries- roles assumed.....	360
7.4.2.5.1 Rosie	360
7.4.2.5.2 Box Boy	361
7.4.2.5.3 Hot Wheels	363
7.4.2.5.4 Summarising roles assumed	364
7.4.2.5.5 Summarising time spent in peer-to-peer creative relationships	365
7.4.2.5.6 The implications of peer-to-peer roles assumed	367
7.4.2.6 Social identity.....	369
7.5 Summary of Discussion	370
CHAPTER EIGHT	373
Conclusion.....	373
8.1 Introduction.....	373
8.2 Conceptual Summary	373
8.2.1 Thinking and doing in action	373
8.2.2 The importance of being in an “as if “space for imagination and the complexity of collaboration	375
8.3 What Children Can Do Together-	379
Recognising Differences	379
8.3.1 The temporary nature of peer-to-peer relationships	379
8.3.2 Linking identity to behaviours in action- “as if”	380

8.4 The Value of Artistic Communication in the	382
Nursery Classroom	382
8.4.1 <i>Elucidation and imagination</i>	382
8.4.2 <i>Authentic voice in an authoring “as if” space</i>	384
8.5 Observing and Documenting Children’s	388
Emergent Creativity	388
8.5.1 <i>Characterising creativity</i>	388
8.5.2 <i>PT Matrices</i>	389
8.5.3 <i>The nature of “development”</i>	392
8.5.4 <i>Summarising key PT differences in this doctoral study</i>	394
8.6 Pedagogy of Possibilities- Developing a Role	397
8.6.1. <i>Enabling creativity through facilitation</i>	397
8.6.1.1 <i>Materials- possibility broad, moderate, narrow</i>	397
8.6.1.2 <i>Provocation</i>	398
8.6.2 <i>Extending creativity- intervention</i>	399
8.6.2.1 <i>Meddling- the implications for practice</i>	399
8.7 Final Summary of Communicating Possibilities	402
8.8 Critique of this Doctoral Study	403
8.8.1 <i>Evaluation</i>	403
8.8.1.1 <i>Small scale research</i>	403
8.8.1.2 <i>Unequal gender representation</i>	403
8.8.1.3 <i>Microphone data</i>	403
8.8.1.4 <i>Prioritising the close up mobile video data set</i>	404
8.8.1.5 <i>Episode selection</i>	404
8.8.1.6 <i>Researcher positioning and perspective</i>	405
8.8.2 <i>Further areas of research</i>	405
8.8.2.1 <i>Developmental aspects of PT</i>	405
8.8.2.2 <i>Challenges for future researchers</i>	406
8.9 Looking Back, Looking Forward	407
APPENDICES	410
BIBLIOGRAPHY	436

LIST OF TABLES

Number	Table Heading	Page
Table: 2.1	PT behaviours in action (Craft, et al., 2012b)	58
Table: 2.2	Practitioner role in PT (Craft, et al., 2012b)	60
Table: 3.1	Notes on potential focus participants	109
Table: 3.2	Contribution of data to analysis- this doctoral study	120
Table: 3.3	Utilised elements of a grounded theory approach	132
Table: 3.4	Code classification, flow of classroom movements- this doctoral study	134
Table: 3.5	Summary of research process	148
Table: 4.1	Question framing examples- this doctoral study	163
Table: 4.2	Question- responding categories and sub-categories- this doctoral study	170
Table: 4.3	Question-responding (QR) definitions by comparison- Chappell, et al. (2008) and this doctoral study	183
Table: 4.4	Summary of QR cross case deductive analysis across weeks 1-9	184
Table: 4.5	Summary of individual QR differences (deductive analysis)	186
Table: 4.6	Strength of PT features- this doctoral study	213
Table: 5.1	Range of meddling styles	218

Table: 5.2	Range of narratives	227
Table: 5.3	Summary of question-posing examples	240
Table: 6.1	Time spent in art areas engaged in activity alone (Rosie)	277
Table: 6.2	Time spent in art areas engaged in activity with peers (Rosie)	278
Table: 6.3	Time spent in art areas engaged in activity alone (Box Boy)	282
Table: 6.4	Time spent in art areas engaged in activity with peers (Box Boy)	283
Table: 6.5	Time spent in art areas engaged in activity alone (Hot Wheels)	288
Table: 6.6	Time spent in art areas engaged in activity with peers (Hot Wheels)	288
Table: 7.1	Comparison of PT characteristics found in early years settings	305
Table: 7.2	Question-responding definitions by comparison	308
Table: 7.3	Comparative table of artistic representations and communications- Hall (2008) and this doctoral study	358
Table: 7.4	Case study summary- roles assumed in order of strength	364
Table: 7.5	Case study summaries- time spent in art areas engaged with peers	365
Table: 7.6	Case study summary- time spent in art areas alone (red) and engaged with peers (blue)	366
Table: 8.1	The Core of PT Matrix- this doctoral study	390

Table: 8.2	PT Question-Responding Matrix- this doctoral study	391
Table: 8.3	PT Risk Taking Matrix- this doctoral study	391
Table: 8.4	PT Behaviours Matrix- this doctoral study	392
Table: 8.5	Defining continuous and discontinuous development Berk (2006)	393

LIST OF FIGURES

Number	Figure Heading	Page
Figure: 2.1	An evidence-based model of PT, Burnard, et al. (2006)	53
Figure: 2.2	Pedagogy and PT, Cremin, et al. (2006)	54
Figure: 2.3	Question-posing and question-responding, and original PT framework, Chappell, et al. (2008)	55
Figure: 2.4	Question-posing and question-responding Chappell, et al., (2008)	56
Figure: 2.5	PT through provocation-stimulated play Craft, McConnon, and Matthews (2012)	59
Figure: 2.6	Pedagogy nurturing possibility thinking Craft, McConnon, and Matthews (2012b)	61
Figure: 2.7	Expressive arts and design: Being imaginative practitioner guidance, Early Education (2012)	68
Figure: 2.8	Meddling in the middle, shifting behaviours and actions, McConnon (2013)	70
Figure: 2.9	Creativity as individual, collaborative, and communal, Chappell (2008)	84
Figure: 3.1	Focus of analysis Chappell, et al. (2008)	139
Figure: 3.2	Focus of analysis Craft, et al. (2012b)	140
Figure: 3.3	Focus of data collection timing and analytical layers- this doctoral study	145
Figure: 4.1	Core of PT - this doctoral study	157

Figure: 4.2	Visual model the core of PT and PT features in action- this doctoral study	215
Figure: 5.1	Rosie's spider picture (end of episode)	234
Figure: 5.2	Visual model of meddling in the middle of young children's art- this doctoral study	241
Figure: 5.3	Visual model of classroom dynamics and creative relationships- this doctoral study	252
Figure: 6.1	Identity manifest through individual creativity- this doctoral study	257
Figure: 6.2	Artist communicator identities	292
Figure: 7.1	Visual model the core of PT and PT features in action- this doctoral study	296
Figure: 7.2	Critical themes- this doctoral study	372
Figure: 8.1	Conceptualising a possibility path into the "as if" space	378
Figure: 8.2	PT pervading through EYFS curriculum areas	408