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Drawing to differentiate: The effects of colour

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Sitton and Light's (1992) drawing differentiation tasks (draw a man, woman, boy & girl) was presented to 60 four- to six-year-old children, to complete either with a black pen or with 10 coloured pens (repeated measures). Differentiation by height was found in the black pen condition, comparable to Sitton and Light's findings, but not in the coloured-pen condition where the additional cognitive load also led to a decrement in the number of features produced. In contrast, a copying task using dolls (between subjects, 60 four- to six-year-old children) found that coloured pens facilitated copying performance. Children produced greater differentiation by salient features (e.g. skirts), and differentiated by height with coloured pens, but not in the black pen condition. In this case the colours seemed to relieve the problem of translation into monochrome, by providing a direct representational translation that was simpler than shape.

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'If you don't understand this don't worry, for the rest of you I will go on': Deconstructing children's opportunity to participate in the classroom community of practice

H. STIVAROS, J. TOBBELL & M. HARDMAN, Leeds Metropolitan University.

Learning is a fundamental concern within Western societies as demonstrated through the development of schooling systems and National Curriculums, both of which strive to take charge of and advance children's learning. Current Government ideologies and classroom practices implicitly assume associationist learning processes and unproblematic individual competence despite acknowledgement by much psychological theory, of the constructive and interactive nature of children's learning. According to the Community of Practice formulation, learning is characterised as participation in the practices of the environment. Drawing on the ethnographic research of one of the authors, which explores the quotidian learning experiences of year six children, this paper illuminates the role of teacher as gatekeeper to pupils' learning. It is argued that teachers' classroom practices serve to dictate pupils' opportunities to participate in learning. This is a powerful supposition and in terms of children's educational development, suggests teachers and schools need to ensure access to participation levels of all pupils.

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Singing with infants: Balancing control with collaboration

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This paper presents the second of a two-part study exploring mothers' attitudes towards singing to their infants in daily caring routines. The first part was a survey of 104 mothers' attitudes to singing. The second part analysed observations of video-recordings of mothers interacting with infants between four and 10 months old. Recordings were made in naturalistic settings (at home or in an equivalent convenient venue) of 16 mother-infant pairs, followed by immediate playback and recall, to obtain mothers' commentaries on their infants' responses and their own feelings. These commentaries were recorded and transcribed. Analysis classified six types of singing in the video vignettes. Detailed sequential analysis of one vignette showed elements of collaboration across different singing types. The two recording processes complement each other and reveal insights into these intimate musical exchanges. The results suggest that mothers' singing is a very varied activity, dependent on their infants' states and on their own needs to communicate.

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Reconceptualising learning: Legitimate participation in communities of practice, explaining transition from primary to secondary school

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The structural and pedagogical differences between primary and secondary school have been listed in a number of research papers and have been identified as one of the reasons for the difficult process of transition. However, to date these differences have been merely described (e.g. original ORACLE project and the follow up 20 years on) and subsequent assumptions made about why they present difficulties. In this paper I will discuss a six-month research project which followed 55 children from primary school to secondary school. The outcomes demonstrated that primary and secondary schools constitute two cultures so different that notions of smooth transitions are rendered an impossible dream. I will use the learning as participation literature to demonstrate how the learning and performance are embedded in the wider practices of the schools so that, in order to succeed, children need to reevaluate and forget primary practices and involve themselves in a set of new procedures, which a significant proportion of them will find problematic because of the shift in emotional and motivational factors pursuant to the transition. I will use the data to challenge traditional notions of learning and to suggest how inclusionary practices can address transition problems.

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A connectionist approach to teaching rhythm notation to three- to four-year-old pre-school children

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In many countries, including Britain and the USA, rhythm notation is traditionally taught utilising the mathematical relationship between note values (for example, one semibreve equals four crotchets). The purpose of this study was to investigate whether it was possible for very young children to learn to perform from conventional rhythm notation without being taught such rules. Here the children were simply exposed to rhythmic phrases along with their correct performance. Subsequently they were able to accurately perform previously unseen phrases comprised of the learned note values (semibreves, minims, crotchets and quavers). The children (n=10) received a pre-test, 20 10-minute teaching sessions, followed by post-test. Pre- to post-test gains were significant (p<0.001). Scores on a re-test administered seven weeks later were not significantly different from post-test scores (p>0.05).

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Agency: Measuring selfhood in toddlers' social actions

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This paper will present a new measure of selfhood in two-year-olds - interpersonal agency - that quantifies the ability to act effectively upon the self's goals in social interaction. Using social play and interpersonal conflict as arenas of analysis, individual differences in interpersonal agency among toddlers are described and exemplified. It will be shown that children as young as two years of age vary quite widely in their ability or willingness to affect the social environment, that this variation is consistent across a range of interactive partners, and that it is predicted by security of attachment such that securely attached children are more agentic than their insecure peers. Interactionist theories of self-development place the explanation for differences in selfhood in the child's history of social interaction. Hence, in an exploration of potential determinants, aspects of maternal interaction that may promote interpersonal agency in toddlers will be highlighted, using videotaped examples.

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Academic achievement and social functioning of children with and without learning difficulties

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Academic achievement and social functioning of children with learning difficulties (LD), low achieving (LA), and high achieving (HA) children was examined. The children were seven- to 12-year-olds (n=234, including 39 children with LD). Children without LD were assigned to the LA or HA category on the basis of attainment scores on exams for Mathematics and English. Sociometric and behavioural scores were also collected for each child. Findings indicated positive correlations between academic attainment and positive social behaviours; and negative correlations between academic attainment and negative social behaviours. Behavioural attributes accounted for greater variance in social preference than in academic achievement. HA children scored higher on social preference and positive behaviours than LA and LD children. Only help-seeking behaviour discriminated between LD and LA groups - children with LD scoring significantly higher. These findings indicate a relationship between social adjustment and academic achievement and that intervention strategies need to target social relationship difficulties in LA children as well as children with LD.

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'He takes after his father': Children's reasoning about parent-offspring and sibling resemblance

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This study is part of a three-year longitudinal project funded by the Wellcome Trust examining the development of children's intuitive inheritance concepts. It reports cross-sectional comparisons on a 'mother-bias' task. Children from four age cohorts (four, seven, 10 and 14 years; n=180) were interviewed individually using a forced-choice procedure about their beliefs concerning the inheritance of three different feature types (physical characteristics, personality traits and disabilities). They were presented with pictures of the biological mother and father exhibiting variations in the feature at issue. Children were asked to select the most likely offspring out of four alternatives: same feature as the mother, same feature as the father, combined features of mother and father, neither parental feature. Children then made judgements about a second offspring. For both judgements the child was required to provide an explanation of inheritance. The results showed significant age and feature differences in children's beliefs regarding the inheritance of characteristics. Although younger children have a general understanding of parent-offspring resemblance, overall the results indicate that older children develop more complex conceptions of inheritance which include a recognition of multiple sources of inheritance, awareness of genes and genetic uncertainty.

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Emotion recognition by children with Down's syndrome: Effects of varying emotion label and expression intensity

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Sociocognitive ability is often thought to be a relative strength amongst those with Down's syndrome (DS). However, recent work suggests that some children with DS may experience difficulties with certain aspects of social cognition, including recognition of specific facial expressions of emotion. The study to be reported used a photo matching task to further explore emotion recognition ability amongst children with DS (n=28), and compared DS performance with that of children with non-specific intellectual disabilities (n=25) and typically developing children (n=28) matched on cognitive and language ability. Four conditions (regular vs exaggerated emotions, emotion labelling vs generic task instructions) were used in an attempt to establish the extent to which emotion recognition task difficulties in DS relate to perceptual aspects of facial expression or to