

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND READING DIFFRACTIVELY

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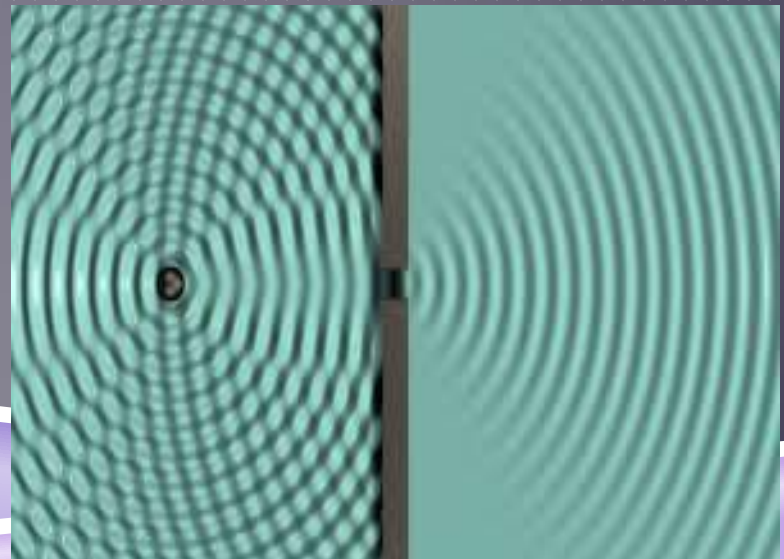
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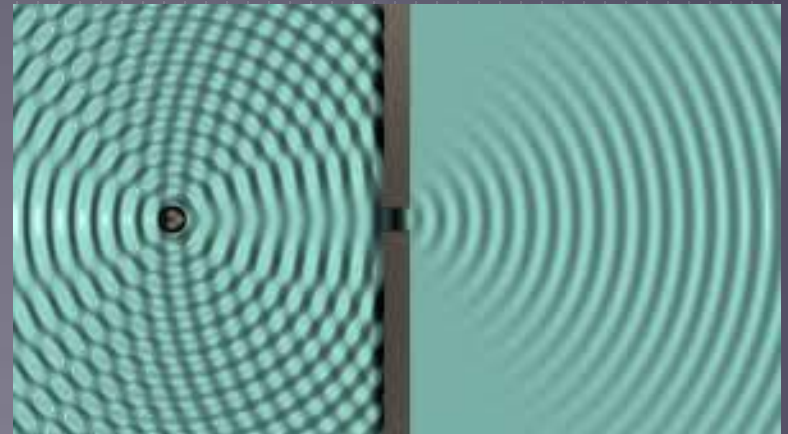


OVERVIEW

- ▶ Critical reflection and the 0-5 Australian Early Years Learning framework
- ▶ Assessment against National Quality Standard (reflection)
- ▶ Diffraction
- ▶ An example
- ▶ Conclusion



DIFFRACTION



CRITICAL REFLECTION

- ▶ Reflection is a quality requirement for educators working with children 0-5 years in Australia
- ▶ “Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives” (*Belonging, being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 13*)

We do not learn from
experience... we learn
from reflecting on
experience.

- John Dewey

REFLECTION

Overarching questions to guide reflection include:

- ▶ What are my understandings of each child?
- ▶ What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist my work?
- ▶ Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?
- ▶ What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- ▶ What aspects of my work are not helped by the theories and guidance that I usually draw on to make sense of what I do?
- ▶ Are there other theories or knowledge that could help me to understand better what I have observed or experienced? What are they? How might those theories and that knowledge affect my practice? (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 13)

OUTCOME 4: CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT AND INVOLVED LEARNERS

- ▶ **Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another**
- ▶ **This is evident, for example, when children:**
 - ▶ engage with and co-construct learning
 - ▶ develop an ability to mirror, repeat and
 - ▶ practice the actions of others, either immediately or later
 - ▶ make connections between experiences, concepts and processes
 - ▶ use the processes of play, reflection and investigation to solve problems (Early Years Learning Framework, 2009, p. 36)

Overall quality ratings of services

Authorised officers from state and territory regulatory authorities assess and rate services using the seven quality areas, 18 standards and 58 elements that make up the National Quality Standard (NQS). Services are given a rating for each of the seven quality areas and an overall rating.



NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

- ▶ **Quality Area 1 - Educational program and practice**
- ▶ Standard 1.2
- ▶ Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child
 - ▶ Element 1.2.3
 - ▶ Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program

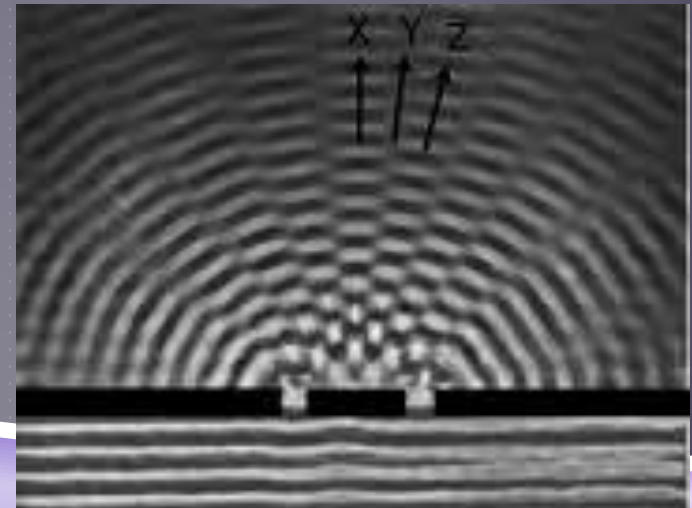
DIFFRACTION

- ▶ We are trying to
- ▶ ...think theoretically with the idea of diffraction from feminist materialism (Barard, 2007; Haraway, 1997) ...and apply it to everyday teaching with the aim of extending/moving beyond critical reflection
- ▶ ...think with theory about the ethics of pedagogical practices of reflection



DIFFRACTIVE METHODOLOGY

- ▶ “A critical practice for making a difference in the world”
- ▶ “A commitment to understanding which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom”
- ▶ “a critical practice of engagement, not a distance-learning practice of reflecting from afar” (Barard, 2007, p. 90)
- ▶ Offers possibilities for inventive provocations, disruptions to routine ways of thinking and doing; and to think and do again in ways that are detailed, ethical and respectful



AN EXAMPLE: AN ENCOUNTER (DUHN & GRIESHABER, 2016)

It is a sunny day in spring, the sun feels warm on the skin. The doors are open and the child crawls towards the sandpit. The child wears a jumper and brown pants. His soft slippers provide grip on the wooden deck and he reaches the sandpit. He tries to stand up in the sand but falls on his bottom. His mouth tightens. A plastic pipe lies within his reach. The pipe is hollow and about twice his height. A girl, sitting close to the pipe, digs a hole with a small spade. She stands up, reaching to the top of the pipe and tips it into the hole. Holding the pipe steady with both hands, she uses her feet to trample the sand around the pipe down firmly. She steps away and looks at the pipe, now standing upright in the sandpit. An educator sits nearby, watching both children. The boy crawls to the pipe and makes an attempt at pulling himself upright by holding on to the pipe. The girl watches while the pipe begins to wobble in its sandy hole. The boy balances, both hands on the pipe, stands upright and pulls the pipe from its anchor in the process. The girl walks a few steps away and begins to dig a hole with a little spade. The adult remains seated and doesn't seem to pay attention to the sandpit encounters. The boy continues to lift the pipe and then repeatedly pushes it down into the soft sand but the pipe does not stand up by itself.

POSSIBLE DOCUMENTATION

- ▶ *James (1.6 years) was playing in the sandpit near Chloe (4.2 years), who was digging a hole into which she inserted a large hollow plastic pipe upright, which was about twice the height of James. James tried to use the pipe to pull himself up, but moved it from the hole in his attempt to stand. When Chloe moved away and began to dig nearby, James tried many times to put the pipe back where it was and to make it stand up in the hole, the way it had been. James showed that he had a sense of belonging by joining the play and was confident and independent enough to try and put the pipe back in the hole. He persevered when faced with a challenge even though the task was difficult and he did not succeed. Follow up action might have included showing James how Chloe dug a hole deep enough for the pipe and trampled the sand around the base of the pipe to help it stand upright. An educator might have noted elsewhere than in the learning story that James' actions could also be seen as taking over what Chloe was doing and that she did not contest his actions, preferring instead to move to another part of the sandpit and resume digging, without the pipe.*

A POSSIBLE REFLECTIVE READING

- ▶ Interpretation backed with theory to generate pedagogical follow-up action...
- ▶ The child was *faced with a challenge* (learning opportunity), *he persevered* (learning disposition), *he did not succeed* (learning outcome identified)
- ▶ Possible pedagogical action: scaffolding James's learning so that he understands how to dig a 'proper' hole next time
- ▶ If the teaching strategy leads to a successful outcome in the future (James learned how to dig a hole that's deep enough), the learning story serves as evidence of quality teaching

RE/READING: MAKING DIFFERENCES MATTER

- ▶ If learning theories move to the background, what questions are possible?
- ▶ Re/reading with intent to open spaces for differences to emerge
- ▶ Looking for “increasing...complexity and organization” (Grosz, 2011, p. 3)
- ▶ ...possibilities for “making variations matter” (Dionne, 2014, p. 204) pay attention to the open-ended transformations that occur in any given assemblages



BOY IN THE SANDPIT

- ▶ Child-pipe-sand assemblage could be re-viewed with increasing complexity and organization
- ▶ Could this reading generate openings for pedagogical differences to emerge?
- ▶ What might be the difference for the child?



TRADITION OF 'GAZE' IN ECE

- ▶ But the 'gaze' encounters its 'object' in a fundamentally different way from traditional observation (Grosz, 2011)
- ▶ No attempt to observe for evidence to plan/act to improve learning
- ▶ Gaze is curious and supports open-mindedness: what is there to see/sense?
- ▶ The gaze lingers and opens up: what else is there to see/sense?
- ▶ Instead of following the child in search of meaningful learning, the gaze takes in possibilities for encounters of all kinds in search of increasing complexity and organisation

AN ASSEMBLAGE OF RELATIONSHIPS

- ▶ Teachers can enable or close down children's initiation of narratives (Løkken, 2009)
- ▶ Boy has time to persist and form relationships with the pipe, sand, girl
- ▶ Boy and the pipe challenge each other in a lively encounter
- ▶ Pipe has its own ways of resisting gravity like the boy – both get up, both wobble, both are embraced by the soft and shifting sand that encourages movement and flow
- ▶ Seeing the pipe-child-sand in relationship with each other opens the gaze to the complexity and organization of the encounter

IMAGINING OTHERWISE

- ▶ Adds complexity; opens possibilities beyond seeing children in physical, cognitive, social and emotional capacities
- ▶ Moves focus from potentially extending children's cognitive understandings about wet and dry sand (more likely to occur with older children than the boy in the vignette) to curiosity about what else could be happening in these moments
- ▶ What might be happening in the intra-action between the boy, the pipe and the sand?
- ▶ The agency of the pipe and sand in the encounter suggests forces (learning?) at work in between the materials (pipe, sand) and the child
- ▶ How does the pipe act on the boy and the sand; how does the sand act on the boy and the pipe?

READING WITH INTENT TO OPEN SPACES FOR DIFFERENCES TO EMERGE...

- ▶ Makes it possible to see the assemblage as sand and pipe 'becoming with' the boy
- ▶ Creates new possibilities for meaning-making (Haraway, 2013)
 - ▶ the pipe and sand are affecting child; child is affecting the pipe and sand
 - ▶ assemblages are momentary and conditional on the intra-action among materials, space and persons; are therefore not fixed, as pedagogical documentation of this event might be/come



DIFFRACTION



CONCLUSION

(BARARD, 2007, PP. 89-90)

▶ Diffraction/differences

1. Marking differences from within as part of entangled states
2. Relationalities: differences that matter
3. Intra-acting within and as part of entangled states
4. About making a difference: practices matter
5. Respectful engagement that attends to detailed patterns of thinking of each
6. Accounting for how practices matter/making perspectives porous

▶ Reflection

1. Reflection of objects
2. Free from distortion
3. Interacting of separate entities
4. Words mirror things (nature/culture binary)
5. About finding accurate representations; gaze from afar
6. Simplify; make the other into a separate object less attentive to important details
7. Reflecting on representations

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