

***Creativity and Making in Early Childhood: Challenging Practitioner Perspectives.* By Mona Sakr, Bindu Trivedy, Nichola Hall, Laura O'Brien and Roberto Federici, 2018. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN: 9781350003095.**

Creativity and Making in Early Childhood: Challenging Practitioner Perspectives is written as a both a textbook that can serve university professors in their teacher education courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels as well as current practitioners in the field of early childhood education (ECE). However, the authors do clarify that this book is best used while engaged in work with young students in classrooms, either in paid or unpaid positions as it gives many opportunities to reflect and expand their practice. This book consists of ten chapters that collectively explore what young children's creativity and making can look like both inside and outside the classroom, as well as the roles of the adults often involved in facilitating and observing these activities. Overall, each chapter includes an introduction and chapter summary that help organize the text so that not only would students taking courses be able to solidify their understanding, but so that practitioners can refer back to this book later on, refresh their previous readings, or focus on one topic discussed. Concepts introduced throughout the book are explained alongside anecdotal stories, photos, and observations to illustrate concepts more meaningfully and how they occur in classrooms and at home. Moreover, each chapter includes several "Research spotlight" sections that integrate the current and relevant empirical research that informs practice and approaches in ECE all over the world. These sections explain the methods used by researchers to study these topics in creativity, their findings and implications for practice and understanding creativity in early childhood. Lastly, Sakr et al. encourage active engagement with their material by including question prompts throughout chapters for practitioners to reflect on their own experiences and end each chapter by providing activities and ideas to deepen their thinking and exploration.

In their introduction of the book, Sakr et al. ask readers to begin by adopting an open mind, as they hope to challenge previous perspectives on early childhood creativity and help readers to create new and alternative perspectives that will enrich their practice. After a brief overview of their aims for their book and who the book is intended for, the authors introduce the team of researchers and practitioners in early childhood education who worked together to create this book. Each member's educational background, current positions and their experiences in early childhood education are described to give the reader a sense of the differing perspectives involved in the writing of this text. The authors take a very transparent approach by devoting a section of this chapter to how their book project developed. The authors then finish off their introduction chapter with a more detailed section on how best to engage with their book, ethical considerations, and chapter overviews.

In their first chapter, Sakr et al. introduce the three theories relating to creativity: divergent thinking, creative flow and possibility thinking. The authors encourage practitioners to observe and foster divergent thinking, which they describe as "a mode of thought that encourages multiple discoveries, but does not work towards any one right answer or product" (p. 29). Further, they spend time on the concept of 'flow', a sense of heightened engagement that is observable through the body's physical cues that practitioners can use to affirm whether an

activity has the right level of challenge and stimulation. Lastly, the theory of possibility thinking in creativity by researcher Anna Craft is introduced to describe the transition of an individual's mindset from "what is" to "what might be". Craft argues that this transition must be acknowledged and facilitated by adults for open-ended, and creative activities to occur. Overall, this chapter sets the tone for how practitioners should be framing their observations of children's creativity making while making their way through the books various topics.

In their second chapter, Sakr et al. explore the relationship between creativity and children's identities and the sociocultural influences on their creative making. The authors use the term 'remix' to describe the process in which children take features of their own lives and popular culture such as TV characters and toys that they've engaged in to reimagine these sources into their creative activities. The authors also describe children who engage in certain topics repeatedly, as 'subject matter specialists' and critique the term "self-expression" as it implies that children are not actively producing their self in their creative making. Chapter three shifts focus onto concepts of collaborative creativity. The authors explore Glăveanu's (2010) three paradigms of creativity and the shift that has occurred in Western cultures from individual based creativity (we all have potential to be individually creative) to creativity that exists between individuals. They further explore multimodal interactions and moments of meeting that strengthen relationships between individuals in creative making. Chapters four and five then discuss the role of time and choice in creative making. The authors discuss the important role practitioners have in controlling the time and choice of children in their creative making activities. They introduce the concepts of 'stretchy time' and point to the Montessori approach as ways to support the creative process but maintain a balance in the classroom. The sixth chapter brings attention to the space and materials afforded to children's creative making in classrooms. Looking closely at the Reggio Emilia approach, the authors introduce Fraser's (2006) principals of space: Aesthetics, Transparency, Active learning, Flexibility, Collaboration, Reciprocity, Relationships and Bringing the outdoors in. Emphasizing the role of practitioners in the organization of space and materials in the classroom, Sakr et al. encourage the use of these principals as inspiration to improve early learning spaces.

Although discussed throughout the book, the authors devote chapter seven specifically to the use of digital technology and its relationship to children's creativity. Speaking openly about a highly contentious topic in early childhood education due to fears regarding the presence of screens and loss of sensory experiences, the authors consider how digital environments and tools have shaped children's sensory dimensions and creativity in the 21st century. The authors are careful to distinguish between different digital resources and their wide-range of affordances, using anecdotal observations to shape this discussion and speak to the personalization that digital technologies can more readily provide and incorporate into different environments as opposed to non-digital processes. Of course, the authors also discuss the role of the adult in supporting the use of digital tools and the considerations that need to be made in terms of the control and constraints.

The last three chapters of this book are devoted to learning more about child-adult interactions, inspirations that educators draw on for their pedagogical practice and adult expectations of children's creativity making. These chapters focus on the role of both parents and educators and

how they tend to think about their own creativity and playfulness. Chapter eight looks at notions of apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation as alternative guides to the interaction between children and adults. These chapters are especially helpful to those new to the field in discussing the common misconceptions and misunderstandings adults can bring into their observations and interactions with children in creative making activities.

Overall, this book was a fun, engaging, and informative orientation to the topic of creativity and making in early childhood. Not shying away from long-standing debates such as the rise of digital technology in children's lives, the authors encourage thoughtful engagement with the vast range of approaches in early childhood and current research findings to explore and challenge these topics further. Further, they are quick to frame children as the experts of their creative making process, and caution adults to remain in their roles as facilitators and observers during these activities. In their final chapter, the authors remind us to step outside the development lens adults tend to assume when observing children's art (what they can and cannot do) and appreciate the richness of a child's creativity. This book is useful to early childhood practitioners and course instructors to utilize in their teacher preparation courses. Made up of a team of both researchers and experienced early childhood educators, this book does a wonderful job of including the essential voice of the practitioner as well as their students. Using educator experiences as the focal point, Sakr et al. provide several insightful perspectives and alternative theories that openly consider all aspects in children's creative engagement. With the use of reflections and concrete ideas for practice, practitioners are likely to find themselves referring back to this book when refining their pedagogical practice. This book could serve as a much needed addition to an early childhood educators resource library.

References

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