

International Perspectives on
Early Childhood Education and Development 11

Linda J. Harrison
Jennifer Sumsion *Editors*

Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Education and Care

Exploring Diverse Perspectives on
Theory, Research and Practice

 Springer

Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Education and Care

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 11

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Linda J. Harrison • Jennifer Sumsion
Editors

Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Education and Care

Exploring Diverse Perspectives on Theory,
Research and Practice

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Editors

Linda J. Harrison
Jennifer Sumsion
Research Institute for Professional Practice,
Learning and Education
Charles Sturt University
Bathurst, NSW, Australia

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Preface

This book is an outcome of the *International Research Symposium on Infant-Toddler Education and Care: Exploring Diverse Perspectives on Theory, Research and Practice*, held at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, a university town in regional Australia, in November 2011. The participants came from seven countries—Australia, England, Finland, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand, and the United States of America—to learn from each other by hearing *diverse perspectives talk together* and, collectively, push the boundaries of possibilities for infant-toddler research, practice and policy.

Accepting the invitation to participate in the symposium required no small commitment. Participants (and their co-authors, for many wrote with colleagues and doctoral students) were asked to provide a draft chapter about their current work as it related to the focus of the symposium and the book. Prior to the symposium, each draft chapter was distributed to two of the participating scholars, who were requested to provide a written review and critique, to be presented and discussed at the symposium. All participants were then provided with copies of all the draft chapters and invited to add to the critique and discussion of each chapter. As anticipated, these conversations not only identified commonalities of approach, but also productively addressed discontinuities and dissonances in theorising infant-toddler research and practice. Following the symposium, authors revised their draft chapter in response to the written reviews and the wider discussion.

The final versions of the chapters that appear in this book draw on and reflect an exhilarating 5 days of dialogue, generated by discussions and critiques and, in many cases, ongoing, trans-continental, post-symposium discussions. Because of the collaborative processes and sharing of ideas leading up to, and continuing throughout, the writing and compilation of the chapters, the book is unlike a *typical* edited collection. Whilst each of the chapters draws on and concentrates the existing work of the authors, the contribution each makes to scholarship also draws on the collective dialogues held during (and after) the symposium. The distillation of these conversations is formally addressed in the Prologue, the editors' Introduction, and the final chapter, which draws the chapters together in considering implications for policy in infant-toddler education and care.

Whilst this book is a tangible outcome of the symposium, the conversations and interchange of ideas that occurred outside the scheduled meetings were another, less tangible but immeasurably valuable, outcome. By bringing international authors to a regional university in Australia, we were also able to provide local researchers, doctoral students, and infant-toddler practitioners with an experience not commonly available to them—to hear and discuss international perspectives first-hand. Locating the symposium in Bathurst also provided an opportunity for international authors to be introduced to the richness of the cultures of Australian Indigenous peoples whose ancestors have been the custodians of this ancient continent for at least the past 50,000 years.

Bathurst, Australia

Linda J. Harrison
Jennifer Sumsion

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Aboriginal elder, Auntie Gloria Rogers, from the Wiradjuri nation on whose traditional lands Charles Sturt University is situated, for welcoming participants to Country. We thank, too, local artist Darren Cooper, also from the Wiradjuri nation, from whom we commissioned a panel series of paintings. The paintings were inspired by the aim of the symposium: to recognise that together we can create a larger, richer picture to inform future thinking about infants and toddlers and the educators who work with them. The symposium was supported by a generous grant provided by the Charles Sturt University Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE).

The production of this book would not have been possible without the insight and input of Kim Woodland, whose editorial expertise and administrative assistance were invaluable to us. Our thanks also go to Astrid Noordermeer-Zandee from Springer for her support in bringing this book to publication. Our preparation of the book was assisted by funds made available from RIPPLE and the School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, and we thank them for this. We offer our sincere thanks to all the authors for their contributions and also acknowledge permissions given to reproduce images from other sources.

Linda J. Harrison
Jennifer Sumsion

Prologue

Campus-Toddlers: Observations and Reflections from a *Window Ethnographer*

From the window of my office I overlook a kindergarten populated by toddlers aged one to three. As I work on this prologue I watch them from time to time. I am able to see their outdoor area and entrance door as well as into a playroom through big windows nearly touching the floor. Facing the footpath through the university campus there are similar windows. This cold winter morning an adult sat on the floor while two youngsters moved about inside—sometimes turning to the adult, sometimes to each other. Then one of them caught sight of an arriving pal on the pathway outside and ran to the window. The other one joined the first and I could see, even from on high and across the playground, how they greeted the newcomer by means of their eager body movements. The newcomer in ‘her’ stroller seemed more interested in a passing cat, but ‘her’ mother noticed the two toddlers inside the playroom and waved back at them. They then scuttled over to the entrance door as the new ‘girl’ and ‘her’ mother approached it from the outside.

Why the quotation marks around ‘her’ and ‘girl’? Because I don’t really know the child’s gender, but I could observe how ‘she’ fitted into the dominant cultural representation of girlishness dressed in ‘her’ pink coverall and carrying ‘her’ pink lunch box into the kindergarten.

Like most mothers and fathers bringing their children to this kindergarten between 8 and 9 in the morning, this mother stayed inside for just a few minutes, a fact that made me think that the process of leaving the child is relatively uncomplicated for her, the child and the kindergarten staff.

At 9.30 the same morning, 12 empty strollers were parked outside facing the big windows. Half an hour later, 12 toddlers in snowsuits and identical reflective vests accompanied by four adults carrying plastic sleds left, probably on their way to a sledding area in a nearby park. A couple of hours later, they all returned and disappeared inside for a while, probably having their lunch outside my field of vision. Soon some of the toddlers were carried outside and placed, well-insulated in duvets and sheepskin bags, into strollers and prams lined up outside the big window through which they could be watched as they took their naps.

Unlike the empirical materials underpinning the rest of the chapters in this book, my observations of these activities are not part of a scientific study. It is more a piece of an informal *window ethnography*. For me, however, watching what goes on in the kindergarten outside my window has become interesting *because* I have been influenced greatly by the chapters to follow in this book. They have contributed to directing my gaze and showing me “where to look” (Valsiner 2007). Though each chapter is unique, they share some key premises: all are focused on toddlers in different kinds of care arrangements outside their homes; all explore the varieties of social relationships and activities engaged in by the youngsters comprising the object of their investigations; and, finally, all aim to understand the lives of small children with the help of descriptions of the complex and dynamic sociocultural and material contexts in which their actions and interactions are embedded.

I will argue that (at least) three analytical dimensions are put into play throughout this book:

- A community dimension comprising social organisation, institutionalised practices, laws and regulations as well as public discourses
- An interactional dimension comprising the partially intersecting social zones of the everyday lives of small children, especially home- and out-of-home care, where they participate in face-to-face interaction
- A personal dimension involving the individual youngster’s processes of actions, interactions and meaning making as a social participant in his/her social zones

Over the last 50 years there has been a remarkable change in the ways small children are perceived within the social/psychological/pedagogical sciences. During this time, infants and toddlers have been transformed from passive, dependent egocentrics into active, meaning making and interaction seeking persons (Bruner 1987/1990, 1990; Dunn 1988; Nelson 1989; Trevarthen 1979). Within both the *new sociology of childhood* and interdisciplinary *new childhood studies*, a shared perspective has developed focusing on the social organization of childhood (Qvortrup 2009) as well as the active efforts of both individual children and groups of children to relate to other people and to comprehend the social-cultural-material world they inhabit (Corsaro 1985; James and Prout 1990). In the field of pedagogy, the focus has shifted from toddlers as persons to be cared for to persons to interact with and to help scaffold on their way into continually wider interactional spaces (Wood et al. 1976).

This interdisciplinary turn to *small children’s social participation* has been strongly affected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 of this internationally binding agreement adopted in 1989 emphasizes the right of “the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”. UNCRC (1989) Article 13 makes clear that:

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice. (p. 4)

The UNCRC has put great emphasis on the rights of children to be active participants in their social worlds. Not only has this agreement stimulated many studies of various forms of children's participation and co-decision making, but it has also strongly influenced other fields of child studies with its image of active children sharing the right to be considered full-fledged members in their own societies and more intimate social contexts. Moreover, this Convention can be seen both as a result of the participatory turn of child-oriented social sciences *as well as* an amplifier of this development in a number of disciplines. It also strongly incorporates the community level by pointing to the child's legal rights, as they should be assured by state parties. The practical implications of this assurance have much influence on parents and professionals who take care of the child and have the responsibility for the facilitation of the child's *everyday life*.

The concept of *everyday life* comprises continuing forms of participation in different arenas as well as the connections along and across participatory arenas. The vertical connections of everyday life are embedded in the axis of time along which *present* arenas and forms of participation are tied to *former* and *future* arenas and forms. The horizontal axis comprises connections across participatory arenas and forms at any given point of time. Understood in this way, everyday life can be envisaged as being lived across contexts and including spatial and relational transitions as well as various activity opportunities throughout the day. Gullestad (2006) emphasizes everyday life as a concept including both the practical organization and *doing* of daily life *and* daily life as experience. *Experiencing* everyday life can be seen as a process of meaning making (Bruner 1990) through which the child continually forms her/his self in interaction with general cultural ideas and social co-participants in her/his sociomaterial contexts.

It must be emphasized that the participatory turn does not solely concern the relationships between children and adults but extends as well to the relationships among children themselves. In the legally based discourse of the UNCRC, the concept of participation is primarily connected to the child's right to participate in decision making. However, even within this legalistic discourse, decision-making is increasingly seen as a processual endeavor (UNCRC 2009, p. 7) that may require cooperation over time. Within sociocultural theories, the concept of participation has a wider significance (Smith 2002). Here, participation points to continually ongoing processes involving children taking part in activities and relationships embedded in and shaped by the historical, material, social and cultural aspects of their communities (Bruner 1990; Rogoff 2003). This understanding requires that the focus of scientific inquiry should be directed primarily to *processes of participation* understood as necessary prerequisites for the development, learning and wellbeing of the individual child. At the same time, it also requires the analytic gaze to be focused on each child's efforts to initiate activities, to tune herself/himself into relationships with others and to create meaning in and of the situations of daily life.

In this book, the concept of space is given a prominent position. Space, of course, may refer to *geography* or *materiality*. However, space may also be seen as socially constructed and mediated. The meanings conveyed by artefacts, rooms, houses and

institutions as well as the diversity of meanings continually produced, negotiated, challenged and changed come together to shape space in certain ways for certain people. In this book we are made witnesses to how toddlers' initiatives and reactions contribute to shaping and reshaping the spaces in which they live great parts of their everyday lives. When we see space as imbued with meaning, it can then be understood as comprising sociocultural aspects of settings as well as of the meaning making activities of children.

Let us now return to the early morning observation of the toddlers in the kindergarten outside my office window. There are some aspects of this small ethnography I wish to emphasize either because they connect to central points in the chapters to come or because they foreground points that are present but not explicitly highlighted throughout the book.

The first is the scene where the newcomer arrives with *her* mother and the two children already busy in the playroom leave their activity and go to the window greeting the *girl* in her stroller. They are obviously excited by *her* arrival and they are noticed and properly greeted back by the *girl's* mother. Even if the *girl* is more occupied with the cat, *her* mother acts according to an understanding of the toddlers inside as genuinely socially oriented persons whose greeting activities qualify them for a culturally adequate response. By greeting them, as she probably would have done if one of the preschool teachers had waved at her, the mother marks the toddlers as full participants of this space. The kindergarten constitutes a space where toddlers are positioned as socially intentional actors. This positioning creates a certain kind of social arrangement calling for much more detailed, finely honed and nuanced analyses like those found in analyses of various out-of-home contexts in the following chapters.

The second point to notice is my assumption about the gender of the arriving child. *She* is dressed in pink and equipped with pink artefacts, which commonly are markers of *girlishness* in a Western, cultural context. I can also observe other children in the kindergarten who are conventionally gender marked. The *girls* are often dressed in pink, they wear small skirts or dresses, and their hair is often arranged into small ponytails or decorated with hairpins. In describing them like this, I realize that I am actually involved in a process of *othering* the girls by making the boys the neutral and unmarked gender whereas the girls are seen as distinguished from the boys' *neutral* appearance by their style of hair and clothing. The gendered ways of self-presentation are perhaps not so much the result of the toddlers' intentions as of those of their adults. The toddlers are guided into their proper gender category by means of culturally significant markers. Such processes of categorization are never innocent. As shown by many researchers, social categories such as gender, age, race, ethnicity and class do not just indicate differences but often also social hierarchies (Staunæs 2003). Belonging to several categories at the same time, the meanings of these belongings will shift for the child as the categories intersect in various ways in various spaces and situations. How processes of categorization and negotiation of meanings of intersecting categories are carried out among toddlers and between toddlers and adults in out-of-home care settings can be addressed

as part of the social construction of space. We can ask further: How does the sociospatial organization of the kindergarten influence processes of categorization? What implications of diverse categories of belonging are conveyed to and among the toddlers? How do toddlers go about exploring their space for acting and interacting *as* aged, gendered, racialized, classed persons? How are their experiences as participants in intersecting categories in their home environments met and recognized by professionals responsible for out-of-home care? The phenomena addressed in these questions are touched upon in the book, albeit implicitly and modestly conceptually elaborated.

The third point gleaned from my small store of observations is that the parents bringing their toddlers to my neighboring kindergarten spend very little time inside the kindergarten while handing over their children to the professional caregivers working there. Since I am well aware of local (ethnic Norwegian, middle-class) values of child care, I can assume that this short time span indicates that the transition of the toddler from parental to professional care is usually a smooth process for the involved parties. If so, this means that the child is rather comfortable with the transition and is able to quickly connect herself/himself to other children and adults in the kindergarten. The *experience* of the daily transition seems to be a positive or, at least, neutral one on the part of the children as well as the adults involved. This and similar micro processes of toddlers' transitions between caregivers are further explored by contributors to this book.

Being handed over from parents to staff is, however, also part of one of the repeated spatial moves the toddlers do in their everyday life. The kindergarten I observe is situated in the middle of a university campus and is populated by the kids of students and staff members. The entrance and playground is secluded from the pedestrian area of the campus by a wire fence through which the children can watch the traffic of people moving between the university buildings. From time to time I hear their "Heys" and "Helloes" as I pass and, like many others, I return a hello. Even if the gate is locked, the toddlers take initiatives to interact with the other users of the campus area. They may also come to see both their own and their peers' parents during the day. And as my small ethnography showed, the toddlers and their care persons sometimes make excursions out of the protected area of the kindergarten. So even if the playground of the kindergarten is secluded from the rest of the campus, the boundaries seem to be permeable: It is possible to pay interest to activities outside the fence and to initiate contact with people passing by. The kindergarten is a *toddlers' world* but it is situated in the midst of their parents' and other people's world of work and studies and may thus be seen as part of an intergenerational space of everyday life.

The last point I wish to attend to here is how local, cultural values contribute to the construction of space—in this case the outdoor space for the children of the kindergarten. I observed how the children and their caregivers left the kindergarten on the sledding expedition. They were all properly dressed and equipped, according to traditional Norwegian middle-class standards, for sledding in the snow. There are good sledding hills in a park about 500 meters away, so I assumed that this was their

geographical goal. Even though the kindergarten does have its own outdoor playground well equipped with play equipment, the Norwegian value of “going for a walk” (gå på tur) is pursued—even for the small ones who are so bundled up in their snowsuits they can hardly walk. Sledding as well is a highly valued activity in Norwegian society and it may be understood from what I observed and interpreted as being part of presenting the toddlers for the ideas, practices and values of *being Norwegian*. And this, too, may be understood as including the toddlers in certain processes of social categorization.

The next outdoor activity I observed—that of tucking the toddlers in their winter coveralls into duvets or sheepskin bags for their naps outside the kindergarten building—may also be understood and analyzed as part of the practice and cultural construction of *being Norwegian*. A shared value among *traditional* Norwegians is that fresh air is good for the health of babies and small children (as well as everybody else) and so they are put to sleep outside as long as the temperature is above -10°C . These ways of valuing outdoor life clearly contribute to the construction of space outside as well as inside the kindergarten and they convey central meanings of *being Norwegian*.

However, even if these practices constitute routine ways of organizing the toddlers’ everyday life in the kindergarten, there are frequent exceptions from the routines. This illustrates the multilayered nature of the cultural practices described. There are, at the same time, ideas about preferred practices, such as sledding or placing sleeping children outside, *as well as* ideas about the conditions that allow for exceptions. In later chapters, we see how routines shape the transitions from indoor to outdoor activities in the kindergartens in certain ways and at certain moments in time. Simultaneously, there are concerns allowing for exceptions, and certain of these are associated with individual children’s wellbeing. The professional caregivers in the kindergarten must keep in mind the preferred and regular practices *and* the creative practices securing the wellbeing and developmental opportunities for each and every toddler. These issues constitute a complex and dynamic space where general meaning systems as well as the idea of each child’s right to influence his/her ways of participation coexist.

In this book, a number of different out-of-home care settings are closely studied and analyzed to secure a common goal: to help readers understand by making visible for them a range of culturally embedded actions and interactions involving toddlers acting out their everyday lives in their specific spaces of care. These spaces, situated in seven different countries, differ according to international conventions, national legislation and policies, and local organization. As we shall see, these differences can be viewed as analytical contrasts helping us to grasp practices and ideas that are widely shared as well as those more locally shaped and lived. It is in this tension between the local and more general ideas and practices that the spaces for change and development can emerge.

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About the Editors

Linda J. Harrison is Professor of Early Childhood Education at Charles Sturt University, Australia, where she is a researcher in the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE). Linda holds an Honorary Fellowship with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. She has conducted large-scale longitudinal research studies investigating children's experiences of child care/early education (from infancy to middle childhood), quality in centre- and home-based child care, and children's socioemotional, cognitive and speech-language development. With Jennifer Sumsion, she co-led the 2009 development and national trial of *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Linda has a long-standing interest in the development of innovative methodologies for studying children's lives, experiences, and perspectives as they move into and through early childhood settings and school. She has written a chapter on children's drawings for the *Handbook of Research Methods in Early Childhood Education* (due in 2014) and is a co-author (with Sumsion) of a chapter on infant-toddler play in the *Handbook of Play and Learning in Early Childhood* (also due 2014).

Jennifer Sumsion is Foundation Professor of Early Childhood Education at Charles Sturt University, Australia, within the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE). She is also Co-Director of the Australian Government-funded Excellence in Research in Early Years Education Collaborative Research Network (2011–2014). Jennifer currently holds an Australian Research Council-funded grant (with Linda Harrison, Ben Bradley and Matthew Stapleton) that is investigating how infants come to develop a sense of belonging in early childhood centre-based education settings, and whether and how they also contribute to a *climate of belonging*. She has a long-standing interest in the possibilities that arise from bringing together diverse conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches as a means of re-conceptualising and addressing policy and practice challenges in early childhood education.

About the Contributors

Treshawn Anderson is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University in the USA. Her research focus is child care and teacher quality for children ages birth to three. She is currently working on her dissertation in which she will develop a scale to assess infant-toddler teachers' beliefs about education and care.

Donna Berthelsen is a Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology (Australia). Her research expertise is in the disciplines of psychology and education and her research addresses applied issues in children's learning in families, school systems, and early childhood programs, through large scale and linked studies, using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. She has a strong interest in children's participatory learning in early childhood education and has co-edited a book on this topic, *Participatory Learning in the Early Years: Research and Pedagogy*, with Eva Johansson and Joanne Brownlee in 2009.

Ben Bradley is Foundation Professor of Psychology at Charles Sturt University in Australia, where he is a researcher within the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE). Ben has been researching communication in early infancy since the mid-1970s. His first book, *Visions of Infancy* (1989), argued that infancy has provided a blank canvas for the projection of psychologists' theories—raising the question: how do infants themselves experience their worlds? Ben explored the psycho-social constitution of experience, and its past and future roles in psychology, in his 2005 book *Psychology and Experience*. In keeping with Charles Darwin's proposals about the human psyche—another of Ben's interests—his more recent research has focused on demonstrating the capacity and content of babies in infant-peer group communication, both in the laboratory, in families and in day care. Ben now has a contract with Oxford University Press to write what is improbably, the first-ever book on *Darwin's Psychology* (due in 2016).

Liz Brooker was an early years' teacher for many years before returning to higher education, where she is now a Reader in Early Childhood at the University of London (United Kingdom). Her interest in the transitions to school of ethnic minority children stemmed from her own classroom experience and was the subject of the book, *Starting School: Young Children Learning Cultures* (2002). Liz continued to study transitions, including those of young babies into their first group-care settings, producing a book, *Supporting Transitions in the Early Years* (2008), which explored the varied experiences of children from birth to five as they moved through their early environments. In the last few years, her work has focused on play, using a sociocultural perspective to describe how the contexts and contents of children's play shape their own development and that of the communities they share with others. Her *Handbook of Play and Learning in Early Childhood* appears in 2014.

Kalli B. Decker is a doctoral student in Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University in the USA. Her research focuses on mechanisms that influence early parent-child communication and investigates aspects of parent-child communication that positively influence children's language development. Kalli is also a classroom assistant at Michigan State University's Child Development Laboratory, where she works with infants, helps teachers incorporate infant signs into their classroom, and holds parent workshops related to the use of infant signs.

Sheila Degotardi is a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood at the Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University (Australia). Her research falls into two connecting themes: the first is an interest in infant-toddler pedagogy, learning and development; and the second involves exploring how intersubjectivity, relationships and interpersonal relatedness are established in both child-child interactions and adult-child interactions. In particular, she has explored children's and adults' social understanding and the ways in which this understanding is evident during their social interactions with significant others in their lives.

Robyn Dolby is a psychologist in private practice with interests in attachment, children's emotional development, and intervention for infants and children who require high support for emotional and behavioural regulation. With Eilish Hughes and Belinda Friezer she founded Secure Beginnings to provide infant mental health consultation and relationship-based training for early childhood educators. Since 1999, she has run a unique collaboration in the fields of psychiatry and early childhood involving 6-month long Child Observation Seminars for the New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry. The seminars are set in an early childhood centre and are part of the required training for child psychiatrists in New South Wales, Australia.

Peter Elfer is Principal Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies and Convenor of the Masters Programme at the University of Roehampton in the United Kingdom. Prior to this, he worked for 10 years in the Early Childhood Unit of the National Children's Bureau in London. He has a long-standing interest in the wellbeing of babies and children under three. His book, with Elinor Goldschmied and Dorothy Selleck, *Key Persons in the Nursery: Building Relationships for Quality Provision* (2003) has recently been published in Italian and a revised second edition was

published in 2011. Peter contributed to the guidance on the key person role (concerning the formation of emotional attachments between nursery staff and children) for the English Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). He is currently developing new models of professional reflection, taking close account of emotional experience in working professionally with young children, to meet the requirements of the revised EYFS.

James Elicker is Associate Professor in Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University in the USA. He teaches early childhood education and child development courses for undergraduate and graduate students. His research focuses on child care quality and adult-child relationships in early childhood programs. He is currently evaluating Paths to Quality, Indiana's statewide child care quality rating and improvement system.

Sheena Elwick is a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Charles Sturt University in Australia. Sheena has a broad range of experience in early childhood education and care both as a practitioner and as a teacher educator. As a practitioner, she has worked in long day care, mobile child care, and also primary school settings. Her current research interests include infants' lives in early childhood settings. She is particularly interested in the potential of philosophical empirical enquiry as a methodology for developing responsive and ethically reflective research pedagogies with infants in early childhood education and care contexts.

Belinda Friezer is a psychologist and art therapist. She has worked as a clinician in the area of infant-parent psychotherapy and as an Associate Lecturer in Art Therapy at the University of Western Sydney in Australia. With Robyn Dolby and Eilish Hughes she has formed the private practice: Secure Beginnings. She currently guest lectures at the Institute of Psychiatry in the Infant Mental Health program. Through Charles Sturt University, she is currently undertaking a Ph.D. on babies in long day care.

Joy Goodfellow is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer within the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE) at Charles Sturt University in Australia where, as an early childhood educator and researcher, she is involved in a number of research projects focusing on professional practice and the experiences of young children in early childhood services. Her particular interest in the Infants' Lives in Childcare project is seeking to understand, through segmented analysis of video, the developing social competence of infants in peer groups.

Liv Mette Gulbrandsen is a developmental cultural psychologist. She is a Professor of Social Work in the Department of Social Work, Child Care and Social Policy at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (Norway), where she teaches courses in intersectionality, and theories of childhood, children and child welfare practices for Master's and doctoral students. Her research interests fall within longitudinal studies with girls and boys forming their developmental trajectories in interactions with peers and adults in their sociocultural contexts. She is also conducting studies of child-related professional practices (in child welfare services, pediatric rehabilitation, kindergarten and school), and children's participation in these practices.

Tamesha Harewood is a doctoral student in Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University (USA). She has a background in human resources administration and child development, and her research merges these two disciplines to focus on the professional development of the early child care and education workforce, specifically related to supporting children's social-emotional development. Tamesha's research also includes the effects of both mothers' and fathers' mental health on children's language and behavioral development. Tamesha is a graduate assistant working on a project funded by the USA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration which seeks to promote community-wide wellness of young children from birth to age eight.

Eilish Hughes has a Master's Degree in Art Psychotherapy and in the practice Secure Beginnings she bridges early childhood practitioner thinking with psychotherapeutic understanding. Eilish is also currently employed as a consultant with KU Children's Services to develop the Marte Meo Early Childhood Training Resource alongside Robyn Dolby. She teaches on the Pedagogy of Relationships for Charles Sturt University and was previously employed as a Senior Practitioner and Team Leader with the Partnerships in Early Childhood (PIEC) program run by The Benevolent Society in conjunction with childcare and preschool organisations in New South Wales and Queensland.

Eva Johansson is Professor of Education in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Stavanger, Norway. Eva is an experienced researcher in the field of early childhood education with an extensive research and publication profile in the area of children's morality. She is engaged in questions on moral learning in early childhood education, including national and international studies on how children experience and develop morality and how teachers approach such issues in their work. Her research also includes studies on young children's learning as well as quality aspects of preschool.

Gregor Kappler is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Vienna in Austria and a data analyst for businesses needing prediction or data visualization. He has previously worked as a consultant and programmer of semantic text search in corporations. Gregor researches ontogenetic processes (socioemotional development, stress physiology), as well as categorical data, and specifically natural language data in psychology. He is fascinated with proper theoretic formalization and the meaningful visualization of statistical and Bayesian models. He investigated the dependency of categorical reliability coefficients on the number of categories in simulation studies and derived a reliability coefficient that is independent from information theoretic definitions. His latest research includes Bayesian modeling of natural language text coding systems (such as coding of implicit motives in texts describing pictures) and in Bayesian multilevel modeling.

Ashley Karsten is a doctoral student in Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University (USA). Her research focuses on early language development and children's use of infant signs, including the positive effects that infant

signs have on aspects of social and emotional development. Ashley is also a research assistant on a federally funded grant from the Institute of Education Sciences, aimed at developing a narrative language assessment for preschool-aged children; she has managed data collection and coding of young children's narratives.

Anne Kultti is a Senior Lecturer in Preschool Teacher Education at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Anne's research focuses on preschool as a learning environment, and children's communication and participation in preschool activities. Additionally, her research considers learning in preschool from the perspective of young multilingual children, through scaffolding as well as tools and artefacts. Anne has experience in the field of early childhood education as a preschool teacher.

Sharynne McLeod is Professor in Speech and Language Acquisition at Charles Sturt University, Australia, and a researcher within the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE). She is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow, an elected Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and of Speech Pathology Australia. Sharynne is Editor of the *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* and provided expertise in the development of the World Health Organization's children and youth version of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

Linda Mitchell is an Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education and Associate Director of the Early Years Research Centre at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. She has led several longitudinal policy evaluations analysing the impact of policy on pedagogy and access and has a record of publication about early years' policy. Another established area of her research and publication concerns parent and family involvement in early childhood education. She is interested in how policy frameworks can support early childhood services as democratic communities supporting citizenship and social justice. Linda has served on many government working groups and reviews and is a member of the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Research Policy Group.

Jools Page is a Lecturer in Early Childhood Education, Deputy Director of Learning and Teaching (Student Matters) and Programme Director for the Masters in Early Childhood Education (United Kingdom and Malta) in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield (United Kingdom). Jools is also coordinator of the staff seminar series on critical discussions of research and policy in early childhood education. Her research focuses on attachment relationships between babies and their key adults in group care settings and the rights of babies and young children under three. Her research has examined the complex issues of *love* and *care* in day care provision, informing her developing theory on *professional love* in early childhood education and care. Jools is lead author of the second edition of *Working With Babies and Children: From Birth to Three*, published in 2013. She has had a long career working with young children and families, and prior to taking up her role at the University of Sheffield held a key role in local policy where she was responsible for leading on practice and provision for children aged birth to 3 years.

Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden), holds a UNESCO Chair in Early Childhood Education and Sustainable Development, and is the World President of Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire (OMEP). Her research has primarily been about children learning different content in preschool practice, children's perspectives, didactic questions, and preschool as a learning environment. She is currently working on questions about education for sustainable development from an international perspective.

Frances Press is an Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education and a researcher within the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE) at Charles Sturt University in Australia. She has a long-standing research and publication record concerning early childhood policy frameworks and their impacts upon practices and pedagogy. She is interested in how government policy can better support high quality infant and toddler early childhood programs built on strong collaborations with families. She is a member of the Work and Family Roundtable in Australia, which is comprised of 31 researchers with expertise on work, care and family policy with the goal of informing good evidence-based public policy in Australia.

Karen M. Ruprecht is a Research Associate in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University (USA). Her research interests include primary caregiving and continuity of care for infants and toddlers. She is currently evaluating Paths to QUALITY, Indiana's statewide child care quality rating and improvement system.

Niina Rutanen is a university researcher in the School of Education at the University of Tampere, Finland and Docent (Adjunct Professor) at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her main areas of research and teaching focus on birth to 3-year-old children in early childhood education and care, sociocultural approaches, and application of spatial approaches in research on children's everyday life in educational institutions. Her research projects include collaboration with Brazilian research groups to discuss infant-toddler care policies and practices from a comparative perspective. She is the Vice-Chair of the Finnish Society for Childhood Studies.

Tina Stratigos is a doctoral student at Charles Sturt University in Australia. She has worked as an educator in preschool, primary school and outside school hours' settings. She is completing her Ph.D. as part of the Infants' Lives in Childcare study with a particular focus on how the politics of belonging operate for infants in family day care settings. Tina is interested in the use of visual methodologies and working with Deleuzian concepts in her research.

Claire D. Vallotton is an Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University (USA). She has previously undertaken a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)-funded postdoctoral fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In 2006, she was acknowledged with the Young Investigator Award from the World Association

for Infant Mental Health for her work on infants' use of symbolic gestures to communicate about emotions. Claire teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on early child development and observational methods for assessing behavior and development. Her research focuses on the early development and integration of social and symbolic skills in the context of child-adult relationships.

E. Jayne White is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, where she is a member of the Early Years Research Centre and Global Studies. Jayne's research focuses on interpreting the acts of very young children, including infants, through innovative methodologies. As well as contributing to, refereeing and editing several early years' journals, Jayne has co-authored a book titled *Educational Research With our Youngest* in a 2011 volume in this series. Her engagement with dialogic pedagogy and its philosophical origins includes a co-authored book, *Bakhtinian Pedagogy* (2011). She is involved in the establishment of a new online journal called *Journal of Dialogic Pedagogy*, where she is a member of the Editorial Board with special responsibility for book reviews. Jayne is currently working on an early childhood text entitled *Introducing Dialogic Pedagogy: Bakhtinian Provocations for the Early Years*—due for publication in 2015. She is Secretary of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia, where her keen interest in diverse scholarship is further fostered.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Exploring Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Education and Care

Jennifer Sumsion and Linda J. Harrison

This book has emerged from our deep and abiding interest in two interrelated questions: How can we further our understandings about early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings as they are experienced by very young children and adults? And, more specifically: What can be gained in this endeavour by bringing together diverse and sometimes seemingly oppositional theoretical and methodological perspectives? We are not alone in these interests. There is now a rich corpus of writing about the lives of infants and toddlers and early years' practitioners in ECEC settings. Indeed, infant-toddler education and care settings have become increasingly visible and vibrant sites for innovative research, as a growing number of collections illustrate (see, for example, Berthelsen et al. 2009; Johansson and White 2011; Pramling Samuelsson and Fler 2010; and special issues of the *International Journal of Early Childhood* [October 2010], the *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* [June 2011] and *Early Years: An International Research Journal* [June 2012]).

Moreover, in recent years there has been a groundswell of calls to unsettle the familiar contours of ECEC research and practice landscapes by finding ways to transcend constraining theoretical and methodological divides and dichotomies. Moss (2007, p. 233), for example, paints a picture of a landscape “occupied by many camps ... grouped together on different sides” of a paradigmatic divide. Primarily, he notes, the divide separates modernist and postfoundational perspectives. But divisions are also evident amongst the many camps occupying positions on either side. From these various camps emanate very different worldviews, assumptions and interpretations. Moss laments what he sees as lack of contact across the divide and amongst the various camps. That lack of contact, he argues,

J. Sumsion (✉) • L.J. Harrison
Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education,
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia
e-mail: jsumsion@csu.edu.au; lharrison@csu.edu.au

is perpetuated by “incommensurate discourses” that result in ideas that are coherent, clear and convincing to one camp being summarily dismissed by other camps as “invalid, unintelligible, uninteresting or incredible” (p. 233). The absence of engagement, dialogue and debate, says Moss, drawing on Babich et al. (1995), is stultifying and impoverishing. In a similar vein, Press and Skattebol (2007, p. 180) refer to a “vehemently territorial” research landscape. They join Moss (p. 236) in calling for efforts to find common ground—not through artificial consensus or denial of often profound difference, but by actively seeking spaces that offer “crossing places and observation points”. More recently, Farquhar and White (2013, p. 3), in a different but related argument, warn of the “limitations of relying on one particular set of theories bound to one philosophical orientation to the exclusion of others”, while drawing attention to the risk of trivialising epistemological and philosophical differences through the indiscriminate use of incommensurable philosophical ideas.

Welcoming the growing interest in moving beyond ingrained and sometimes acrimonious ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological divides, Brooker and Edwards (2010) note encouraging shifts in relation to research into play in ECEC settings. They argue that these shifts are especially significant given the iconic status accorded to play by some camps, and searing critiques of that iconic status by others. Brooker and Edwards advocate exploring ways in which ideas and concepts favoured by what Moss (2007) refers to as different camps, or from different sides of paradigmatic divides, can be examined relationally, not as competing or complementary, but for their “mutually illuminative” potential (p. 5). They challenge us to consider how different perspectives can be positioned and brought into conversation to enable ways of thinking “that might otherwise have remained unconsidered or invisible” (p. 5).

Calls to open up thinking in ways that transcend unproductive divides are also beginning to appear in early childhood curriculum frameworks. Australia’s first national curriculum framework for early childhood settings, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2009), for example, highlights the importance of fostering lively cultures of professional inquiry that include discussion and debate about new ideas and different theoretical perspectives. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) encourages educators to move beyond reliance on any one theory. It advocates, instead, that they ask questions such as:

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? (DEEWR, p. 13)

We are committed to working in ways that bring together in conversation ideas that, on first encounter, may seem incommensurate. We know, however, from first-hand experience across a range of endeavours, including our role in the development of the EYLF (Sumsion et al. 2009), that engaging, and working productively, with theoretical and methodological diversity is far from easy.

Such undertakings require much more than a commitment to listening to and engaging respectfully with others whose ontological and epistemological assumptions may be far removed from our own. They also require a capacity for both excitement and equanimity in the shock of encounters with the radically different *other* and openness to entertaining possibilities that may seem antithetical to our own worldviews. They demand, as well, a willingness to take on the challenges of articulating what we think our preferred theoretical and methodological resources offer. They call, too, for a preparedness to respond non-defensively to respectful but critical interrogations of our choice of resources.

Regardless of how well we might hone these capacities, some differences will remain irreducible and irresolvable. Moreover, some of the tensions that can be associated with these differences will never be entirely eradicated. Mouffe (2005) argues that relinquishing illusions of achieving a rational consensus in the face of such differences and tensions is central to successful engagement in productive pluralist democratic politics. Similarly, and in line with Mouffe's argument, we recognise the need to relinquish any illusions that bringing together diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives will achieve a consensus view about lived spaces in infant and toddler ECEC settings. Rather, our hope is that this book will provoke conversations about research, practice and policy in ways that will contribute to the lived spaces in infant and toddler settings becoming increasingly pluralist democratic spaces in which different views can be articulated and debated. Contributors to this book share this aspiration. In that sense, they might also be said to share what Mouffe refers to as a "common symbolic space" (p. 13). What they choose to highlight as important aspects of lived spaces in infant-toddler settings, however, varies markedly, as the following chapters illustrate.

1.1 Conceptualising Lived Space/s

The notion of *lived space/s* invites rich and diverse conceptualisations. In conceptualising this book, we have been influenced by ways of thinking about space emanating from various disciplines and theoretical traditions. Underpinning these diverse ways of thinking is a shared understanding that space entails far more than physical or geometrical dimensions; it is also socially and experientially constructed. Put simply, space is relational, as well as having a more concrete and material form—a notion encompassed in many disciplines and traditions by the term spatiality (Soja 1989).

Cultural geographers, for example, emphasise that there are many kinds of spaces and many different kinds of dynamics operating within those spaces. They are imagined, experienced, lived and interpreted differently by the people who inhabit them, as well as by those who have an interest in those spaces. Because space is constituted, at least in part, by social relations, it is not static or stable but rather "an ever-shifting social geometry" (Massey 1994, p. 3; Thrift 2006). Its dimensions and coordinates are multiple and fluid. They can include, amongst many other possibilities, symbolism, artefacts, practices, reciprocal influences and power relations.

Many cultural geographers, as well as writers from other disciplines including education, have been influenced by the work of Marxist philosopher and sociologist, Henri Lefebvre. For Lefebvre (1991), lived space is a particular type of social space: the *grass roots* space that is felt and experienced by the inhabitants and users of that space (for example, children and adults in infant-toddler classrooms) in negotiating the realm of their everyday lives. Lefebvre also refers to space that is *perceived* through commonsense categories, such as *the home*, *the school*, and *the early childhood centre*, as well as to space that is conceived through representations such as maps. A town planning map, for example, may identify the location of the town's early childhood centres, while architectural maps/plans identify the physical dimensions and design features of specific early childhood centres. Lefebvre highlights the *trialectical* relationships between lived space, perceived space and conceived spaces and the ways in which these different kinds of social spaces are produced, as Niina Rutanen (Chap. 2 this volume) discusses in more detail.

Phenomenologists, too, emphasise the directly experienced, felt nature of lived space. For them, lived space is about engagement in the world, or as Benswanger (1979, p. 119) describes, a "pervasive intertwining of 'self-act-world'". Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 263) sees our very existence as spatial: in other words, "being is synonymous with being situated". Space saturates our consciousness. We experience it primordially and pre-reflexively, in a "communication with the world more ancient than thought" (p. 265). As Simms (2008, p. 27) so eloquently writes in her phenomenological account of the first years of life, "spatiality is inscribed into our bodies and souls". Inscription, she explains, occurs through the senses, through desires, through curiosity. For toddlers, lived spaces are action spaces: "The toddler, called by curiosity and desire, steps into the spatial web and moves along its threads" (p. 27).

Dewey (1938/1997) uses the term *life-space* rather than *lived space*. He conceptualises life-space as accumulating life experiences. Like Simms (2008), Dewey highlights the expanding world of infants and toddlers. He notes that the infant:

... begins with an environment of objects that is very restricted in space and time. That environment steadily expands by the momentum inherent in the experience itself.... As the infant learns to reach, creep, walk and talk, the intrinsic subject matter of its experience widens and deepens. It comes into connection with new objects and events which call out new powers, while the exercise of these powers refines and enlarges the content of its experiences. (p. 74)

Our reading of Dewey is that he differs from phenomenologists in that he sees infants and toddlers engaging *with* the world rather than *being-at-one-with-the-world*. Although he emphasises the rhythms, aesthetics, and the ecological situatedness of the ever-accumulating, everyday *life-experiences* of life-spaces, his notion of life-space, as we interpret it, focuses more on the epistemological and pedagogical (understanding, learning, growing through experience) than on the ontological emphasis of phenomenologists.

Writing from a psychotherapy background, Fuchs (2007, p. 437) draws on understandings from phenomenological and ecological psychology. He contends that lived space can be thought of as an "ecological niche" that is continuously shaped through mutually responsive exchanges with one's environment. Relationships are an important aspect of that environment. According to Fuchs, distortions or blind spots

in those relationships, exchanges and habitual ways of being in the world limit possibilities for responsiveness, fluidity and movement, which, in turn, limit one's "horizon of possibilities" (p. 437). Similarly, educational philosopher Maxine Greene sees lived spaces as intensely personal spaces. In contrast to Fuchs' therapeutic focus, however, she considers them inherently liberating spaces: the realm of imagination, creativity, and escape from constraints (Greene 2000).

Inevitably, this brief survey has only touched on some of the many conceptualisations of lived space that have emerged from different disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. Nevertheless, it conveys a sense of the multiplicity of meanings associated with lived space. This multiplicity reminds us, as West-Pavlov (2009, p. 23) observes, that meanings, themselves, are "a function of the space" in which they emerge. What is important, therefore, he emphasises, is not an interrogation of the *true* meaning of lived space but rather attention to, and a questioning of, its contexts, contours and dimensions.

1.2 Past and Contemporary Explorations of Children's Lived Space

In some disciplines, the contexts, contours and dimensions of children's lived space have been of long-standing interest. For instance, in what has become known as geography of childhood, or children's geographies, foundational studies date back at least 60 years. They include Barker and Wright's (1951) minutely detailed report of a day in the life of a 7-year-old boy in the mid-West of the United States of America (USA); Diack's (1962) memories of his home, its surrounds and his early years of school in a small Scottish village; and Hart's (1979) doctoral dissertation, which reported on how the 86 children aged from 4 to 12 years living in a small town in New England (USA) experienced, understood, and used their local environment, and their *favourite places* within that environment.

In phenomenological psychology, Benswanger (1979, p. 115), in her doctoral study undertaken in the USA, explored how 1-year-old infants learned to inhabit their "vital space", how they made themselves "at home in the world", and how they began to articulate spatial dimensions of their lived experience. In the Netherlands, Langeveld (1983a, b) explored the phenomenon of secret places in children's lives. With notable exceptions (e.g., Benswanger 1979), however, early studies generally tended to focus on older pre-schoolers (aged from around 4 years), or school-aged children, in their home or out-of-school contexts.

In environmental and developmental psychology, however, there has been a history of quasi-experimental studies investigating the *spatial arrangements* of ECEC settings and their effects on very young children's behaviour. For example, in the USA, Moore (1986) investigated the effects of different levels of spatial definition on children's behaviour. By spatial definition, he meant the degree to which areas were well-defined, partially-defined, or poorly-defined, in terms of the specific activities and behaviours they were designed to promote. Included in his sample were 2-year-old children. In France, in a study that primarily involved 2-year-olds,

Legendre and Fontaine (1991) examined the effects of visual connections between different parts of the room and ease of visual contact with caregivers on children's use of space and on their behaviours. Similarly in Brazil, Campos-de-Carvalho and Rossetti-Ferreira (1993) investigated 2–3-year-olds' preferences for different types of space definition and the types of space that encouraged children to play in the vicinity of caregivers. These studies built on a substantial corpus of earlier studies of the effects of the organisation of physical space in early childhood centres.

For at least two reasons, it is a conceptual stretch to see studies such as these as investigations of lived space. Firstly, they focus on children's behaviours (as their observable and quantifiable responses to specified physical conditions) rather than experience (as subjective encounters and/or meaning making in naturally occurring circumstances). Secondly, they are underpinned by Euclidian conceptions of space as *a container* in which children's behaviours occur. Nevertheless, Moore (1986), Legendre and Fontaine (1991), and Campos-de-Carvalho and Rossetti-Ferreira (1993) all refer to the bi-directional or ecological nature of the interactions between children and the physical and social environments of their child care centres. As Legendre and Fontaine (1991, p. 2) put it, they are concerned, to varying degrees, with children's "exchanges with the milieu" and, in this respect, warrant inclusion in this brief and partial survey of conceptual and methodological diversity in investigations of children's lived spaces.

Amongst early childhood education researchers, there has been longstanding interest in the importance of physical and social environments of ECEC settings for children's learning and social experiences. Research undertaken in the USA under the auspices of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, largely stemming from the pioneering work of Prescott and Jones (1972), has been influential worldwide in identifying characteristics of environments considered to be of high quality. Debates about the codification of these characteristics (Fenech 2011; Fenech et al. 2010), through measures such as the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (Harms et al. 2006), along with intense international interest in the infant-toddler centres and preschools of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy where the environment is recognised as the *third educator* (New 2007), have since considerably broadened the conceptual, theoretical and methodological underpinnings of research into the physical and social environments of early childhood settings. There is evidence, too, of an increasing attention to spatiality in education research more broadly (Gulson and Symes 2007; McGregor 2004) flowing through into early childhood education research.

In Ireland, for instance, Kernan (2010) used notions of affordances (Gibson 1979; Kytta 2004) from ecological and environmental psychology to examine the outdoor environments of four early years' settings. Her emphasis was on children's and adults' experiences of those environments, as well as the material affordances these environments offered. To this end, her research questions included:

What does this space look like, feel like, sound like, and smell like, to children and to early years practitioners? What do children and early years practitioners value about the outdoors as part of daily life in the ECEC setting?

How much time do children spend outdoors? Who and what decides? What does this space and the wider spaces where children are taken make possible or afford? ... (Kernan 2010, p. 160)

In their visual ethnography, Prochner et al. (2008) and Cleghorn and Prochner (2012) focused on three majority world preschools—in India, South Africa, and an Indigenous community in Canada. Their specific interest was in the interplay between globalising influences and local cultural norms. Conceptually, their study was framed around ways in which children and adults inhabited the preschool space, with an analytic focus on the organisation and use of space and materials. Accordingly, their research questions included:

What lessons can we take from the design and use of space in three culturally diverse preschool settings? In what ways can the materials be seen to reflect local concerns and priorities for young children? What is the meaning of materials to children and adults in these settings? (Prochner et al. 2008, p. 189)

In an Australian study, Millei and Cliff (2014) undertook a micro *semi-ethnography* of the bathroom/toilet space in a preschool. Drawing on Foucauldian notions of power and surveillance and Lefebvre's (1991) theorising around the production of social space, they examined the interplay between the architectural design of bathroom/toilet space, with its emphasis on openness, and dominant discourses within the preschool about how that space should be used.

Research into infants' and toddlers' lived space in ECEC settings, as opposed to the lived space of older preschoolers, seems to have been slower in gaining momentum, at least amongst early childhood education researchers. There could be a number of explanations. For example, in Scandinavia, where much innovative research into the social dynamics of early childhood settings is taking place, generous parental arrangements result in a relatively low participation rate of infants aged under 18 months in these settings (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006). In the USA, where participation rates are higher, the confronting and political sensitive findings of Leavitt's (1994) controversial sociological study of the lived experiences of infants, toddlers and their caregivers may have dissuaded early childhood researchers at the time from continuing that line of inquiry—as a speculative reading of Tobin's (1995) critique might conceivably suggest.

Notably, more than a decade after Leavitt's study, the cross-national *A Day in the Life* study (Gillen et al. 2007) focused on toddlers' home lives. In its geographic and cultural reach, it is arguably one of the most ambitious contemporary studies of toddlers' lived spaces, with the 2-year-old participants drawn from seven countries: Canada, Italy, Peru, Thailand, the UK, the USA, and Turkey. In one of the reports from the study, Hancock and Gillen (2007, p. 337) document the "intimate geographies" of favourite play spaces in the homes of three participants. Each of these spaces—a family grocery shop adjoining the house in Peru; the upstairs of a house in the USA; and an apartment balcony in Italy—provided *a safe space* in a material and personal sense in that they fostered a sense of belonging, *emplaced knowledge*, and confidence in exploring other spaces. To the best of our knowledge, no equivalent cross-national study has yet been undertaken in infant-toddler ECEC settings.

To some degree, contemporary interest in the lived spaces of infants and toddlers in these settings appears to have been influenced by researchers from disciplines other than early childhood education. For example, Gallacher (2005), a cultural geographer, analyses the social geography of the toddler room in a Scottish nursery. Her analysis shows in vivid detail how the toddler participants in the study attempted to “appropriate and reconfigure space and time” in their day-to-day life in the nursery. As part a larger interdisciplinary study, Datler et al. (2010) draw on psychoanalytic perspectives to describe a toddler’s difficult transition to an early childhood centre. Although lived space is not identified as a conceptual lens, their account nevertheless illustrates the value of attunement to spatiality in understanding the lived experiences of very young children.

Infants and toddlers, of course, are not the only inhabitants of infant-toddler ECEC settings, as several early childhood education researchers with an interest in spatial analyses have recently emphasised. Rutanen (2012), in Finland, for example, employed Lefebvre (1991) to examine how early childhood practitioners structured, defined and implemented spatial practices in a toddlers’ room and the possibilities and constraints for toddlers arising from these practices. In New Zealand, Duncan et al. (2012), using methodological tools from business and health studies, mapped parents’ movements through space in five early childhood centres to identify spatial patterning in their interactions with other parents and early childhood practitioners. We envisaged the current book contributing to this momentum through its exploration of lived space, including that of adults, in infant-toddler settings.

1.3 Chapter Contributors and Their Brief

It was with broadly conceived notions of lived space in mind, then, that we extended the invitation to participate in the symposium on which this book is based to researchers/practitioner-researchers from nine countries, working in a range of disciplines. We targeted prospective symposium participants whose work, we believed, collectively had potential to showcase a rich diversity of ways of conceptualising and investigating lived spaces in infant-toddler settings. We aimed for sufficient epistemological, theoretical, methodological and cultural diversity to unsettle assumptions, invoke strong responses and generate robust discussions. We were delighted that researchers in early childhood education, developmental psychology, social psychology, speech pathology, childhood studies and policy studies accepted our invitation, thus providing reasonable disciplinary diversity. We were less successful than we had hoped, though, in achieving cultural diversity and, regretfully, had no Indigenous symposium participants.

The brief to symposium participants asked them to respond to the meanings that the construct of *lived spaces* in infant-toddler ECEC settings evoked for them. They were also requested to articulate how their chosen conceptual and methodological approaches assisted them in their endeavours to understand the nature of those spaces and the experiences of the children and/or adults inhabiting those spaces.

Decisions about whether or not to engage specifically with explicitly spatial framings were left to participants; however, we gestured to possibilities such as relational spaces, interactional spaces, transitional spaces, curriculum spaces and pedagogical spaces within the social, physical and temporal environments of infant-toddler settings. Decisions about age parameters concerning infancy or toddlerhood were also left to participants.

One of the difficult decisions we needed to make concerned the nature and extent of contextual detail that we would ask symposium participants to provide, particularly in relation to different ECEC policy settings. Although policy landscapes and their effects are an undeniably important dimension of spatiality (Gulson and Symes 2007), ultimately word-space limitations precluded in-depth attention to them. Instead, we suggested that participants provide only the minimum policy details required for readers to make sense of the micro-contexts on which they report in their respective chapters. In the final chapter, policy analysts Frances Press and Linda Mitchell take up policy considerations by reflecting on issues arising for them from symposium discussions and their reading of the penultimate draft of this volume.

The eclectic mix of chapters that follow, we believe, vindicates our decision to provide minimal guidance concerning how the notion of lived spaces might be interpreted. The coupling of *lived* and *spaces* seemed to open up many possibilities for a wide variety of interpretations that, in turn, has yielded a rich amalgam of constructs, perspectives and descriptions of practices—or as West-Pavlov (2009, p. 19) might say, a richly textured “medium woven of the relationships between subjects, their actions, and their environment”. This richness and texture serves the intent of the book well, for, as Benswanger (1979) reminds us, “we come to understand spatiality by attending to its subtle meanings and permutations” (p. 114). But, inevitably, it also raises complications and challenges, for us as editors. For example, how to articulate and represent that richness, and those subtleties and permutations? How to capture and convey the spirit of robust but respectful dialogue and debate that imbued the symposium discussions? How to acknowledge some of the irresolvable tensions arising from pronounced epistemological, theoretical and methodological differences and some of the common ground, intersections or mutually recognisable observational points nevertheless achieved? And, not least, how to do so within the constraints of the textual conventions of a single, edited volume?

1.4 Ways of Reading This Book

The richness and diversity of perspectives across the chapters also potentially poses challenges for readers in terms of the ground that is covered and the deliberate absence of a single, unifying, epistemological standpoint. At this point, we want to emphasise that this book is not intended to be read as a linear unfolding of sequentially organised ideas. Nor does it represent a grouping of chapters under over-arching topic areas, although we have placed chapters reflecting similar interests, such as emotion or communication, adjacent to each another. Rather, it offers multiple

entry points. In the remainder of this chapter, we sketch some alternative ways of approaching the book from various locations on what might loosely be considered a modernist-postfoundational continuum. We use the metaphor of a continuum in an endeavour to avoid perpetuating the unhelpful paradigmatic divides referred to by Moss (2007) and others. Two of the approaches we describe take up the idea of a matrix, while the third invokes the concept of assemblage. In a sense, each approach is double-layered—it offers a way of reading the book that, in turn, may mediate how one might *read* the landscapes of lived spaces in infant-toddler settings.

One way of approaching the book is with the aim of superimposing on and across the chapters a series of grids or matrices constructed around the reader's interests. Such lattice-like structures can assist in categorising and organising diverse ideas and content by offering a relatively stable analytic framework with relatively fixed coordinates. One axis of a matrix, for example, might comprise common *routines*, such as arrival, group time and mealtime, as key spatial-temporal features of infant-toddler settings. The other axis might comprise key aspects of educators' practices, for example, when interacting with children during routine times and in organising the environment to scaffold routines. In much the same way that coding matrices are sometimes used in the analysis of qualitative data (see, for example, Saldaña 2009), this type of approach can lend itself to a systematic consideration of what various chapters offer concerning educators' practices with respect to routines, as well as to a comparative reading across chapters.

This kind of analytical matrix could be superimposed, for instance, on the four chapters concerned with meal times: Chap. 4 by Sumsion, Stratigos, and Bradley, which is concerned, in part, with the spatial arrangements and lunch time routines established by the educator in a family day care setting; Chap. 6 by Johansson and Berthelsen, which focuses on rules and expectations of compliance during a supposedly less formal meal routine of sharing of a birthday cake; Chap. 11 by Kultti and Pramling Samuelsson, which analyses teachers' communicative practices in guiding in fostering multilingual children's participation in routines, including mealtimes and group times; and Chap. 12 by Vallotton, Harewood, Karsten, and Decker, which describes very young children's use of gestures and modelled infant signs to engage their caregivers, including to initiate mealtime routines. The same matrix could also be used to examine the spatial arrangements and interactional patterns established by practitioners to support children during their arrival at the centre, as described by Dolby, Hughes, and Friezer in Chap. 7.

This kind of approach has similarities to mathematical understandings of matrices as structures into which relevant numbers, symbols or expressions can be inserted to provide a partial or comprehensive breakdown of an entity, in this case, lived spaces of infant-toddler settings. The quantitative analyses of children's time spent with peers by Harrison, Elwick, Vallotton, and Kappler in Chap. 5, and of their words and communicative gestures by McLeod, Elwick, and Stratigos in Chap. 13, could be said to encapsulate mathematical connotations of matrices. Matrices derived from mathematical traditions are often constructed with the intent of arriving at a solution, or, as interpreted here, as a plan of action. Accordingly, this approach could lend itself, for example, to evaluating the relevance of ideas discussed

in a particular chapter or across a set of chapters to a particular infant-toddler setting, or to a particular policy context, in order to decide which ideas to prioritise, momentarily set aside, or discard.

A second way of approaching the book is to draw loosely on biological, rather than mathematical, connotations of a matrix. In lay person language, within biology, the term matrix can refer to the “fine material used to bind together the coarser particles of a composite substance” (Soanes and Stevenson 2003, p. 1084). Conceivably, *fine material* might include features and components of lived space in infant-toddler settings that are not readily discernible through the analytical grids of the kind described above, which are arguably more suited to identifying the *coarser particles* of lived space. Fine materials might be those that are liable to fall through the gaps of those lattice-like structures. Focusing on the *fine material*, therefore, could involve paying attention to the less tangible nuances and sometimes ephemeral experiences of lived spaces, such as the emerging sense of belonging experienced by toddlers making the transition to an early childhood setting, as conveyed by Brooker in Chap. 3; fleeting encounters and negotiations with peers as described by Goodfellow in Chap. 15 and by Rutanen in Chap. 2; and the intimacy of infants’ bodily engagement with their teachers, evoked by White in Chap. 16.

A third approach involves conceptualising this book, and lived space in infant-toddler settings as an assemblage. Similarly to the term matrix, assemblage is a term conceptualised and used in different ways. Common to most conceptualisations, however, is the notion of a complex combination of diverse and often seemingly unrelated ideas, materials, objects, influences, forms, parts and people interacting together to form an entity or whole (De Landa 2006). Assemblages can be found anywhere. Cities, for example, “are assemblages of people, networks, organizations, as well as a variety of infrastructural components, from buildings and streets to conduits for matter and energy flows” (pp. 5–6). Similarly, lived spaces in infant-toddler settings are assemblages—of people, relationships, organisational practices, infrastructure, materials and flows of energy. Approaching the book in this way, we suggest, requires an appreciation of three crucial qualities of assemblages.

Firstly, assemblages are non-hierarchical. As no part of an assemblage is more important than the other, none of the ideas, objects, influences, people, or so on, in the assemblage take precedence over any other (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Consequently, as editors, we have deliberately refrained from taking any kind of evaluative stance toward the diverse, sometimes conflicting ideas presented across the chapters. Nor have we offered readers any critical guidance. Rather, following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we encourage readers to take from the book ideas that resonate with them with the intent of putting them to work to explore what new ways of thinking about lived space of infant-toddler settings they make possible.

Secondly, the non-hierarchical nature of assemblages also means that they have no particular starting or entry point. Rather, we see the book having multiple entry points and offering multiple pathways. We urge readers, therefore, to read rhizomatically rather than in a linear manner, following lines of inquiry that interest them.

Readers who are primarily interested in theoretical perspectives on space and spatiality, for example, might like to follow interconnecting threads linking

Rutanen's discussion of Lebevre's spatial triad (Chap. 2), Sumsion et al.'s endeavours to work with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of mapping (Chap. 4) and White's dialogic approach to Bakhtin's conceptualisation of chronotope (Chap. 16). Readers with a particular interest in emerging methodologies that have potential to enrich understandings of lived spaces of infant-toddler settings might want to turn initially to any combination of Harrison et al.'s chapter about Time-Use Diary methodology (Chap. 5), Elicker, Ruprecht, and Anderson's review of caregiver-child observation systems (Chap. 10), and Degotardi's multi-perspectival approach to understanding data (Chap. 14). For readers interested in the personal and emotional experience of early childhood educators' practice as a dimension of these lived spaces, fruitful entry-points might be Dolby et al.'s description of the Playspaces structure (Chap. 7), Elfer's account of educators' facilitated conversations in Work Discussion groups as a form of reflective practice (Chap. 8), and Page's conceptualisation of caring relations between educators and infants as *professional love* (Chap. 9).

Readers who want to explore relational dimensions of lived space are likely to find multiple threads connecting several chapters: for example, Degotardi's focus on intersubjectivity (Chap. 14); Goodfellow's interest in shared experience and infant-initiated encounters (Chap. 15); Johansson and Berthelsen's attention to the role of structures in mediating interactions (Chap. 6); and Brooker's account of toddlers' agency in appropriating space to facilitate the building of relationships (Chap. 3). For readers interested specifically in verbal or alternative forms of communication as a dimension of relational space, Kultti and Pramling Samuelsson's focus on communicative practices in multilingual early childhood settings (Chap. 11), Vallotton et al.'s account of infant signing as a means to enhance caregivers' understandings of children's thoughts and feelings (Chap. 12), and McLeod et al.'s comparison of infant-toddler talk in home and early childhood settings (Chap. 13), are likely to be of interest.

There are, of course, numerous alternative possibilities for tracing interconnecting threads through and across various combinations of chapters. For example, for readers interested in how the experiences of one child, who appears in several chapters under the pseudonym of Charlie, have been interpreted from multiple and very diverse perspectives to build a multilayered portrayal of his lived space, might be enticed to link Chaps. 4, 13 and 16.

The third characteristic of assemblages we consider crucial to this book is that the properties of an assemblage emerge from interactions between its various parts. Because these interactions are continual and often unpredictable, assemblages are always changing and never static. Consequently, the book can offer readers no definitive conclusions or answers. Nor can it offer a comprehensive account of the lived spaces of infant-toddler settings. What it can offer, however, is a generative space for the emergence of new possibilities through the interactions of what, at first glance, may seem disparate and disconnected ideas. As Koro-Ljungberg and Barko (2012, p. 257) point out, "it is exactly this ... disconnection that puts ideas, thoughts, and concepts in motion". In turn, we would add, it is from this motion that new conversations, insights and understandings continue to be produced.

1.5 Concluding Thoughts

In writing this introductory chapter, we have sought to provide a background to the diverse theoretical, conceptual, methodological and practical perspectives that are described in the chapters in this book, and alternative ways that readers might approach their diversity. Despite the multiple entry-points and pathways that these chapters offer to an expanding and deepening understanding of lived spaces in infant-toddler settings, inevitably there are other possible lines of inquiry that are not represented. As Gulbrandsen notes in the Prologue to this volume, for example, social categories such as gender, class, culture and ethnicity and the dynamics through which they are reinforced, contested or otherwise negotiated receive relatively little attention. Likewise, there are alternative theoretical/conceptual frames that could have been drawn upon. Architectural perspectives, such as those described by Dudek (2011, p. 87), who argues that “children understand the quality of a space”, would give emphasis to the aesthetic dimensions of infant-toddler spaces; while a semiotic lens, as described by Gaines (2006) would focus, for instance, on how children interpret images, signs, and spatial arrangements of everyday objects in those spaces. Similarly, research into non-traditional ECEC services, such as forest kindergartens, would bring greater attention to children’s experiences in outdoor and natural spaces, an area briefly touched upon by White (Chap. 16 this volume). Notions of *conceptual space*—interpreted by Fleer (2010, p. 15), for example, as promoting children’s engagement in “dialectical relations between everyday concept formation and scientific concept formation” also warrant further explorations as an aspect of lived spaces in early childhood settings. As we have already intimated, however, no book can be comprehensive. Indeed, we believe that a strength of this book is that its inclusions *and* omissions collectively call out for further work. This is not a book that provides readers with definitive answers or any closure concerning the complexities of the lived spaces of infant-toddler settings. Rather, we hope and anticipate that it will provoke new questions, new methodologies, and new interpretations and points of departure.

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Chapter 2

Lived Spaces in a Toddler Group: Application of Lefebvre's Spatial Triad

Niina Rutanen

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the everyday life of toddlers in a Finnish day care centre from a spatial perspective. The chapter is based on a research project that aims to investigate toddler group care by applying a spatial perspective to the analysis of everyday practices.¹ The intent of this chapter is to illustrate how the ideas of Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), a French philosopher, sociologist and Marxist intellectual, can be useful in thinking about institutional practices, and children's everyday life in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. The chapter begins with an introduction to Lefebvre's (1991) ideas on the social production of space. His spatial triad of conceived, perceived and lived space is presented as a starting point for the analysis of everyday life. To illustrate the relevance of these ideas to ECEC contexts, the chapter then draws on data from an empirical case study. Three episodes are discussed as snapshots to illustrate the social production of space in free play events among 1–3-year-olds, with a particular focus on the lived spaces of toddlers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the wider applications of Lefebvre's spatial perspective to toddler group care, and the implications of this perspective for understanding young children's everyday lives.

¹The project is led by Niina Rutanen. Kaisa-Reeta Laitila and Elisa Tanner have been working on their Master's thesis as part of the project. The project includes collaboration with the Brazilian Research Center on Human Development and Early Childhood Education (CINDEDI), at the University of São Paulo. For more information, see <https://invisibletoddlerhood.wordpress.com>

N. Rutanen (✉)

School of Education, University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland

e-mail: niina.rutanen@uta.fi

2.2 Lefebvre's Production of Space and Spatial Trialectics

Henri Lefebvre's extensive writings are based on a fusion of idealist and materialist notions, together with critiques of structuralism, phenomenology and existentialism (Lefebvre 1991, 2004; also Elden 2004). In his historical analysis of the production of space, Lefebvre identifies different modes of production throughout history—ranging from natural space to the abstract space of capitalism and related spatialities, whose significance is (socially) produced. For Lefebvre (1991, p. 83), space is not a *thing*, but a set of relations—it implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships. Space is neither a fixed setting for action, but “the outcome of past actions... space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others” (p. 73).

Lefebvre develops a unitary theory of space that involves three dialectically interconnected dimensions, i.e., *moments*, of the production of space. While remaining sensitive to their interrelations and divergences, he refers to these moments as *conceived space* (representations of space), *perceived space* (spatial practices), and *lived space* (representational space) (Lefebvre 1991). Collectively, they constitute Lefebvre's *spatial trialectics*.

Conceived space (representations of space) is space as a “mental construct, *imagined space*” (Elden 2004, p. 190). For Lefebvre (1991), it is “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to *frontal* relations” (p. 33). It is the conceptualized space, the abstract, the mental and the geometric: “the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers...” (p. 38). It is the space represented and planned; it can be manifested, for example, in maps, designs, institutional rules and symbols (Zhang 2006, p. 221).

Perceived space (spatial practice) is the observable, the concrete and the physical: it “embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each formation” (Lefebvre 1991, p. 33). It is the space appropriated, dominated, generated and used; it is visible, for example, in the physical movement of people and the flow of material, money and information (Zhang 2006, p. 221).

Lived space (representational space) is the “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre 1991, p. 39). *Lived space* is directly experienced social space; it is subjective, bodily lived experience. It involves “more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs” (p. 38). Lived spaces are the results of the dialectical relation between conceived and perceived spaces; it embodies both of them without being reducible to either (Zhang 2006, p. 221).

This trialectical perspective moves away from investigating space (as location, context, physical or material entity or preexisting given) or *things in space* to *processes of production of space*. These processes of spatial relations are often contradictory, conflicting, and most of all, political. Space is produced and the production of space

has an important role in the reproduction of social relations of production. In his interpretation of Lefebvre's writings, Elden (2004, p. 44) clarifies Lefebvre's concept of production: it refers to the production of things, but also to the production of institutions and knowledge. This sense of production underlines the interlinkedness of material and mental production: "our mental interaction with the world, our ordering, generalizing, abstracting, and so on produces the world that we encounter, as much as the physical objects we create" (p. 44).

In line with post-structuralist and postmodern critical discourse, Lefebvre's interests are on the centrality of power struggles in production of space. Lefebvre draws parallels between the development (and hegemony) of capitalism and the production of *abstract space* (conceived space) as, according to his analysis, both have created homogenization and hierarchization. The three dimensions (moments) in the production of space are hierarchical in the sense that for Lefebvre (1991), in the capitalist social world, the *conceived space* is the dominant space. The *lived space* is dominated by the representations of the ones in power; the ones who plan, design and work with their abstractions projecting their understandings back onto the lived level (see also Elden 2004, p. 189). However, the everyday life and lived space are also sources for surprises and alternatives, for creative diversions and new practices.

2.2.1 Putting Spatial Triad into Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care

Complex global and local processes, policies, hierarchies and powers are involved in the planning of space in/of ECEC contexts that, in many ways, are linked to the spatial patterns of everyday life in day care centres. ECEC practices are constructed on the basis of legislation, national and local policies, plans and curricula, all inter-linked and mixed with the local culture, resources and the practitioners' aims and ideals. The policy documents, the guidelines and the local, unit and child specific curricula can be seen as producing written representations of space (*conceived space*) for ECEC. By describing the values, the aims and giving examples for practice, they draw a rough map, a road plan, for the spatiotemporal practices (Rutanen 2011). The *perceived space* of spatial practices, consists of the flow of labour, information, and physical movement of the people within this setting (see, for example, Zhang 2006). Linked to *conceived space* and *perceived space*, there is the lived space, a space of pure subjectivity, of human experiences (Watkins 2005) "of people's sense-making, imagination, and feeling—that is, their local knowledge—of the organisational space as they encounter it" (Zhang 2006, p. 221). It is the symbolic meanings enacted in a spatial form, as *lived space* in a day care centre. As Schmidt (2011) clarifies: "place occurs when spaces have acquired particular meanings through the interactions of people with/in that space" (p. 22).

Like Lefebvre, various authors argue that these three moments should not be treated as separate categories. Zhang (2006, p. 221) likens conceived space,

perceived space and lived space to three cameras projecting onto a particular event simultaneously. Hence, different interlinked, overlapping spaces can exist in the same physical location, such as an infant-toddler group care setting. Moreover, as this discussion has highlighted, space is not only a concrete location but a product of representations and images.

2.2.2 *Rhythms and the Body*

In his later writing, Lefebvre emphasizes the centrality of body in the production of space; for him, the production of space is “invariably tied to human corporeality” (Zhang and Beyes 2011, p. 15). He understands the body as a collision of the biological and social, and the starting point for the analysis of rhythms (Lefebvre 1991, 2004; Elden 2004, p. 197). Bringing together time and space, Lefebvre (1991, 2004) proposes *rhythmanalysis* as an analytic method.

Rhythmanalysis addresses the coming together of the biological and social timescales, the rhythms of bodies and societies. Each rhythm has its own specific measure: speed, frequency, and consistency (Lefebvre 2004, p. 10). *Cyclical rhythms* (e.g., day, night, months, hours) include simple repetition in intervals, different from *linear or alternating rhythms* (e.g., routine, encounters, succession). Rhythms include a struggle between measured, imposed, exterior time and rhythm, and a more endogenous time and biological rhythm; for example, in the day care centre one could think of the official, routine, public and social rhythms which superimpose themselves on the multiple rhythms of the body. In other words, in addition to individual rhythms of the body, the body also bends to particular and historically specific rhythms of the social group (Lefebvre 2004, p. 39).

The following empirical case will discuss the analysis of various rhythms (e.g., endogenous, social) as part of the spatial trialectics of *conceived, perceived* and *lived space* in the context of ECEC. The participants in ECEC—children and adults—are equipped with particular biological rhythms that encounter and overlap with the various rhythms imposed by the institution. For understanding any event in everyday practices, it is beneficial to move the gaze to the wider context (rhythms) of the group and the institution. It is in the bodies of the children and the adults where these different rhythms collide and constrain the actions.

2.2.3 *Ethnographic Fieldwork and Interpretative Analysis of the Practices*

One group of 1–3-year-olds in a Finnish day care centre was selected for the study. The group included 13 children aged 17–34 months and three practitioners: one preschool teacher and two nursery nurses. One child attended the group part-time. A 2-month period of ethnographic fieldwork included observational field notes,

video recordings, maps of children's movements, in addition to video elicited interviews with the practitioners and audio recordings of their team meetings.

The video recordings are the primary source of data for the analysis undertaken here. The recordings during 11 days (about 12 h altogether) covered both routine events (such as lunch time) and non-routine events (such as play) (Brownlee et al. 2004). After the general transcription of the visual content of all the video footage, the data for analysis was limited to episodes where one focus child (Lauri, 17 months)² appeared. From a total of 9 h and 50 min of footage involving Lauri, one free play event comprising three episodes was selected for more detailed qualitative microgenetic analysis (Branco et al. 2004; Rossetti-Ferreira et al. 2004). These episodes are used to illustrate the different spatial dynamics present in the free play event. They constitute snapshots into everyday life in the day care centre through the simultaneous coming together of conceived space, perceived space (practices) and lived space.

2.2.4 *'Free Play' Within the Rhythm of the Day*

Within the institutional structure of the day care centre, a fixed daily timetable guided the general time space movements for the whole group. The rhythms of the group were synchronized with the rhythms of the whole day care centre; with respect to the detailed planning of the working shifts of the professionals, parents' working hours, cleaning hours, mealtimes, and nap times of the children that repeated daily, and many other rhythms. Clearly, in Lefebvre's (2004) terms, these have both institutional and social origins, as well as biological (endogenous) origins, such as children's need for sleep and food. In practice, however, it is impossible to separate the social and the biological: children's needs (for sleep, rest, care) are socially and culturally constructed within and by the institutional structure. The linear rhythms, with some daily repetition (routine, daily rhythms) are interlinked with the cyclical rhythms of day-night and months.

Within the context of the daily rhythm, the free play events had a repetitive nature, yet the perceived space (spatial practices) was open to changes (Lefebvre 1991). A variety of aspects, including the weather conditions for outdoor play, the size of the group, and the number of practitioners present had an impact on the forming of the free play event within the daily routine. In addition, the conceived space (plans, curricula, legislation, architectural planning of the space) is reproduced together with the spatial practices; a clear example is the writing and redrafting of the child-specific early education plans throughout the fall semester. These plans, which are supposed to give a general guideline for the practitioner, are defined together with the parents, usually after the child has been attending the day care for some weeks.

²Children's names are pseudonyms.

2.2.5 *Overlapping Spaces*

The following discussion draws on video recordings selected from one morning. During that morning, the free play event unfolded in three different episodes that, together, lasted for about 5 min. Even across this short time span, they can be used to illustrate and test Lefebvre's ideas on the social production of space.

From an *interactional point of view* (Pedrosa and Carvalho 2006), and focusing on the co-construction of meanings among children, the first episode includes a process of transformation from initiatives and mutual attention to interaction.

Episode 1 Hat exchange (05102010_1/8_00.34–04.00)³

Ritva, the preschool teacher, sits by the small table. Altogether, seven children are in the room; some children are a bit further away, some are very close to her with different toys, such as dolls and puzzles. Ritva pays attention to children around her, particularly to Venla [26 months] and Olivia [28 months] who enter into an argument. Then, Lauri [17 months] moves to Ritva's lap and Ritva moves a knitted hat from her head to Lauri's head.

Now Lauri [who has the hat] and Venla stand next to the small table, side by side. Lauri hits the table, gazing towards Venla. Venla observes him, and repeats the movement. Venla looks around, and meanwhile, Lauri grasps the knitted hat. He waves the hat towards Venla and touches her head with the hat. Venla extends her hand towards him, and says: "Give it".

Suddenly, Ritva moves her attention to them and says: "Don't, don't take it, its Lauri's [the rest of the sentence is unaudible]". Ritva pushes Venla a bit further from Lauri. Her attention returns to Olivia who is talking to her.

Lauri moves towards Venla and offers the hat: "tata ta [vocalizations]". Venla grasps the hat. Ritva shifts her gaze and while talking to Olivia, moves the hat back to Lauri's hand. Venla gazes at Lauri then moves away.

Lauri's gestures of hitting the table and gazes are responded to by Venla, and as such, the gestures gain a status of an initiative. The two toddlers establish mutual attention and Venla imitates the movements of hitting. As the mutual attention is established, regardless of momentary disruptions, Lauri's offering of the hat is also interpreted as an initiative by Venla and she responds with gestures and verbalizations.

When applying Lefebvre's terms, the analysis moves away from the action of the individuals to observe the social production of space, particularly, the spatial trialectics, the bodies and the rhythms present in the event. As a starting point, the conceived space and the perceived space (spatial practices) seem to be in union: the time in between breakfast and outdoor activities in the timetable is allocated for children's free play, for their interaction and use of objects such as toys and books.

In the event, the adult is the central figure, sitting on the chair and observing children; she is the only one in a stable position throughout the episodes. Similarly to Musatti and Mayer (2011), here the spatial position of the adult is relevant in the structuring of the children's activities and their attentional focus. Various children move around the teacher, sometimes approaching her and other children in different ways. The event is characterized by *various rhythms of the moving bodies* that can

³Transcriptions from the video recordings are marked in the following way, e.g., 05102010_1/8_03.00–04.30; 05102010=day, month, and year of the recordings; 1/8=the number of the recording(s) in total on that day; 03.00–04.30=time log.

be described as the rhythms of the group (movement, approaching-distancing, encounters) and rhythms of the individual children (biological rhythms, initiatives). These rhythms exist in parallel; some have clear similarities, while others diverge. Even though the focus is on the two children—Lauri and Venla—the social space includes movements, sounds and laughter in the background.

In this episode, the space in production includes the production of (children's) lived space as *interactional space* (Pedrosa and Carvalho 2006); it also includes a successful exchange of an object (hat) that begins to define the relation between the children in this event. Originally the teacher offered the hat to Lauri, while he was in a privileged position on the teacher's lap. This new exchange (rhythm) between the two children is disrupted by the teacher, who interprets the co-regulations between them as signs of an emerging conflict. The teacher's intervention with reference to rules that are also familiar to the children is a *sudden event* in the episode, breaking the rhythm of the construction among the children. The teacher is also following her original initiative: Lauri had ownership of the hat. Lauri, on the other hand, first accepted and then resisted by changing the meaning of the hat from being his possession to being an exchange object between him and Venla.

Here, the *conceived space* (representations of space) that is part of the spatial triad taking place, encompasses not only the ideals or representations for the physical space of the day care (e.g., floor plan), but also the role of the teacher and the goals for the different moments described in the daily timetable. The conceived space refers to the roles, to the order implied, the abstractions that guide the relations (of production) in the practices (Lefebvre 1991, p. 33). Here, the institutional role of the teacher to care and educate includes surveillance of the events in general, but it also brings forth divergent goals that include both individual attention to children's needs on the one hand, and to the necessity to follow the routines and daily timetable on the other hand. In this event, the teacher balances observing and responding to individual children, but also attends to the general guidance of the event and the group. Following Lefebvre (1991, p. 77), the socially produced space includes a diversity of objects, both natural and social, and relations; here, relations of power as the teacher steps in to redirect the event.

With respect to *conceived space* (representations of space), the teacher refers to the previously constructed rules of the day care ("not to take from someone's hand") that guide the construction of the practices. As children have established a joint rhythm of exchange, they soon return to their coordinated action of offering and taking that has already emerged. Again, the teacher intervenes and children separate. It is through these corporeal enactments that space is produced and transformed: "... lived spacing interprets conceived spacing and routine spatial practices via human bodies" (Zhang and Beyes 2011, p. 34). For Lefebvre (1991, p. 203), the body unites the different rhythms and the handling of both material and abstract tools.

2.2.6 *Controlling and Redefining the Space*

Lefebvre (2004, p. 383) talks about counter spaces, about deviant or diverted spaces, that have escaped the control of the established order. Various groups,

such as children, are capable of diverting homogenized space to their own purposes and “a theatricalized or dramatized space is liable to arise” (Lefebvre 1991, p. 391). The modifications of space depend on the body (Lefebvre 1991, p. 174).

In the next example, Olivia sits in a spatially clearly defined area: on a bean bag chair. She resists Lauri’s approaches (rhythm) and defends the *territory*, i.e., the boundaries that she had established around a particular spatial location.

Episode 2 “Don’t push me” (05102010_1/8_04.00–04.15)

After interaction with Venla, Lauri moves away from the table and goes to Olivia who lies on a bean bag chair. Lauri now lifts the hat towards Olivia’s head. Olivia screams and backs off: “Don’t push me!” Lauri gazes at the hat in his hands, and moves away a little. Looking at him, Olivia repeats: “Don’t push me”.

Lauri’s initiatives towards Olivia are met with open resistance, similar to the responses Olivia has so far given to other children. The exchange relation that was earlier established between Venla and Lauri didn’t occur and Lauri withdraws from the event. The children’s personal territories were usually very clearly definable and linked to the material environment: a chair, a corner in a sofa, bean bag chair, mattress, or a toy or other object that the child was holding or reaching for. The others’ initiatives in intervening and entering the territory were sometimes responded to with cries or strong rejection (verbally or nonverbally). In other words, within the same physical space, there were spaces not accessible to all.

With respect to *conceived space* (representations of space), the event includes a negotiation about ownership status and power in defining the meaning of the spatial location. According to the general framework of the day care, children should have equal access to physical locations and objects in the day care, excluding children’s private lockers, beds and clothes. Here, however, Olivia gains control of a specific location and introduces an explicit temporary dominance over the location, a temporal ownership by protecting the location from Lauri’s approach, similar to what Lefebvre discusses as a “relatively” forbidden territory (1991, p. 193). In the event of Lauri approaching her, she refers to the general rules of order (“no pushing others”).

In Lefebvre’s terms, the rhythms diverge: an approach, a gesture, an offer that is consistent conflicts with resistance, authority, confrontation, and strong bodily expressions of rejection. Exchange of objects, that was earlier established, fades away. Lefebvre talks about the *bodily desires* that create a platform for contradictory spatial constellations. Following Zhang’s and Beyes’s (2011) interpretation, lived spacing is not a “disconnected places of resistance and otherness”, but “it is through bodily desires...that experiences of spaces seek to alternate and challenge existing spatial designs and practices” (p. 34).

2.2.7 Entrance into Jointly Constructed Symbolic Space

In the next episode, the focus is again on the larger group. Lauri observes the overall event and changes his initiatives towards the others.

Episode 3 Offers and acceptance (05102010_1/8_04.15–05.30)

Lauri observes Ritva [the teacher], who now has other children around her. They offer 'food' for her to eat from cups and plates. She pretends to eat and comments to children: "Wonderful cake". Lauri looks around and then runs to another room. Soon he comes back and offers a plate. Ritva says: "Thank you" and pretends to eat. Two other children also offer her food by hand and from a plate, and Ritva repeats the eating gestures.

Again, as in Episode 1, the teacher is the central figure, remaining in a stable position. Her earlier presence by the table, drinking her morning coffee, has been an affordance for a construction of a symbolic play, a lived space that is based on an offer; an acceptance of rhythm and routine among the children and the teacher. The group is working in union. Children's bodies are moving in alternating movements towards the teacher, approaching her and then again distancing her, keeping her at the centre.

Lauri observes the others' movements and initiatives towards the teacher, interprets the overall event and then constructs a way to participate in the previously emerged frame of play: *offering food, accepting the offer* and *eating*. Lauri's actions are intentional and planned: he moves to the other room to get the appropriate object to participate in the exchange. With this gesture Lauri moves from an observational position to the center of the exchange routine and rhythm of the group (see also *peripheral position* by Monaco and Pontecorvo 2010). Exchange now occurs, as in previous episodes, but with a different object.

Earlier studies of 1–2-year-old children show that at this age early peer relations start to emerge: familiar children pay attention to each other; they engage in reciprocal interactions and express pleasure in shared activity (Musatti and Panni 1981; Shin 2010). With repeated encounters and daily familiarity, children start to build ritualized codes and a shared *peer culture*. Studies have illustrated in detail children's use and reconstruction of meanings of communicative codes, such as ritualized gestures, idiosyncratic gestures and linguistic segments (Pedrosa and Carvalho 2006). The current analysis, which emphasizes territories and spatial practices together with interaction among peers, underlines the spatial and material embeddedness of children's actions and meaning construction. It is with the affordances of the material that the play spaces are created in interaction and relationships are established among children. The ownership of the shared, public, material objects is temporarily negotiated as well as power relations that define the lived space, i.e., the content of the spatial productions that are taking shape.

2.3 Concluding Thoughts

This work has used Lefebvre's (1991, 2004) ideas on social production of space as heuristic tools to investigate the toddler group care from a spatial perspective. This text has not tried to pursue the "hopping from one camera to another" (Zhang 2006, p. 222) in full detail. The choice made in the analysis has been to use *lived space* as

an *entry point*, or *first camera* and then discuss the two other interlinked dimensions (moments) within the episodes. Previous publications reporting on the same research project have focused on the other two cameras, namely, on the interpretations about the *abstract, conceived space* (Rutanen 2011) and the *material, perceived space* of this same day care centre (Rutanen 2012).

The space in ECEC institutions is characterized by a variety of inherent tensions. Day care centres or preschools are places where children are the focus of professionals, who are supposed to create a stimulating place for children. At the same time, the movement towards out of home care and institutionalized childhood can be seen as an increasing control over the private sphere and children's childhoods; as part of governmentality characteristic of neoliberal societies (Brembeck et al. 2004; Markström and Halldén 2009). Even though children's agency is emphasized, preventive surveillance and risk management are deeply ingrained in this institutional setting (Kernan and Devine 2010; Rutanen 2012). Furthermore, in relation to practices, there is a tension between free play and individual attention to children's interests and a high degree of routinised and collective activities (Gulløv 2003; Markström and Halldén 2009; Markström 2010; Rutanen 2012).

The construction of *lived space* occurs interconnectedly with this institutional space offered for children, and it is related to the discourses, expectations and ideals about young child and toddlerhood in ECEC institutions. The *conceived space* (representations of space) in this social space reflects the notions of the proper child; a (day care) child who "acts in line with his or her level of development in the institutional context" (Markström 2010, p. 311). In other words, the space is embedded with interpretations and expectations in relation to the proper (age-related) behaviour reflecting the "institutionally situated normality" (Markström 2005, p. 311).

In applying Lefebvre's (1991, 2004) ideas to the analysis of children's everyday life in day care, the starting point is that a day care centre is an example of an institution and particular physical location that is part of the network of forces and relations of production. In connection to these forces of production, space is produced and reproduced. To address children's group lives in day care from this point of view, the actions become visible as deeply institutionally ingrained within the network of powers. Lefebvre's ideas also acknowledge all actors (adults, children) as participants in the production of space. It doesn't mean the experiences of production of space are similar; on the contrary, each actor participates in the production of space from different and particular starting points, positions, experiences and emotions. A critical question includes the different positions children and adults have in the social production (reproduction of social relations of production), following the generational structuring of childhood and adulthood within this institutional context. In Lefebvre's (2004) terms, the question could be about rhythms: "How does each party (individual, group, family, etc.) manage to insert its own rhythms amongst those of (different) others, including the rhythms imposed by authority?" (p. 99).

In Lefebvre's (1991) thinking, abstract spaces (conceived space) such as curricula, plans, policies and guidelines for the practices, include forces towards homogenization. However, in the construction of the triad of conceived, perceived, lived

space there is an emerging new space, *differential space*, that serves as resistance to these forces. This is the area of re-appropriation of space by the children themselves. This re-appropriation occurs regardless of the organization of space pursued by the specialist who has translated the social order into *territorial reality* such as floor plans, and location of day care centres and child services within certain neighbourhoods (Lefebvre 1991). Lived space is the space of imagination; with imagination and play, children (re)produce the spatial (lived) order in the day care centre.

Adding a spatial point of view to the microanalysis of interactions brings forth the questions of location, territories, physical space and the space produced in interactions. Space is a result of structures, material and people's interactions. Human action is not predefined by the structure, neither is agency detached from the structure. Lefebvre's theory of social production of space is a theory of the interaction of structure and agency. Relational concepts of space underline that space is produced through meanings produced in action; thus, space cannot be separated from culture and society. A day care centre is approached not as an outside frame or predefined, prefixed context for children's actions. Rather, the focus is on how this institutional space is also socially produced in these interactions.

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Chapter 3

Making This My Space: Infants' and Toddlers' Use of Resources to Make a Day Care Setting Their Own

Liz Brooker

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on findings from a study of the ways in which a group of young children make the transition from their family home to their early childhood setting in London, England; and in particular of the ways in which they appropriate the *space*—physical, social, cultural, organisational—of the setting, and make it their own. The study itself is situated within a number of interlocking ecological, economic and policy contexts, and locates itself within a number of key (and also interlocking) theoretical frameworks. The chapter outlines both the macro and micro contexts for the fieldwork, and the theoretical frameworks which inform the analysis, before presenting and discussing the methods and findings of the study. It concludes by arguing, with Rogoff (1990, 2003), for the *mutually constitutive* nature of young children's evolving relationships with their environments, as children select and appropriate the resources and affordances of the space, and find means to participate in its characteristic cultural activities.

3.1.1 Macro and Micro Contexts

Underlying the overall approach taken in this study is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) proposal of an ecological systems theory to account for the nature of human development: a theory which views every part of the ecological environment, however invisible or distant, as influencing every other part and shaping the context for individual development. The individual infant or toddler, in other words, observed in a

L. Brooker (✉)

Department of Early Years and Primary Education, Institute of Education,
University of London, London, UK
e-mail: e.brooker@ioe.ac.uk

small scale study, is understood as being at the heart of a set of nested contexts, ranging from the immediate settings of home and day care, to the national, and international, economic and social contexts which persistently stamp their imprint on those settings. In the 1970s, Bronfenbrenner made a bold claim that the *macro* (national) context, the outermost circle of his bull's eye model, provides a blueprint for the workings of the more readily identifiable *exo*, *meso*, and *micro systems* which shape individual development. Forty years later we are even more aware of the global, *transnational* forces which impact on local environments and the individuals who inhabit them. Thus a brief summary of the ecological contexts for this study is appropriate.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in England, as in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, is explicitly driven by economic and political considerations, both in terms of international comparisons and competition, and in terms of the need to tackle the related internal problems of poverty, inequality and social exclusion. At a national level, policy initiatives since 1997 have focused on:

- The progressive integration of education and care for young children (e.g., *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2000);
- The integration of 0–3 and 3–5 services (e.g., *Early Years Foundation Stage* framework, Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008);
- An integrated and multi-faceted agenda for children and young people (e.g., the *Every Child Matters* agenda, Department for Education and Science 2003), supported by multidisciplinary professional services for children and families; and
- An integrated *qualifications ladder* to improve the knowledge and skills of the children's workforce (Nutbrown Review 2012).

One very concrete outcome of these initiatives was the creation of around 3,000 new spaces for young children and their families—children's centres, like the one where this study was conducted.

As a result of these macro level initiatives, individual child care providers of every kind, from family day care (*childminders*) to primary schools, operate within a statutory framework intended to secure all children's entitlement to a minimum level of quality. The framework includes:

- Registration, regulation and inspection by the government's inspection service, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted);
- Adherence to national welfare standards;
- Compliance with curriculum and practice guidance;
- Broad developmental expectations for children aged from birth to 5 years;
- Formative and summative assessment procedures; and
- Monitoring of child outcomes at the end of the Foundation Stage (age 5).

Additionally, the policy framework requires that each child is allocated a Key Person (sometimes called a key worker) who is responsible for establishing a relationship with the child and family, and mediating their access to provision.

An important role of the Key Person is to support the child's successful transition into, and adaptation to, each new early childhood setting.

At an institutional (micro system) level, the Key Person role, along with all the other requirements, may be enacted in very different ways in different settings. Such differences derive from the ethos, or culture, which has developed over the life of the setting. At this level, it is the product of many local factors, including neighbourhood resources, demographics, market location, internal leadership, staff qualifications and experience, and parental needs or wishes (see, for example, Brooker 2010).

The significance of culture in shaping the micro settings which young children enter as they move from home to group care is one aspect which Bronfenbrenner's blueprint tends to ignore. Culture, as Michael Cole (1998) explains, implies above all an environment for development:

From earliest times, the notion of culture included a general theory for how to promote development: create an artificial environment in which young organisms could be provided optimal conditions for growth. (p. 15)

It includes the whole set of beliefs and practices, derived from generations of human activity, which informs the environments which children experience, and in turn shape. The spaces, resources, routines, curriculum, pedagogy and practices of early childhood settings are all the product of cultural beliefs about childhood: they reflect a particular society's or community's goals for children, its view of children's best interests and its understanding of the role of adults, inside and outside the family, in children's upbringing. These internally differentiated, national and, in turn, local cultural practices form the immediate, institutional backdrop to the individual agency shown by each of the children observed in this study. For the child they define the space he or she moves into and appropriates, a space with physical, social and organisational characteristics to which children may accommodate themselves, but which they also have the power to change in the course of their membership of that space.

A sociocultural inquiry, therefore, tries to take all such aspects into account in describing children's adaptation and their agency. In Wertsch's (1998) terms, "the task of a sociocultural approach is to explicate the relationship between human *action*, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional and historical contexts in which this action occurs, on the other" (p. 24).

3.1.2 *Learning to Belong: Children's Use of Resources*

Two further key concepts inform the analysis of the activity of the children in this small scale study. These are the ideas of *belonging* and *wellbeing* associated with research into transitions (Broström 2002), and the idea of human development as the transformation of participation in cultural activities (Rogoff 1990). Both these ideas have their roots in the focus on relationships which characterises much research into very young children (Oates 2007). These relationships include attachment relationships, which are understood as the chief source of a child's

evolving sense of identity (Houston and Dolan 2007). All these ideas can be located within the concept of the child care environment as a cultural space (or *artificial environment*) which has been fashioned by adults, intentionally or unintentionally, to promote children's optimal development.

3.1.2.1 Belonging and Wellbeing

Young children's transitions, including those from home into day care settings, have been described as a process in which the child's primary task is to develop a sense of belonging, of membership, of *feeling suitable* in the new space (Broström 2002; Brooker 2008). The degree of difficulty a child experiences in acquiring cultural membership may be a function of intrapersonal factors—such as the child's own sense of self-efficacy, competence and confidence—as well as institutional factors; but it is also a function of the degree of discontinuity and dissonance that exists between the familiar and known worlds of home and neighbourhood, and the unfamiliar worlds of institutional care. In England, a sense of belonging aligns with the Every Child Matters (DfES 2003) construct of wellbeing, a goal of all provision for children and young people.

More broadly, belonging has been understood to encompass all those facets of relatedness which contribute to wellbeing (Woodhead and Brooker 2008). As Woodhead and Brooker suggest:

Belonging is the relational dimension of personal identity, the fundamental psycho-social 'glue' that locates every individual (babies, children, and adults) at a particular position in space, time and human society and—most important—connects people to each other. (p. 3)

This sense derives both from being cared for, and having needs met, and from "having opportunities to express personal agency and creativity ... feeling able to contribute, to love and to care for others, to take responsibilities and fulfil roles" (p. 3). These two aspects enable children to feel part of the varied social environments they inhabit, creating what Vandebroek (2008) has described as a *polygamy of belongings*. They can contribute to an analysis of young children's observed experiences on both the interpersonal and the institutional plane (Rogoff 1995).

One additional contribution to the definition of belonging is derived from the work of Axel Honneth (1995, discussed in Houston and Dolan 2007; Woodhead and Brooker 2008), who argues that an individual's sense of belonging relies on a multi-layered *recognition* of the self by others: through *primary relationships of positive regard*, *legal rights* and *acknowledgement by the community*. All these forms of recognition are present, implicitly or explicitly, in children's experience in day care settings, and all can be teased out in analysis of children's agency and activities.

3.1.2.2 Participation (in Cultural Activities)

A definition of belonging which draws attention to the child's *active contribution* to the new setting, rather than simply to the child as a *recipient* of care and attention

from adults and others, fits well both with the United Nations' advocacy of children's participation rights (Committee on the Rights of the Child 2005) and with a sociocultural understanding of learning as the transformation of participation (Rogoff 1990, 2003). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) views children as social actors from birth, with age appropriate competencies to form relationships and participate in activities. In its reference to the "evolving capacities of the child" (a concept further developed and evaluated by Lansdown 2005), it places an obligation on adults caring for children to observe, identify and support those capacities in order to allow children ever increasing responsibilities as they demonstrate increasing mastery. It is this perspective which underpins post Vygotskyan theories of learning (Tharp and Gallimore 1988; Wells and Claxton 2001; Wood 1988) which have generated a range of terms for the gradual handover of responsibility from the more experienced *teacher* to the less experienced *learner*: scaffolding, apprenticeship, guided participation. Rogoff and colleagues (e.g., Rogoff et al. 1993) have documented the subtly different ways in which caregivers in both traditional and modern societies have supported children's growing participation in the cultural activities of their communities, arguing that this *intent participation*, during which adults mediate tasks and their meanings to young children, can be a model for children's development and learning in out of home settings in the preschool and school years.

Since beliefs and practices about caregiving themselves contribute to the "tacit routines and arrangements" (1990, p. 8) which, Rogoff argues, shape children's own understanding, they constitute an important aspect of the cultural space which children experience. As Fleer (2006) has indicated, within most European heritage settings, including those in England, policymakers' and practitioners' beliefs derive from a peculiarly *white western* perspective on child development, which is widely accepted as *natural* rather than recognised as *cultural*. Within this view, children's best interests require a form of provision characterised by free flow play, child centred and individualised arrangements, and active exploratory learning, and depend too on a close dyadic relationship between caregiver and child. Such arrangements, Fleer points out, may render other cultural perspectives on childhood invisible. Within the English context, they are visible not only in policy frameworks but in the valued activities and practices of the early childhood classroom.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study were collected as part of an exploration of young children's transitions into preschool, school and other early environments (Brooker 2008). The study was one of a number of case studies collected to illustrate the ways in which educators and parents support children through the many early transitions they experience, in the United Kingdom as in other complex contemporary societies. Earlier work (Brooker 2002), like much other transitions research, had focused on

children's entry to school just before their fifth birthday; this follow-up was designed to explore the experiences of children aged from birth to four.

Children participating in this study were observed during 1 day a week for their first 12 weeks of attendance in full day care in a London Children's Centre. Observations were carried out in the Babies' and Toddlers' Rooms, and in the separate gardens, or outdoor spaces, which were attached to each room. The two areas catered for children aged from 6 to 36 months: the 2 Baby Rooms each contained 6 children, while the 2 Toddler Rooms each contained 12 children. Staff in each room were asked to identify the children who were making their first transition into the new space. Three babies aged 7, 13 and 14 months, and three toddlers, aged from 24 to 26 months, were identified, and their parents were approached to ask if the children's transition experiences could be studied. All the parents were enthusiastic and agreed to participate in the study, as did the key workers for each child. Narrative observations were made of each child for at least an hour on each day they were observed, but as the children were interacting in very small groups, the other children in the group were often included in the narratives.

Parents and key workers of the six case study children were interviewed informally using an interview guide, and were invited to review transcripts of the recordings. Each parent (or couple) was asked how they had prepared for their child's transition and how the nursery had supported this preparation, how the first days in the new setting had been for both child and parents, and what in particular had helped or hindered the child's settling. Key workers were asked to describe their general routines for settling new children (including home visits), and the particular experience of the child being studied, including the practices which had supported the transition. These interviews took place towards the end of the observation period in order to enable transcribed observations to be discussed, and to facilitate a dialogue based on shared knowledge of the child.

Preliminary analysis of all the transcribed data began with identifying and then categorising *what the children did* to appropriate the new space (classified under emergent headings such as exploring space, accessing resources, making overtures to an adult/child, responding to overtures from an adult/child, and anticipating routines) and *what the adult did* in support of the child (including making face to face contact, playing alongside, offering objects, demonstrating resources, giving verbal explanations, and bringing two or more children into contact). Subsequent reanalysis clarified *what the environment did*, in other words the affordances that the space, including its cultural and institutional aspects, offered to different children. After a number of weeks, the evidence for each child of *belonging in this space*, including the perspectives of the adults, was collated. In every case, the child's parents and key worker recognised the picture of the child which emerged.

In a further step, these individual case studies were examined using Rogoff's (1995) suggested three planes of analysis, which try to identify the child's development from an individual/intrapersonal, a social/interpersonal and an institutional perspective.

3.2.1 Making This My Space: Children's Agency and Adults' Support

3.2.1.1 Participating in Cultural Activities

Rogoff's (1990, p. 8) proposition that children's development occurs through their guided participation in culturally valued activities provides a framework which encompasses all the categories of children's activity, adaptation and agency which were found in the observations and interview transcripts. As the children began to appropriate physical spaces and resources, learn routines, and form relationships with peers and adults, they developed their own particular and preferred ways to utilise the cultural space of the nursery. Even the youngest children could be seen to enlarge their take up of the setting's resources from week to week, increasing their levels of interaction with people and objects. These resources included: the physical environment—play areas, rest areas, kitchens and gardens designed to accommodate and attract children of their age; material resources—textiles and furnishings, beds and bathrooms, toys, games, instruments and soft toys, as well as food and drink; human resources—children as well as adults, casual helpers as well as key workers; and the routine practices which marked out the transitions of every day.

At the same time, each child's presence had an effect on the perceptions and behaviour of the adults, on the physical provision they made, and on the consistency of the routines they practised. *Making this my space* is understood therefore as an activity in which the child and the environment are *mutually constitutive*—the environment shaping the child, and the child the environment, in the course of children's steady increase in participation.

3.2.1.2 Appropriating Nursery Spaces

The children's appropriation of the physical space increased day by day as they grew in confidence and expanded their range of activities. During the early weeks, tracking children's movements in their first hour in the setting each day often (but not always) revealed a pattern of initial insecurity and stasis (demonstrated by clinging to the key worker, tugging at her clothing, following her as she went about essential tasks, reacting with fear to any sign of leaving), which was quickly followed by a succession of moves away: to another activity, another part of the room, outdoors (close to the door), and then to the furthest reaches of the gardens.

One of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (DCSF 2008) is that children have daily access to outdoor as well as indoor provision, and this nursery had well planned routines for allowing children to spend time out of doors at certain times of day. Two young children were identified by their key workers as gaining such pleasure from the garden that they needed to be taken outside as part of the daily settling process, in contravention of the routine practice of keeping children in their home room until all the parents had departed.

Billy, aged 7 months, begins to grizzle as his mother brings him into the room and greets the staff; while accepting the handover from his mother into Lillian's arms, and whimpering weakly as she waves goodbye, he seems to be preparing himself for full scale howling: breathing deeply, gulping and gasping. The doors to the garden are shut at this point, but Lillian swiftly carries Billy outside and deposits him gently into a cushioned *doughnut* on the ground. Billy leans back, turning his face to the Autumn sun and half closing his eyes in evident contentment. In the course of the morning he beams and squeals with pleasure as leaves float down from the trees nearby, attempting to reach and grab them. (Observation, week 2)

Billy's access to the outdoors depends on the response of a perceptive caregiver, who in disrupting the nursery's routines is acting in accordance with her expressed beliefs about "following the child, especially when they're too small to tell you". Davey, a 2-year-old entering the Toddlers' area, is able to communicate his wishes more clearly. His key worker, Sara, also makes a decision to tackle Davey's daily distress at his dad's departure by taking him outside without delay.

Sara signals to the staff that she is leaving the room, takes Davey's hand and slips out of the door with him. He makes straight for the large sandpit and locates a digger truck, settles beside it and begins to struggle with the lifting arm. Sara stands back and watches as Davey becomes absorbed in this task, stopping occasionally to move other vehicles out of the way, or to reposition himself on his knees at the edge of the sandpit. (Observation, week 2)

When other children later emerge into the garden, Davey appears to take purposeful control of his activities: scrutinising and testing equipment, gesturing to other children about having turns, demonstrating pleasure in climbing or building or handling tools. In his third week he hangs over the gate leading to the older children's area as if ready to explore further, and in his own area he utilises every corner including the spaces behind the shed and between the block stores.

Davey's exploration, perhaps unusually, does not begin from any visible attachment to his key worker, who comments with slight regret that "Davey is not a very tactile child whereas other children are; they want to be on your lap." Practitioners' expectation of a close, and even dependent, relationship with a new child was a recurrent theme in the interviews, and children who did not seek such a relationship were viewed as unusual, even puzzling. In such cases, the western consensus on young children's attachment and dependency, as well as the statutory Key Person responsibility, made it difficult for staff to understand children who did not demonstrate these needs.

3.2.1.3 Appropriating Nursery Resources

While the nursery encourages parents to supply transitional objects, such as favourite toys and blankets from home, to help children settle, several children formed strong attachments to particular objects in the nursery space. The objects chosen seemed to offer affordances to individual children which went beyond their practical use and provided some symbolic significance, although it was hard for an adult to work out what this significance was, other than familiarity. Davey's attachment to one particular digger truck in the sand was an example of such significance: the truck did not do anything more than other trucks, but Davey appeared to rely on its

being there, every day. The space where he belonged, in his early days in the nursery, was alongside this truck.

For Hana, aged 15 months, a key object was a very small yellow teddy, with zip-up trousers, which she found among a profusion of other soft toys and dolls. Once settled in the Babies' area each morning, usually with considerable effort from her key worker Jackie, she took to browsing the areas of the room with interest but without apparent purpose, until she lighted upon the yellow teddy which she triumphantly seized and carried around, showing him to the other children and adults in the room.

In the Toddlers' room, 26-month-old Qun Yue immediately took herself to the kitchen corner on entry, and proceeded to play at cooking with ferocious determination, banging and clattering the plastic food and dishes, until eventually persuaded to join in the morning group time. This persistent and exclusive focus on one activity and set of objects was a cause of some concern to the Toddlers' room staff, as discussed below.

For each of these children, the resource in question appeared to enable them to settle into the new environment each morning, and was preferred to any alternative objects offered as substitutes by staff. Key workers observed children's preferences carefully, and made efforts to support them in accessing their favourite activities: "following the child" was a phrase which arose in several interviews, and all the children's choices could be described as culturally approved activities within the setting. Over time, however, the key workers persisted in their efforts to extend each of the children's interests, in line with their own beliefs about appropriate breadth in each child's access to learning experiences, and within the requirements of the EYFS curriculum framework.

3.2.1.4 Making Peer Relationships

Children's use of other children as a resource provided one of the most important sets of codes derived from the data. The observed interactions were broken down into categories describing the target child's behaviour with peers, including the following:

- Child initiates a relationship with a child (C/IRC);
- Child responds to a communication from a peer (P/RRC);
- Child hands over or accepts an object from another child (C/O), (P/O); and
- Child shares in joint effort, or a pleasurable experience, with another child (P/JEP).

Although peers were an important resource for appropriating the new space, individual children differed in the length of time it took them to pay attention to other children. (Staff in this setting were perhaps atypical in their focus on young children's peer friendships and their collective experience: in a similar children's centre I was informed that "they don't make friends at this age—not until they're three").

Hana, for instance, on a particularly difficult day when her father had forgotten to say goodbye to her, was handed the tiny yellow teddy by 18-month-old Ben, who had evidently observed her preference for it on previous days, and worked out that

it might comfort her on this occasion. Hana batted the toy away in an apparent determination *not* to be placated, but Ben picked it up and repeatedly offered it to her until she accepted it.

On other occasions, Hana herself deliberately contributed to Billy's enjoyment of the outdoors, placing herself alongside his cushioned support so that he could grab and stroke her hair. One indoor observation showed her choosing to share a treasure basket he was exploring:

Lillian invites Hana to play with something in the sleeping area, but on her way there Hana passes Billy, who is sitting, propped up, with a basket of sounds objects. Hana first squats and then kneels down close to Billy. She selects two metal jar lids from the basket and bangs them together, watching Billy closely. She repeats the action more deliberately, and interacts teasingly with Billy, who now observes her with interest. Hana continues to bang, look, tease and turn-take with Billy, and both giggle. (Observation, week 2)

Other small groups of children in the Babies' area were observed developing shared play strategies, demonstrating the preverbal state of "communicating about intentions, interests, and feelings with trusted companions", which Trevarthen (2001, p. 95) calls intersubjectivity:

Ben, Travis and Jody [15–18 months] have settled down on the floor together after their parents have departed. Ben selects some wooden animals from a storage tray and begins to walk them down the floor in a straight line. Travis and Jody do the same and the three boys play contentedly in near silence alongside each other, occasionally making animal noises and waiting for their animals' turn to set off down the floor after the previous animals have finished. (Observation, week 3)

Such cooperative play aligned closely with the values of the nursery staff. Ben's key worker, Lillian, kept an eye on the progress of this lengthy period of play from another part of the room, only occasionally commenting quietly as she passed ("Your giraffe's making a big noise, isn't he?").

Qun-Yue, discussed below, also caused concern to her key worker in this respect, since she did not display the enthusiasm for other children which was such a strong feature of the nursery's values.

3.2.1.5 Acquiring Routines

A more unexpected set of codes to emerge from the observation data, which were strongly corroborated by the key worker interviews, related to children's understanding of routines; the invisible but very potent cultural rules of the space. Membership of a cultural group entails (in Bernstein's terms, 1996) both *recognising* and *realising* the explicit or implicit rules of the culture. These rules are not difficult to observe in classrooms with older children but may not always be decipherable in an infant/toddler space; where they may be *broken* in order to meet specific children's needs and wishes, as in Lillian's and Sara's decisions to take children outside before the morning group times. Routines such as hand washing, coat buttoning, and moving to new areas of the nursery, are cultural activities in themselves, and the ability to participate in the rhythmic flow of the day appeared to give some children a sense of confidence and control.

One superordinate *rule* is the daily timetable of the nursery, which is made explicit to parents and practitioners while potentially remaining implicit for children. The day, which is outwardly informally organised, is segmented by the clock: children who arrive early (the long-day children) and breakfast are completed before the short-day children arrive with their parents; 10-min sessions for the key group of children to meet (key group times) are completed before the doors open for children to go outside; and so on. Children's ability to predict, anticipate and grasp the shape of the long nursery day was often observed. Eighteen-month-old Ben, for instance, surprised baby room staff one day:

Lillian went to her locker, apparently unobserved, to collect a CD which she intended to hand on to a colleague during her break. Ben, who must have seen her, left the cars he was playing with and went to rummage in a plastic basket on the shelves, bringing out a handful of streamers attached to short coloured sticks, and running to wait by the door to an internal corridor. The adults were mystified until they realised that Ben had (mis)identified the CD as a sign that the babies were going for music time in the shared space, and had made appropriate preparations by collecting some of the other equipment. (Observation, week 4)

Other children regularly, and correctly, interpreted the signs of staff collecting their coats as an indication that the outdoor session was about to begin, and knew that the clearing and wiping of a particular table signified that lunch was on its way. These signs, once detected, were somehow communicated to the other children in the room, who quickly picked up on the cues.

In the staff's view, routines played an important role in enabling even the youngest children to gain control of the day, and to regulate their emotions and behaviour. Children who were distressed over separations were informed, "Just a little play outside, then we'll have our dinner, and then another little play and then mum will bring Max to collect you" or "Not long now till dinner time and then daddy will be coming back from the shops; I wonder what he's bought for your tea." There were some children however—even among the 3-year-olds in the preschool classrooms—who conspicuously failed to understand the pattern of the daily routine, and appeared disconcerted as each transition occurred.

3.2.2 *A Special Case: Qun Yue Makes Her Own Space*

Qun Yue, aged 26 months, was the youngest in a family of five children and was able to care for all her own physical needs. On entry to the Toddlers' area, she showed apparent indifference to the presence of both adults and children in the nursery, and her key worker reported that this made it hard for staff to make a relationship with her, or to involve her with the other two children in her key group.

In her first 2 weeks in the room, Qun Yue used one area of the nursery space purposefully, almost obsessively. She entered the room, smiling, every morning, ignored the welcoming greetings of key workers and the gaze of other children, and took herself into a kitchen corner where she took out all the cooking equipment and banged it about with single minded vigour, pausing only to visit a sand tray to collect sand for cooking, or to sort through plastic foods and select items to throw into

the pans on her cooking stove. She showed a polite lack of interest in the activities Kerry offered in the key group; making images of each other with the digital camera, or learning simple games and rhymes. She made no eye contact with adults or children, and returned to her cooking as soon as the key group activity was over.

It appeared that Qun Yue had constructed the physical space of the kitchen corner, with its age-appropriate resources of plastic pots and pans and its age-appropriate affordances of connections with home and family, as a symbolic space in which she could insulate herself from the attentions of others. She did not welcome co-players and her extreme busyness enabled her to tune out the activities going on around her. She had made her own space, which she protected for as long as she needed to.

The need was short-lived. After a few days Qun Yue lowered the invisible barriers around her space, and began to take her platefuls of sand (described as dinners and teas) to the adults in the room, or to acknowledge other children who came to cook alongside her. Her overtures did not initially prioritise the adults responsible for her own room: by week 4, she was also observed engaging fleetingly but happily with a succession of adults passing through the room, verandah, and garden, bringing them books to look at, requesting help with the fastening of a fairy skirt, or demonstrating the magnetic properties of a wooden train set.

At the same time, the staff were developing their own strategies to overcome Qun Yue's exclusion, based on her evident passion for cooking. Kerry set up daily cooking activities in which the three 2-year-olds needed to cooperate and take turns, obliging Qun Yue to make eye contact with others and acknowledge their names. As Kerry explained:

... the cooking activity, they were sitting together and they needed to pass things to one another, and that brought her in with the group and that tied her in with me as well ... our relationship is stronger in the last couple of weeks than it has been since she started, and that real relationship has taken me a while with her. (Key Worker interview, week 5)

Qun Yue's mother contributed a further insight. When asked what had helped her daughter to settle, she explained that, from her first day, the child had insisted on bringing her own toy tea set to nursery in her backpack:

I said, "you have the home corner there" ... but she takes it with her, every day, that is her human being survival way, she thinks it makes her belong, so she took that to nursery, and she's happy! I said "Qun Yue, you can take it, but you play with the nursery one", and she does that, but it is for belonging, for comfort ... and then she takes it back. (Parent interview, week 8)

Qun Yue, in other words, had acted with considerable agency in supporting her own transition and settling herself into the new physical, social and emotional space. Her behaviour, however, highlighted a potential tension within the practitioners' belief systems. Though committed to "following the child" and respecting her wishes, their own understanding of a 2-year-old's best interests, grounded in a wider early childhood ideology as well as in national and local policy, prompted them to intervene to steer her towards more typical, *sociable*, behaviour. Nevertheless, the encounter with Qun Yue, which obliged them to discuss her evident preferences, may have imperceptibly modified the practitioners' own developmental assumptions. The encounter between Qun Yue's *individual/intrapersonal* dispositions and the

interpersonal and *institutional* practices of the nursery had made possible changes both in the child and in the cultural space.

3.3 Concluding Thoughts

The environment of the nursery, though superficially natural to all those who have been enculturated into its practices, is a rich and complex social space, an artificial environment *fashioned* in Cole's term to meet societal beliefs about development. Rogoff (1990) states that "Each community's valued skills constitute the local goals of development" (p. 12), and these local goals can be read off from the setting at the many levels at which they operate, from compliance with national guidelines to folk beliefs about children's best interests, themselves highly culturally inflected and mediated by western models of child development (Hedegaard and Fleer 2008).

Such an environment may be viewed as powerfully shaping of the development of very young children, through the mediation of the "tacit and routine arrangements" (Rogoff 1990, p. 8) which regulate their daily experiences. A fully sociocultural analysis, however, looks for the interaction between individuals and the environment, to identify the "social situation of development" which Vygotsky (1998) defined as "nothing other than a system of relations between the child of a given age and social reality" (p. 199). Within this system of relations all kinds of human agency are embedded, including children's power to modify, over time, the environments they inhabit, through acting on the understandings of the adults and children who share them. The snapshots provided above suggest some possible lines for investigation of this process.

In the case of the nursery described here, the commitment to *following the child* and *observing their interests* can be understood as a commitment to the kinds of recognition described by Honneth (1995) and prescribed by the policy framework: recognition of individual and cultural variations in development; of children's (albeit limited) rights to self determination; and of the importance of a community of practice which supports both children and families in achieving their own, as well as the culturally valued, goals. In Rogoff's (1990) explanation:

Individual effort and socio cultural activity are mutually embedded, as are the forest and the trees, and ... it is essential to understand how they constitute each other. (p. 25)

A close focus on children's contextualised individual agency is a step towards this process.

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Chapter 4

Babies in Space

Jennifer Sumsion, Tina Stratigos, and Ben Bradley

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is about mapping, in a more-than-representational sense. We examine how space can be portrayed when studying infants' experiences in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, first theoretically, and then by constructing schematic descriptions from video-records of an Australian family day care home by way of illustration. We ask: how are we to map relationships between babies and space? What kinds of maps open up anew the everyday worlds of early childhood settings? And from whose points of view can such mappings be undertaken?

Our engagement with infants' experiences has been catalysed by reading the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In particular, we have been inspired by and appropriated their emphasis on the variety of heterogeneous and hybrid elements, human and non-human, animate and inanimate, that connect with and form *assemblages* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) including ourselves as researchers researching and infants' moment-to-moment lives (Bradley et al. 2012). In considering what space might mean to babies, we have been helped by cultural geographer and *non-representational* theorist, Nigel Thrift (2006, 2008) who has also been influenced by Deleuze and Guattari. Thrift's space is dynamic, porous, hybrid and complex. It takes no one singular form; rather it "comes in many guises: points, planes, parabolas; blots, blurs and blackouts" (2006, p. 141). We call Thrift's conceptualisation of space *more-than-representational* (Lorimer 2005), rather than *non-representational*, both

J. Sumsion (✉) • B. Bradley
Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education,
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia
e-mail: jsumsion@csu.edu.au; bbradley@csu.edu.au

T. Stratigos
School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia
e-mail: tstratigos@csu.edu.au

to convey the impossibilities of pinning down the potential fluidities and porosities in infants' worlds *and* to avoid unhelpful dualisms.

Thrift's *take* on space invites methods of mapping that bring out almost imperceptible, sometimes evanescent aspects of the multidimensionality of infants' worlds and experiences. It entices us with possibilities of cultivating a new sense of understanding about how babies may experience the physical affordances and constraints of early childhood settings. We are especially interested in "the continuous undertow of matterings that cannot be reduced to simple transactions" (Thrift 2008, p. viii). Echoing Thrift's notion of "*the geography of what happens*" (p. 2, original emphasis), we try to map spatialities in the context of *what happens* for, and in relation to, babies. Mindful of the risk of framing complexities in ways that fix and render them inert (Lorimer 2005), we do not confine ourselves to any single set of coordinates, particularly those commonly used to specify what constitutes *high quality* space for babies. While we recognise the need for regulation of early childhood settings, we argue for a richer notion of space-as-assemblage, and hence of babies in space, than is evident in much of the research on infants typically informing the development of regulatory standards.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *assemblage* also gives us a way to de-emphasise the researcher-infant dualism that had increasingly come to preoccupy us in the Infants' Lives in Childcare project (Sumsion et al. 2008–2011), on which this chapter is based. As we have intimated above, we understand assemblages to be productive concatenations of divergent elements (Bradley et al. 2012), including human and non-human elements and forces, flows, intensities and passions (Braidotti 2006, cited in Zabrodska and Ellwood 2011). Without wanting to downplay the ever-present webs of power relations in assemblages (Currier 2003), the notion of the assemblage positions us and infants alike as desiring subjects who exist "in the dialogical play of social processes and affirmative, creative and *embodied* experimentation/engagement with the world" (Fox 2002, p. 351, original emphasis). In this chapter, we take up the notions of location and dispersal and affects in assemblages where babies are the focal elements. Here, we use affects, in a very general, Deleuze-Guattarian-inspired sense, to refer to responses to experiences, rather than the meanings of those experiences (Colebrook 2002). We are thus able to draw into our consideration of infantine space Deleuze and Guattari's theorising about desire and their spatial concepts of *mapping*, *tracing*, *smooth/striated space*, *territorialization*, *detrterritorialization*, *reterritorialization* and *lines of flight* to extend existing ways of mapping babies' experimentation and engagement with and in ECEC settings.

In taking up these concepts, however, we do not want to imply that our notion of space is synonymous with Deleuze and Guattari's. While we share their belief that space "is not a pre-existing container for artefacts and practices" but rather constituted in reciprocal relationships, inflections, influences, flows and forces (West-Pavlov 2009, p. 24), we are yet to fully explore the multiplicitous possibilities of the many geo-philosophical nodes in their work, or the usefulness of those nodes for us. Indeed, we are conscious of the lingering effects of Euclidean notions of space in our mapping, despite our endeavours to supersaturate them with new relational dimensionalities.

4.2 Maps and Tracings

“Make a map, not a tracing,” advise Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 13). Maps, from their perspective, are fluid, “open and connectable ... detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification”. We map as we explore the unknown. Maps invite experimentation. Tracings, on the other hand, reinforce and sediment what is seen as already settled. In prioritising mapping over tracing, we recognise that the coordinates of our *representations* are best determined neither by a slavishly scalar correspondence, nor “by theoretical analyses implying universals, but by a pragmatics composing multiplicities or aggregates of intensities ... [involving] gestural, mimetic, ludic, and other semiotic systems” (p. 15). Building on this recognition, we can contrast the approach to space we are developing here with its more traditional treatment in previous research on infancy and in policy concerning the provision of ECEC for infants.

For example, it might be said that much behavioural research on babies is representational (Thrift 2008) and *space blind* in that it has generalised findings made in specific and often rather peculiar kinds of spaces (e.g., laboratories) to all settings. This is because traditionally behavioural science has identified its subject-matter as observable spatial displacements of babies’ (or, for example, carers’) bodies, or meters that can measure or display, for example, cortisol levels in their blood or the auditory contours of their vocalisations. These spatial displacements are assumed to be signs of something *deep* that is already there in *the child’s mind*, supposedly generating the observed movements. So a 9-month-old’s removal of a cloth that has been draped over his father’s watch in front of his eyes is a sign that he has developed “the object concept” (Piaget 1955, p. 53). A one-year-old’s failure to enthusiastically approach and greet her mother upon their reunion is a sign that she has an *avoidant-insecure attachment* (Ainsworth et al. 1978). The finding that newborns look for longer at *attractive* than *unattractive* adult faces may “result from an innate representation of faces that infants bring into the world with them” (Slater 2001, p. 21).

This traditional use of the concept of *space* in infancy research conforms to what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 12–13) call *tracing*: “the tracing always involves an alleged ‘competence’”. Tracings select and isolate “by artificial means” (p. 14), reproducing linear or hierarchical structures that have always already “organized, stabilized, neutralized the multiplicities according to the axes of significance and subjectification belonging to it” (p. 13). In so doing, Deleuze and Guattari argue, a tracing “injects redundancies and propagates them” (p. 15).

Thus when psychologists describe the gist of what Piaget found when he hid his watch from his son Laurent (see above), they typically focus solely on the physical displacements of the objects insofar as these phenomena bear on the *deep* cognitive competence involved, namely acquisition of the object concept, thus neutralising the significance of all the other aspects and features of the event being described or traced.

The stage-IV infant, though, still seems to have a peculiar concept of objects. The infant will look for an object if the object is hidden under the cloth. If however the infant is allowed to find an object under the same cloth two or more times and then the object is

hidden within the infant's view but under a different cloth in a different place, the infant will look for the object in its original place under the first cloth—totally ignoring the actual location of the object ... (Bower 1974, pp. 182–3)

No mention is made here of any characteristics of *the infant*, what the hidden thing is, whether the infant likes it, how or by whom it is hidden, how well the infant knows the hider, what clues they do or do not give the infant as to their state of mind, how the infant behaves other than *looking for* the hidden object or not, where the hiding takes place, where the infant's parents are, what happened before and after ... So it is hard to tell whether the child might have constructed the whole experiment as something other than a *test* of cognitive abilities—maybe as a bore, or as a game, for example—or whether all these multiplicitous factors might be assembled into a description of some quite different kind of *baby event* than the mental test the psychologist believes it is (Bradley et al. 2012). Bower's hierarchical tracing of “the Stage-IV infant's” behaviour jettisons or de-prioritises many features of the *baby event* which are its raw material. They become redundant when compared to a few key features that relate directly to the event's putative *deep structure*: the baby's competence with the object concept.

Similarly, it might be argued that policy and regulatory conceptualisations of space concerning provision for infants in early childhood settings focus predominantly on stipulating precise spatial coordinates. In Australia, for example, the Education and Care Services National Regulations (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEEDYA] 2011) governing the provision of all licensed early childhood settings comprise 321 pages of hierarchically ordered stipulations, many of which refer to physical spatial arrangements and penalties for breaching those stipulations. While designed with children's wellbeing in mind, and despite some attention to relational space, the overwhelming impression is one of tracing legal obligations associated with space rather than one of mapping its possibilities.

A map, unlike a tracing, does not set up a hierarchy. It is all on the same plane (i.e., flat) and characterised by multiple entry-points and pathways (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). None of the elements, no matter how heterogeneous and multiplicitous, is more important than any other element. All the elements—human or not, animate or not—share the same ontological status (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

The argument that none of the elements that constitute a map of infants' space is elevated above any others applies as much to the physicality of space as it does to other elements. There are no absolutes in portraying multi-dimensional domains, partly because mapping a space cannot be divorced from temporality and partly because one must always make choices as to how to project an n -dimensional space onto any surface or domain of text which has less than n dimensions (Snyder 1997). A further complication is that infants (in particular, but adults too) constantly partake of that intermediate area/dimension of existence which Winnicott called “*experiencing*”:

... to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area which is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate but inter-related. (1951, p. 230)

This implies that maps of infant-relevant space should recognise that some people or things may, at times, be *closer to* or *further from* each other than others, regardless of their observable propinquity. Indeed some phenomena may be imaginary or otherwise beyond our field of view and yet still figure in the multiplicity being mapped. Desire is one such phenomenon. Assemblages, in essence, are “compositions of desire” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 440). As Zabrodska and Ellwood (2011, p. 186) explain, “to desire is to construct an assemblage within a particular context” or space.

4.2.1 *Desire*

By desire, Deleuze and Guattari (1984) mean a creative force, a flow of energy; “not a fantasy of what we lack; it is first and foremost the psychical and corporeal production of what we want” (Holland 2005, p. 65). To Deleuze and Guattari, we are all *desiring machines* in that we constantly produce and act on a flow of desires. Thus we can think of babies as *desiring machines* propelled by their urge to engage and experiment with their world (Fox 2002; Hickey-Moody 2013). In the assemblage of the family day care setting that is the focus of this chapter, there are constant multiple flows of desire: among them, our desire as researchers to understand and articulate infants’ experiences; the desire of the family day care educator, Amanda, to provide well for the infants in her care; parents’ desires for their infant’s wellbeing; the desire of policy makers and the regulatory authority, expressed through standards designed to ensure high-quality provision, to which Amanda must adhere; and, of course, the desires of the infants themselves.

We are interested in ways of mapping the flow of infants’ desires, within the context of the desires of multiple others, in the hope of becoming more attuned to how they might experience their family day care space. Flows, by their very nature, call for maps not tracings. To this end, Deleuze and Guattari’s spatial concepts provide generative cartographic tools.

4.3 Smooth and Striated Space

As Tamboukou, who also draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s spatial concepts notes, “we experience the world as a continuum of striated and smooth spaces” (2008, p. 360). Striated spaces, she explains, are “hierarchical, rule-intensive, strictly bounded and confining”. Smooth spaces, on the other hand, are “open, dynamic and allow for transformations to occur”. Striated spaces tend to be ordered, fixed and somewhat sedentary, while smooth spaces facilitate a kind of informal nomadic wandering (Tamboukou 2008). Movement in striated spaces follows a specified, often linear or hierarchical logic: “one goes from one point to another” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 528). In smooth spaces, however, it is not the points or the coordinates that matter but rather the trajectories—where one is going or

has a desire to go, and the new directions, options and *lines of flight* that might subsequently open up. Trajectories are affected by often unexpected events, experiences, impassés, forces and desires—in short by the multiplicities of the assemblage of which they are part. Because smooth spaces are always in a state of “continuous variation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 533), they do not lend themselves to “metric determination” (p. 528).

Striated spaces, in contrast, can readily be assigned seriated coordinates, valences and codes. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 425) point out, “one of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate space over which it reigns”. Striation typically occurs through appropriation or *territorialization* by *binary machines* (Deleuze and Guattari 1984), a neologism for dichotomising forces and structures, such as the use of standardised measures in uncritical ways to assign quality ratings to early childhood settings. Striated spaces can be more limiting than smooth spaces, for example, by rendering the creative potential of spaces more difficult to recognise and act upon. This does not mean that striated spaces are necessarily more desirable or better than smooth spaces; indeed, they can be efficient in getting things done (Hickey-Moody and Malins 2007). Deleuze and Guattari, themselves, take pains to emphasise that they do not see smooth and striated space as binaries: “We must remind ourselves that the two spaces exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space” (1987, p. 524). Ultimately, what is of interest are the processes by which these translations take place and their effects. “Maps should be made of these things,” Deleuze and Guattari (p. 68) argue, and it is to that task our attention now turns.

4.4 Mapping the Family Day Care Home

Our mapping focuses on life in a family day care home in western Sydney (the same home referred to in this volume by Goodfellow (Chap. 15), and by McLeod, Elwick, and Stratigos (Chap. 13)). The house, a spacious country-style weatherboard, is conspicuously neat and orderly, inside and out. As can be seen in Appendix 4.1, a noticeable feature is the long hallway that runs directly from the front door down the centre of the house. Opening off either side of the hallway are a number of doors, usually closed but affording many possibilities for the babies inhabiting this space that are beyond the scope of this chapter to explore. Behind the doors at the top of the hallway are rooms for the family’s own use and at the bottom, a bathroom, a sleeping room for the family day care infants, and immediately opposite, the bedroom in which the infant daughter of the family day care educator sleeps and in which the communal nappy (diaper) change table is located. The hallway leads to a large open-plan living area at the back of the house which includes the kitchen, dining area and a lounge/playroom. A large play-mat covers much of the wooden floor in the play area. Glass doors lead onto an outdoor deck and, via a small flight of steps, to the backyard. Perhaps because of inclement weather, the backyard was

not much used during the 10 weeks or so of data collection. For this reason, our mapping is confined to indoors. The daytime inhabitants of this family day care home include Amanda, the educator; her daughter, Bianca (aged 18 months); and three other children—Charlie (13 months), Kaia (2 years) and Angus (19 months).

On casual observation, the family day care home could seem predominantly striated space. Clearly delineated, for example, are the rooms that the infants are allowed to enter and those off limits. The rooms to which they have access have designated functions (playing, eating, sleeping, washing and toileting/nappy change) that in turn specify the activities to be undertaken by/with the infants when in those rooms. Within each room are further designations concerning where individual infants are expected to sit for their meals, where they are to sleep, and so on.

Some of these striations seem deeply etched; others less so. For example, the hallway has clearly designated functions—as a portal, though the front door, for the infants' arrival and departure, and as a conduit in providing access to the playing and sleeping areas, bathroom and change table. Yet, it also invites nomadic wandering as conveyed in Appendix 4.1, where we have tried to map Charlie's manner of being in seemingly constant motion over a 20-min period of indoor play. It is, at the same time, a map of desire as a flow of productive energy (interpreted in this case as the intent that we sense in his wandering) that contributes to "the different ways in which life becomes or produces relations" (Colebrook 2002, p. xv) within the context of this family day care home. Our focus in the remainder of this chapter, however, is the arrangement of the high chairs in the dining area, for it lends itself to mapping the translation of striated space into smooth space and of smooth into striated space through the productive forces of desire.

4.4.1 Mapping Desire

Our interest is primarily in mapping the infants' desires. To this end, we take up two strategies offered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Firstly, we ask, "What can infants' bodies do in this family day care home?" Again, we stress that we are not interested in tracing infants' *competence*, which is the focus of research of the kind we referred to earlier in the chapter. Rather, after Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 14)—whose view is that "the map has to do with performance"—our mapping focuses on the infants' *performance* of desire within the context of the assemblage of people, material objects, other forces (such as the educator's desire and the regulatory requirements), and the relations between them, and the intensities and affects they generate, in the family day care home.

Secondly, we take up the notion that "things, people, are made up of very varied lines ... there is a whole geography of lines ... rigid lines, supple lines, lines of flight etc." (Deleuze and Parnet 2006, p. 8). Mapping an assemblage, then, involves trying to "distinguish in every case a number of very different lines" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 405). We are interested in the lines (flows) of infants' desires: their directions, effects and possibilities, as well as in the micro-moments and

micro-movements through which we might discern them (Malins 2004; Ringrose 2011). How, for example, do infants' flows of desire connect with human and non-human bodies? What blockages do they encounter and how do they contend with them? What affects and effects are produced? How do infants' desires intersect with the multiplicity of other lines and flows within the assemblage of the family day care home? What *lines of flight* (sudden escapes that open up new possibilities) emerge, and how productive are they?

We are also interested in the concept of territorialities, which Deleuze and Parnet (2004, cited in Zabrodska and Ellwood 2011, p. 187) liken to "walking into a room and choosing where one wants to sit, where one feels best". In other words, territorialities encompass "the normally unremarked sense in which the self forms an assemblage with its physical location and whatever other material-others are present in that space" (Zabrodska and Ellwood, p. 187). They can be thought of as "connective forces that allow any form of life to become what it *is*" (Colebrook 2002, xxii). Territorialities require us to think, as well, about deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) and how "we constantly move between deterritorialization—freeing ourselves from the restrictions and boundaries of controlled, striated spaces—and reterritorialization—repositioning ourselves within new regimes of striated spaces" (Tamboukou 2008, p. 360). Understanding how infants manage such movements seems to us an important focus in attempting to become more receptive to their experiences of family day care.

4.4.2 Mapping Mealtime

The arrangement of the highchairs in which the infants sit three times a day for morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea, could be described as one of the most striated spaces in the family day care home. The mealtime events are discussed in more detail elsewhere (Bradley et al. 2012). Here, we want to map their potential to flow from striated to smooth and back again through the ways that the infants, the educator and other elements interact and the assemblage of which they are part.

The map portrayed in Fig. 4.1a illustrates many of the elements of striated space identified by Tamboukou (2008). Firstly, it shows order and fixities, with the four highchairs always in the same position, placed in a broad arc, at a regular distance, facing the kitchen area where Amanda prepares food and where the infants' lunch bags are kept. The placement of the highchairs enables Amanda to demonstrate adequate supervision of infants and attention to other health and safety matters. The fine-grained cross-hatching in Fig. 4.1 refers to the regulatory requirements to which she must adhere for licensing purposes. Like the warp and weft of woven fabric, it symbolises the structured and predictable qualities of striations (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The effect is a focus on the children as individual units as they face toward the educator distributing food. The arrangement of children in highchairs is also, for the most part, fixed: Charlie on the left, then Kaia, Angus, and on the far right, Bianca.

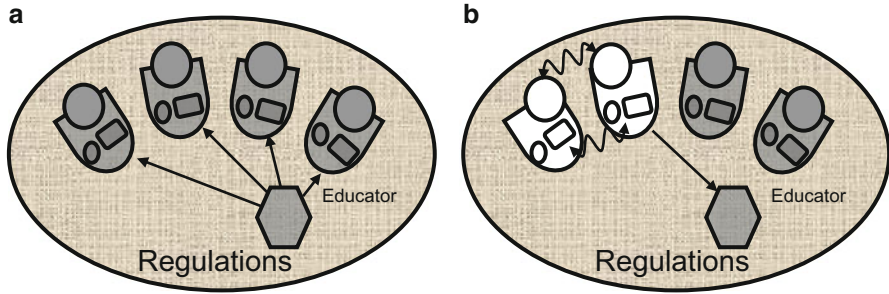


Fig. 4.1 Infants in highchairs (a) striated space, (b) deterritorialized space

Secondly, it is a sedentary, confining and strictly bounded space. Once the infants are in their highchairs, they are no longer able to move about and are limited in their ability to interact with objects other than those provided by Amanda or the children placed next to them. They are also reliant on Amanda to release them. Thirdly, it is hierarchical and rule-intensive (Tamboukou 2008). The map shows Amanda's control over the giving (and sometimes removing) of drink bottles and food. She decides the kinds of behaviour that are appropriate and inappropriate, what behaviours she wants to reinforce, and what to feed each individual infant and in what order. This hierarchy is conveyed on the map as arrows flowing from the educator to the individual infants. It is important to note, though, that, as with Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we conceptualise smooth and striated space as neither better nor more desirable than the other. There are many good reasons why this space is as striated as it is, including Amanda's desire to ensure that she complies with health and safety requirements. What is interesting is what the infants are able to do within these striations.

In this section, we turn to some key moments from a particular morning tea time to illustrate Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) assertions that there is never only striated space, but that it exists in mixture with smooth. The following *photo-narrative/map*, although linear in its portrayal, highlights how two of the four infants, Charlie and Kaia, manage at times to reverse the striation, creating small patches of smooth space through their performance of desire. Implicit in their performance is the flow of desire along the lines we have signaled implicitly through our selection of photographs and accompanying text.

The photo sequence suggests how Charlie and Kaia, despite the heavily striated, meal-time spatial arrangements, were able to find small moments where they were able to engage in deterritorialization, using the resources they had at their disposal: their bodies, food, drink bottle, and their desire. Charlie and Kaia were able to bridge the gap between the highchairs, turning towards each other and reaching across to interact, and even to break rules about sharing food and drink, often without the educator being aware of what was going on. That Charlie and Kaia engaged in these activities when Amanda's back was turned suggests it is possible they knew that these activities were in opposition to the striation of the space. Ironically, the hierarchical arrangement that put Amanda in control of the food afforded the infants moments of

deterritorialization and lines of flight, enabling them to *fly under the radar* of the educator who was otherwise occupied with her role moving back and forth between the infants and the bench as she replenished the infants' food supply. Kaia also managed to turn back the hierarchical flow of food and drink from educator to infant as she repeatedly refused items of food and attempted to return them to Amanda. These moments of deterritorialization and reversals are portrayed in Fig. 4.1b.

Although these activities often occurred when Amanda was not looking, she eventually became aware of what was happening when things ended up in the wrong place, on the wrong tray or on the floor. As a result, the following week Amanda purposely moved Charlie's highchair further apart from Kaia's. When Charlie reached across to Kaia, he could no longer reach her. Charlie still tried to place his bottle on Kaia's tray, however now it was too far to reach and it simply fell on the floor. When Charlie's drink bottle accidentally fell off his tray a little later, Amanda picked it up, saying "Thank you, Charlie", and put it on the kitchen bench. As if to join Amanda in reterritorializing the meal-time spatial arrangement so that they once again conformed to the striations desired by Amanda, the group of infants then seemed to work together to remind Charlie about the rules for appropriate behaviour at meals. For example, Kaia looked up at Amanda and, waving her finger, said, "No". Amanda replied, "No, that's right, we say no". Bianca then echoed "No". Kaia picked up her bottle and held it out to Amanda, smiling. Amanda took it saying, "Thank you, for not throwing it on the floor, thank you". Bianca said, "Not" and Amanda, encouraging her, said, "You say: not on the floor". Angus then held his drink bottle out to Amanda, who took it, saying "Ta Angus, ta". Bianca said, "Ta ... no". Amanda: "No, not on the floor". Bianca: "Not". In this way, the rules for behaviour at mealtimes were reinforced to the whole group and the striations of the mealtime space were similarly reinforced.

Charlie, Kaia and Amanda's performances of desire, drawn in Fig. 4.2, are portrayed in Fig. 4.3 in a less linear way that draws on the subsequent group dynamic of reterritorialization described in the previous paragraph. Thus Fig. 4.3 seeks to convey the flows of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization that occurred during mealtime in the family day care home over the period of a week, and provides a frame for constructing a less conventional mapping than that implied in Fig. 4.2.

4.5 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter is about mapping. But it is not a map. Maps, in the Deleuze-Guattarian-inspired sense we invoke here, do not just comprise the three dimensions that define the Euclidean universe. Maps that are more-than-representational must encompass many dimensions, and have multiple entryways. Hence they involve not just spatial coordinates but, among other things, social relations, temporality, bodily performance, governmental regulation, concepts, power-differentials, images, affects and diverse desires, including our desires as researchers—and yours, dear reader,







	<p>Amanda places the infants in their highchairs for morning tea. She puts Charlie in first and then Kaia. As if desiring engagement with each other (despite the spatial arrangements that prioritise the individual infant as the focus of Amanda's attention), Charlie and Kaia turn their bodies to face each other and reach across to touch each other on the shoulder.</p>
	<p>A series of brief interactions occur between Charlie and Kaia involving tugging on clothes, vocalising, pointing and hand holding while Amanda is busy putting the other two children in their highchairs.</p>
	<p>Amanda has placed Charlie's water bottle on his highchair tray before turning away to get the other children's bottles. Kaia points towards Charlie's bottle, vocalising and looking first at the bottle and then towards Amanda, perhaps wondering where her drink is.</p>
	<p>In response, Charlie picks up his water bottle in both hands and turns his body towards Kaia, leaning over and passing her the water bottle. She reaches for it with both hands and leans down to take a sip. Kaia and Charlie hold the water bottle between the highchair trays.</p>
	<p>As Kaia began to sit up again, both Charlie and Kaia remove their hands from the bottle. It falls to the ground. Both infants quickly sit upright in their chairs, facing the front again and looking to Amanda as she brings Kaia and Angus' water bottles.</p>
	<p>They continue to watch as Amanda, who was unaware of the interaction between Charlie and Kaia, picks up Charlie's water bottle then replaces it on his tray.</p>

Fig. 4.2 A photo-narrative/map of morning tea time (Reproduced with permission from the participants. Copyright 2011 by Infants' Lives in Childcare project research team)

A little later as the children wait for Amanda to cut up fruit . . .

	Charlie picks up his bottle and turns to pass it to Kaia again, this time unprompted. By leaning right across the distance separating them he manages to get it on her highchair tray.
	Kaia eagerly takes Charlie's bottle (although she has her own one in front of her) and takes a sip, placing it back on her tray.
<p>Amanda, by this time, has arrived with the cut up fruit and is placing some on Charlie's tray. She notices Charlie's bottle on the wrong tray and says, "Oh, how did you get that drink?" She removes it and places it on the kitchen bench, out of reach. The children then busy themselves eating for a few moments. Kaia picks up her own drink bottle saying, "Ta, ta" and holding it out towards Amanda who is busy at the kitchen bench. When she gets no response, Kaia drops her bottle on the floor. Amanda turns to pick up the bottle saying, "Kaia, no". Kaia smiles at her briefly and Amanda places the bottle on the bench along with Charlie's. Kaia then tries to give Amanda her remaining slices of banana, again saying "Ta". With some encouragement from Amanda, she eats the banana pieces.</p>	
	Kaia then begins refusing a variety of food including more banana slices, biscuits, sultanas, a packaged bar, and a cheese stick. She shakes her head emphatically, says "No", presents her upturned palms to Amanda, again as if for emphasis, and hands food back to Amanda.
	The only food Kaia shows any interest in is the food belonging to other children. When Charlie is given a fruit-filled bar from a packet which he takes eagerly and begins to eat, Kaia turns to him, pointing at the fruit bar and vocalising.
	Charlie reaches across with the remains of the fruit bar. Kaia takes it from him, turning it over in her hands and examining it. Amanda notices and says, "No, no, no, that's Charlie's. You can't bite it and then give it back".

Fig. 4.2 (continued)

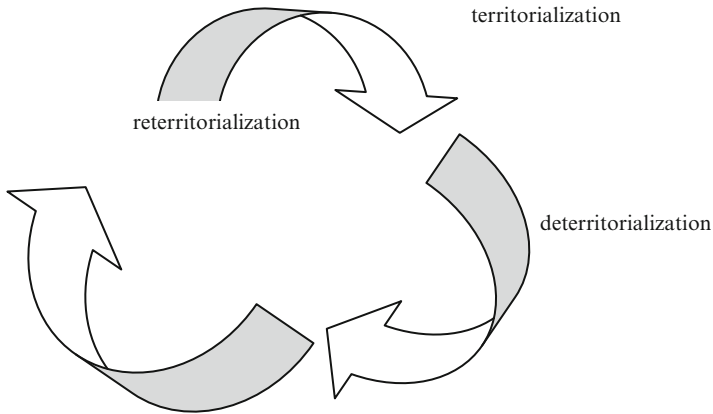


Fig. 4.3 Territorialization, deterritorialization, reterritorialization

supposing you have any idea of what we might be trying to say. What is more, a map cannot simply be projected onto a given surface without remainder. In particular *a text*, which has perforce a linear spatial-temporal arrangement will necessarily struggle to convey elements of Thriftian and Deleuze-Guattarian space. Because our kind of map must extend beyond or outside any text we can compose, in part depending on how it is *entered* by its different beholders, our aim has been, not to draw a map, but solely to suggest some of the elements and dimensions from which a map of baby-space might be constructed.

To this end, we have employed diagrams, fragments of narrative, photographs and a number of different concepts to gesture to the kinds of way in which we suggest babies may experience or perform space in one family day care home. Thus, the seeming mute materiality of the infants' highchairs, and of their drinking bottles, was shown to have significance that goes beyond the physical, drawing in regulatory striations and adult and infant desires that exceed a three-dimensional presence. Then again, the subversions that Kaia and Charlie achieve in this regulatory space, the striation of which is accentuated by the orderliness Amanda wanted to impose on mealtimes, is a deterritorialization which owes much to the two toddlers' lively interest in each other and their blossoming friendship, bringing in the elements of social relationship and temporality. Finally, we argue that the Deleuze-Guattarian-inspired notion of mapping suggests how we might move academic thinking toward a more experiential way of describing baby-space so as to pre-empt the pressure to pre-theorise its inhabitants' cognitive and perceptual *competences*.

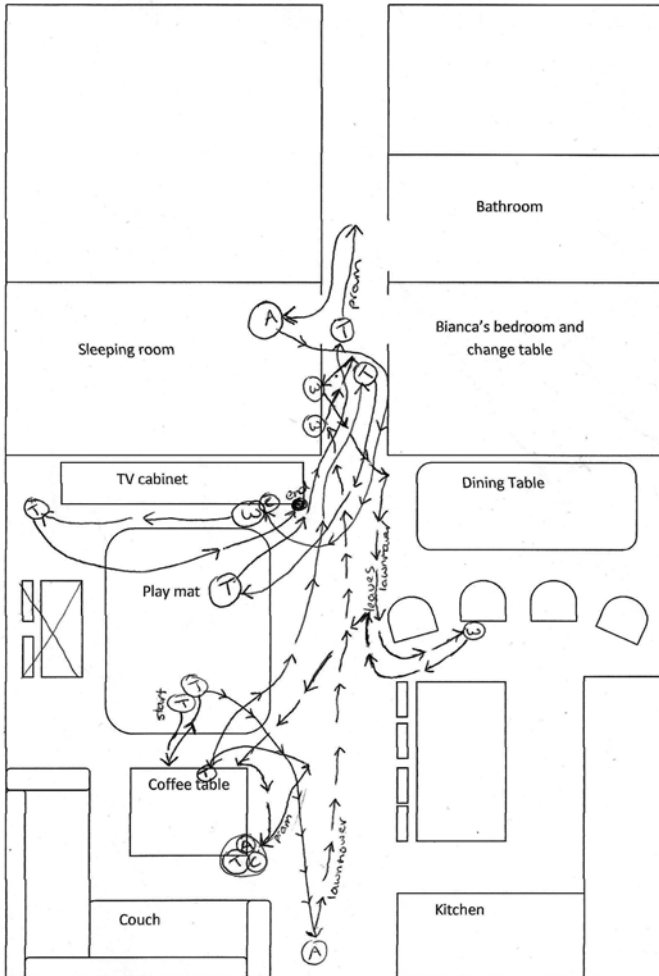
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Appendix 4.1: Charlie's Nomadic Wandering Through the Family Day Care Home

Map Observation

Child: ~~Walter~~ Charlie
Date: 17.06.09
Time: 8:20 - 8:40
Duration: 20 minutes

Key:
T = Interacts with toy
A = Interacts with adult
C = Interacts with child
W = watching



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Chapter 5

Spending Time with Others: A Time-Use Diary for Infant-Toddler Child Care

Linda J. Harrison, Sheena Elwick, Claire D. Vallotton,
and Gregor Kappler

5.1 Introduction

The expectation that infants and toddlers enjoy positive relationships with others is central to contemporary models of early education and care. In Australia, the National Quality Standard requires services to ensure that “each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults” (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA] 2012, p. 30). This statement is based on a body of evidence from research and practice showing that young children learn about themselves and the social and physical world through their interactions with, or observations of, others. Learning is supported by the guidance of adult caregivers and educators (see Elicker, Anderson, and Ruprecht, Chap. 10, this volume; Kultti and Pramling Samuelsson, Chap. 11, this volume) and the interchanges children have with peers (see Goodfellow, Chap. 15, this volume; Rutanen, Chap. 12, this volume). The relationships children form in child care

L.J. Harrison (✉)
Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education,
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia
e-mail: lharrison@csu.edu.au

S. Elwick
School of Education, Charles Sturt University, Albury, Australia
e-mail: selwick@csu.edu.au

C.D. Vallotton
Human Development and Family Studies, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA
e-mail: vallotto@msu.edu

G. Kappler
Institute for Applied Psychology: Health, Development, Enhancement and Intervention,
Faculty of Psychology, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria
e-mail: gregor.kappler@univie.ac.at

develop during the day-to-day interactions they have with adults and other children (see Dolby, Friezer, and Hughes, Chap. 7, this volume). In this chapter we focus on these social experiences as they occur in children's *everyday lives* in child care (see Gulbrandsen, this volume). Our study of daily life in child care began by selecting a methodology that would capture it in its entirety.

To date, research studies of children's interactions with adults and other children in early education and care settings have relied on data collected during selected parts of a day, such as free play (e.g., Deynoot-Schaub and Riksen-Walraven 2006), or over a long period of time but targeted to specific types of episodes, such as language incidents (Laevers et al. 2011). In some cases, researchers use an extended period of data collection but routine caregiving activities such as mealtimes, sleep time, and toileting are omitted (e.g., Early et al. 2010; Tonyan and Howes 2003). Because routines make up at least one-third of a child's day (Early et al. 2010), leaving them out of an observation would result in a significant loss of information about children's daily life in child care. It appears that very few observation studies, including video-based, have sought to cover the child's day in its entirety. An exception is Ahnert et al. (2000) whose time-sampling record included all of the child's waking and napping hours.

Examined together, the diverse methodologies that researchers from Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, France, and the United States have used to record the ways infants and toddlers spend their time in child care provide an emerging picture of adult-child interaction. They suggest that group care settings are limited in the amount of one-to-one adult-child time that can be provided for infants and toddlers. This is most evident in studies that compare infants' and toddlers' time at home and in child care. Based on their detailed records of German toddlers' days, Ahnert et al. (2000) wrote: "Toddlers in child care experienced communication on an individual level, care-provider-initiated proximity, emotional exchanges, and soothing less often than did the toddlers at home" (p. 349). Similarly, Laevers et al.'s (2011) observations of language and communication in Belgian day care centres and family care settings showed that educators' responses to children's communications were infrequent (only 10 utterances per hour) and tended to be either regulatory (e.g., telling children what to do) or informative (e.g., telling children what they'll get for lunch). The episodes they selected for observation, however, did not include other forms of educator-child communication, such as reading a story or singing.

A different picture of adult-child interaction emerges when researchers have observed children's interactions. In a United States study of children's activities and interactions during free play, Tonyan and Howes (2003) used cluster analysis to identify six different groupings of children, based on the amount of time spent in different activities, and the level of adult interaction. A typical pattern for under-3-year-olds (30 % were in this cluster) was to be close to a highly involved adult. Laevers et al.'s (2011) records of children's utterances further showed that the large majority of infants' and toddlers' utterances (68 %) were addressed to an educator. Only 12 % were directed towards peers. This pattern also emerged in Deynoot-Schaub and Riksen-Walraven's (2006) study of Dutch 15-month-olds' contacts with peers and adults in child care. They observed children's initiatives and responses

towards peers and caregivers, as well as peer and caregiver behaviors directed to the child, and found that toddlers had twice as much contact with educators as with peers. Similar findings were reported by Legendre and Munchenbach (2011), who supplemented their observations of 18–30-month-old French children during free play time with mapping of the child’s location in their child care centre. They found that when an adult was close by, children made more bids for attention and interaction to the adult and fewer bids to peers. Their conclusion was that toddlers find adults more attractive play partners and that “the compelling attractiveness of adult partners incites children to keep on attempting for interactions with them at the expense of interactions with peers” (p. 123).

These studies indicate that whilst educators may be less readily available in child care than parents are at home, infants and toddlers make the most of opportunities for contact. What is less clear, however, is how this focus on adults affects the time toddlers spend with other children. One suggestion is that peer contact offsets a lack of adult contact. For example, Ahnert et al. (2000) commented, “The reduced exposure to adult input was of course associated with increased opportunities to interact with peers” (p. 349). This position is consistent with studies of older children, which has not only acknowledged the benefits of complex play with peers, but also the view that such interactions are “more probable when adults are *not* part of the children’s social context” (Kontos and Keyes 1999, p. 47). It may not, however, be appropriate for describing the interactions of younger children. Legendre and Munchenbach (2011) observed that when toddlers were in close proximity to an adult, they were almost always also in proximity to peers. This would suggest that, for infants and toddlers, spending time with or in proximity to adults supports opportunities to be in contact with peers.

Studying the dynamics of children’s spending time with peers and spending time with adults is a challenge that we address in this chapter. The methodology we selected to do this was via a time-use diary, which was designed to record young children’s activities and interactions with educators and other children as they occurred throughout the child’s day. The unique contribution of this method is its focus on the child’s entire day, rather than on episodes or events that occur during part of the day.

5.2 Time-Use Diary Methodology

Time-Use Diary (TUD) methodology is a research method most typically used in the social sciences (Gershuny and Sullivan 1998) to record a person’s activities as they naturally and sequentially occur in daily life. The aim is to collect a detailed, complete and accurate estimate of the time spent in different activities over one or more 24-h periods. TUDs have been used, for example, to describe the amount of time parents engage in daily child care (Kalenkoski et al. 2005) or leisure activities (Bittman and Wajcman 2000). TUD data are collected from adults or older children via self-report or an interview with a research assistant.

For younger children, information on their use of time is typically collected via parent records. Parent-generated TUDs, for example, have been used to analyse the amount of time Australian 4–5-year-old children spent watching television, snacking and engaging in physical activity (Brown et al. 2010) and American 3–11-year-olds spent reading, watching TV, studying, and doing chores (Bianchi and Robinson 1997).

The data that are generated by TUDs (i.e., amount of time spent in different activities during a defined period of time) makes them substantively different from time-sampling, which is a common method used by researchers to record children's activities or behaviors in early education settings (e.g., Ahnert et al. 2000; Early et al. 2010). Time-sampling has also been used by teachers to collect quantitative information about the children in their classrooms for the purpose of curricular planning for individual children or whole groups (e.g., Nicolson and Shipstead 1994). But there are distinct differences between the TUD method and time-sampling: (1) a TUD is used to record an individual child's experience, rather than a group of children; (2) it is a record of an entire day, rather than a selected period of time or activity; and (3) TUD observation is continuous, with no periods of time that are skipped or unobserved, as occurs with time-sampling in which an observer observes for a given increment, e.g., 3 min, then stops observing while recording for another given increment, e.g., 1 min, to provide a series of *snapshots* (Early et al. 2010).

As continuous data, TUDs can also generate information about when children engage in certain activities. Baxter and Smith's (2009) analysis of 3,000 infants' time-use diaries, gathered as part of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), presented a series of graphs that illustrated the times of the day when children were sleeping, feeding, playing, crying, watching TV, etc. The plotting of TUD data across the day identified peak times for particular activities; for example, although crying was recorded across the day there was a spike at 5 pm on weekdays. This time corresponded with the peak period between 4 pm and 7 pm for being held/cuddled and for being read, sung or talked to. Baxter and Smith also graphed who infants spent time with across the day. These data illustrated that, in general, infants spent most of their time with their mothers, with a peak period for time with fathers at 6 pm.

In the following section of this chapter, we describe how we applied the TUD approach to recording children's activities, and who they are with, in infant-toddler child care, including in centre-based care and home-based family day care.

5.3 Developing a Time-Use Diary for Infant-Toddler Child Care

The TUD was developed for the Infants' Lives in Childcare project, a 3-year research study undertaken in collaboration with Family Day Care Australia and KU Children's Services (Sumsion et al. 2008–2011). The question of interest, "What is life like for babies and toddlers in child care?" was investigated using the mosaic approach, which is described by Clark (2005) as "the bringing together of different pieces or perspectives in order to create an image of children's worlds" (p. 31).

The project research team sought to use diverse methods that provided different but complementary insights into the experiences and *perspectives* of the infants (Goodfellow et al. 2011). These included anecdotal observation records, digital video data generated through tripod-mounted and handheld cameras and some footage from a baby cam mounted on an infant's hat or headband, interviews with educators and parents, and a TUD. Some of these methods, including the TUD, were developed specifically for this project.

5.3.1 *Time-Use Diary Content*

Drawing on TUD formats developed for the LSAC, the TUD for infant-toddler child care captures three broad dimensions:

1. 'What the child is doing';
2. 'Where the child is'; and
3. 'Who the child is with'.

What the child is doing was described by 20 specific items loosely grouped within the following six areas:

- *communication and language*, coded as 'being talked to, talking', 'making bid for attention (non-verbal, verbal)', 'being reprimanded, corrected', and 'independent self talk';
- *play*, coded when the child was engaged in 'quiet play/manipulative (draw, puzzles, mat toys, dress ups)' or 'active and play, large motor activity (crawl, climb, swing arms/legs)', and also as 'moving around/purposeful wandering' when children were moving from one play area to another but not clearly engaged;
- *non-play*, coded as 'looking around/watching others', 'doing nothing/unengaged/aimless wandering', and 'watching TV/video/DVD';
- *emotion and negative affect*, coded as 'conflict, disagreement, argue, fight', 'crying, upset', 'laughing, excited screaming, being silly', and 'being held, cuddled, comforted, on lap';
- *teacher-led activities*, coded as 'sharing a book, being read to/told a story', 'being sung to, singing, engaging in music', 'organised activities, being taught' and 'helping with, being taught to do chores'; and
- *routines*, coded as 'sleeping', 'bathe, hand wash, nappy change, toileting, dress, hair care', and 'eating, drinking, bottle-feeding (independent, being fed)'.

Where the child is was described by four items: 'indoors', 'outdoor area', 'covered outdoor space/verandah', and 'small enclosed space, cubby'.

Who the child is with was described by three categories and six items:

- *alone*, coded when the child was independent and not 'with' another person. This included times when the child was near another child but not showing any awareness of their presence;

- *with adults*, coded when the child was with a carer, staff member or educator, a parent, grandparent or guardian, or another adult, including the researcher or other visitors; and
- *with children*, coded when the child was with another child or group of children, or a sibling.

5.4 Using the Time-Use Diary in the Infants' Lives in Childcare Project

5.4.1 Participants

Participants were 25 children (13 boys, 12 girls) ranging in age from 5.11 to 24.65 months (Mean age=14.92 months). Twelve children were attending Family Day Care (FDC) homes and 13 were in a Long Day Care (LDC) centre.

5.4.2 Procedures

TUD data were recorded continuously using a pre-set format, with real-time intervals for each 5-min period of the day. For each 5-min period of observation, the researcher noted whether each of the content items occurred, and if so, whether this was for less than half of the time or more than half of the time. In this method, all activities that occur during the time period are recorded. Multiple activities are recorded, for example, when children are engaged in different activities at the same time (e.g., 'looking around/watching others' while engaged in 'quiet play'), or when activities occur sequentially (e.g., 'looking around/watching others' followed by 'quiet play').

Each study child was observed from when s/he arrived at child care to when s/he left. Data collection occurred over blocks of time of between 2 and 4 h, which were spread over 2 or 3 separate visits. The total observation time per child ranged from 5.4 to 10.6 h; the average duration was 8.0 h.

5.5 Analysing Time-Use Diary Data

TUD records for each item and each 5-min time period were coded as either 0 (none of the time), 2.5 (up to half of the time), or 5 (more than half of the time) and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software in a person-period format. Each 5-min period was represented as a separate row of data.

We applied two different approaches to analysing the data: a summary approach, and an over-time approach. We used the summary approach to estimate children's total time in different activities across the observation period, and the over-time

approach to describe the changes in types of activities and experiences across the course of the day. Each method provides a different way of modeling the co-occurrence of activities and experiences.

5.5.1 Summary Approach: Total Time

Two initial analytical steps were applied to the raw data to estimate the total time children spent in specific activities. First, we created a set of summary person-level variables that summed each item across the observation periods recorded for each child. Next, we divided these time-summary variables by the total amount of time the child was observed to create a set of percent-of-time variables. This was necessary to take account of the different amounts of time each child was observed. We conducted descriptive analysis of these percent-of-time variables to provide a first look at the variations in children's overall experiences in child care. Results are presented in Table 5.1.

Following this, we used correlation and *t*-test analyses to examine the extent to which child characteristics and type of care influenced the time children spent with others and in different activities. Finally, using the summary data we examined correlations between children's social experiences ('who the child was with'), and their activities ('what the child was doing'). We used a partial correlation, controlling for child age, because age could influence both who children spend time with and their activities, creating a spurious relationship.

5.5.2 Over-Time Approach: Mapping the Day

The raw data (in person-period format) were analysed using the R statistical package and ggplots (Wickham 2009). This method plots the occurrence of each item graphically across the observation periods from arrival to departure (i.e., 7 am to 6 pm). Smooth fitted lines (each shown as a single line) depict the average proportions of time spent in each activity across time of day (LOESS curves with span of 24 min). Gray areas surrounding the smoothed functions (lines) indicate 95 %-confidence intervals. Narrower gray areas indicate less variation in the data and wider gray areas indicate more variation. Wider gray areas were typically seen at the beginning and end of the day because children's arrival and departure times differed markedly.

The selection of items for inclusion in the plots was necessarily restricted to those that occurred relatively frequently across the day. For the most part, single items were plotted, but in some plots items were combined to create a summary variable, such as 'with adults' which combined time spent with educators, parents, and other adults.

This method of analysis allowed us to combine plots for children's social time ('who the child is with') and activities ('what the child is doing') over the course of

the child care day. We also explored the role that type of care setting might have on children's time use over the day by creating separate plots for family day care homes (FDC) and centre-based care (LDC). Results for the whole group are presented in Figs. 5.1 and 5.2, and results contrasting FDC and LDC are presented in Fig. 5.3.

5.6 Findings: What Infants and Toddlers *Do* in Child Care and *Who* They Spend Time With

5.6.1 Summary Approach: Total Time

Figures presented in Table 5.1 (Column 2) show the Mean percent of time children spent alone, with educators and with other children, and the percent of time children spent in different activities. The Standard Deviation and the range, Minimum to Maximum (Columns 2, 3, 4), indicate that the time spent in different social, learning and routine activities varied widely across the 25 participants.

How children spend their time: Descriptive analyses. Looking first at the figures for 'who the children are with', we see that on average children spent 40.7 % of their time in child care alone. It is important to note, however, that being 'alone' was typically recorded when children were 'sleeping', which occurred for about 25 % of the day. Therefore, we can estimate that children spent about 15.7 % of their time alone when not sleeping. Of the rest of the time, 42.3 % was spent with educators, although this ranged from 14 to 60 %, and 35.6 % with other children, with a range of 7–79 %.

The figures for 'what the child is doing' show that a large proportion of the day was spent in routine activities: sleeping (25.0 %), and eating and drinking (15.0 %). Children were talking and/or being talked to for one-quarter (25.9 %) of their day and playing for over one-third (quiet play 22.2 % + active play 12.4 %) of the day. Teacher-led educational activities occurred infrequently, averaging about 6.5 % of the day (book reading 1.8 % + music 2.8 % + other 'taught' activity 1.9 %).

Child influences on how time is spent. We then explored whether children's age or gender was associated with the percentages of time they spent in social contact or specific activities. We tested associations with child age by using a bi-variate Pearson correlation between child age in months and each of the percentage of time variables. Results showed that older children spent more of their time with other children ($r=0.53$, $p<.01$), but age was not associated with time spent alone or with adults. Older children were found to spend more time playing actively ($r=0.39$, $p=.05$), seeking attention ($r=0.59$, $p<.01$), and in the teacher-led activities of being read to/sharing a book ($r=0.34$, $p=.09$) and taught activities ($r=0.64$, $p<.01$). Younger children spent more time sleeping ($r=-0.36$, $p=.08$) and being held or comforted ($r=-0.61$, $p<.01$). Child age was not associated with time spent in quiet play, looking at and watching others, watching TV, talking, or singing. Gender differences were minimal.

Table 5.1 Who children are with, and what children do, in child care: Total time

	Percent of daily time recorded			Type of care
	Mean % (SD)	Min %	Max %	<i>t</i> -test $p < .05$
Who children are with				
Alone	40.7 (16.1)	2	72	FDC > LDC
With educator(s)	42.3 (11.2)	14	60	
With other child/children	35.6 (16.8)	7	79	LDC > FDC
What children do				
<i>Communication</i>				
Talking/being talked to	25.9 (13.1)	2	46	FDC > LDC
Seeking attention	10.1 (10.1)	1	40	LDC > FDC
<i>Play</i>				
Quiet play	22.2 (9.1)	8	41	FDC > LDC
Active play	12.4 (7.2)	0	28	
<i>Non-play</i>				
Looking/watching	27.3 (13.9)	3	48	
Watching TV, video, DVD	1.8 (3.3)	0	11	FDC > LDC
<i>Emotion and negative affect</i>				
Conflict/disagreement	1.0 (1.2)	0	4	
Crying/upset	5.2 (5.3)	0	17	
Laughing/being silly	1.9 (2.7)	0	10	
Being held, comforted	9.2 (8.1)	0	31	FDC > LDC
<i>Teacher-led</i>				
Sharing a book, being read to	1.8 (2.4)	0	8	
Singing, engaging in music	2.8 (2.6)	0	8	
Teacher organised activity	1.9 (3.3)	0	9	LDC > FDC
<i>Routines</i>				
Sleeping	25.0 (12.2)	0	52	FDC > LDC
Eating, drinking	15.0 (5.5)	9	33	

Note: Because multiple activities can be recorded within the same time period, the total percent time is greater than 100 %

Setting influences on how time is spent. Next we compared the social contact and experiences of children receiving home-based (FDC) and centre-based (LDC) child care. Many differences were found, as summarised in Table 5.1, Column 5. In FDC homes, children spent more time alone ($t=2.35$, $p < .05$), in quiet play ($t=2.12$, $p < .05$), watching TV ($t=3.00$, $p < .05$), talking or being talked to ($t=2.34$, $p < .05$), sleeping ($t=2.85$, $p < .01$), and being held/comforted ($t=2.81$, $p < .01$). In centre-based care, children spent more time with other children ($t=-2.39$, $p < .05$), seeking attention ($t=-2.30$, $p < .05$) and in teacher-taught activities ($t=-3.21$, $p < .01$).

What children do when spending time alone and with others. Our final set of analyses sought to explore what children were doing when they spent time alone or with others. Possible associations were tested using bi-variate Pearson correlations. Not surprisingly, we found a strong positive correlation between time spent ‘sleeping’ and time spent ‘alone’ ($r=0.67$, $p < .001$). Items describing children’s language and

communication were positively correlated with time spent with educators: talking/being talked to ($r=0.64, p<.001$); seeking attention ($r=.45, p<.05$). Time spent in quiet play was not significantly correlated with any of the ‘who with’ items, but time spent in active play was negatively correlated with time with educators ($r=-0.36, p=.09$), suggesting that adults are less involved with children when they are engaged in gross motor, physically active play.

The time children spent in non-play activities was positively correlated with time spent alone: looking around or watching others ($r=0.40, p=.05$); and watching TV ($r=0.36, p=.09$). This finding was to be expected, but more surprising was that looking around/watching others was also associated with the time children spent with educators ($r=0.52, p<.01$). This suggests that when infants and toddlers are with adults in child care they are also observing and ‘learning’ about the other children in the group, and presents a different interpretation to Legendre and Munchenbach’s (2011) view of the “compelling attractiveness” of adults. Our TUD data does not support such a preference for adults over peers. Rather, it suggests that being with adults can link infants and toddlers with other children.

Results for items describing emotion and negative affect occurred infrequently (as seen in Table 5.1), but showed expected and unexpected associations which we felt warranted reporting. Not surprisingly, time spent crying, and time spent being held or comforted, were positively correlated with time with educators ($r=0.43, p<.05$ and $r=0.42, p<.05$, respectively). Contrary to expectations, there were no significant correlations between time spent with other children and time spent crying, arguing/disagreeing/in conflict, or being reprimanded/corrected. Also unexpected was the positive correlation between the amount of time children were corrected or reprimanded and time spent alone ($r=0.40, p=.06$). A possible interpretation for this result is that infants and toddlers may be more likely to ‘break the rules’ when they are alone, rather than when they are with an educator or another child.

These findings for the summary TUD data were extended by the second approach to analysing the data, which mapped the same items over the course of the day.

5.6.2 *Over-Time Approach: Mapping the Day*

This analytical approach provided a visual depiction, or map, of the changing patterns in children’s social encounters and activities over the course of the child care day. The plots extend from the earliest arrival time of 7 am to the latest departure time, 6 pm. Although the majority of children were in attendance between 8:30 am and 4 pm, the Figures included here cover the maximum time period.

Routine events in the daily timetable. Using TUD data allowed us to appreciate the pattern of children’s activities and social experiences in relation to routine care activities—sleeping and eating—that are key markers of their day. This is illustrated in Fig. 5.1 which includes two lines showing the time of the day when most children were sleeping (solid black line) and eating (short dashes ■ ■ ■). The shape of the

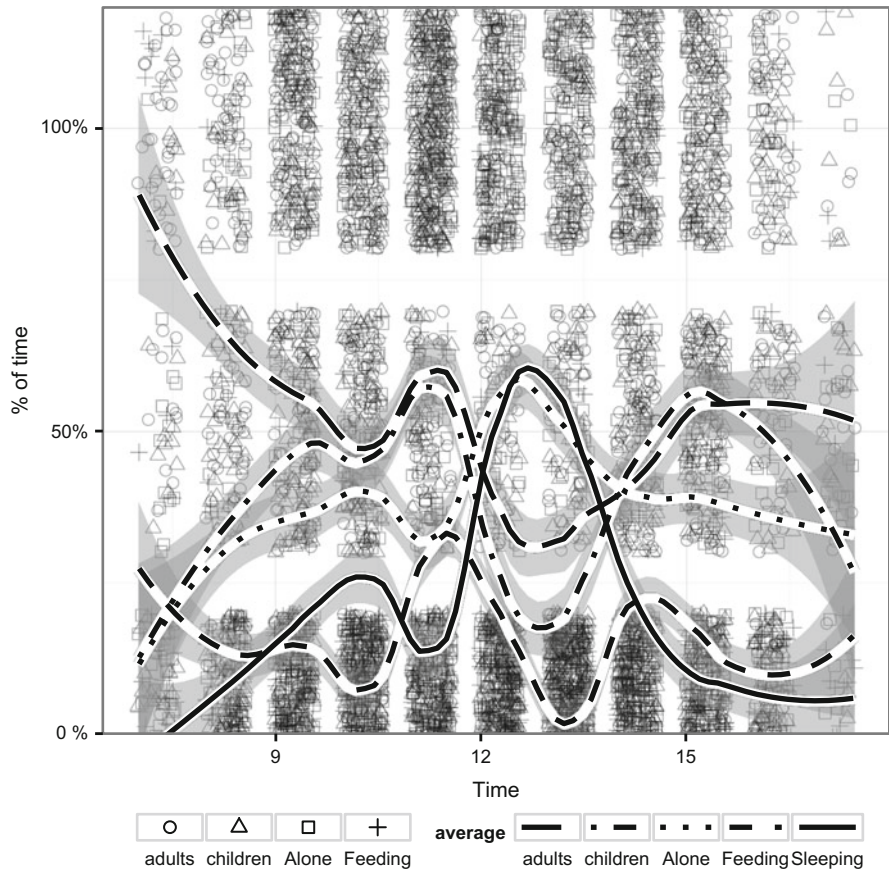


Fig. 5.1 Who children are with, plus time spent sleeping and eating: Over the day

plot line for sleeping shows two peak periods: the first occurs mid-morning and the second with a higher and larger peak in the early afternoon, when children were most likely to be sleeping. Eating, on the other hand, showed a more varied pattern over the day, with peak periods at the very beginning (before 8 am) and end (after 5 pm) of the day, and at three times during the day: mid-morning, noon, and mid-afternoon. These routine events were features of the children’s day that framed the experiences children had and helped us to interpret other plots for children’s time alone and with others.

Spending with others and alone. Starting with the plots for who children spend time with (Fig. 5.1), we see that children begin their day with adults (long dashes — — —). Time with adults decreases steadily until mid-morning, and is mirrored by an opposite increase in the amount of time children spend with children (short dashes + dots - • - •). These two lines merge at about the time when

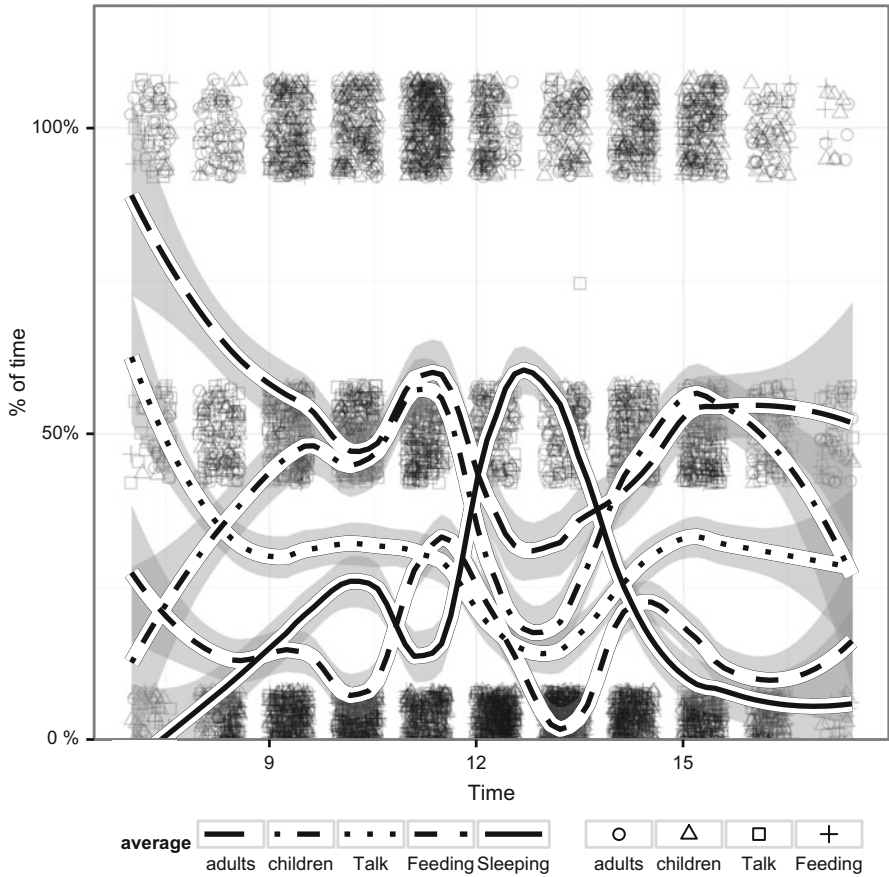


Fig. 5.2 Who children are with, and time spent talking or being talked to: Over the day

children have their ‘morning tea’ or snack, an event that is typically organised for the group of children and adults to sit together. The plot lines for time with adults and time with children remain close together or parallel for the rest of the day, right through until late afternoon, when they separate again. The peak periods for being with other children appear just before and during ‘morning tea’ and again during and just after ‘afternoon tea’.

Time spent alone, seen in Fig. 5.1 as a dotted line (● ● ●), also increases during the morning, and then appears to plateau, with dips during mealtimes and an increase at sleep time.

Communication and language when spending time with others. In Fig. 5.2, we amended Fig. 5.1 by deleting the line for ‘alone’ and plotting a line for ‘talking/being talked to’ (dotted line ● ● ●). The other plot lines remained the same. The plot shows that time spent talking/being talked to is highest when children arrive at child care, initially matching, in parallel, the time spent with adults, but then decreasing

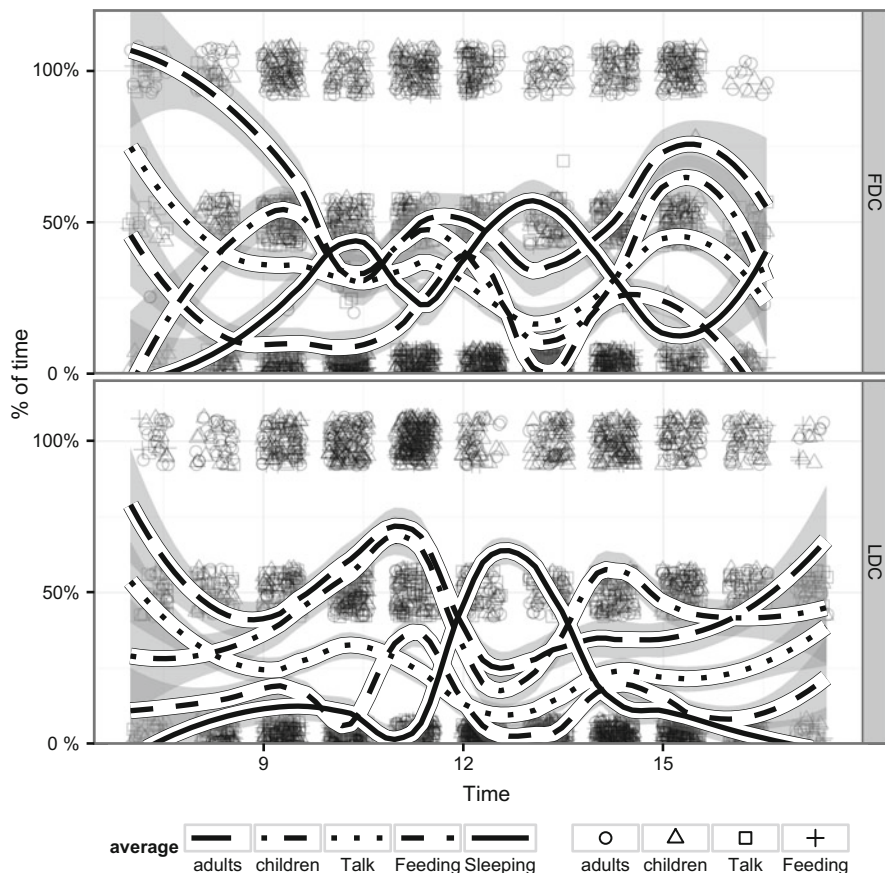


Fig. 5.3 Who children are with, and time spent talking or being talked to: Over the FDC and LDC day

and reaching a plateau level that is maintained throughout the morning. Time spent talking begins to drop as time spent sleeping begins to rise, with the two plots mirroring each other. There is a further rise in time spent talking in the afternoon, to some extent matching the increased time spent ‘with adults’ and ‘with children’. What is interesting about the plot line for talking is that, apart from sleep time, it stays reasonably stable across the day.

We follow Fig. 5.2 with Fig. 5.3, which analysed a split data file to produce separate plots for the two types of care: Family Day Care (FDC) and centre care (LDC). In doing this, we sought to extend the statistical results reported in the previous section showing that total time talking was higher in FDC than LDC. When we compared the two plots for time spent ‘talking/being talked to’ (dotted lines ● ● ●) in Fig. 5.3, we were impressed by their similarity. Both FDC and LDC plots started high, reduced to a plateau across the morning, dipped at sleep time, and increased in the afternoon. Apart from a steeper rise in talking in the FDC afternoon,

the pattern was quite similar. Where a difference could be seen, however, was in the position of the line on the graph, which was marginally, but consistently, higher for the FDC plot line.

Of further interest were the different patterns in FDC and LDC plots for talking (dotted lines • • •), for time with adults (long dashes — — —), and time with children (short dashes + dots - • - •). From 9 am, the three lines depicted in the FDC plot were parallel, suggesting that as time spent with adults and time spent with children increased and decreased, so did time spent talking. While there are also parallel lines for time spent with adults and time spent with children in the LDC plot, particularly in the morning, the plot for talking does not follow the same pattern as closely as it does in FDC. In the LDC afternoon, when the plots for time with adults and time with children diverge, time spent talking is more closely aligned (parallel) with time with adults.

The data depicted in Fig. 5.3 also provided a visual explanation of the finding from the statistical analyses showing that children spent more time with other children in LDC than in FDC. In LDC, the plot line for time with other children (short dashes + dots - • - •) increases steadily across the morning, peaking about the time that children have morning tea, then falling to mirror the plot line for sleeping, and then rising again for a second peak at afternoon tea and remaining high and relatively stable to the end of the day. In FDC, the plot line for time with other children is more complex, showing three peaks across the day, and no evidence of a steady pattern of interaction at the end of the day.

5.7 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter is about the ways that infants and toddlers spend their time during the course of the child care day. As such, it explores the intersections among time and the *lived spaces* of child care: relational space, interactional space, curriculum and pedagogical space. By applying two very different analytical tools to the data collected using the TUD for infant-toddler child care, we were able to consider not only summary totals for time spent, and factors internal or external to the child that might influence their use of time, but also visual patterns depicting how children's use of time changed across the day. These two approaches to understanding the daily lives of very young children allowed us to add to the *mosaic* of methods that were used in the larger Infants' Lives in Childcare study. In this chapter, we have reported summary information that combines the TUDs of 25 infants and toddlers, but the TUD method is equally valuable when used in combination with other methods to observe and interpret the experiences of individuals. The systematic format of a TUD observation can be used to confirm and expand on themes or points of interest that arise from interpretations of qualitative data. In this way we harness and bring into dialogue diverse disciplinary, methodological, and analytical resources, which invite us to create interpretative spaces in which we become more receptive to what the infants themselves are *saying* about their experiences.

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Chapter 6

The Birthday Cake: Social Relations and Professional Practices Around Mealtimes with Toddlers in Child Care

Eva Johansson and Donna Berthelsen

6.1 Introduction

Events that involve food and eating are important parts of the daily routine in which adults and children participate in child care settings. These events can be viewed as cultural practices because they involve certain everyday ways of acting, thinking or feeling (Grusec et al. 2000). The cultural practices around food and eating symbolise and guide the social relations, emotions, social structures and behaviours of the participants. Identities and roles for the participants are created in these practices, marked by ambiguity; movement and fluidity through ongoing processes of negotiation (Punch et al. 2010). The formal professional systems that guide these practices in early education and care programs often focus on the nutritional value of the food, while the children and teachers involved in these mealtime events account for the intersubjective experiences. Mealtimes provide opportunities for children and teachers to interact and co-construct meaning around the situations that arise. Of special interest in this research are teachers' and children's intentions for communication in the context of events involving food and eating and the kind of learning embedded in the communications that occur. Throughout this chapter, these events are referred to as mealtimes.

This study is informed by phenomenological theory which aims to reach understandings about interactions and their meaning from the perspective of the participating individuals. In particular, this study is influenced by the theory of the *life-world* developed by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962), as well as by the ideas which the German sociologist, Alfred Schütz (1972) developed in his book, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Several concepts from these theories

E. Johansson (✉)

Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway

e-mail: eva.johansson@uis.no

D. Berthelsen

Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

e-mail: d.berthelsen@qut.edu.au

are of interest to this research. These concepts are the life-world, the lived body, intersubjectivity and the structure of relevance. These concepts serve as the framework for our understandings and interpretations of interactions during mealtimes in a child care centre.

6.2 Mealtime Research in Early Childhood Programs

Interactions around mealtimes have often been studied according to nutrition, consumption, and as an event in family life. Some studies have viewed interactions involving food as more or less hidden social practices in families and in institutions (James et al. 2009; Punch et al. 2010); while others have taken an interest in mealtimes as important pedagogical events, especially in the early childhood research from Nordic countries. Mealtime is viewed as a time when various aspects of development and learning can be communicated and challenged. Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson (2006) analysed a mealtime interaction at a Swedish day care setting. Their findings indicated the importance of the teacher's role in contributing to mealtime interactions with different kinds of support as the teachers communicated with the children. While mealtimes can involve opportunities for learning and expressions of care, it is a time when values for appropriate behaviour are also expressed. While mealtime is about meeting primary needs through eating, it is also an important time for communication and participation.

Bae (2009) described mealtimes as a time for providing opportunities in which children can make *playful initiatives*, even if mealtime is not a defined time for play. Bae described *spacious* interactional patterns which can be observed at mealtimes and in other contexts. These spacious interactions have an openness and acceptance of children's playful initiatives as opposed to *narrow* interactional patterns in which there is extensive control on the part of teachers; when closed questions are asked and the rules for mealtime behaviour are emphasised. In spacious interactions, teachers can contribute to sustaining conversational exchanges by being emotionally responsive and expressive; engendering an attitude of playfulness; and shifting perspectives to take a child's point of view.

The way in which mealtimes are used as a learning experience and the engagement style used by the teachers will differ according to the sociocultural context. Ødegaard (2006, 2007) in analyses of video observations of young children at mealtime in preschool settings in Norway considered how the teachers' communications took into account the children's background, experiences and lived context. While there were different practices exhibited by the teachers in constructing co-narratives with children, the most common initiatives made by the teachers at mealtime were: eliciting and sharing stories of significant events in the lives of the children; giving directions and instructions; and encouraging particular children to tell their versions of a story or experience.

Grindland (2011) investigated discourses in teachers' talk about mealtimes in Norwegian kindergartens. She identified two discourses: an explorative discourse

and a discourse of order. Grindland discusses the possibilities that these discourses might create for democratic practice built on disagreement. A discourse of order created at mealtimes is steered by rules and gives little space for children to explore and oppose or change the rules. Such discourse leads to more hostile relations in which the partners try to diminish each other's identity. The discourse of order reduces possibilities for democracy because it highlights consensus and minimises the variety of ways to be a participant during mealtime. Explorative discourse, on the other hand, ensures that the participants learn about rules and structures but it also allows for the rules and structures to be challenged, tested, and changed by the participants (e.g., children). Friendly disagreements are approved in this discourse. According to Grindland, this is a prerequisite condition of democratic practice.

It is apparent from these research reports that significant responsibilities rest with the teacher if they are to use mealtimes as an opportunity to engage with children and make the mealtime a playful, communicative or democratic learning event.

6.3 The Life-World, the Lived Body, and Intersubjectivity

The life-world, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962), is constituted as the taken-for-granted experiences of daily life. This world is always there in the subject's experiences. He or she lives in the world and can never step outside it. The life-world both precedes and succeeds the subject. It is there when she/he is born and when she/he dies. Still the life-world cannot be reduced to an objective world. It is subjective and objective at the same time. The subject is inseparable from, as well as in interaction with, the world. Of particular importance is the idea that our body is lived and, as such, central to all our being. To talk about the body as lived is to emphasise the indispensable relationship of subject and body.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), the body forms a whole, a system, in which the physical and psychological cannot be separated. In addition, human life is intersubjective. As human beings we are born into a common world. We communicate with each other by participating in each other's worlds, by confirming or questioning each other's being. It is through interaction with others that we become able to understand the other. This is not a question of feeling the same as the other. The understanding that we obtain is always limited, as we cannot *be* the other. There is always something left that we cannot understand. This is especially pertinent to the understanding of the role of the researcher in early childhood education settings (Johansson 2011). The researcher is always part of the world she/he is studying, including all her/his previous experiences and understandings. Consequently there are lots of limitations for a researcher in the interpretive study of children's and teachers' perspectives as he or she engages with their life-worlds, as in this chapter.

Our conclusion from this theory is that child care settings can be viewed as a part of the teachers' and children's life-worlds and together they (re)create a world of meanings and expectations, values and rules. The encounters between teachers' and children's life-worlds are the foundation for the communication that occurs at

mealtimes. Within an educational context, the responsibility to create encounters with the child's life-world rests upon the teacher. This meeting includes mental and emotional involvement. It includes a concern for, and a presence directed, towards the child. Additionally, there is wholeness in this situation, in which the teacher is also a part.

Significant in this study is to understand encounters between the life-worlds from the perspectives of the teachers and the children. For the researcher, when interpreting teachers' and children's actions, it is essential to take the wholeness of the entire situation and be open to the ambiguity and complexity of the life-worlds of participants. In this ambition, we have also related the concept of the *structure of relevance* to this study.

6.4 The Structure of Relevance

The individual's everyday knowledge of the world is seen as a system of typified constructions, called the structure of relevance (Schütz 1972). An individual is situated in a physical world and also in an historical and sociocultural situation. This sociocultural situation is a result of layers of intersubjective experiences, knowledge and interpretations, organised by the individual, and which become taken-for-granted knowledge. This is the structure of relevance that gives meaning to individual and collective activities, knowledge and interpretations. In the life-world of the child care centre, meanings and interactions are intertwined in the structure of relevance.

The structure of relevance embraces historical, cultural and societal understandings of the goals and intentions of child care that includes knowledge of children and childhood and also the teachers' and the children's interpretations of *what is going on* in specific events like mealtimes. This means that certain interpretations, activities and knowledge are associated with certain activities such as mealtime, in which some interpretations and knowledge are relevant while others are not. Taken-for-granted expectations, meanings and values for interaction and learning during mealtime frame the communication and the participants' interpretations about what is happening and how to interact. Teachers and children communicate, relate to and (re)construct meanings, rules and expectations for mealtime interactions on the basis of the structure of relevance that operates for the individuals participating in that situation.

6.5 Research Focus and Questions

While the overall question was to investigate the learning potentials expressed in the communication between teachers and children during mealtime, more specific research questions in focus were: What intentions for mealtime appear to be in the forefront for teachers and children respectively? What kind of meanings,

expectations and rules are communicated in the encounters between teachers and children? The aim was to identify encounters between life-worlds and the taken-for-granted structures of relevance in the communication between teachers and children during mealtime events.

6.6 Research Context

The data presented in this chapter stem from a larger project that took place in two child care centres in Australia. The overall aim of the larger project was to understand young children's lived experiences of values and norms and behaviour towards others in the everyday life of child care. The data were collected over a period of 3 months. Data consists of 15 h of video observations of everyday interactions between teachers and children in two toddler groups. The study involved 19 children: 8 boys and 11 girls, aged 2–3 years.

In Australia, regulatory responsibility for early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs has traditionally been held by the state and territory governments. However, over the last decade, the Australian federal government has taken increasing responsibility for driving a change agenda to address the quality of child care services, as well as cost and accessibility. Since 2009, there has been a national early childhood curriculum, The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2009).

The EYLF emphasises intentional teaching in that adult roles are proactive and responsive (Grieshaber 2010). It endorses the importance of children's learning to foster child autonomy, confidence, competence and independence. These competencies can be supported during mealtime interactions. A common scenario in Australia is that children bring their own food to the child care centre. Only a relatively small proportion of centres offer meals and snacks prepared at the centre. The more common practice is that children bring their own lunch and snacks for the day.

6.7 Research Data and Analytic Approach

There were ten mealtime observations (varying in length from 15 to 40 min) available in the data from the larger project. We chose four observations for more in-depth analyses based on the richness of the data available and the distinctiveness of those particular mealtime events from each other. Some findings across these four observations (a snack time, two lunch times, and a birthday party) are presented in this chapter and one event, *The Birthday Cake*, is presented in-depth to illustrate the overall findings. The criterion for choosing the presented example was because it characterised a specific structure of relevance that allowed for interactions of a more open and playful character in contrast to other mealtime events in the data.

The Birthday Cake is of symbolic value for teachers and children and is loaded with specific expectations, meanings, traditions and rules. It symbolises particular social relations, emotions, and behaviours created by the participants. The children and teachers are aware of the different structure of relevance for this specific mealtime event and this is reflected in their actions and interactions.

In the analyses of the observational data, the interpretations are based on the theoretical concepts of the life-world (Merleau-Ponty 1962) and the structure of relevance (Schütz 1972). The intent was to explore the different sorts of life-world encounters that were expressed and to consider the kinds of learning for children that may have been possible. The child care group is viewed as a part of the children's and teachers' life-worlds. Teacher and children create a world of meanings and expectations through their everyday interactions. This does not mean that the different life-worlds always meet or that the meanings and interpretations always coincide or even overlap.

The relevance structure in this child care group is also examined. The relevance structure has a general *and* a specific character and is framed by the collective experience of the participants as well as by individuals' previous *stock of knowledge* about what happens at child care and what happens in events involving food and eating. The relevance structure frames individual and shared interpretations and the *taken-for-granted* knowledge of the situation. This, in turn, creates boundaries for the nature of the learning opportunities available to children.

A broad overview of the analyses of the four selected mealtime observations that were studied in-depth is presented. Our overall impressions of mealtime for this child care group are outlined, followed by a detailed analysis of one of the mealtime observations, *The Birthday Cake*. The physical setting for all the mealtime observations in this centre was an outdoor covered area, adjacent to the main activity room. The children sat at a child-height, long table and child-sized chairs for all mealtimes.

6.8 Observed Practices Across Mealtimes

The *life-world encounters* between teachers and children were rare and of short duration. While teachers seem to share life-worlds between themselves, the children appeared to create shared life-worlds based on their own interplay by observing and participating in each other's actions. However, while interactions between children did occur, these life-world encounters were also rare and of short duration. The analyses indicated various emotional layers in mealtime events. Generally, the emotional character was calm and almost neutral in tone. However, the atmosphere could quickly change in the course of a mealtime from calmness to joyfulness or to a more distanced and controlling emotional tone set by the teachers as they gave instructions. Joy and laughter (as well as conflicts) between children and teachers could work in parallel with the more general overall neutral emotional tone of the group.

The *structure of relevance* for mealtime seen from the teachers' perspectives appeared to be that mealtime is primarily an event for eating and for fostering rules for appropriate behaviour. Manners were high on the agenda. The teachers often gave short instructions on how to behave. To sit and eat properly was certainly important. Health issues were often addressed. The teachers often raised issues about germs when correcting the children. For example: "That is how germs are spread," says one teacher when one of the children is touching the serving tongs with her hands. The words, "Yucky" and "Yummy" were also often heard across mealtime occasions. For example, when one child offers another child a sandwich a teacher says, "That's yucky. We don't share food". The word "Yum" is expressed by teachers (and children) for what is considered tasty food.

The teachers' position seemed to be to serve the children with food; to sit and observe the children; and to instruct the children as they eat. "Good boy" and "Good girl" were expressions for encouraging appropriate behaviour. "Don't be silly" was often used for correcting the children. Short instructional statements were common, such as, "Sit on your chair". Often one teacher sat at the table with the children while another teacher circled around the table monitoring the children as they ate. Discussions between the teachers also took place during mealtime.

Play was generally not allowed during mealtime and the children were corrected when playing with food, with their plates, or playing with each other. This rule appeared to be well known to the children. Nevertheless, this did not stop the children from some playful interactions during mealtime. For example, on one occasion, one child put his empty bowl on his head and this action was then taken up by the other children as they waited to be served. This was quickly corrected by the teacher. However, the teacher's instruction to stop did not bring this play to an end, as some of the *braver* children continued to put their bowls on their heads until their food was served.

The teachers also created opportunities for learning as they talked about concurrent events; for example, to identify the various sounds that could be heard while they sat at the table. "What noises can we hear?" says the teacher with an enthusiastic tone of voice, initiating an interaction with the children. "I can hear a telephone," she continues. Teachers also tried to make children consider their experiences of the various qualities of the food, in pointing out, for example, that the food was cold or crispy. This kind of interaction was primarily built on teachers' questions and initiatives. While individual children could also initiate an interaction about their experiences, these interactions were mostly short or they were interrupted and the initiative faded away.

In summary, the relevance structure for mealtimes from the perspectives of the teachers appeared to be mainly about teaching the children to eat properly. The relevance structure for mealtimes from the perspectives of the children seemed also to be about eating and either adapting to or opposing the rules for *good* behaviour. For some children, mealtime appeared to be a situation to show themselves in the best light to the teachers (letting the teacher know that they were *doing the right thing*—behaving as instructed). For other children, mealtime was a situation for

opposing the rules. Mealtime was occasionally fun but sometimes seemed rather boring for the children. Children also occasionally tested the rules by continuing with a particular behaviour after being instructed to stop.

The children seem to be aware of their role as receivers. The teacher distributed the food, instructed them on how to behave and, in general, framed the mealtime interactions. Children occasionally took the initiative to create their own meanings and to share life-worlds with their peers; for example, by playing with the plates or sharing food. The children were interested in the teachers' reactions to other children, as they watched and took cues for their own behaviour from the teachers' comments and actions.

6.9 The Birthday Cake

A departure from the usual structure of relevance for mealtime occurred with the birthday cake, although there are some clear elements of commonality to other mealtimes. The birthday cake was an opportunity for celebration and was viewed by teachers and children as an occasion for a more playful attitude to prevail. The celebration seemed to release both the children and their teachers from some of the usual rules of mealtime.

From the teachers' perspectives, this event seems to be a positive happening dedicated to the children. From the children's perspectives similar sentiments can be identified. This situation is framed by tradition and is embedded with collective and positive connotations. There was collective singing and loud hoorays as expressions of joy. The intention was that the children should enjoy the event. While only one child was having a birthday, the ritual for the celebration was collective. One teacher documented the event with a camera.

The structure of relevance of this particular event, a birthday for one of the children, gave room for a more liberal interpretation of the usual rules. Play, for example, was allowed, to a certain extent. While this event seems to have greater *ownership* by the children, in reality, the teachers still framed the boundaries. The event was not entirely released from the usual rules for mealtime behaviour. Instructions such as, "Sit properly" and "Say thank you" were also heard.

6.9.1 The Event

There were eight children and two teachers outside in the eating area. All the children and one teacher (Anna) were sitting around the table outside; while the second teacher (Renata) was taking photos of the celebration. There was a birthday cake in the middle of the table and everyone was singing *Happy Birthday* to Tom. The children were excited as they sang. It was a happy atmosphere and both teachers and children seemed to enjoy this event.

“Ready to blow them out?” asks Anna, the teacher. Tom leans over. “Ready? Go! Blow! Blow!” exclaims Anna. Tom manages to blow one candle out on the cake. “Good job. Okay, one more,” Anna encourages while smiling at Tom. Tom leans over and blows out the other candle. Anna smiles, claps, and calls, “Hooray”. Tom leans back and claps along. Some of the other children also clap their hands. “Good job, Tom. You’re so clever,” praises Anna. “Who wants some cake?” she asks. “Me,” says Sebastian. “Cake, cake!” he says eagerly, smiling and pointing at the cake as he leans across the table. Anna opens Michael’s box with his special food and gives it to him.

Shared excitement characterised the initial part of this event. The teacher and children participated together and the excitement was reciprocal. The teacher’s tone of voice was excited, as she marked this auspicious moment. This was a shared encounter of the life-worlds of teachers and children.

In the continuing interactions issues of justice and manners were raised, even though the teachers tried to maintain the joyful atmosphere.

Dylan, who is sitting beside Anna, stands up and points at the cake. “A blue, a blue, a blue,” he repeats several times looking a little worried. “Yes, you can have a blue one [M&M],” says Anna. “Everyone will have a blue one,” confirms Renata the teacher who is standing behind, “and Tom is the birthday boy so he...”. “Aww,” interrupts Tom. “Tom’s a boy, Tom’s a boy,” adds Robert. “Chandera,” says Renata, “your friend sitting next to you, it’s his birthday”. “Say thank you, Anna,” she adds, generally addressing the remark to all the children [and referring to Anna, the teacher, who is now distributing the slices of cake around the table].

“That mine?” asks Robert. “No,” says Anna as she puts the bowl down in front of Dylan. “It’s Dylan’s.” “Thank you, Anna,” prompts Renata, again indicating that the children should say thank you when receiving a piece of cake from Anna.

In this communication, issues of justice and manners can be identified. The teachers drew children’s attention to their manners and that they should say, “Thank you, Anna” when getting a piece of cake. The children seemed not to react to these directions. It is interesting to note that the usual rules for mealtime behaviour in the adults’ interaction were taken-for-granted as relevant. Notwithstanding that the overall framing for this celebration was positive in its emotional tone, there were still rules to follow.

Meanwhile Michael is leaning over towards Susie again and watching her very intently while she eats her cake. “Is that yummy?” asks Anna. “You need to say thanks, Tom.” “Aww,” says Tom happily. “Aww,” Anna imitates, laughing. “Look I think you’ve got an M&M right there,” says Anna, pointing at Tom’s cake which he is holding. Tom looks at where she is pointing and then takes a bite. “Is that good, Tom?” asks Anna. “Are they good cakes?”

The teachers emphasised in a number of ways that the cake tasted good and also gave frequent suggestions for how to eat the cake (to lick your fingers, lick your cake, taste, chew). There seemed to be no need for spoons when eating the cake even though an important rule at other mealtimes was that utensils should always be used. Children were allowed to use their own ways for eating.

One of the children (Michael) had serious food allergies and was given a sandwich. He was used to having his own dishes during mealtimes but it was easy to see that he was fascinated by the colourful birthday cake. He looked at the other children and his sandwich remained untouched on the table. No one commented on his situation.

The playful attitude continued but the children were also being reminded of certain rules. To sit on your chair was important.

“You need to sit on your bottom while you’re eating,” says Anna to Sebastian who is standing up. “Sit on your chair,” says Renata while walking around the table to push the chair in for him. /.../ Dylan accidentally knocks his bottle over the table. “Whoa, whoopsie,” says Anna (in a neutral tone of voice). Dylan holds his hands out towards Anna, appearing to indicate that his hands are dirty. “That’s all right,” she says. “We’ll clean it later. Eat all your cake first.” Dylan then starts coughing. “You all right?” asks Anna and pats him on the back.

Intersubjectivity and shared life-worlds seemed to characterise this part of the interaction. When one of the children spilt water over the table the teacher minimised the incident and assured him that this would be taken care of after the meal-time. She showed concern for him and comforted him when he started coughing.

Later the children and Anna became involved in a shared narrative about the danger of fire and birthday celebrations. Both the teacher and the children are interested and a serious discussion takes place. There were shared constructions of a narrative between the children and the teachers.

Dylan puts his hand on the box of matches that was used to light the candles on the birthday cake and mutters something. “Yes, hot. Ouch,” says Anna and moves the box out of the way. “Hot,” repeats Michael. “That’s right,” says Anna, looking towards him. “Hot,” says Robert. “Hot. Ouch,” repeats Anna. “Burn me,” says Robert with a serious tone of voice. “Burn-ies. That’s right,” agrees Anna. “Ouch” says Susie. “Ouch, hot,” repeats Anna, looking over towards Susie. “Fire,” says Robert, pointing towards the cake, “fire for the cake”. “It’s fire,” agrees Anna, “fire to light the candles, that’s right.” The teacher and children sound serious. “Candles,” says Robert. “Have you got candles at home?” asks Anna. “Yeah,” says Robert. “Yes? For your cakes?” she continues. “I have a birthday for Mum,” says Robert, holding up five fingers. “Happy birthday to you,” sings Anna. “Happy Mummy,” says Robert.

The teacher responded to the children’s comments and developed the conversational thread about the dangerous candles and also about celebrating mothers. The children seemed very interested in talking about the dangers of fire and continued to talk about their mothers. There was a shared focus of interest.

However, there are still restrictions concerning ways to behave during this celebration.

Dylan starts squeezing his cake with his hands in the bowl and Anna notices after a little while. “No! If you’re going to be silly I’ll throw it in the bin. Are you going to eat it?” she asks with a sharp tone of voice looking at him. “Yeah,” replies Dylan. “Well you eat it and don’t be silly or it’s going in the bin. Lean over your bowl,” she instructs. “Are you going to eat it? Don’t be silly, eat your cake,” she repeats. “It’s going in the bin.”

To play with the cake was not allowed. If Dylan continued “to be silly” he would lose his cake. He seemed to accept the reprimand and the threats and started to eat the cake.

The teachers’ focus of attention then shifted towards the documentation of Tom eating his birthday cake by taking photos. Both teachers instructed him repeatedly to eat big bites of the cake to ensure a successful photo.

Then Anna looks at Renata, who is trying to take a photo of Tom, and at Tom who is taking big bites out of his cake. Anna imitates him, showing him how to take big bites of the cake.

“More. More,” she instructs. Tom puts the cake down in his bowl. “Put it back,” says Anna, encouraging Tom to take more bites from his cake for the photo. “Yeah every time, um...” says Renata who is trying to take the photo. “Maybe as he goes to lift the cake, then press the button,” says Anna, and Renata agrees. “No, he’s not going to do it again,” she says, attempting to take a photo. “No,” agrees Anna. “Have a bite Tom,” she encourages. “Pick up your cake,” encourages Renata. “That’s it!” she exclaims with a friendly tone of voice as Tom takes a bite of his cake. “There we go, press!” says Anna. “Get it?” she asks. Renata laughs: “Yeah, I think so”.

Tom seemed to struggle to understand what the teachers were communicating and when he did what was expected of him, the teachers praised him. The teachers’ intentions to take a picture of Tom seemed not to be based on his perspective. The teachers also talked about him as if he were not present. A distance between the children’s and teachers’ life-worlds was identified.

In the final part of this mealtime event, the children received more cake and M&Ms. Anna cut the cake and distributed M&Ms to the children. The children were quiet and the atmosphere was calm, except for Dylan who continued to challenge the rules.

Dylan puts water on his plate. Anna takes away the bottle. Dylan drinks from his bowl. Anna looks at him saying: “Silly Dylan! Silly!” while shaking her head. Then she turns away. Dylan mashes his cake, looks at her at first serious then smiling. Anna looks at him again. “Na,” he says with a happy tone of voice. “Na,” she repeats and turns away.

Dylan was reprimanded several times during the mealtime. He seemed to understand the instructions and threats but he kept on playing with the cake and he kept on challenging the rules. He succeeded in getting more cake and M&Ms from the teacher. He took an active position and stuck to his ideas.

Tom, the birthday boy, got a lot of amused attention from the teachers and he was encouraged to eat more. He responded to the teachers’ instructions and he seemed to enjoy the situation. Another child, Robert, across the whole of the mealtime event of the birthday cake tried to communicate frequently with the teacher. Sometimes he got a response, at other times not. He did not challenge the rules, and like the majority of children, he adapted to the rules and expectations. The rest of the children took a more or less passive position, accepting and enjoying the celebration.

6.10 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter explored the meanings embedded in mealtime interactions from the children’s and the teachers’ perspectives in an Australian child care centre. It considered the meeting of children’s and teachers’ life-worlds and the structure of relevance around mealtimes for children and teachers. Shared encounters between the life-worlds of children and teachers across the mealtime observations appeared to be rare. The structure of relevance for teachers seemed to be primarily focused on children’s learning of appropriate behaviour while the structure of relevance for the children appeared to be focused on playfulness; portraying themselves in the best

possible way to the teachers if they followed the rules; and sometimes resisting the rules and norms for behaviour. Nevertheless, the symbolic role of the food and the actual mealtime events engendered close engagement of children and teachers that could create the space for alternative practices during mealtimes.

The Birthday Cake allowed for a more playful communication and child-directed practice than the other mealtime events for this child care group. There were, however, limits to the freedoms allowed for the children by the teachers. A tension existed for the teachers as to how to have control over the event and to follow the traditional rules for mealtimes, on the one hand and, on the other hand, to allow the children some agency so that a shared and joyful atmosphere could be created.

With respect to shared life-worlds and intersubjectivity (Merleau-Ponty 1962), the *coming together* of children and teachers around mealtime events were fleeting moments. Teachers view mealtimes as an instrumental event focused on eating, and while there were interactions with children that focused on intersubjectivity and learning, these were also short. The structure of relevance from the teachers' perspective appeared to be about learning manners and appropriate behaviours. While these directions were slightly relaxed for *The Birthday Cake*, the behavioural rules were still a primary focus. The structure of relevance also goes beyond the immediate context and the life-worlds of teachers and children. The traditions, rules and expectations from society, from parents, and from directors in child care settings are also a part of the stock of knowledge to which teachers must subscribe, as described by Schütz (1972). These broader expectations may be intertwined with the immediacy of situations and the wish to do things in different ways. Teachers (and children) can be *trapped* in the traditions about what is expected during mealtimes in the child care setting while also wishing to override a strong relevance structure.

As we have seen in this study and in other studies, power is involved in mealtime interactions. For the children in this study, mealtime seemed to be a time for quite explicit messages about the authority of the teachers but children also had their opportunities to contest the teachers' authority. While the authority of the teachers could be challenged by persistent behaviour, it was possible to get one's own way in spite of authority. There was some evidence of community during mealtimes but this was conditional on the nature of the event (e.g., *The Birthday Cake* when the rules could be relaxed).

What potentials for learning in mealtimes appear in our analyses? It seems that learning opportunities to a large extent concern rules and regulations for behaviour and the children probably learn both how to adjust to rules and about the most significant rules to follow, but they also learn how to negotiate and challenge the rules. On one hand, children can learn how their (re)actions can influence what is going on and, on the other hand, they may also learn to be more passive receivers of regulations with few possibilities to influence interactions. In the mealtimes observed in this research, some children sought opportunities to show their teachers their good intentions and good manners, which can be a powerful tool in social relations. The mealtime is probably judged by the children as a trustful event through repetition. Similar structure and rules surrounded the mealtimes, whether they were snack times, lunch times, or a celebration.

What can we learn from this study? For mealtimes to become pedagogical situations it is essential for teachers to identify those moments for shared life-worlds and the opportunities come together, as well as to value those moments as important pedagogical events. There is a need to shift from an understanding of mealtimes as an event to foster rules and compliance to a pedagogical intersubjective experience for sharing of thoughts, ideas and questions between children and teachers. This takes both effort and courage from teachers and children to reconstruct the taken-for-granted structures into new directions. From previous research (e.g., Bae 2009; Ødegaard 2006, 2007) and from this study we have learnt that very young children can engage in interactions on existential matters of fear, joy and desire during mealtimes if they are allowed to do so, if these opportunities are open to them (Grindland 2011). This does not mean that rules for behaviour or power relations between teachers and children will disappear, but they might take different directions and routes. Instead of having order and consensus as the dominant structure of relevance, mealtimes can be spaces for different relationships and inquiries based on the shared life-worlds of teachers and children.

In the Australian curriculum—the EYLF—for programs involving children prior to school, the child’s perspective is considered important (Grieshaber 2010). The EYLF provides opportunities for Australian child care practitioners to reflect on their practices and how they align with the values espoused in this curriculum document. Mealtime is a place and time for learning. It is important to enable greater use of the relational space at mealtime to provide opportunities for children to take initiatives and share experiences. Conceptual tools of importance when understanding mealtimes can be the life-worlds of children as well as the structure of relevance for these situations. From the perspective of the two researchers involved in this research from different countries, contexts and disciplines, such concepts have been valuable to help us understand not only the data but also our different interpretation of data.

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Chapter 7

Playspaces: Educators, Parents and Toddlers

Robyn Dolby, Eilish Hughes, and Belinda Friezer

7.1 Introduction

The content of this chapter is based on the Attachment Matters Project (Dolby 2007; Dolby et al. 2008)¹ that has pioneered a method of working to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice. In this project clinicians and educators in an early childhood centre have worked together for 10 years to develop new understandings of how teacher-child relationships and interactions can support children's learning and social competence with peers. The approach involves choosing a practical issue in early childhood education and care (ECEC), often a concern raised by educators. Small-scale research is conducted to understand the issue better. The findings are then used to develop a concrete procedure that educators and parents put into practice step-by-step. Each step is filmed and shared and discussed with parents and educators. This discussion is itself filmed and the ideas that emerge are incorporated into what is produced. The outcome of this collaborative approach is the production of a practical, well-tested procedure with a dedicated package of training resources that have come directly from practice with input from educators and families.

Our approach is consistent with White's emphasis (Chap. 16, this volume) in pursuing a new direction for research and practice in early childhood settings that "signals a shift away from top-down approaches ... towards a pedagogy of compassion, care and advocacy" (p. x). It is also in line with Tronick and Beeghly's (2011) view "that a more intense focus on the life of infants and parents *as it is lived* is warranted" (p. 116) to emotionally support very young children at home.

¹The Attachment Matters Project was located at the KU James Cahill Preschool, operated by KU Children's Services, a not-for-profit children's service in Australia. The project ran for 10 years between 2001 and 2011.

R. Dolby (✉) • E. Hughes • B. Friezer
Secure Beginnings, Sydney, Australia
e-mail: robyn@securebeginnings.com.au; eilish@securebeginnings.com.au;
belinda@securebeginnings.com.au

We would say the same intense focus on the life of infants and toddlers and educators *as it is lived* is warranted to emotionally support young children in child care.

Our work also highlights educators' own need for support. Child care staff work in a field that involves intense emotional relationships, but often do not have the same support or supervision as clinical psychologists or other professionals. Menzies-Lyth (1989) points out that rather than supporting practitioners in the emotional tasks they face, organisations may develop ways of protecting staff from feeling too much. Similarly, Elfer (Chap. 8, this volume) argues that unless staff are given the support to process the painful as well as joyful aspects of close relationships with very young children, they will almost inevitably retreat into distant styles of interacting.

In this chapter, we focus on a particular concern—the day-to-day experience of toddlers and their families when they arrive at child care—and present the collaborative research and practical procedures undertaken and developed through the Attachment Matters Project to address this issue. First we outline the preschool context, which was characterised by a structure called Playspaces® (Dolby 2007; Dolby et al. 2004, 2011) that was intended to make the children's morning reunion with staff very predictable and had been in place at this centre for 4 years. Next, we present our observations and analysis of children's daily experiences of arriving at child care. The chapter then reports on the morning transition procedure that was designed with input from parents and educators. The Attachment Matters Project is particularly relevant to current thinking in early childhood theory and practice in Australia, recently outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Australia² (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2009), that acknowledges the importance of forming secure relationships. In this chapter, we give specific attention to the opportunity, at the beginning of the child care day, to invest in developing secure relationships in child care. We believe that this investment can help children become better connected, more confident in their learning, and less likely to be isolated or show behaviour problems during the rest of the day.

7.2 The Playspace® Structure

The Playspace® structure arose from an earlier program of Child Observation Seminars³ developed by Dolby for child psychiatry trainees and conducted at a child care centre. The trainees came to child care one morning a week for one semester and sat with the children. Infants were filmed at floor level; sometimes the camera was focused on the infants and sometimes footage was taken that tried to capture

² Australia's first national curriculum framework for early childhood education and care services.

³ Child Observation Seminars have been offered by Dr Robyn Dolby through the teaching program of the New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry for the past 14 years.

what the infants saw. The trainees and the early childhood educators then reflected on the footage. Video footage taken at the floor level of 6–18-month-olds showed that when educators were moving around, the infants saw passing feet, which accentuated the distance between infants and the educators.

Playspaces were developed to address this distance and support educators to make a connection with the infants by being at their physical level and in the emotional moment with them. The Playspace structure creates an *external space* where the staff member is physically predictable for the children, and supports an *internal space* or way of thinking within which the educator can think about the children's ease of coming *in and out* to them. Staff received training in attachment theory to become more aware of the attachment-exploration looping first described by John Bowlby (1988) and to guide their observation of children using them as a secure base for exploration and a secure haven for comfort (Ainsworth et al. 1978). They also used the Circle of Security map (Cooper et al. 2009) to guide their observations.

The *external space* is created when the staff sit in their individual Playspaces before the children arrive. The educators each bring an activity that they can share with the children. They sit at the children's level and do not move around. By sitting still they provide a predictable physical presence and are easy for the children to find.

The *internal space* is an internal calm or sense of stillness (within the educator) that allows staff to be receptive to the children's feelings. They have room in their minds to make guesses as to the children's relationship needs and to observe their own internal responses to the children's comings and goings. This internal space provides a *holding environment* for the children (Winnicott 1971).

A *holding environment* was also provided for the educators. A child and family worker (Eilish Hughes) was employed to be onsite each week and each educator had release time (30 min per week) to meet with her. This gave the educators time in the company of someone who was supportive of their understanding of what the children were doing and feeling and the feelings evoked in the educators. Regular opportunities for reflection were offered to educators by reviewing filmed observations of their interactions with the children. (The video footage was taken by Robyn Dolby, Eilish Hughes and the educators themselves). The educator and child and family worker then interpreted the children's emotional communications while looking at the clips together. This involved making guesses as to the children's relationship needs and reflecting on the feelings the children's behaviour evoked in the educator.

Just as the educators were the *hands* to provide relationship support for the children, the child and family worker was the hands of support for the educator. We have found the image of *the hands within the hands* aspect of the Circle of Security (Cooper et al. 2009) to be extremely useful in illustrating the way this support works (Fig. 7.1).

This tiered support assists staff in the process of self-reflection, which in turn enables them to meet the relational needs of the children. The tiered support also assists the staff to reflect with the parents about their child's relational needs.

Fig. 7.1 Hands supporting hands (Source: Cooper et al. 2009. Retrieved from www.circleofsecurity.com)



In the study centre, Playspaces are in operation for the first hour of the morning when the children arrive (outdoors in summer and indoors in winter); at the end of the day; and when the children are outdoors.

7.2.1 The Educators' Experience of the Playspace Structure

Educators were interviewed about their reflections on Playspaces. One educator described how she felt when she first began to use the Playspace structure in her practice. At first it didn't feel right, as she explains:

I found it very difficult when I first started doing it because I was always taught that to be there with the children, you have to be where the children are, which isn't the case. The children know where I am. They know if they need me I'm here, sometimes they might not come up to you but they will look at you or they smile at you and you smile back and that's telling them, "I'm here if you need me".

Another educator gave this picture of how Playspaces work as an external space where children know that the staff are available to them.

Playspaces—it's how the children get to know you are available to them. It's surprising how soon the children get to know not only that you're physically available to them as they know the space that you're in but that they also get to know that you're available to them to notice them, to be with them and to spend time with them and to just be.

A third educator describes her experience of Playspaces as an internal space where she is open to the children's feelings.

When I'm in my Playspace I look at the kid's faces, that's my first contact as soon as they walk in the door. I look at their face and their body language. How they are looking when they come in the door gives me a pretty good idea of how they are feeling inside. I'm always getting ready for noticing the children's feelings and I think that's what Playspaces are all about.

The same educator describes how this also becomes a reflective space where she can settle herself to be ready for the children.

Playspaces enable me to be prepared for the children to come in, it's where I get grounded so I feel grounded and ready to receive whatever comes. It helps me feel grounded because I can actually notice so much more just by sitting there and watching the children come in. The Playspace is like my little welcome mat when I come into work, so I just walk into the room and go, "Oh great, I'm here" and I can just sit in this little spot and my day begins. It just calms me down and I forget what has happened in my house this morning! I can offer the children time and no pressure in my Playspace. I'm just allowing them the same thing that I have given myself by sitting in that spot.

The intention behind Placespaces is to support educators to be physically predictable and emotionally available to children. It is also intended to give them a *sanctuary space* or refuge from outside distractions so that they can be in the moment with the children and notice how they come in and out to them and reflect on the children's relationship needs. These quotes and other comments from the educators suggest that their experiences are in keeping with the Playspace objectives.

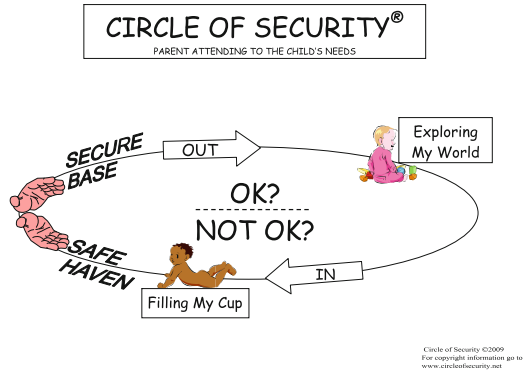
7.3 The Filmed Observations of Arrival and Separation at Child Care

Fourteen families and their children were invited to participate in the aspect of the Attachment Matters Project reported here. Separations were filmed as parents brought their children to child care at the start of the day and took them home in the afternoon. Eleven of the children were aged between 2 and 3 years and three children were older (4–5 years).

Filming (by Robyn Dolby) began as each child came through the gate and continued until the parents had left and the children were interacting with their peers. Our aim in filming the morning transition was to see and feel the immediacy of what happened for the child, and to look for the support that children and educators needed in the moment, and the opportunities that followed when this support was given. A researcher who did not know the families (Belinda Friezer) analysed the videotaped interactions, tracking how the children related to the adults (parent and educator) over the transition period.

The analysis was based on attachment theory. John Bowlby (1988) says that what makes children (and all of us) feel safe is a *relational anchor*. Children use their attachment figure as a *secure-base* from which to explore and as a *safe haven* to return to (Ainsworth et al. 1978). This attachment-exploration cycle opens up opportunities for learning (Ainsworth et al. 1978). It is considered to have great educational relevance, because the safer and more comfortable children feel to come in to their educators, the more effective learners they will be when they go out to explore (Cooper et al. 2009; Dolby 2007). The feeling that the educator is gladly *being there*, to come back to, is what makes it possible for children to go out and learn.

Fig. 7.2 Baby circle of security: OK-not-OK circle
(Source: Cooper et al. 2009).
Retrieved from www.circleofsecurity.com)



The Circle of Security authors (Cooper et al. 2009) have drawn a map of this attachment-exploration cycle in the shape of a circle and make the children’s relationship needs explicit. We received permission from the Circle of Security authors to use a particular form of their map, the Baby Circle of Security: OK-not-OK Circle, as the key to tracking the children’s experiences in the filmed observations. The map is reproduced above (Fig. 7.2).

This OK-not-OK Circle is a simple version of the Circle of Security roadmap (Cooper et al. 2009). It succinctly summarises the process of relationship support for infants. The adult hands support both halves of the Circle: the words *exploring my world* on the top half refer to the secure base infants need for play and learning; and *filling my cup* on the bottom half refer to the safe haven infants need when they have had enough of exploring and come back in to reconnect. Inside the Circle is an orienting question: is the baby OK or Not OK? as they come in and out to their attachment figure.

The researcher’s role in analysing the videos was to use the OK-not-OK Circle as a roadmap to describe what she saw. She noted when the child signaled for or made contact with either their parent or educator, noting the time on the clip. She recorded what she saw them do or say and made a guess about the child’s relationship need in that moment, whether it was on the top or bottom of the Circle. This procedure of *Seeing and Guessing* was devised by Glen Cooper (Cooper et al. 2005). The researcher used the OK-not-OK question to describe how she perceived that the children were feeling in that moment and to guess whether the adult was *with* or *not with* them in their experience.

7.3.1 Making Bids for Connection

The observations showed that as soon as the children came into the centre they immediately looked across at one of the educators. Each of the 14 children made visual bids or signals to make contact with an educator within the first 40 s of

walking through the gate. They did this regardless of how they came in; for example, some children walked in hand-in-hand with their parent; others ran ahead; and other children clung to their parent and were carried in.

Their bid for connection came ahead of linking up with a peer or getting involved in an activity. The video analysis demonstrated that when the children first arrived, the starting point they sought was likely to be connection with an educator. It seemed that they needed to know that they were on a staff member's radar and that this person was available and ready to look after them. When the children looked across at an educator, the researcher guessed that their relationship need was to *Fill my emotional cup*. It followed, therefore, that the educator's task was to welcome the children in (given the positioning of the child on the Circle in Fig. 7.2). It seemed likely that the parents' needs may be similar to the children's: they might be wondering, "What have I got to do, how am I going to manage this situation?"

Many implications arise from the video analysis. For example, instead of focusing on how to engage the children when they arrive at child care, the first task of the educator becomes one of negotiation, where child, parent and educator come together and the child experiences the responsibility for their care shifting from the parent to the educator. The educator takes the lead in this process to invite the parent to bring their child into them. Once they are there the child needs to know that both adults have him/her in mind as they communicate in a relaxed way about the transition, and indicate that the educator is ready to look after him/her.

Our findings and implications were discussed with Glen Cooper (personal communication, October 20, 2010) who, in response, wrote the Two Row-Boats Metaphor (Fig. 7.3).

We continued to reflect on the findings that each child looked to an educator when they came through the gate at the centre. The questions that arose for us, and which were the impetus for the next stage of the project, were:

- How did they know where to look in a large group environment at a very busy time of the day?
- Did they have an expectation that the educator would look back and be pleased to see them?
- Were the children acting from a sense of *felt* connection with the educator?

Guided by our ongoing reflections, we then worked with educators and parents to develop a transition procedure.

7.3.2 The Process of Working with Educators and Parents to Develop the Transition Procedure

The transition procedure was not intended to teach educators and parents new skills but rather to offer them a new perspective about the children's experience at separation, based on relationships. The morning drop-off was broken down into steps.

The Two Row-Boats Metaphor

Imagine two little row-boats coming up next to each other. And the child steps out of the parent's row-boat and into the teacher's.

The problem for the children is that there is that moment where they have a foot in each boat. And if the boats drift apart they get stuck. Or when the children come in and they are not quite sure whether they are in the school boat or the parent boat then they are stuck. The morning transition is a way to help them to make that step from one boat to the other.

What we want is for the children to know that the parent and the teacher are in charge and they are going to take care of this. The children can need what they need and feel what they feel and be OK. They don't have to act like they are OK when they're not, or feel more than they feel, or take charge themselves.

We would like the children to experience that there is a clear negotiation where the child goes from feeling secure with parent to secure with the teacher and it is pretty seamless.

Glen Cooper (personal communication, October 20, 2010)

Fig. 7.3 The Two Row-Boats Metaphor

The suggestions and the reasoning behind each step were discussed with parents and educators. The information in each step was intended to highlight to the child that there was an adult available to support them during this time.

We worked with five families with toddlers and educators who knew the families well. Robyn Dolby and Eilish Hughes filmed each step of the transition procedure with each family and educator, and got their feedback (by watching the filmed clips together) on how each step helped them show the children that the educator was ready and available to care for them. Each of these steps is illustrated with comments from these parents and educators.

7.3.3 The Transition Procedure Step-by-Step

On their way to preschool (Step 1), it was suggested to parents that they talk with their child (in their own words) about which staff member they would like to go in and see when they arrive. For example: "Jody will be waiting for us at the sandpit, shall we go and say hi". The intention was to reassure each child that an educator will be available to take care of him/her.

Educators were asked to prepare by reflecting on what relationship question the child may come in with. For example: "Do you see me? Are you OK to look after me?" This was important because the filmed observations suggested that what mattered to the children in the first moment was the contact with the educator, ahead of any interest in the activity that they could join in.

This is a quote from one of the parents after we filmed this step and sat down with the parent and educator and watched the clip together.

On the way to preschool Ethan has always had this disconnect. When he's with me, before we reach the gates of the preschool he's interested in me and we just have a conversation all the way along the street, but then as we reach the preschool gate he'll clam up and won't even answer my questions. He's just absorbing the surroundings trying to work out what is happening; he can be shy. Or sometimes he can be boisterous and wanting to take part in a particular activity. So the idea of actually going in to a teacher is good, to have that one path he follows. The 'Row-Boat' metaphor exactly describes what is happening with Ethan.

Once the children and the parents arrived (Step 2), the suggestion was for parents to bring their child to an educator in their Playspace. Primary caregiving was not practised officially in this centre, although the children showed through their actions that they usually had a preferred consistent carer that they *came into* each morning. We asked the educators for ideas about a welcome for the child that would also include the parent. Their suggestions included:

Hello Sophie, you've come in with your daddy.

Good morning Trisha, you've brought your pillow and your mum.

Hello Max, you've brought parsley from mummy's garden.

They noted that the parent then feels included, "It's about both of us [not only my child]". They appreciated that children can be very aware of whether the educator enjoys the encounter with their parent, and that a genuine greeting to the parent can reassure the child.

The following quote from the director of the centre after we filmed and watched with her and the child's parent illustrated how she welcomed the family.

I believe that everyone who comes through the gate would like to feel as though they have been seen or acknowledged. And the children are all going to have a different way of doing that. In the Playspace, over time you get to work out what is the best way to get that connection happening. How would you see that if you were not sitting down? You would just miss so much of the children's reactions. Sometimes I can feel uncomfortable thinking I am not quite sure what to do with the children who don't connect easily. But then I feel the least I can do is to welcome them in. I've learnt to appreciate that all the children have a need to be seen even though on the outside they might not show their feelings to you. They express their need for connection in a more indirect way.

As the director said, some children do not connect easily and may express their need for connection in a more indirect way. They may come with their own expectations about how available *big people* are. When an educator says, "I'm glad you are here", children's responses may reflect their attachment history, initially expecting a response like the one they get from their mum and dad. Educators who are trained in Playspaces are aware of the importance of giving children a secure message about their availability; "I'm here and you are worth it" (Cassidy 2006). They recognise that children will express their need for connection in different ways. Whichever way the children make contact, the staff understand that the children have learnt these interactions with their primary caregivers.

Therefore, a significant part of the training in using Playspaces helps educators become familiar with children's different internal working models of how close relationships work (Bowlby 1988), and become more aware about their own attachment state of mind when responding to children's relationship needs.

This opportunity for reflection makes a difference in how the educators speak with the children when they first arrive. Their conversation is based on saying what they see the children do and guessing what they need in the way of relationship support (Cooper et al. 2005), as the following excerpt (transcribed from video footage) illustrates.

Sara comes into child care holding on tight to her mum.

Educator to Sara: "You are holding on tight. I see you want to be close to mummy right now. You can both sit down here with me."

Sara sinks into her mum for a longer cuddle.

Educator to Sara: "I'm glad you're getting filled up with Mum's cuddle. You can keep that cuddle inside you when mummy leaves. I will stay here with you."

This opportunity also supports them in "What to say when saying goodbye" (Step 3). The idea behind this step was that when parents say goodbye, children want to know that they are being handed to someone who can keep them safe. It will reassure children to hear this being negotiated, and their feelings being acknowledged. Here is an example of a negotiation covering the moment just before the parent was about to leave.

Dad to Jack: "Jack, I'm leaving now. Judy is here to look after you and keep you safe for me."

Dad to Judy: "Judy, will you look after Jack today?"

Judy to Dad and Jack: "Yes Jack, I'm pleased I get to keep you safe and play with you till Daddy comes back. I'm always here when you need me."

As we emphasise in our conversations with educators, saying you'll keep a child safe may seem strange to the adult and abstract to the child, but in our experience children seem to respond to it in a way that shows they understand the meaning. What is important is how the adults convey the message, "We can keep you safe", rather than the words they use. Saying this out loud creates very clear expectations, and tells Jack that he is in the minds of two big people who care for him.

We also emphasise that parents can also acknowledge when their child is upset. They can let them know that although saying goodbye is hard to do, they have support and they are not alone. For example:

Dad to Jack: "I know you feel sad to say goodbye and you will miss me, I will be thinking about you today. Judy is here to look after you and keep you safe for me."

Dad to Judy: "Judy, will you look after Jack today?"

Judy to Dad and Jack: "Yes Jack, I am always here when you need me, I'm pleased I'm here to keep you safe and play with you until daddy comes back later."

Examples or suggested scripts were offered when introducing the separation procedure to parents, because talking with children in this way does not come naturally.

The examples enabled parents and educators to find their own words to make it their own. The following comments from educators and parents show how they experienced using this *relational language* with each other at the morning separation. The comments are taken from a parent–teacher night when the transition procedure was shown and discussed within the parent community.

Educator: I think at first it does sound funny to say that, “Oh I’ll look after you and keep you safe”, but the more you say it the more comfortable you feel with it and you realise the difference that it makes for the child and how predictable it is for them. When they come in they know we’re here for them and the parents. And you know too, that we’re all here for you. So if you are thinking that feels a bit strange over time it does feel more comfortable.

Director: I think it feels more strange for the adults but it doesn’t feel strange for the children. That’s where your mind shift may have to be around that.

Parent: The whole thing with the dialogue I found quite awkward at first saying, “They’ll look after you and you’ll be safe”, but it was amazing the difference that it made. Jack went from someone who was quiet, often didn’t want to go and would be upset when I left and he changed to where gradually he became more and more comfortable and it’s gone now the past 6–8 months where I find myself going through the speech and he’s going “Yeah, whatever, can I just play now?” It was absolutely invaluable to see him transform and to see the effect that it had.

This parent also noticed a big difference with the Playspaces.

Parent: The Playspaces I found amazing because of all the different ways that it works, seeing him come in and for a while Suzanne was that person that he particularly wanted to go to and ... I saw in some videos that the guys kindly showed me to see him talking and physically moving in between me and Suzanne. He’d start off and he’d be holding on to me, talking to Suzanne and doing a bit of play and as time went on and over the course of 3, 4, 5 min he gradually relaxed more and more and started making eye contact with Suzanne and you could see him, with the benefit of looking at the video, become more and more comfortable to where it was like, the metaphor I was given was coming in on a rowing boat going from one boat to another boat and there’s this transfer between the two and it’s absolutely accurate it really was quite amazing to see it work so smoothly. The contrast is the other place that we go to which is a perfectly good place but it’s the traditional thing of: “Leave your child with us and if they cry don’t worry, they’re fine after you leave”. And you walk away with the sound of your child crying and you have to think to yourself it is going to be fine.

Another parent:

Parent: I must admit I had never, you kind of take it for granted that the child knows that the carers are there to look after them because why, why else, do you send the children here if it’s not for the other adults here to look after them, so you kinda think that the kids know that but until such time as you do verbalise it, it

probably doesn't sink in for them. [I think what was helpful] was almost like a combination of the two by having the Playspace and by naming the feeling as you leave as well.

The final step in the transition procedure helped parents to become familiar with what happens after they leave (Step 4). Because staff remain in their Playspace for the first hour of the day it is easy for the children to stay with them and to find them again when they venture out.

Director: Playspaces have given us the opportunity to recognise that children have a greater capacity to learn about and explore their world and relationships with each other, if they are able to form a secure connection with the educators who are responsible for their care. This is evident to us each day in our work with the children.

The first hour of the day is dedicated to emotional exchange, rather than the staff directing and teaching the children in a formal program. When the children are with them, the educators are intentional in their practice to link up the children. New parents are introduced to this arrangement through a Parent Invitation evening where the staff and some existing parents describe how the morning unfolds after parents leave. The director uses video clips to show parents the lens that the staff look through to see the children's own play ideas and to indicate where they (the staff) can support the children to develop their play skills and give them a position in the group. They use the structure of Linking from *Marte Meo* (Aarts 2008) to do this. For example, parents may see a video clip that shows a toddler who is non-verbal making an invitation to another child.

Elly points to a bright big ball she has discovered. As she points she vocalises in emphasis and looks over to Sheena who is beside her. She is conveying clearly, "Do you see what I'm looking at?" On the clip you see Elly's educator turn to follow her pointing finger, "Elly you found *the ball*". Elly looks pleased. She keeps pointing and looks at Sheena once more. Then you see the educator turn to Sheena and you hear her say, "Look Sheena, Elly is showing you *the ball*". Sheena looks at the ball and smiles. Then you hear the educator say, "Elly, Sheena *likes* your ball".

By being in the moment in their play, the educator helps the girls to successfully make contact. When she names what she sees Elly doing, she gives Elly words for her actions. Later when Elly can say "Ball" she can make a more predictable social invitation to Sheena. When the educator names what she sees Elly doing she also gives her a position with her peers and helps Elly come to trust her own ideas more. When she lifts up Elly's invitation to Sheena and Sheena's response back to her, the educator makes it easier for the girls to come into each other's play (Aarts 2008).

The video clips allow the parents to *borrow* the educators' eyes to see into the world of their children at child care. They enjoy seeing what their children *can* do, and where the educators are stepping in to assist. Because the information is concrete, it often suggests to them things that they can do at home the same as the educators are doing at child care. A natural partnership is forged.

7.4 Concluding Thoughts

The EYLF for Australia highlights secure attachments as the first principle. “Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships” are fundamental to educators’ practice and children’s learning (DEEWR 2009, p. 12). The challenge for educators is how to put this into practice. The approach we have taken in this chapter suggests that an answer can be found by looking at the life of infants and toddlers and educators *as it is lived* in child care.

We studied children’s experiences of arriving at child care and then developed a transition procedure that was designed so that parents and educators could reassure children that the connection that they were seeking from their educators was readily available. This procedure went step-by-step through everyday *lived* interactions to give children the experience of connection, to enable them to feel that there is a plan for “how I can make contact with my teachers so I feel I belong”. This procedure acknowledges the experiences of educators and respects and supports them to be open to the emotional demands and joys that are part of their day-to-day interactions with very young children. The structure of Playspaces is at the heart of this procedure. There is more work to be done to see the transition procedure formally implemented in an infants’ room and to see how educators can use Playspaces with younger children, namely with infants who are not yet mobile.

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Chapter 8

Facilitating Intimate and Thoughtful Attention to Infants and Toddlers in Nursery

Peter Elfer

8.1 Introduction

Infants and toddlers have a well-known and distinctive power to stir up deep emotions in adult caregivers. This capacity and the attuned responsiveness of adults has been conceptualised in different ways: maternal reverie (Bion 1962), attachment (Bowlby 1969), innate intersubjectivity (Trevarthen and Aitken 2001) and reflective function (Fonagy 2001). At home, the way adults respond to infants and toddlers is likely to be deeply instinctive and thoughtful but driven by strong emotion and shaped by the distinctive values and practices of individual families and their cultural contexts. In early years' settings, the way practitioners respond is likely to be influenced by some of this, but in quite a different way.

How might the intensity of infants' and toddlers' interactions be understood and responded to, in early years' settings? The early years' practitioner's own responses will be partly shaped by training, but also personal and cultural history that may not easily be open to scrutiny and challenge. Her background may be quite different to that of the families and colleagues with whom she is working. All of this requires reflection, and negotiation in enabling personal and professional collective practices to be balanced.

Professional work with infants and toddlers thus presents the challenge of how to combine a deep level of emotional engagement with sufficient detachment to be able to think about the details of interactions. Infants and toddlers, as well as their families, are entitled to feel that the intimacy of interactions in early years' settings is informed by such critical reflection. Practitioners also have a stake in feeling supported in facilitating interactions where their own thoughtful and emotional engagement is expected, but which entails considerable personal demand and challenge.

P. Elfer (✉)

School of Education, University of Roehampton, London, UK

e-mail: p.elfer@roehampton.ac.uk

This is not just a question of the *reflective practitioner* but the *reflective setting* where there is a shared commitment to understanding the interplay of thinking and feeling.

This chapter is about Work Discussion (WD), a form of professional reflection in which thoughtful attention can be given to the emotional life of early years' settings, and the details of individual interactions that make up this life. It draws on the findings of three recent studies of WD in the early years. WD is seen as having a particular contribution to understanding and managing the emotional life of settings in a way that can draw on objective and detailed descriptions of interactions and their contexts combined with the subjective experience evoked by these interactions. Such professional reflection matters for the wellbeing of all in the early years' community: children and families, staff and external advisers, but most of all infants and toddlers themselves.¹

8.2 The Importance of Individual Attention to Infants and Toddlers in Families and Early Years' Settings

Findings from developmental psychology and neuroscience have converged to show the capacity of infants and toddlers to engage in, and rely upon, intimate and finely tuned interactions, first with highly particular adults and then with a wider range of adults and peers.

Infants and mothers engage in an intricate and animated pattern of loving interaction, in which the mother's voice and intonation, facial expressions, and responses to her infant's first gestures and movement engage the infant in a relationship from the beginning of life. (Rustin 2001, p. 71)

This is true for infants and toddlers in diverse cultures and diverse family forms. That much is agreed upon by social scientists adopting different theoretical approaches and kinds of research (Fonagy 2001; Rogoff 2003; Trevarthen and Aitken 2001). Internationally, early years' policy has therefore addressed the question of how the particularly close relationships characteristic of family life should be extended to life in early years' settings. These are very different social contexts. Practitioners are unlikely to have the same intensity of involvement as family members and will be closely involved with young children for a much shorter time than the lifelong expectations of family relationships. Further, practitioners will work as part of a professional team with diverse cultural and social practices of caregiving in individual backgrounds. Nevertheless, intimate attention to infants and toddlers in early years' settings can be understood as encompassing mutual knowledge and mutual emotional closeness in the fine-grained way that Rustin describes as occurring in families. Much research energy is now being given to the commonalities as well as differences in the minute details of this intimate attention, and how it may be enabled and managed in early years' settings.

¹I have taken *infants* to refer to the age range birth to 12 months and *toddlers* 12 months to around 30 months.

8.3 Early Years' Policy on Emotional Wellbeing

8.3.1 *The Attachment Emphasis*

Although emotional wellbeing is a complex construct (Hascher 2010), there is strong evidence for seeing its developmental roots in interactions in which infants and toddlers feel thought about, understood and responded to with sensitivity and attunement (Fonagy 2009; Trevarthen 2005). Young children, indeed all people, also need to feel a reasonable level of security (freedom from anxiety) and agency (desire and capacity to explore), in order to engage in interaction with others. Children who are persistently anxious and unhappy are unlikely to be able to take advantage of the rich cognitive and social opportunities that group settings can provide (Belsky et al. 2007). Emotional wellbeing might therefore be understood as a pre-condition of all other objectives, including playful exploration, sustained thinking, forming friendships and participating in groups. In the early years' research literature, emotional wellbeing has been seen as fostered mainly through opportunities for attachment (Brooks-Gunn et al. 2003; Melhuish 2004), that is, through the provision of care that is *attentive, responsive, stimulating and affectionate* (Belsky 2007).

Attachments between practitioners and infants and toddlers have been seen as underpinning emotional wellbeing in English early years' policy for 20 years (Department for Education and Skills [DfES] 2002; Department of Health [DH] 1991; Department of Education [DoE] 2012). There has also been much practice guidance on implementing attachment interactions in early years' work (Elfer et al. 2011; Goldschmied and Jackson 1994; Manning-Morton and Thorp 2001; Nutbrown and Page 2008).

The significance of attachment interactions in early years' settings have also been emphasised in Europe (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2006), in the United States of America (Clarke-Stewart and Allhusen 2005; Lee 2006), and in Australia (Dolby 2007; Ebbeck and Yim 2009).

8.3.2 *The Need for Attention to Peer Interaction*

Yet this emphasis on attachments has been criticised as being based on an instinctive desire to model the life of group settings on home life, particularly for infants and toddlers (Dahlberg et al. 1999). These researchers argue that, provided young children experience attachment at home, early years' settings offer rich opportunities for infants' and toddlers' interactions with peers rather than primarily adults. Others have called for a better balance in attention to attachments *and* peer interactions (Degotardi and Pearson 2009), and have shown toddlers' need and desire for both attachments to chosen adults and for interaction with peers at different times of the day (Elfer 2006).

8.3.3 *The Need for Attention to Diversity in Culture and Class*

There has also been work on the emotional demands of close interactions from the point of view of practitioners. Colley (2006), drawing on the concept of *emotional labour* (Hochschild 1983), has questioned the emotional costs to practitioners of being expected to foster forms of interaction or forms of feeling, that may be particular to one culture or class but not be widely shared by others. She calls for training curricula to be more open to discussion of diversity in the expression of emotional interactions.

Taggart (2011) argues that caring dispositions and behaviours are expected of practitioners but that little attention is given to how this care is produced, the different cultural forms it might take, or how it might be valued in the way practitioners are recognised and remunerated. He calls for better attention to how this is taken into account in professional practice, and supported and rewarded as *emotional work*. Brooker (2009) has also shown the importance of paying more attention to differences in views about attachment interactions between parents and practitioners.

8.3.4 *The Emotional Demands on Early Years' Practitioners*

Research informed by psychoanalytic theory has shown the emotional demands on practitioners of interactions with young children; for example, through the accumulative stress of repeated formation of attachments followed by separations as children move from one group to another or away from the setting altogether (Bain and Barnett 1986; Hopkins 1988). Infants and toddlers have the capacity to evoke in their caregivers powerfully protective feelings (Shuttleworth 1989). From this perspective, the demands of repeated attachments and separations may be particularly intense. Bain and Barnett (1986) documented the fleeting attention that different practitioners gave to infants or toddlers, describing this as “multiple indiscriminate care” (p. 16): meaning patterns of care where practitioners were interchangeable and where each child may have many fleeting interactions from many different practitioners. These researchers argued that such patterns of interaction could be understood as a defence (unconscious self-protection) against the stressful demands of being emotionally available to a much smaller group of young children, where attachments and then painful feelings of loss when these children moved on, were more likely. There is some evidence that the provision of consistent individual attention, even in nurseries committed to attachment interactions and where the necessary resources are available, is still problematic (Elfer 2006; Datler et al. 2010; Drugli and Undheim 2012).

8.3.5 *Attention to Emotion in Practitioner Reflection*

This literature shows the importance of practitioners' engagement in critical reflection on the broad patterns and fine nuances of their interactions with children.

Enabling this engagement requires a model of professional reflection that is sensitive to the emotions such reflection is likely to evoke, such as anxiety about sharing personal caregiving experience and beliefs. The need for such a model is also supported by the work of Bain and Barnett (1986) and Hopkins (1988) if practitioners are not to seek to protect themselves from the emotional demands of individual children by prioritising displacement activities and thus risking *multiple indiscriminate care*.

These writers collectively seem to be pointing to the need for greater attention to how *caring*—emotional labour—is produced and deployed in early years’ work, how it is supported, acknowledged and valued, and how it is reviewed. The task here is to develop frameworks for *how* the lived daily interactions of settings, with infants and toddlers, with family members and with colleagues, can be talked about in a way that takes account of emotion in work experience, for its own importance and for its impact on thinking. This may seem the most straightforward of tasks. In reality, these complex mixtures of personal and professional responses to collective early years’ setting life, and to individual children, seem often dismissed as *taken for granted* and unproblematic.

In the next section, WD is discussed as one form of *space* for professional reflection, where critical thinking and *co-constructive learning*, including attention to emotional experience, can be fostered.

8.4 Introducing Work Discussion as a Space for Critical Thinking

In the following quotation, an experienced and sensitive room leader talks about emotionally close interactions with the toddlers she is responsible for.

... there’s that fine line ... yes it’s nice to give them a cuddle but a quick cuddle’s nice, not a 20 minute cuddle ... when I was at college I was taught about sitting children on your laps, not to do that and I thought well ... children of that age can become too reliant on a member of staff and you go to lunch and or home, they are still there with other staff so they need to be able to gel with all members of staff so by passing that around equally ... (Elfer 2008)

This quotation, and particularly the phrase “so by passing that around equally”, suggests the possibility of *multiple indiscriminate care*. The general prescription not to have children on your laps is without any reference to children’s age, need, or wider circumstance. One way of understanding this room leader’s concern is that managing the possible distress of children when their attachment figure is not available to them provokes so much anxiety for practitioners that the room culture ensures systematic avoidance of attachments forming.

A similar interpretation has been made about teachers’ interactions with pupils in schools contexts:

It is quite common, for instance, for anything to do with the teacher-pupil relationship, particularly any strong feelings (whether positive or negative), to be treated as if they were

a totally taboo subject, rather than one of the most ordinary, inevitable and potentially creative factors lying at the heart of day to day life in school. (Jackson 2008 p. 71)

However, it could be that if the practitioners involved in these situations were asked to talk about the difficult feelings that can arise in professional interactions with children, they may deny there are any difficult feelings to be discussed. In psychoanalytic theory, this might be understood as a *defence* against the *anxiety* of difficult or painful feelings. Here, the term *anxiety* is used in a different way from its colloquial use. It refers not only to the conscious fear about an obvious threat (e.g., a dangerous dog), but also to the unconscious anxiety about situations or interactions that may be threatening or painful in a psychological sense. Psychological defences, held in psychoanalytic theory to be an ordinary part of human functioning, keep out of consciousness thoughts that are too uncomfortable or painful to be thought about consciously (Trowell 1995).

The unique insight of the work of Bain and Barnett (1986) and Hopkins (1988), taking a psychoanalytic approach to the organisational dynamics of early years' settings, was to understand how it was almost impossible for some practitioners, faced with the demands of so many very young children, to feel that they could adequately meet the children's emotional needs. An understandable way of managing this painful reality was to adopt defensive practices, for example excessive *busyness* with tasks that may not be strictly necessary so that the demands and distress of infants could perhaps be understood in a negative way (*attention seeking* or *spoilt behaviour*), and it was then easier to ignore them. These researchers sought to see beneath the surface of what might be superficially described as ill-informed staff showing callous indifference. They facilitated a discussion space that was constructed through:

- A reliable meeting place with clear time limits;
- Close attention to interactions with children and staff;
- Sensitive exploration of anxieties, with careful attention to timing, sequences of discussion, how conflicts arose, disagreements and their resolution;
- Encouragement of learning by experience and reflection rather than by direct teaching; and
- Attention to discussing the *negatives* of early years' experience (disappointments, frustrations and conflicts) (Elfer and Dearnley 2007).

This kind of WD space is offered as a regular professional forum in which a group of practitioners can meet to discuss difficulties and challenges that may arise in daily work experience (Rustin and Bradley 2008). The underlying principle is that of emotional containment. The aim is that individual anxiety about discussing emotion and individual experience, as it arises in day to day work, should be understood without judgement or criticism. Thinking and reflection about the minutiae of individual interaction is then more possible. The aim is for the group to learn by rigorous discussion of experience rather than direct teaching so that there can be sensitive exploration of difficult issues and possible disagreements.

Table 8.1 Comparing models of Work Discussion—participants, facilitators, focus, structure and duration

	Study 1 Elfer and Dearnley (2007)	Study 2 Elfer (2008)	Study 3 Elfer (2012)
Group participants	12 managers of separate early years' settings.	7 staff members of a single setting.	9 managers of separate settings.
Facilitators	×2 – one with early years' and one with group relations expertise.	×1 – deputy head of setting with early years' expertise.	×2 – one with early years' and one with group relations expertise.
Focus of discussion	<i>Three elements:</i> Spontaneous choice of any topical issue on participants' minds in relation to work; Taught topic (see note 1); Discussion of narrative holistic <i>child</i> observation brought as a prepared transcript by individual members in turn.	<i>Two elements:</i> Taught topic (see note 1); Spontaneous choice of any topical issue on participants' minds in relation to work.	<i>Two elements:</i> Spontaneous choice of any topical issue on participants' minds in relation to work; Discussion of any current nursery issue (to do with children, practitioners or families) brought as a prepared transcript by individual members in turn.
Structure	Phase One: 4 × full-day sessions (5 h each); Phase Two: 3 × half-day sessions (2.5 h each).	Weekly half-day sessions (2.5 h).	Monthly half-day session (2.5 h).
Duration	Three weekly intervals over 26 weeks.	Two years and ongoing.	Four weekly intervals over 39 weeks.

Note 1: Taught topics included any items that participants had requested, for example, early development theory; play; attachment theory; team work and partnership working with families

8.4.1 Work Discussion in Nurseries: The Evidence

8.4.1.1 The Research Studies

Different models of WD have now been evaluated in three research studies (Elfer 2008, 2012; Elfer and Dearnley 2007). The studies, each involving intensive case study designs, are summarised in Table 8.1.

The detailed findings of each of these studies are not reported here. Rather, I draw out key points of agreement or difference between the studies in relation to the three main research questions common to each:

1. *What did participants talk about in WD sessions?*
2. *How did participants evaluate the WD process with regard to clarifying problems, identifying or enabling possible resolutions?*
3. *Did participants think the WD process made any difference to interactions between practitioners and children?*

Table 8.1 shows how the three models of WD varied including the degree of direction from the facilitators about what was discussed. The expectation in all three studies was that discussion should focus on aspects of the professional work, not on private matters, supporting staff to engage in critical professional reflection but with recognition that private matters may be relevant to the extent that they were impacting on professional practice.

8.4.1.2 What Did Work Discussion Participants Want to Talk About?

In studies 1 and 2, participants were asked by the group facilitators to bring a child observation for discussion. In study 3, participants were free to choose their discussion topic and all the prepared issues were primarily concerned with managing staff or work with families. They included managers' anxiety about staff work overload; managing breaches of agreed procedure; dealing with staff personal issues that were affecting relationships; and coping with the challenging behaviour of some parents. These examples may read as an unsurprising list of issues any manager in any field of work may have to deal with, yet the extent of stress, communicated alongside the spoken description of each issue, vividly portrayed how these apparently *ordinary* issues preoccupied and dominated managers' energies. Although not directly concerning children, their impact on children and the emotional life of the setting seemed undoubted.

Where children were directly discussed (studies 1 and 2), *feelings* rather than *thinking about* children seemed dominant:

... next, the group talked about a forthcoming outing to the seaside ... one spoke of dreading it because of the difficult behaviour of the children she had at that time. The facilitator spoke about how difficult it was to dread something and the importance of providing extra support for this practitioner and her group.... The discussion led on to which children were not toilet trained and whether they might get more of the children toilet trained by the time of the trip.... Some parents were then blamed by practitioners for not being interested in supporting toilet training. The facilitator was careful to keep a balance between the need to work in partnership with parents but to also help the group think about parents who had lots of difficulties or were working all day, and it was easier in the evening to leave children in nappies rather than repeatedly checking if the potty was needed. It seemed as if practitioners' *fear of the difficult children*, and perhaps being unable to manage them, quickly turned instead to blame of the parents for not managing toileting. The facilitator seemed skilful in avoiding this fear/blame dynamic and getting the group back to thinking ... (Group Discussion Transcript/Nursery 4/Study 2).

8.4.1.3 Participants' Reports of Their Experience of Work Discussion

Participants expressed their bemusement and curiosity at the interest of the facilitators in their thoughts and ideas. They said they had been used to their own ideas seeming to be of only marginal relevance in the face of external regulatory prescription. Quite rapidly their responses gave way to expressions of pleasure and

relief that their real feelings and thoughts about their work were seen as *core* relevant material in WD.

In turn, these positive expressions also gave way to some struggle too. About a third commented on the difficult contrast between sitting still for long periods (although the group had hourly breaks) and the continuous physical activity of daily work. Participants also reported that they found the *intensity of thinking* difficult when they experienced uncertainty and ready *answers* to practice dilemmas were not offered. Occasionally participants suddenly came to realise connections between their practices and their own early childhood experiences. One participant spoke of a sudden realisation regarding her professional attitudes to feeding infants and her own early childhood. Such connections could be painful. Differences within the group also became evident and there was the issue of whether these could be allowed to fully surface or were best avoided, for example, by uniting in their hostility towards others outside of the group such as politicians or inspection agencies.

Yet in each study, there was a trend towards the group forming with a sense of solidarity and mutual support. There was relief at the move away from a competitive stance between participants and a sense of greater readiness to share innovative ways of working as well as problems and difficulties. A new group culture emerged of recognition of the reality of difficulties and differences, even if there was sometimes unspoken agreement to avoid these through silences, banter or jokes.

Finally, there was evidence of learning, from the experience of the groups, of how to better facilitate thinking and reflection within their own teams. One example of this was groups' initial anxiety about any silences and practitioners' anxiety to fill these. Groups discussed the difference between a silence experienced as a *trial of strength* (e.g., who could be made to speak first through embarrassment) and silence as a more respectful space in which quiet individual thinking could be accommodated without competition to jump in with ready solutions. Participants who were managers spoke of gradually feeling better able to facilitate discussion within their teams, with less fear of silences. Managers spoke too of experiencing the value of time boundaries, not only for the ordinary management of their time but also for this kind of professional reflection. The demands were made more manageable by knowing the WD would reliably end!

8.4.1.4 Participants' Evaluation of the Impact of Work Discussion on Their Interactions with Children and Families

Data was gathered through anonymous evaluations following each WD session, at the end of the series of WD sessions, and in follow up interviews. The majority of participants said they felt the WD had had a positive impact, making them feel better supported and respected, and strengthening attention to individual children and families. A small minority referred specifically to a renewed and sustained commitment to thinking and observation and to professional discussion whilst an equally small group said that the positive impact had begun to fade.

Some participants reported shifts in what was noticed, and how what was thought about seemed linked to the participants' own experience of being noticed and thought about in the WD groups. For example, participants spoke of their uneasy but vague realisation that there may be *quiet* children who were routinely overlooked as time and energy was taken by more demanding children. These *quiet* children were now reported as more noticed, as if talking about their own feelings of being overlooked in a *top down* regulatory culture had made some space for this to occur.

An important part of the WD process was to listen to the negative experience of participants and to try and understand it better without criticism or judgement. This experience in the group was possibly related to new reports by participants of being able to allow *negative* emotion in the children, for example infants or toddlers who were distressed at separating in the morning. There seemed less pressure to try and distract children from their distress as rapidly as possible or to blame parents for not helping their children separate.

Unexpected changes of room where WD groups met gave a lived experience of the unsettling impact of physical change. Discussion of this ran in parallel to discussions of the impact of changes on the children and the timing of infants' and toddlers' moves to older age group rooms. These transitions were reported as managed with more attention to balancing ratios and group size with consideration of a toddler's emotional experience and the appropriateness of timing.

8.4.2 Issues and Questions in Work Discussion as a Form of Professional Reflection

8.4.2.1 What the Participants in Work Discussion Discussed

Table 8.1 shows how WD sessions were organised with different approaches to organising the focus of discussion in each study. Presenting and discussing a child observation enabled close attention to the actual details of interactions focused on one child as they occurred. Participants free to choose their topic of discussion, brought issues almost entirely to do with staff relations rather than individual child observations. Why should this be, and what are the implications for the organisation of WD?

First, where settings were embedded in local communities, staff were commonly drawn from those communities and could then easily have both professional relationships with children and families in the setting and personal ones with the same families in the community. Whilst these community roots were often valuable, they could also be problematic and demand considerable time to clarify boundaries and address conflicts.

Second, some settings were small commercial enterprises on the margins of financial viability, struggling further in a deep economic downturn where parents faced wage reductions and difficulty paying fees. Managers talked about their guilty feelings of relying so much on the strongest members of staff whilst knowing they were paid inadequately in an effort to keep fees low. They also felt much

frustration at the problem of *weak* staff and the difficulties of recruiting and retaining good staff because of poor pay. This too could have the effect of leading discussion time to be focused on strained staff relations rather than interactions with children.

8.4.2.2 Who Decides What Should Be Discussed in Work Discussion?

This is a dilemma of facilitating WD groups. Their primary task is to attend to the quality of interactions between practitioners, children and families. These are not groups for social support and neither are they therapy groups to address personal problems—it is important that their professional task is kept in focus. It was not the case that participants were casual or indifferent to the experiences of the children, prioritising staff relationships instead. In all three studies, they seemed deeply committed to the children in their care. Nevertheless, should WD facilitators structure the discussions to ensure they are directly focused on children?

It may be a false dichotomy to think about the focus of discussion as either concerning *child issues* or *staff issues*. When staff interactions together were problematic, it is hard to imagine that ignoring them in favour of directed discussion of observations of children would be helpful. A further but more subtle group relations issue concerns power and control. If facilitators take control of the agenda and determine what can or cannot be discussed, (rather than reminding the group about its primary task), then they reinforce an experience that was commonplace for participants; feeling their practice was overly determined by external regulation. WD will only be of value if it results in more thoughtful practice. If the facilitators allow themselves to be made responsible for what is discussed, then they can also be held responsible for the outcomes of discussion or lack of them.

Third, the research literature may have underestimated the emotional complexity of interactions in early years' settings (Page and Elfer 2013). The interactions between practitioners themselves, as well as between practitioners and children, may need considerably more attention to help resolve dilemmas and conflicts if staff are to be enabled to respond to children with sensitive and thoughtful attention.

8.4.2.3 Facilitating Work Discussion

The value of having two facilitators, one with early years' expertise and one with group relations expertise, seemed considerable. There are many ways for a group to avoid the task of *thinking together*. For example, as the WD sessions started, some groups said they had been working together for a long time and knew that they all agreed about all aspects of practice, with the implication that there was nothing to discuss. Sometimes, groups put pressure on the facilitators to teach and provide *handouts* as if this would provide valuable prescriptions of how they

should be working. If facilitators appeared to do this however, groups were quick to say how the facilitators' ideas would not work in the real circumstances of the group's own settings. Helping the group keep to its task of thinking about the details of interactions in their own contexts, with careful application of theory and research evidence, whilst also being attentive to emotional experience at work, is demanding.

Having two facilitators also helped maintain attention to what sometimes appeared unsaid as well as said. There often seemed pressure within the group to keep the tone upbeat and positive, as if allowing any attention to aspects of practice that were problematic might risk a spiral of despair. However, this left the question about how to attend to what may be depressing or negative, as well as thinking about practices that had gone well. Gradually drawing out negative experiences for the WD participants themselves seemed to enable more attention to the negative experiences of infants and toddlers; for example, the ordinary sadness that separations may entail. Young children's negative experience came to be seen as an important part of their overall experience that needed considered attention rather than quickly brushing it away.

8.4.3 Work Discussion in Highly Regulated Policy Systems

There is an issue of how WD, as a space for professional reflection, fits in a political context that is highly instrumental in national early policy and practice guidance. English early years' curriculum guidance from birth to five—the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)—is detailed and mandatory (Department for Education [DfE] 2012), and nurseries are subject to high levels of audit of children's progress (House 2011). In all three studies, participants spoke of their anxiety at the ever present possibility of a government inspection—not least because the resultant setting grading published on the internet could have major implications for commercial viability. The United Kingdom education inspection regime has been characterised as one of *name and shame* and is therefore accompanied by a high level of anxiety (Youell 2005). Open and independent professional reflection in this political context requires considerable courage and strength. The revised EYFS includes a new requirement for all early years' settings to:

foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement which encourages the confidential discussions of sensitive issues. (DoE 2012, para. 3.19)

This has the potential to be an important counterbalance to the instrumental emphasis and levels of control in early years' policy. Yet fostering such a culture has the twin costs of skilled facilitation and the time for practitioners to meet away from direct work with children. With most nurseries operating in a commercially competitive market, there is a question of how the resources can be provided for WD forums of the type described in this chapter.

8.4.3.1 The Limitations of Work Discussion

Whilst responsibility for the care and wellbeing of any young child is a heavy one, the intense emotional receptiveness required for effective work with infants and toddlers seemed distinctive. In this respect, in all three varieties of WD, the accounts of managers about enabling their staff to manage this work were impressive. They were managing in an English policy context where they said workforce pay and conditions were often comparable to low status alternative occupations (for example, shop sales assistant or supermarket checkout jobs). Further, qualification requirements were low and staffing infant and toddler rooms could be a challenge because it was regarded as low status, and career progression depended on choosing to work with older children. WD forums must expect to take account of these structural realities. However, it seems important that WD does not come to be seen as a space in which the frustrations of structural deficiencies can be soothed or soaked up. There is a potential ethical issue about the use of WD to attend to emotion arising from feelings of exploitation and facilitators need to be alert to this.

8.5 Concluding Thoughts

If industrialised societies are seeing a sustained shift in the balance of responsibility between family and early childhood setting for the daily care of infants and toddlers (OECD 2006), it is important to have better data on the *daily lived realities* of infants and toddlers in different kinds of setting. WD may constitute a valuable research tool for investigating life in early years' settings as well as a tool of professional reflection and support. In a time of acute attention by service commissioners to *hard data* on cost-benefits, it may be necessary to investigate whether controlled research designs can demonstrate significant improvements in indices of interactions between practitioners and infants and toddlers. However, it is the *rich data* in the communications and accounts of infants and toddlers, family members, practitioners and external advisers that have shown the value of WD so far.

In concluding this chapter, I would argue that the continued development of WD should not be dependent only on the benefits it may bring to particular developmental outcomes for children, nor on the benefits in terms of the economic effectiveness of the setting as important as both of these are. My hope would be that the value of WD should be seen more broadly than this. A primary aim should also be that WD is one way of enabling early years' settings to function as organic entities in local communities, with a degree of democratic life and influence in the way described by Dahlberg et al. (1999). The provision of a regular space for thinking and reflection might be seen as a right, an entitlement, and a permitting circumstance of their effectiveness. Here, effectiveness means their capacity to contribute to the democratic experience of the infants and toddler constituency of the early years' setting, but also to the democratic functioning of staff, family members and local communities.

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Chapter 9

Developing *Professional Love* in Early Childhood Settings

Jools Page

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reference a popularly held assumption that attachment relationships in the home and particularly, in most instances, between a mother and her child are fundamental to the healthy development of young children. Thus, when a mother returns to work following the birth of her baby, the decision making process about choice of child care is likely to be difficult and complex. This chapter is based on the findings of a life historical study which examined the policies, practices and relationships which underpinned and influenced the decisions taken by six mothers to return to paid employment when their infants were under 12 months of age. The mothers' need for their infants to develop close, secure, emotional attachments with other key adults was an overwhelming concern. My focus is on the mothers' perceptions of *love*. When mothers were able to distinguish the mutually loving attachment between the caregiver and their child as an intellectual encounter, complementary rather than undermining their own mother-child relationships, they were able effectively to give caregivers the permission they needed to love the children in their care. The study coined the term *professional love* and showed how the issue of love in day care is highly complex. In this chapter, I urge that a space is made for further debate so that *love* can be properly conceptualised, positively valued and appropriately taught with caregivers working in infant-toddler education and care.

In my examination of Noddings' (1984, 1992, 2003) work on the intellectual aspect of caring in relation to the ethics of care and education I have been exploring the boundaries of *care* and *love*, specifically in relation to infants and toddlers (Page 2010, 2011, 2013a, b). I have suggested that the work of early childhood professionals necessarily involves not only *care* and *education* but also *love*. I argue that, for

J. Page (✉)

School of Education, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

e-mail: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk

mothers of young children under 12 months of age, the concept of *love* is a crucial feature in the decision making process about whether to leave their child and return to work. The findings of my recent study (Page 2010) showed that when the mothers were able to recognise love as an intellectual encounter that complemented their own mother-child relationship, then they positively wanted caregivers to love their children. When this happens, I suggest, mothers can effectively give caregivers the *permission* they need to love the children in their care. I have expressed this as “permission to love them ... but not too much” (Page 2010, p. 301). Yet, this is highly complex. For caregivers, the idea of loving children who are unrelated may cause concern, not only about possible child protection reprisals but also that mothers may become worried about being replaced in their child’s affections. This chapter explores these issues and builds further upon the suggestion to begin to thinking about love within the context of paid child care as *professional love*.

For too long, the concept of love in education has been masked by other terms which are different to love though they are equally important. Respect, dignity, containment, attachment or even emotional wellbeing are words that appear to be more readily acceptable within the terminology of education and policy. The idea that love in professional roles is too difficult a concept to imagine is one argument put forward by Rabe-Kleberg (2011), who warns of the dangers of what she sees as intense passions which she claims have no place in professional relationships with babies and toddlers. Nevertheless, it is true to say that young children, and infants in particular, do evoke strong feelings in others (Quan-McGimpsey et al. 2011) and that in nurseries caregivers are expected to respond *lovingly* to an infant’s needs (Early Education 2012). Therefore, to deny that there is love between the caregiver and the child is to treat caregivers with suspicion, almost suggesting that they are behaving inappropriately if they speak of love and further undermining the importance of professionals who work in close intimate roles with infants and toddlers. As a consequence, the purpose of this chapter is to review the concept of professional love and examine the role of love within the education and care of infants and toddlers.

9.2 Theorising Love and Care

My starting point for a particular notion of professional love is Noddings’ *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984, revised and updated in 2003). Goldstein’s (1995, 1998) work is also important here, in relation to the way she has interpreted Noddings’ ideas.

Noddings’ (2003) work on relational ethics puts forward the idea that “caring involves stepping out of one’s own personal frame of reference and into the other’s” (p. 24) and is based on the notion of reciprocal care and concern. According to Goldstein (1998), caring in education is more than gentle smiles and warm hugs. She claims that naïve notions of caring “obscures the complexity and the intellectual challenge of work with young children” and argues that “coupling early childhood education with this simplistic conception of caring will be

detrimental to the field” (p. 244). Noddings’ (2003) notion of reciprocity is not to suggest the individual wholly take on the identity and care of the other person (p. 30) but instead that the individual [the carer] receives the other person [the one in need of care] into themselves. She calls this *engrossment* (p. 12). For Noddings, engrossment does not require the *caregiver* to have an enduring fascination with the *care receiver*; but, she suggests, there should be enough interest from the *caregiver* to be able to understand the one who is in need of care. Thus, Goldstein’s (1998) contention that “caring is not something you are, but rather something you engage in, something you do” (p. 246) fits with Noddings’ theory. *Motivational displacement* is the term Noddings (2003, p. 16) uses to explain the shift in the way in which the *one caring* becomes more *engrossed* in the one being *cared for* which, she says, must be reciprocated for it to be considered within her theoretical stance, thereby strengthening her claim that “caring is therefore a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviours” (p. 42).

It is in relation to both reciprocity and motivational displacement that I locate my own framework of ideas. According to Noddings’ (2003) definition of motivational displacement, an individual might be busily absorbed in a task of their own, when they would suddenly become interested in the endeavours of another individual; such that they leave their own task and instead focus entirely and with as much effort and determination on the endeavour of the person who has captured their interest as they would have done on their own task a few minutes previously. Noddings argues that this behaviour is what she refers to as ethical caring, which is different to natural caring. A mother, she claims, responds with natural care and concern to the demands of her own infant. On the other hand, ethical caring is when an individual feels obligated to respond to the needs of another person when in fact they do have a choice. Noddings suggests there is no universal code of ethics and individuals would not necessarily carry out the same approach to the ethics of caring just because it is an ethical dilemma; individuals will, for example, respond to the same situations differently. This suggests that concepts of care and reciprocity are subjective and will allow for the uniqueness of both the individual being *cared for* and the one *caring*. Therefore, when the one *caring* is able to step out of his or her own frame of reference into the other’s, then the one being *cared for* is received by the one *caring* and reciprocity not only occurs but is recognised (if not acknowledged). However, what is clear is that in relation to the ethics of care, the *one caring* cannot ignore the one being *cared for*. Therein lies the crucial point of the argument: it is only when the compulsion (on the part of the carer) to become absorbed (in the one being cared for) is twinned with motivational displacement that this intellectual encounter occurs. Without these two things together, the intellectual loving caring encounter is incomplete.

Noddings (1984) proposes that a carer may not need verbal communication with the *cared for* to be in tune with him or her. It is the motivational shift into the place of the other individual that intellectualises Noddings’ notion of caring, which fits entirely with my position on professional love. In relation to young children, such caring might be interpreted as *attunement* (Barlow and Svanberg 2009). Noddings (2003) argues that the notion and the ethics of caring relate to an approach whereby the experience of having been cared for leaves a memory which can later be used by that person in order

to give care themselves. She suggests that it is not the consequences of the act of caring, but what precedes the act of caring, the *motivational displacement*, that is of most importance. My contention, therefore, is that for professional love to occur in professional caregiving roles, the carer needs not only to have experienced being cared for, but also being loved. Of equal importance, the carer must be able to shift their thinking in order to intellectualise the experience as a loving caring encounter; this is what I conceptualise as professional love.

I suggest that caring requires intellectual understanding and is important in spite of the fact that some caregivers who have chosen not to train as teachers may believe that their role as *carer* is regarded as less important than those who are qualified teachers (Dalli 2008). As Lynch et al. (2009) contend, the "...trivialisation of the world of love, care and solidarity, and of feeling and emotion more generally, has had a profound impact on thinking in education" (p. 15). Terms to describe caring roles have been problematic, which Nutbrown (2012) argues has contributed to the continuing debate of carer identity. Furthermore, Taggart (2011) argues that there is a dichotomy for those who work with young children which does not apply to other caring professions, such as nursing and social work. The idea that caring is less important than learning and education is not only unhelpful, but as Taggart contends, inappropriate. Moreover, Taggart (2011) argues that government policies that avoid the use of terms such as care and caring, because they suggest a vision of motherly care, undermine the *emotional labour* of working with the very youngest children in society. Manning-Morton (2006) suggests caregivers who are "not proper teachers and not really social workers" (p. 50) are in a unique position to offer insights and perspectives in ways which do not necessarily require them to be experts. However, I contend that intellectualised notions of caring do in fact require a high level of expertise. Furthermore, I am in agreement with Mortimer (1990), who argues that the role of carer is not inadequate or inferior to that of the teacher/educator but rather has its own clear validity. Therefore, in order for the key adult to keep the infant "in mind" (Barlow and Svanberg 2009, p. 1) in such a way that supports what mothers would ordinarily do, it is vital to be able to interpret the mental state of the young child; what Fonagy et al. (2004) refer to as *mind-mindedness*. Thus, I suggest, *mind*ing infants brings an enormous responsibility to caregivers, never more so than when the child is unrelated.

9.2.1 *Love and Caring...in Policy*

The role of the key person¹ and the key person approach is in keeping with current policy in England (Department for Education 2012) about respectful attachment with young children. This has been defined by Elfer et al. (2003) as:

¹Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs...to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. (Department for Education [DfE] 2012, p. 18)

... how one or two adults in the nursery, while never taking over from the parents, connect with what parents would ordinarily do: being special for the children, helping them manage throughout the day, thinking about them, getting to know them too ... (p. vi)

However, not all researchers agree with the concept of the key person. Dahlberg et al. (2007) contest the notion of attachment relationships in nurseries between children and key adults for fear that children may become overly reliant on their key person, which they argue, may in turn thwart the child's opportunities for interaction with their peers. Furthermore, Trevarthen (2004) claims that infants' innate ability to seek learning opportunities and reciprocal exchanges with others is not entirely explained by recourse to attachment theory.

Although some researchers contest this theory, others do not. Howes and Spieker (2008), for example, insist that children who have experienced poorly attached relationships are even more in need of quality and sensitivity from their key person. My position, in agreement with Elfer et al. (2003, 2012), is that what young infants require most is sensitive, skilled, loving, special adults with whom they have formed a deep and sustaining relationship. My research (Page 2010) suggests that these very young children require care from a key person who is able to understand the complex and demanding needs of infants and toddlers, is emotionally resilient, and is able to intellectualise notions of love and care. Furthermore, as Dolby et al. (Chap. 7 in this volume) say, secure attachments are vital to young children's ability to be able to manage their own feelings and to cope without their parent until they return to collect them. Such relationships, however, are not created overnight. As Cassidy (2008) points out, attachment relationships take time to form and to "crystallize rather than happening immediately" (p. 16).

My work suggests that when highly attuned, experienced, well supported and resilient caregivers are able to apply the motivational shift within their key person role, then the encounter which I have termed *professional love* is realised. Lamb (2007) contends that "a child with secure attachment is able to rely on the parent or parents as a source of comfort and safety in times of upset and stress" (p. 2). I suggest by substituting *key person(s)* for *parent(s)* in this understanding, the notion and practice of loving (and effective) care is broadened and enriched. With regard to early years and child care, Belsky (2007, p. 18) argues that when caregivers see the world through a lens that is responsive to the child's needs rather than to their own, then the child is most likely to flourish. My view is similar to Belsky's, except that I seek to push the boundary of care and concern further. I am arguing for caregivers to not just switch their lens but to shift their thinking. Furthermore, I suggest that for mothers, when they leave their infant with a caregiver who is able to make this motivational shift between caregiver and mother, then true reciprocity can occur. If this is the case, then it seems possible that some mothers may recognise this reciprocity themselves and identify the intellectual encounter between the caregiver and their child as a loving, caring relationship that is essentially in harmony with their own desires for their child.

I suggest that if caregivers have not experienced being loved or have a memory of having been ethically (as opposed to instinctively) *cared for*, as Noddings contends, then it is unlikely that they will be equipped to appreciate the intellectual

aspect of professional love that I am advocating. In other words, caregivers who work with the youngest children should not only be highly qualified, they also need support to manage their own *emotional labour* (Elfer and Dearnley 2007) and build their emotional resilience. The model of professional caregiver support advocated by Elfer and Dearnley (2007) and Elfer et al. (2012), expects managers to plan opportunities for caregivers to be able to discuss emotionally complex issues in early years' settings including the notion of professional love and other equally emotionally laden feelings.

The Tickell review of early years' policy in England in 2011 recommended opportunities for professionals to receive *supervision* which the government has since endorsed in the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for all children aged from birth to 5 years (Department for Education [DfE] 2012). Early indications suggest that with no blueprint in place, supervision for early years professionals in England will fall somewhere between social work supervision practice and performance management. However, whether either model will provide an appropriate space for caregivers to talk about and reflect upon the emotional complexity of their unique caregiving role with infants or families in group care settings to a senior professional remains to be seen.

In Canada, Quan-McGimpsey et al. (2011) explored *closeness* within the teacher-child relationship beyond traditional attachment theory. The outcomes of the study suggested that "the teacher child relationship in early childhood education settings is a complex relationship consisting of personal, attachment, and professional teacher domains" (p. 243). Moreover, they claim that the study findings highlight the pleasure and fulfilment of close adult-child relationships as an alternative to that of the anxiety or burden associated with caring which is perceived as emotionally demanding. Consequently, one way of easing the burden is to be more emotionally detached and thus deemed *professional*.

Nevertheless, based on the findings of an intensive case study conducted by Page and Elfer (2013), I suggest, constructing professional work with infants and toddlers within a binary view does not take account of the complexity of attachment relationships. Consequently, what is important here is the acknowledgement that the personal domain has a *rightful* place in early childhood education alongside the professional domain. This contrasts to the literature which calls for professional distance (John 2008) and adds further weight to my call to provide those who work in professional roles with infants and toddlers, opportunities to discuss love and loving relationships in a space that recognises the complex overlap between the personal and professional domain as a combination of the emotional labour of love (Lynch 2007) as well as one of enjoyment and satisfaction (Quan-McGimpsey et al. 2011).

9.2.2 Love and Policy: Speaking the Unspeakable

So far, this chapter has argued that effective carers working with young children are likely to allow *love* to contribute towards their definition of caring, and penetrate

their practice, yet love is seldom discussed or even mentioned, especially within the context of policy. Indeed, in a roundtable discussion on Sure Start,² the former shadow minister made the following comment:

You don't talk about love in government, or in public policy. This has got to change, because so many of the mothers who use Sure Start and most other public services are looking for just that. Love, validation, nurture and support. (Gerhardt et al. 2011, p. 154)

I agree with Noddings (1984, 2003) and Lynch et al. (2009) that love is *non-commodifiable*, meaning it cannot become a requirement in policy or in practice but it does, however, exist. Nevertheless, the guidance which accompanies the mandatory English Early Years Foundation Stage highlights the importance of positive relationships which are *warm and loving* (Early Education 2012), though there is little effort to expand further on these terms. This omission may be confusing for carers who are also expected to interpret obligatory safeguarding policy which require them to be able to “identify inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff...For example...excessive one to one attention ...” (Early Education 2012, p. 14).

At the beginning of this discussion I suggested that the protection of infants is understandably a cause for concern for carers. Notwithstanding that safety and welfare of all children should always be at the heart of good practice, my concern is that a possible misplaced *moral panic* (Piper and Smith 2003) about safeguarding reprisals may cause some carers to shy away from close, loving relationships, and thereby deprive infants in their care of attachment and *professional love*. To deny the place of love in professional caregiving roles because it is somehow viewed as being too personal and unprofessional seems to me to deny infants and young children the minutiae of secure, loving attachments with their caregivers. It is important to distinguish between ensuring that infants feel that they are loved (worthy of being loved), deeply thought about and, *held in mind* with attunement and reciprocity even if the caregiver's natural feelings are not instinctively warm and loving toward that child. This is highly complex. This is what leads me to suggest that policy is *teetering on the edge of love* (Page 2013c) but exploration is minimal for fear of the unknown consequences.

9.2.3 *What Importance, If Any, Do Mothers Place on Having Carers in Day Care Settings Who ‘Love’ Their Children?*

Having now argued that love does not only exist within the professional caregiver-child relationship, and that practice based research and scholarship now need to find ways in which to articulate the form of this love, this next section focuses on the views of parents on these ideas.

²Sure Start was an initiative set up under the former Labour government intended initially as a multi-professional service to support the most disadvantaged families during the first three years of their child's life.

The six mothers interviewed as part of my life historical research (Page 2010) all had strong views about wanting their infants to have close relationships with the adults who cared for them (see Page 2011 for more details). In the following examples, Martha and Amy (pseudonyms), two of the women who took part in face-to-face interviews, explain the sorts of relationships they wanted for their children in respect of my notion of professional love. To begin, Holly was just 3 months old when she started nursery in order for her mother, Martha, to return to work full-time. Martha describes in the vignette below just how strongly she wanted her daughter to be loved by her key person in the nursery.

Yes I did [want someone to love Holly] because when I couldn't be there I wanted to think that somebody was looking out for her, that she wasn't just a number and she wasn't just left to ... you know wander aimlessly around. That somebody there was actually ... thinking I actually care about that child. To me that was r-e-a-l-l-y important, because I'd have hated to have ... a sea of faces and that she just didn't mean anything to anyone. No, I don't, I don't see that there is any difference [between love and care]. I think that ... depending on how secure you are as a person actually would impact on how you can actually love other people. I think I am a very secure person ... Like with Holly ... I hope that ... people love her. It doesn't mean that it would take any of her love away from me. As a person, I just hope that you know she is able to make them attachments to other people I think that's really important, really important. (Page 2011, p. 317)

As she demonstrates in her own words, Martha was confident in articulating her desire for her daughter to be loved by others outside of the family, due to the secure attachments she had experienced when she was a child. As Noddings (2003) suggests, this is in accordance with the *remembrance* of being cared for previously. Furthermore, the reference to not wanting Holly to wander around aimlessly fits with Cassidy's (2008) point about the importance of a special adult to ensure individual children do not "fall between the cracks" (p. 15).

Like Martha, Amy was also confident in speaking about her son being loved by others. In the following vignette, Amy describes what she sees as the importance of love in her description of the relationship between herself, her child Sebastian, and his nanny.

We're not friends ... there's informality ... but there's still a distance ... I wouldn't say it was a kind of professional distance. It's kind of ... she has her role in my son's life and I have my relationship with her, but she has a closer relationship with my son, you know, than I have with her, which is odd because we're the adults in the transaction, but he's the one who knows more about her than I do ... and because of his young age, he can't tell me... We all kind of know what our role is you know. I don't think she's trying to take my place as mother, and so I don't feel threatened by her as a mother substitute. She has got, years and years of experience and just has an instinctive natural way with children. He [Sebastian] loves her, absolutely loves her! His face lights up. He waves both arms, you know, he has an absolutely lovely time. I just said to her "Thank you, thank you so much for doing a fantastic job, I can see that Sebastian is having a lovely time with you, he's really happy, he's always pleased to see you, and ... and, you know, he's clearly well looked after". I was honest, I said you know "I haven't found it easy, I'm not finding any of this easy and knowing that he's in safe hands when I'm not here is a huge relief, and I, I hugely appreciate it". I ... know ... how a lot of it is instinctive and is about common sense, and is about your capacity to love and show compassion and to care for and about those children and their wellbeing. And then they can have a ... good quality experience of having a really nice time

with somebody who cares about them ... I wanted somebody to—not love him in the same ways that I do but I wanted ... someone ... to care for him in such a way you know, that, all the time ... that she was responsible for my son’s wellbeing, that he is *the* most important thing in *her* world, at that moment. For me, I think that is one aspect of love it’s kind of um, it’s ... about responsibility, and it’s about caring, and it’s about nurturing and I suppose those aspects can be debated with love but I don’t—you know [have] a sense of love in that um ... in that overwhelmingly emotional take the whole body and soul over necessarily, no! no! That’s not what I would be expecting ...

Amy’s views reveal a deep desire for her child to be engaged in a loving relationship with a particular carer. This story demonstrates that Amy did not need or expect the nanny to feel the same way toward Sebastian as she did, but neither did she feel jealous of their relationship. Amy had been a nanny in the past herself and reported a sense of the enormous responsibility placed on the adult who is caring for other people’s children. As a mother she knew and understood the need for Sebastian to make strong attachments (Elfer 2012) and was prepared to accept love in a professional context as she had been able to recognise the higher intellectual aspect of love in the relationship (Noddings 2003; Goldstein 1995, 1998).

It takes a huge amount of resolve on the part of the caregiver to work sensitively with children and parents in a manner that is respectful, equitable and professionally appropriate. This particular point was recently raised by Brooker (2010) who reported that relationships between caregivers and parents can be “fraught with opportunities for misunderstandings” (p. 194). This suggests to me that if the concept of love is to be more explicitly addressed within the context of professional relationships with infants and toddlers, then further research is required in order to ensure that such misunderstandings are avoided. In addition, Elfer et al. (2012) have suggested that if there is talk of love then *hate* is the opposite position and must be talked about too. Hate conjures a further provocation and one that may or may not have a place in the early childhood care and education debate. Nevertheless, I believe that having a critical dialogue that examines terms such as love and hate in a space that acknowledges the complexity of personal and professional anxieties when carrying out professional caregiving roles is an important new direction for early childhood education.

9.3 Concluding Thoughts

I have argued that love and loving relationships exist between infants and toddlers and their caregivers in professional contexts. Love is not easily defined, and in this chapter love has been contextualised and characterised within English early years’ culture which calls for infants and toddlers who attend day care to be closely attached to a professional caregiver; a key person. England is arguably recognisable to many other geo-cultural contexts. In New Zealand, for example, Rockel (2009) claims that Dalli (2006) has been arguing for an academic debate that puts forward “a re-visioned notion of love and care as a pedagogical tool” (p. 7). This fits with the theoretical debate that I am advocating for in using the term *professional love*.

I argue that when caregivers form close attachments with infants and toddlers, they need to know, understand, and be secure in their reciprocal relationships with the young children for whom they are responsible, and to ensure the rights of the child are always fully embedded in their practice. As such relationships are sensitive in nature, it is clear that future research and discussion needs to examine the extent to which these issues intrude, or inhibit, an open dialogue about the role of professional love.

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Chapter 10

Observing Infants' and Toddlers' Relationships and Interactions in Group Care

James Elicker, Karen M. Ruprecht, and Treshawn Anderson

10.1 Introduction

Caregiving relationships, and the daily interactions that build relationships, are central to the care and education of children under 3 years. From many perspectives, most importantly, the very young child's, relationships create a vitally important context for daily experiences and opportunities for development. Perhaps more than any other time in life, for the infant or toddler, *who I am with* is every bit as important as *where I am* and *what I am doing*. Robert Hinde (1979) described the caregiver-infant relationship as a *funnel* for the child's experience, in which the physical surroundings, people, objects, and events are filtered through the mediating care and protection of the adult. Another influential theorist of early relationships, Alan Sroufe (1996), has suggested that children's primary caregiving relationships create lasting impressions, including expectations for the self and the self in relation to others.

Caregivers in group care make a place for children. They work to create the physical and social environment. They carry the child around and point things out. They talk about things in the child's view and about what is happening, conveying meaning and an emotional tone to the child's perceptions. They react to the child's signals, initiatives, and responses. They support feelings of safety and security, and contribute to the child's personal history. These relationships with caregivers bring a sense of continuity and predictability to the child's experience. While moment-to-moment personal interactions are the building blocks of relationships, relationships are also much more. They provide persistent emotional tones, memories, expectations, shared meanings, and early conceptions about self and others, all of which are

J. Elicker (✉) • K.M. Ruprecht • T. Anderson
Department of Human Development and Family Studies,
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA
e-mail: elickerj@purdue.edu; ruprech@purdue.edu; treander@purdue.edu

maintained across spaces and through time, even when the child and caregiver are not together (Elicker and Fortner-Wood 1995; Hinde 1979).

This chapter is about relationships between adults and children in infant-toddler group child care and the quality of the daily interactions that build those relationships. While close relationships in adulthood can be studied by interviewing people about their significant others, for infants and toddlers it is through direct observations of interactions that insights are gained. The chapter focuses on what is currently known about specific kinds of caregiver-child interactions that are thought to contribute to supportive relationships in child care, and thus to favorable experiences and outcomes for children. First, we discuss how adult-child relationships and interactions in infant-toddler child care are conceptualized. Attention is then given to six aspects of caregiver-child interactions that have been identified, observed, and measured through recently developed assessment tools: the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for toddlers (LaParo et al. 2012); and the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) (Helmerhorst et al. 2013, 2014). Next we discuss two types of interventions intended to enhance or improve adult-child interactions and relationships: focused training using the CLASS and CIP to improve interactions, and the program practice of continuity of care. Finally, we suggest future directions for infant-toddler child care practice, caregiver development, and research.

10.2 Child Care Relationships

In both practice and research, defining the relationship between the very young child and his/her out-of-home caregiver or teacher has been challenging, yet scholars from various perspectives have emphasized its centrality. For example, a major goal of the infant-toddler programs of Reggio Emilia and Pistoia in Italy is building positive and supportive relationships with both children and families. Rinaldi (2001) describes the infant-toddler center as an interconnected system where children, teachers, and families are in relationship with each other. In these Italian programs, each child is seen as “the center of these many relationships, which the young child immediately begins to have in time and space” (p. 54).

Raikes and Edwards (2009) describe the infant-caregiver relationship in child care as an *extended dance*, referring to the synchronization of young children’s interactions and relationships with parents and other caregivers. “As each baby alternates dancing with one or two (or more) partners, the dance itself becomes a story about who the child has been and who the child is becoming—a reciprocal self-created story through close relationships” (p. 3). These authors suggest potential security in child care relationships can both extend and supplement the security that develops within family relationships at home.

Researchers working with the attachment perspective of Ainsworth et al. (1978) and Bowlby (1969/1982) have emphasized the importance of infants and toddlers developing secure attachment relationships with primary caregivers. Several investigators consider attachment security with child care providers to be similar in many ways to attachment with mothers or other family caregivers (Howes 1999; Raikes 1993;

van IJzendoorn et al. 1992). Attachment researchers have suggested that a child's relationship with the non-parental caregiver should be considered a true attachment if care begins early, is consistent over days and months, is related to the quality of their daily interactions, is independent of parent attachment, and is associated with the child's wellbeing and later development (Ainslie and Anderson 1984; Howes 1999). Guided by these concepts, there is research evidence for attachment relationships in child care (e.g., Elicker et al. 1999; Raikes 1993).

Best practice recommendations for infant-toddler child care also emphasize relationships and attachment security as a primary focus. In the United States, prominent *birth to three* organizations have endorsed the importance of attachment security and *relationship based care*. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) underlines the importance of relationships in its Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Copple and Bredekamp 2009). The Early Head Start program emphasizes relationships in its performance standards, encouraging programs to support primary caregiving relationships so that consistency in care leading to attachment security between caregiver and child is possible. Other influential American organizations including Zero to Three (2012), the Program for Infant Toddler Care (n.d.), and the Center for Law and Social Policy (2009), have recommended continuity of care and other practices that promote secure attachment between infants, toddlers, and their child care teachers.

In addition to attachment security, there are other dimensions of relationships that have been identified as key aspects in child care, although these have received considerably less theoretical and research attention. Support for each child's growing autonomy is a relational aspect that is closely aligned to attachment security (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Bowlby 1969/1982). Somewhat related to the caregiver's support for the child's autonomy are interactions that involve teaching and learning. Support for infants' and toddlers' early relations with peers in child care is another dimension. Interactions that build these diverse aspects of the adult-child relationship in child care are the subject of this chapter.

10.3 Observing Specific Caregiver-Child Interactions

The child's experience of child care is composed, to a significant degree, of daily interactions with caregivers. As the caregiver and child navigate the daily routines, they engage in many interactions, providing opportunities for their relationship to form, grow, and develop. They engage as the caregiver provides feeding, diapering, dressing, washing, and resting. The caregiver responds to the child's signals, such as crying, other signs of need, laughter, or expressions of curiosity. Children engage in play and learning activities that have been planned by the adult. Together, they go through many transitions, including the parents' departure, going outside or inside, meals and snacks, activity periods, sleeping and waking, and the parents' return at the end of the day. These daily experiences include many meaningful interactions between children and their caregivers. Accepting that interactions are central to the child's experience in child care and are the building blocks of relationships,

it is therefore important to conceptualize, observe, and measure the quality of such interactions.

Research to date that has focused on the observation of infant-toddler child care interactions has tended to employ two measures: the Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS) (Arnett 1989); and the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) (Harms et al. 2006). These assessment tools have been useful in systematic studies of the infant-toddler child care environment; however, both measures have limitations when it comes to the study of interactions in infant-toddler child care. The CIS was designed for use with preschool aged children and teachers in classrooms, so some of its items may not be appropriate for children under 3 years. The ITERS-R was designed to be a global measure of child care center quality, and attention to specific aspects of adult-child interactions is limited (i.e., only 7 of 39 items in the scale directly assess the quality of caregiver-child interactions).

More recently, two comprehensive observation schemes focusing on relationships and interactions in infant-toddler education and care have been independently developed by research groups in Virginia (United States) and the Netherlands. First, Pianta and colleagues at the University of Virginia adapted the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which was originally designed to study teacher-child interactions in pre-kindergarten classrooms (aged 3–5 years) for use with toddler age groups (LaParo et al. 2012) and are currently developing an infant version. Second, a research team in the Netherlands developed the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) to observe the quality of teacher-child interactions in child care rooms for children from infancy through 5 years (Helmerhorst et al. 2014). Our review of these two observation systems suggests six theoretically and empirically important dimensions of caregiver-child interactions: sensitive-responsiveness; support for autonomy; emotional tone; cognitive/language stimulation; structuring/limit setting; and promoting positive early peer relations. We discuss each of dimensions in relation to young children's wellbeing and development and their application in the CLASS and CIP.

10.3.1 Sensitive Responsiveness

Attachment security has been the most common focus of research on child care infant-caregiver relationships. Sensitivity and responsiveness in daily caregiver-child interactions is of primary interest in understanding how secure attachments develop. *Sensitive responsiveness*, originally conceptualized by Ainsworth in groundbreaking observational studies of mothers and infants in Uganda and Baltimore, involves a caregiver's ability to perceive and accurately interpret the child's need signals, to respect the child as an autonomous individual striving for control of his experience, and to respond in a ways that are mostly supportive, and not interfering with the child's needs or intentions (Ainsworth et al. 1978). There is evidence that sensitive-responsive interactions are consistently linked to attachment security in mother-child relationships (de Wolff and van IJzendoorn 1997). While there have not been many studies of sensitive-responsive interactions in child care,

similar associations have been found (e.g., Degotardi and Sweller 2012; Elicker et al. 1999). Sensitive and responsive interactions not only set the stage for the infant's secure attachment to the caregiver, but aid in optimal growth and development. For example, infants and toddlers in classrooms with sensitive and responsive caregivers later show higher language scores and greater levels of peer play (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development [NICHD ECCRN] 2005).

As observed in the Toddler CLASS (LaParo et al. 2012), sensitivity is high when the caregiver is attentive and notices children's needs for support or attention and responds in ways that provide comfort or resolution of the child's needs. As observed in the CIP (Helmerhorst et al. 2014), sensitive-responsiveness is present at high levels when the caregiver recognizes the child's needs, responds appropriately to the child's cues, and responds promptly.

10.3.2 *Support for Autonomy*

Perhaps less apparent to casual observers than sensitivity and responsiveness, and less studied, are interactions that support infants' and toddlers' autonomy. Erikson (1950) emphasized individuation and the development of autonomy as a prominent feature of toddler development. According to Erikson, the toddler's goal is to gain a sense of personal control and independence, while still maintaining security and connectedness with the caregiver. As mentioned above, Ainsworth also saw support for the child's autonomy as closely related to sensitive responsiveness. The goal for caregivers should be to provide an appropriate balance of security and exploration by interacting with the child in ways that respond to needs for sensitive care, yet also support the child's strivings for autonomy.

In the Toddler CLASS this aspect of interaction is represented by the subscale *regard for child perspectives*. The caregiver who promotes this interaction dimension allows and encourages the children to choose their activities, is flexible in adjusting classroom routines to accommodate children's ongoing interests and activities, and supports children's efforts to do things for themselves, rather than doing things for them. In the CIP system, this aspect of interaction is called *respect for autonomy*, characterized by the caregiver's apparent respect for and validation of the child's intentions and perspectives. An important indicator is the caregiver not intruding unnecessarily in the child's ongoing activity, but instead watching and waiting until the child is finished, or at least until an opportune moment occurs to suggest a change in activity.

10.3.3 *Emotional Tone*

Consistent with Hinde's definition of relationship, caregiver-child relationships are characterized by patterns of emotional experience and expression. Whether warm, loving, punitive, harsh, emotionally distant, or some combination of these qualities,

it is reasonable to expect that typical patterns of emotional expression in caregiver-child interactions will affect the child and his relationship with the caregiver. In research examining mother-child relationships, positive and negative emotional expression have been found to be important aspects of attachment relationships, predicting children's subsequent emotional regulation in relationships with adults and peers (LaFreniere and Sroufe 1985).

The Toddler CLASS focuses on both positive and negative *classroom climate*, suggesting that these dimensions of emotional tone are independent. CLASS indicators of positive climate include frequent smiling or laughter between the caregiver and children, displays of verbal or physical affection, and expressions of respect by the caregiver toward the children. Negative classroom climate includes observable behaviors such as anger, irritation, yelling, threats, harsh or controlling physical contact, frequent disputes among children, and children's expressions of frustration. While there is not a specific scale for emotional tone in the CIP, expressions of positive or negative emotion are included as indicators in a number of the scales, including structuring and limit setting, verbal communication, and fostering positive peer interactions.

10.3.4 Cognitive/Language Stimulation

Interactions that support children's thinking, problem-solving, exploring, and communication are included in this dimension. In the domain of language, there is dramatic evidence that the home language environment of infants and toddlers, in terms of the frequency and quality of language available to the child, is strongly correlated with language ability as children enter the preschool phase at age three (Hart and Risley 1995; Waldfogel 2006). With regard to cognitive development, Page and colleagues (2010) found that mothers' verbal stimulation was positively related to infants' cognitive development. Therefore, it would be expected that when children are enrolled in child care, language and cognition development will be influenced by the quality of caregiver-child interactions. For example, in the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (NICHD ECCRN 2005) a number of children's long-term language and cognitive outcomes were associated with the overall child care quality children experienced in the first 3 years. It is likely that quality measures focused specifically on caregiver-child language and cognitive interactions would show even stronger associations with children's learning in these domains.

The Toddler CLASS encompasses language and cognitive interactions within the domain of *instructional support*, including three specific dimensions: facilitation of learning and development; quality of feedback; and language modeling. Caregivers who effectively facilitate learning and development are actively involved with children, intentionally guiding their explorations and learning. They support learning by questioning, encouraging problem solving, and connecting children's play and exploration to other aspects of their lives. High quality feedback is considered to be

that in which the caregiver expands children's thinking and language by scaffolding, questioning, and encouragement. Proficient language modeling includes providing frequent opportunities for conversation, by repeating, expanding, and extending children's language, by adding language to children's actions, and by using a variety of words when describing children's experiences.

The CIP has separate interaction dimensions to observe caregivers' facilitation of communication and other domains of development, labeled *verbal communication* and *developmental stimulation*. The verbal communication scale includes frequent participation by the caregiver in verbal interactions with children and using language that is well adjusted to children's current interests and level of understanding. Effective *developmental stimulation* in the CIP includes frequent attempts by the caregiver to foster some aspect of children's development, encouraging the child to engage in new activities, and suggesting new ways to play or explore.

10.3.5 Structuring/Limit Setting

Providing structure and setting limits for children's behavior is essential for the development of self-regulation, learning social customs, and learning how to live cooperatively with others. This process begins during the first 3 years. A number of researchers have found that when parents engage in warm and sensitive limit setting (rather than being harsh or punitive) there are beneficial effects for children (e.g., Kochanska 1997). Providing effective behavior guidance gives the caregiver more time to support positive behaviors, effectively redirect problem behaviors, and create an environment in which there are lower levels of disruptive or aimless behavior among children.

The Toddler CLASS represents this dimension of interaction as *behavior guidance*. In CLASS observations, effective guidance is defined as monitoring children's behavior, making expectations clear, and being consistent in applying rules and limits. The CIP includes the dimension of *structuring and limit setting*, with similar indicators: clearly communicating expectations, consistency in follow-up of limits and directions, and making the environment predictable.

10.3.6 Promoting Positive Peer Relations

While adult-child relationships are of central importance in child care, relationships with other children are increasingly seen by researchers as a significant source of emotional security, enjoyment, and learning opportunities for very young children. For example, peers may be a source of comfort and security when toddlers transition into a new child care room with a new caregiver (Recchia and Dvorakova 2012). Infants and toddlers have a keen interest in other children, and many of their daily interactions involve peers. Peer interactions are an arena for early experiences with social play, imitation, early communication, conflict, cooperation, and empathy

(Legendre and Munchenbach 2011; Volling and Feagans 1995). For this reason interactions between caregivers and infants or toddlers that affect peer relations are important to observe.

The Toddler CLASS does not focus on this aspect of interaction using a separate scale, yet aspects of the CLASS reveal the importance of managing peer relations. The scales for *behavior guidance*, *regard for child perspectives*, *positive climate*, and *negative climate* refer to peer relations. So while direct intervention in, or support of, peer interactions are not elaborated, it is clear that how children are getting along is considered an important aspect of quality. In the CIP, *support for positive peer interactions* is one of the six scales. Indicators for peer interaction support include the caregiver's active involvement in guiding peer interactions, modeling and reinforcing positive peer interactions, and helping children to manage both positive and negative peer interactions effectively.

10.3.7 Summary

The above six dimensions of caregiver-child interactions are theoretically or empirically linked to infants' and toddlers' wellbeing and development in child care. While observations of adult-child interactions in early care settings with this breadth and depth is a recent enterprise, especially applied with infants and toddlers, more detailed observational assessment tools such as the CLASS and CIP hold promise. Previously, researchers focused primarily on caregiver sensitivity. However, the additional dimensions of caregiver-child interaction allow for the observation and investigation of caregiving across various contexts. Also, having additional focused dimensions of caregiving makes it possible to test hypotheses about how more *specific* aspects of interactions and relationships foster *specific* aspects of children's wellbeing, learning, or development. Using more powerful observational assessments, it will be possible to explore whether and in what contexts specific kinds of interactions occur, with the potential to advise caregivers with specific recommendations for changing their interactions with infants and toddlers.

10.4 Enhancing Caregiver-Infant Interactions

High quality interactions, usually conceptualized as sensitive responsive interactions, have been shown to be associated with children's wellbeing and development. However, many studies have found that child care interactions are not always of high quality. For example, in the NICHD Study of Early Child Care, researchers found that positive caregiving in child care happened infrequently for children under three. According to these researchers, only 12 % of the children in this United States sample had interactions that were *highly characteristic* of positive caregiving (Ramey 2005).

Consequently, researchers and practitioners have recently formulated strategies to improve the quality of caregiver-child interactions and relationships. In this section, we discuss two promising strategies: attempts to improve interactions using video feedback training with caregivers, and the more global program policy of continuity of care.

10.4.1 Video Feedback Training

Based on emerging understanding of caregiver-child interactions and relationships, one approach taken recently to improve quality in early childhood classrooms has been interaction training for caregivers. We were engaged in an early effort to develop a video feedback program for infant-toddler caregivers based on the Video Interaction for Positive Parenting (VIPP) approach, originally developed by researchers at Leiden University in the Netherlands (Elicker et al. 2008; Juffer et al. 2008). In this training program, called *Tuning In*, we focused primarily on helping infant-toddler caregivers increase their sensitive-responsiveness in everyday interactions with children. Using four weekly visits, we observed and video recorded caregiver-child interactions, engaged caregivers in discussions about sensitive responsive care, offered activities designed to increase awareness, and supported caregivers' self-observation and discussion of video recordings of themselves. While initial field tests and case studies showed positive results, a randomized treatment control study revealed no significant short-term effects of *Tuning In* on caregiver sensitivity and responsiveness (Georgescu 2006). However, *Tuning In* caregivers did express positive attitudes about the program, and they engaged in significantly fewer verbally intrusive interactions with children than the non-treatment control caregivers (Bartsch 2007).

Recently, two promising video-feedback training programs have been developed for caregivers. These programs have distinct advantages over *Tuning In*, in that they are of longer duration, provide model examples of high quality interactions, and address multiple dimensions of adult-child interactions. Based on the preschool CLASS, the Virginia research group developed a video coaching program (MyTeachingPartner™) and a similar video-based coaching program is under development for the toddler and infant versions (Downer et al. 2009).

A second video coaching program was developed by the Nederlands Consortium Kinderopvang Onderzoek (NCKO) Dutch Child Care Research Consortium. The Video Interaction Training (VIT) program is based on the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) for children from infancy through age 5. Designed as an individualized course, VIT takes 6 weeks and includes: an observational pre-assessment; video demonstrations of high, medium, and low performance on the six observed dimensions of the CIP (sensitive responsiveness, support for autonomy, structuring and limit setting, developmental stimulation, and support for positive peer relations), strength-based practice with mentoring, video feedback; and post-assessment.

Preliminary results of an experimental evaluation of the effectiveness of the VIT training program with Dutch child care teachers showed improvements in teacher-child interactions (R. Fukkink, personal communication, November 1, 2011).

10.4.2 Continuity of Care

A broader programmatic approach to improving child-caregiver interactions and relationships is continuity of care, a practice in which children under 3 years remain with the same primary caregiver for as long as possible, typically up to 3 years. Providing stable, consistent care, allowing the caregiver, child, and family to get to know each other well, and having fewer disruptive breaks in caregiving relationships are all thought to be the advantages of continuity of care (Theilheimer 2006). Continuity of care as a practice is marked by small group sizes, high adult-child ratios, and a primary caregiving system in which the caregiver takes primary responsibility for a smaller group of children within the classroom environment (Lally 1995). Combined, these three elements provide an environment in which infants and toddlers can develop close relationships with their caregivers (Chirichello and Chirichello 2001; Raikes 1993).

There are several methods for providing continuity of care, including looping, a practice in which caregivers and children stay together from infancy until the children turn 3 years of age, and then the teachers *loop* back to a new group of infants; by establishing mixed age groups; or by keeping children and caregivers in the same room and adapting the environment as the children enter the next developmental phase (Program for Infant Toddler Care (n.d.). Early childhood organizations in the United States such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Early Head Start have encouraged the use of continuity of care based on the theoretical notion that small group size and individualized care will lead to more positive developmental outcomes for young children (NAEYC 1991; Early Head Start Performance Standards 1304.21(b)(i)) However, despite its wide support within the early childhood field, continuity of care is still not widely practiced in the United States, probably because of high rates of staff turnover in many centers, variations in implementation, and perceived parental concerns about children becoming too attached to their child care providers (Cryer et al. 2000; De-Souza 2012; Hedge and Cassidy 2004). Some of these concerns are not limited to United States child care alone. Researchers in New Zealand also reported that parents were wary of their children becoming too attached to their child care providers (Dalli et al. 2009). However, researchers have also noted that some of these challenges can be addressed through structural changes in programs (Theilheimer 2006) or by giving parents options regarding placement of their child in a continuity environment (Chirichello and Chirichello 2001).

Outside the United States, practitioners in New Zealand have been able to weave primary caregiving and continuity of care into a system that works for children, teachers, and families by using an approach developed by Emmi Pickler and Magda Gerber (Christie 2011). In Australia, Ebbeck and Yim (2008) found through

qualitative interviews that both parents and caregivers valued relationship-based infant-toddler child care, including primary care and continuity of care.

One possible hindrance to the widespread implementation of continuity of care is that research evidence for its benefits is scarce. Few studies have rigorously examined continuity in early child care, so existing evidence is mostly circumstantial. There is correlational evidence that children who experience more time with caregivers have more secure attachments (Raikes 1993), and those with fewer caregiver changes over the first 5 years have been observed to be more socially competent (Howes and Hamilton 1993). Elicker and colleagues (1999) observed that toddlers in family child care who had been enrolled for more months showed more interactive involvement with their caregivers, and higher levels of attachment security. Prior to 2010, only one published study directly compared experiences of children in centers that promoted continuity of care to those that did not. Owen and colleagues (2008) found that 3- and 4-year-old children in accredited Head Start centers practicing continuity of care were more engaged in language with teachers and received more affection, and African American and Latino children in the continuity centers received more responsive care. Parents of children in the continuity of care centers also reported more advanced social behaviors in their children.

Given the scarcity of evidence from direct examinations of continuity of care versus non-continuity for children under 3, we conducted a quasi-experimental study of infant-toddler continuity of care (Ruprecht 2010). We found that toddlers who had been in continuity of care classrooms for at least 9 months were engaged in more high level, involved interactions with their caregivers than those in a matched sample of non-continuity classrooms. Children in continuity classrooms also exhibited higher levels of social competence as reported by caregivers. This research produced the first evidence of benefits to infants and toddlers using a direct comparison of centers that practiced continuity of care with those that did not.

Additional studies of continuity of care are needed. Richer descriptions and more comprehensive measures based on observations of children, caregivers, and family members will result in a fuller picture of children's relationship experiences in the context of continuity of care. Most relevant to this chapter, focused measures of adult-child interactions, such as those in the Toddler CLASS or the CIP, will allow observers to capture more comprehensive descriptions of adult-child daily interactions, which will permit more thorough investigations of care practices like continuity of care. Based on this early research, continuity of care does seem to offer benefits to infants, toddlers, and caregivers. However, especially because there are significant programmatic costs and personnel challenges involved, more data regarding its effects are needed.

10.5 Concluding Thoughts

The infant-toddler observational tools and professional development strategies described here are promising; first, in terms of the impact they may have on infants' and toddlers' experiences and relationships in child care; and second, because

they increase our understanding of what constitutes nurturance and supportive infant-toddler-caregiver interactions.

Given the rapid expansion of infant-toddler group child care in many countries and recent research into brain development that highlights the importance of early experience, the focus on infant-toddler care and education represented in this volume is welcome. The approaches presented in this chapter include focused observations of interaction, interaction training, and the practice of continuity of care strategies intended to enhance interactions and relationships. We submit that increased understanding of infants', toddlers', and caregivers' daily experiences in child care will come about most fully when investigated using multiple theoretical and research approaches, firmly grounded in everyday practice. The new observational tools reviewed here will contribute by allowing more detailed studies of large numbers of children in child care settings, allowing for generalizations about patterns of interactions. Studies of programmatic interventions like continuity of care, using more sophisticated observational measures, will help to better understand the relationship ecology of infant-toddler child care. Equally important are qualitative studies that reveal, in rich detail, the daily experiences of children and caregivers, offering new insights and theoretical concepts about early care and education.

The early childhood field should be enthusiastic about the development of observation tools that assess specific dimensions of caregiver-child interaction for children under 3. While the sensitive-responsiveness dimension that has been the primary focus of infant child care research is important, the CIP and the Toddler CLASS offer opportunities to study child care interactions in more depth and breadth. These measures provide a method for both practitioners and researchers to assess interactions, identify aspects of interactions to improve, and plan focused professional development programs. The caregiver training programs developed by the authors of CIP and Toddler CLASS are showing promising early results.

Continuity of care as a policy for infants and toddlers presents rich opportunities for both researchers and early educators. A decision to organize care in such a way to keep children with the same caregivers for 2 or more years will provoke significant systemic changes in programs. In addition to changes in interactions and relationships among caregivers, children, and families, continuity of care may affect staff relationships, training needs, administrative practices, program policies, and how space is utilized in the child care center. There are still many questions about continuity of care that beg investigation. For example, how does continuity of care affect caregiver-parent relationships? Is continuity always beneficial, even in cases when the quality of the caregiver-child relationship is not optimal? Is some degree of *discontinuity* of care beneficial, providing children with learning opportunities by virtue of adapting to new caregivers? How do interactions and relationships with several caregivers, across 1 day in a continuity of care program, affect the child's experience of child care?

At a theoretical level, there is much to be done to develop more useful concepts and notions about caregiving and infants' and toddlers' daily experiences in group care. Ongoing dialogues among researchers and practitioners from various theoretical

perspectives will move the field toward a deeper understanding of infant-toddler child care and the interactions and relationships that optimally support children's healthy development.

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Chapter 11

Guided Participation and Communication Practices in Multilingual Toddler Groups

Anne Kultti and Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson

11.1 Introduction: Toddlers in the Swedish Preschool Context

The majority of children (84 %) in Sweden enter preschool¹ between the age of 1 and 2 years. A growing number of them communicate in more than one language. These multilingual children are learning two or more languages from an early age in different contexts: one or two languages in the family and Swedish in preschool. Preschool is also the primary environment for communication and learning of Swedish for the 2-year-olds (17 %) who have a first language other than Swedish (Skolverket² 2011).

The national curriculum for preschool articulates both learning and children's perspectives as important. The general goal is for preschools to be enjoyable, safe, and educative for each child (Skolverket 2010). Each child should be given the opportunity to develop his/her (first and second) language and associated culture. The curriculum provides for a comprehensive picture of each child's development, with an emphasis on emergent literacy, mathematics, science, and technology. The expectation is that not only children's actions, but also the preschool setting for learning, need to be documented, evaluated, and developed. In other words, even the youngest children should be offered an environment characterised by the integration of education and care as well as a pedagogy based on two important aspects of everyday life in preschool: child centredness and play.

¹Preschool in Sweden is for *all* children between 1 and 5 years of age; there is a national curriculum focusing on both democratic aspects and learning; and preschool teachers have university degrees (3.5 years of education). The preschool environment is often described in terms of *educare* and a child-centred negotiation environment. This is part of the reason why we use the terms (*preschool*) *teacher* and *learning* in the chapter. Learning and care are seen as intertwined and dependent on each other.

²The National Agency for Education.

A. Kultti (✉) • I.P. Samuelsson
Department of Education, Communication and Learning,
University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden
e-mail: anne.kultti@ped.gu.se; ingrid.pramling@ped.gu.se

This study contributes to an understanding of infants' and toddlers' experiences within the lived spaces of the education and care setting by illustrating how the preschool environment can be an arena for language learning. It shows how the organisation and structure of preschool activities, possibilities for participating in activities by using different communicative resources, and play with other children who share the same first language can be understood.

11.2 Preschool as a Learning Environment for Young Children

Our interest in young children's learning through participation in preschool activities arose from national and international studies of the variation in quality in preschools (Sheridan et al. 2009; Sylva et al. 2010). *Quality* in preschool in this work has been seen to comprise: communication between teachers and children, teachers' competence, curriculum/pedagogy, child involvement, and group organisation. In an earlier study, we analysed preschool environments for children under three using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Sheridan et al. 2009; Sheridan and Pramling Samuelsson 2013) and qualitative analyses of interaction and communication. Our analyses identified three distinctive learning environments: *separating and limiting environments*; *child centred negotiation environments*, and *learning oriented environments*. Separating and limiting environments, seen in centres rated on the ECERS as low in quality, were characterised by distinctive and restrictive communication dominated by *doing*. The intention of the teachers was to keep children busy through the provision of everyday activities. Child centred negotiation environments, seen in preschools rated as achieving good quality, were characterised by negotiation; that is, the teachers show awareness of and interest in the child's world and thinking. Learning oriented environments, seen in preschools that achieved an ECERS rating of excellent quality, had an additional intention to develop, in an interactive and conscious manner, young children's understandings of the world around them. In these environments, there was evidence of child centredness and an approach in which both children and teachers take the initiative. In addition, the teachers scaffolded the particular knowledge and awareness that they wished the children to acquire, in line with the curriculum. As in previous studies of older children (e.g., Sheridan et al. 2009; Sylva et al. 2010), we found that the quality of preschool affected children's learning, even before the age of 3 years; for example, children showed better skills and problem solving strategies in early mathematics and literacy in preschools characterised by *learning oriented environments* compared to *separating and limiting environments* (Doverborg and Pramling Samuelsson 2009; Mellgren and Gustafsson 2009).

11.2.1 Preschool Activities

Communicative environments that provide different opportunities for children's learning and development are particularly interesting to examine from the perspective of

children who are learning a new language (Kultti 2012). The findings of multilingual children's experiences of play, mealtime, singing, and story time in Swedish, showed that certain types of activities offer children resources other than verbal language for participation and communication, namely gestures, lyrics, melody, rhythm, artefacts, and repetition of the activity (see also Kultti 2013). The findings also stress teachers' guiding practices.

Traditions within an institution reflect what is valued in a community (Rogoff 1990). The preschool in Sweden provides whole day care in which play, mealtime, singing, and story time are regular and recurring patterns of the activity system (Kultti 2012). These activities are rooted in preschool traditions evident in the organisation of large and small groups. For example, during mealtimes—breakfast, lunch and snacks that are provided by the preschool—children and teachers sit and eat together, often in groups of five to six at each table (Kultti 2014). Children are able to participate physically (such as serving) and verbally (such as naming food and answering questions).³ Singing activities are initiated and led by the teacher in a similar way (Kultti 2013). These are organised and structured with the help of symbols, objects (such as toys) and cards illustrating an aspect of the song content. Songs that are used with young children often include gestures. Teachers also organise opportunities for play among children, however the traditions relating to the role of the teacher vary from culture to culture (see Pramling Samuelsson and Fleer 2009). Play, in many Swedish preschools is mainly an activity that children engage in among themselves.

Peer play is recognised as an arena for learning (Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson 2008) in early childhood in general and especially for learning a second language (Philp et al. 2008a, b). Studies of young children's interactions in the Nordic preschool context show mutuality in children's interactions from a very early age (Johansson 1999; Løkken 1996; Michélsen 2005; Sheridan et al. 2009). Research findings on code switching, including the context of multilingual preschool and school environments, indicate that alternating between languages in communication is a common occurrence in social interaction (Björk-Willén 2006; Cromdal 2000; Kultti 2009), stressing the social aspects of children's second language learning (Philp et al. 2008b). Yet, systematic studies of learning through peer interaction when there are differences in language use are rare (Katz 2004).

11.3 Research Focus and Questions

Singing, mealtime and play activities are regular occurrences in toddler groups. In the following chapter we analyse practices for guided participation and communication in three different preschool activities: a teacher led whole group activity, a small group activity with a teacher, and multilingual communication among peers.

³ See also the chapter by Johansson and Berthelsen in this volume.

The overall question is how organisation and structure of activities in toddler group environments create practices for guiding children's participation and use of language. Specific research questions are:

1. *What characterises the activities in toddler groups that children participate communicatively in?*
2. *What characterises teachers' guiding of these children's participation in the activities?*

11.4 Learning Through Participation

A sociocultural approach to interaction and communication provides important theoretical perspectives on second language learning (Firth and Wagner 1997). This approach emphasises social and cultural aspects of children's learning and development (Rogoff 1990, 2003; Vygotsky 1986). Children's experiences and knowledge are seen to relate to the context and environments in which they participate. Physical, social and cultural opportunities are important considerations in communication (Säljö 2000).

Children are seen as part of the cultural meaning that they themselves both produce and reproduce in their interactions. They learn useful ways of communicating in pre-school and create shared experiences when participating in activities, regardless of their language skills and knowledge. Activity can be understood both as something an individual does and something an individual participates in, and it is institutionally and collectively organised and culturally situated (Engeström and Miettinen 1999). In these interactions children appropriate cultural tools and use these in other situations (Rogoff 2008). Such cultural tools are language and artefacts, and a central sociocultural idea is that it is these that mediate relations between people.

Participation is a key concept in the sociocultural theoretical approach (Lave and Wenger 1991; Rogoff 1990). In this chapter, we use Rogoff's (2008) notion of *guided participation* as a framework for considering findings. Guiding refers to "the direction offered by cultural and social values, as well as social partners" and participation refers to "observation, as well as hands on involvement in an activity" (p. 60). According to Rogoff, "developmental research has commonly limited attention to either the individual or the environment—for example, examining how adults teach children or how children construct reality, with an emphasis on either separate individuals or independent environmental elements as the basic units of analysis" (p. 58). Rogoff integrates the focus of analysis in terms of apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation.

Bridging between known and new experiences can be guided and supported by adults or other more skilled children (Medina and Martinez 2012; Rogoff 1990). This way of bridging experiences in participation is achieved by means of the activities and materials used. Adults' support and assistance, for example, through questions directed to children, can be intended as instruction, although this is not always

the case. In order to extend the individual competence of the child, adult support is needed. This is based on the idea that children need to do more with others in order to learn. The learning is described in terms of *actual developmental level* and *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978). Guiding is reduced over time, simultaneously as children's responsibilities increase step by step. ZPD is important for understanding the concept of learning, which is regarded as developmental (Hedegaard 1998, p. 118). In preschool, children can mutually engage in similar actions or imitate each other (both children and teachers). Imitative actions can be used as a tool for learning within ZPD.

Although sociocultural approaches are now widely used in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, they are still somewhat unusual in first and second language research. In the present study, paying attention to the sociocultural context allows us to explore the communicative environment for multilingual children's early language learning. Rogoff's (2008) notion of guided participation provides a useful concept for considering individual (multilingual children), interactional (child-child and child-teacher), and institutional (activities in preschool) aspects of analysis. The focus taken in this chapter is on the structure and characteristics of activities that children participate communicatively in and how this participation is guided by teachers.

11.5 Empirical Data

The empirical data for this study is based on observations in eight preschools within a larger study (Kultti 2013, 2014). Six of the preschools comprised toddler groups (1–3 years), and two comprised mixed age groups (1–5 years). The children in these preschools spoke a wide diversity of languages other than Swedish at home, including Bosnian, Bulgarian, English, Finnish, Fula, German, Kurdish, Kriol, Norwegian, Persian, Tigrinya, and Temne.

The study results are based on data obtained in three of the preschools. Three children were selected to illustrate the findings. Eric was 2 years and 3 months old at the beginning of the 6 month study, and had English as his first language. Dijana was 2 years and 4 months, and had Bosnian as her first language. Nils, 2 years and 5 months old, had German and Norwegian as first languages.

Data from the three preschool environments were generated by video recordings, a common method used in early childhood research (Heikkilä and Sahlström 2003; Kultti 2012). Quality ratings for these three preschools were in the good to high range on the ECERS. One was identified as a *learning oriented environment* and two were identified as a *child centred negotiation environment*. The data included 13 h of recordings of communicative activities in which the children participated with their peers and teachers (Kultti 2012). Activities led by the teachers, meals, singing and story time, were of 5–30 min in duration. The child initiated play activities were between 1 and 20 min in duration.

11.5.1 *Teacher-Led Whole Group Activity*

Eric's preschool comprises a group of 16 children (1–3 years of age) with only Eric as multilingual. There are three staff (two teachers) in the group. The classification of the preschool as a *learning oriented environment* is seen in, among other things, the quality of the teacher-child interactions. The children participate daily in activities that are involved and led by a teacher, such as singing songs together. Below we show how the teacher uses the lyrics of songs as a resource to guide children's participation in the song activity and to create a dialogue with them.

The [16] children and the teacher sit on the floor in a ring. The teacher has a box containing *song cards*, cards with symbols and instructions for movement songs. She looks in her notes about whose turn it is to come forward and choose a song card. When a card is picked, the teacher holds it up for the others to see.

Teacher: "What's this one called then?" The teacher points to the picture of a hare on the card.

Child: "Hoppy, hoppy hare."

Teacher: "Yes, you recognised the new card!" She points to the card. "Do you see that he has his hand on his tummy?" She places her hand on her stomach. "Can you put your hands on your tummies?" Then she pats her stomach: "Can you pat them then?"

The children do as the teacher and she continues by taking hold of her ears: "And then you can pat these. What are they?"

The children take hold of their ears and say: "Ears".

Teacher: "Ear, yes." She pats her nose. "And then you can pat yours."

Children: "Nose."

Teacher: "Yes, we can pat our noses too."

She takes hold of her mouth: "And then you do something on this. What's it called when you do this?"

Children say something about mouth and point to their mouths.

Teacher: "Then I play on my mouth, right! We know how to do this!"

Teacher and children start to sing a song with lyrics such: "See me pat my tummy, tummy, tummy, cheek and nose. Then I play on my mouth. See me pat my tummy, tummy, tummy, cheek and nose. Then I play on my mouth."

Singing songs together as a group led by the teacher offers important opportunities for communication. Firstly, the activity is characterised by a clear structure. It is organised around song cards with images as symbols of various songs. The children take turns to pick up a card from the teacher's box. Secondly, the activity is highly communicative, including multiple modalities: verbal, through songs in Swedish; through gestures/movements; and through *musical* imagery. This means that young children's possibilities for participating in the singing activity occur independently of the language in which the activity is conducted. The character of the activity can be understood as a way of offering an arena for interaction within the ZPD. For example, in a group of 16 children and a teacher participating in the activities, the children are given several opportunities for imitative actions by observing each other.

The teacher's guiding plays a prominent part in the interaction. She provides guiding by going through the lyrics, in which both non-verbal and verbal actions are used. She points to parts of her body (eyes, nose, ears) and to the card at the same time; and she asks questions about the song content. In this way she demonstrates what she means and explains the meaning of the Swedish words. The teacher speaks clearly and with emotion, she praises the children and shows versatility by changing vocal pitch and laughter. As a result of this kind of guiding, the children experience the lyrics, e.g., meaning of Swedish words. In multiple ways, this guiding can be understood as a means of bridging between known and new experiences. The children can choose to communicate in the way they are able to or are used to.

In sum, the activity in the *whole group* is guided by the teacher creating multiple means of communication. The communication is initiated by the teacher and the topic is common for the children. Questions and explanations are used to guide participation, and Swedish, singing, listening, observation, gestures, and symbols are used as resources for participation. Through this activity, new words and terms are introduced. This implies opportunities for language learning in whole group activities.

11.6 A Small Group of Children with a Teacher at Mealtime

Nils is in a mixed age group of 34 children and 8 members of staff, including 4 teachers. Half of the children are multilingual. Nils participates mainly in activities with other children of his own age. The group is divided in half according to age. The preschool is characterised by a *child centred negotiation environment*. Below we can see how a dialogue in Swedish is created on the children's own initiative and maintained jointly by the children and the teacher during a mealtime. Four children and two teachers are sitting at the table. Nils, who speaks Swedish, Norwegian and German, and Linn, who speaks Swedish, engaged in a dialogue with one of the teachers.

Nils has stated that he is *mummy* which is noticed by Linn, who states that she is also *mummy*.

Teacher: "What sort of job do you have then?"

Nils: "I have Överskottsbolaget [discount store]."

Teacher: "What do you do?"

Nils: "I have a motorbike. It stands [inaudible] I leave the motorbike there Överskottsbolaget."

Teacher: "But does everyone work at Överskottsbolaget? Maybe someone works somewhere else, at Ikea?"

Linn: "I work at Ikea."

Teacher: "Yes, or maybe you work at the Coop. There are all sorts of jobs."

Nils: "I work, I work, I work, I work at Överskottsbolaget."

Teacher: "Really, what do people do there then?"

Nils: "Fast."

Teacher: "They work fast?"

Nils: "Yes."

Teacher: "They are efficient. What can you buy here then? If I come into Överskottsbolaget, what can I buy?"

- Nils: "I buy food."
 Teacher: "Have they washing powder here?"
 Nils: "Yes."
 Teacher: "Yes, they have."
 Linn: "Why do they have washing powder?"
 Teacher: "You'll have to ask Nils, he works there, doesn't he? I don't know."
 Nils: "I have to work today."
 Teacher: "You have to work today."
 Nils: "Have to work today."
 Linn: "Because we don't have any money."
 Teacher: "Don't you have any money? Then you have to work."
 Nils: "I've got money."
 Teacher: "You've got money. Have you got a lot of money?"
 Nils: "Yes."

An important condition for the participation and communication is the organisation of the mealtime: children and teachers sitting and eating together at the table with few participants. For one thing, this means that the mealtime is characterised by both eating and communication. This is a child initiated dialogue in Swedish, held jointly by the children and teacher. Children's participation is guided by the teacher, using terms that are familiar to the children, such as *family*, *business/work* and *money*. Children's experiences reinforce the common ground for dialogue. Children's ideas are also used as a basis for the introduction of new concepts (*efficient*). In the dialogue, children use the make believe approach, as a way to make communication possible. Similar to the observation above, the activity and the guiding give the children the opportunity to operate within ZPD.

The questions asked by the teacher are short and relatively simple to answer. These are used to create a dialogue in an activity between the participants. Her questions offer the children alternative ways of expressing themselves. They are able to maintain the dialogue by answering yes/no as well as by using their own words. For example, the questions about *work* lead Nils to imagine and communicate his ideas.

Two of the children and one of the teachers are more engaged in the dialogue than the others. Throughout this dialogue the other children are given the opportunity to be part of communicative activity, in this case through observing and listening. The peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991) is possible in group activities. Experiences are created through different ways of communication, through pretending during mealtime.

In sum, the activity is initiated by children and participation is guided through questions and explanations by the teacher. Communication is about both common and new topics. New words and terms are introduced, which is something the teacher contributes to. The activity in the small group becomes important for language learning when the teacher is sensitive to the children's initiatives and interests, using these as a resource for creating dialogues. The activity provides opportunities to participate in Swedish but does not require the children to do so because communication by means of gestures and/or intonation is also used.

11.7 Multilingual Communication Between Peers During Play

Dijana is in a toddler group with 15 children, 11 of whom are multilingual. One of the three members of staff is a teacher. The setting is characterised by a *child centred, negotiation environment* in which there are few teacher led activities. Communication is primarily concerned with naming objects in the vicinity of the children. Free play is a common activity in this toddler group. The teachers are close to the children but somewhat passive. Dijana, Liza, and Lejla, who all speak Bosnian, often play together, and they speak mainly Bosnian. In the example below, singing, which is a shared activity in this context, is used by the girls to create a multilingual activity in a play setting.

Dijana, Liza and Lejla find an animal jigsaw puzzle on a table and gather round it.

Liza: “**Ovo je**⁴ the zoo [This is the zoo].” She takes up a piece of puzzle portraying a squirrel.

Lejla: “**Nemoj mama to je moj** [Please, mom that’s mine].”

Liza: “**Nije. Vidi ja cu to ovo** [No. Look, I shall this one].”

Dijana: “**Vode je fit** [It fits here].”

Liza: “It does not fit squirrel.”

Lejla sings a song about a squirrel in Swedish.

The play activity is based on the pictures on the puzzle pieces. It is characterised by multilingual communication, which is maintained by the children and seems familiar and functional in this context. The children with the same first language other than Swedish create opportunities to use the common language in play. They comment on the pictures in Bosnian and Swedish. Bosnian is combined with Swedish words: zoo, fit, and squirrel, which are familiar to the children in the preschool context. The content of a common preschool activity, singing in a group led by the teacher, is used as a resource for participation, as well as play materials and familiar songs. Bosnian is replaced by the song in Swedish with the help of the puzzle.

When examining peer play as an arena for proximal development, it is evident that the opportunity to use both languages is important for verbal communication and therefore learning. Similarities between play materials and activities in preschool facilitate children’s communication with each other. Even when regarding language alternation as related to social interaction in a context, these similarities are worth taking into account. Emphasising the link between the material used and the activities that create shared experiences can be regarded as a way of contributing to the children’s participation.

In sum, participation in the child initiated play activity is guided through the children’s statements and suggestions. The topics are common for the children. Resources for participation used are Bosnian, Swedish, singing, and symbols. When

⁴Bold text is Bosnian.

it comes to verbal communication, known words and terms are used, which differs from activities with teacher that include new words and terms. However, in the peer activity the children can use both their languages, which did not happen with Swedish speaking teachers.

11.8 Concluding Thoughts

The findings in this study corroborate previous research that has shown the possibilities for language learning in a preschool environment (Axelsson 2005; Palludan 2007). The children are offered different opportunities to learn appropriate words and ways of communicating through activities. Further, the study underlines the importance of the different activities young children participate in during the everyday life of preschool, and how opportunities for participation, language use, and therefore learning vary across preschools, depending on their social organisation and time schedules. For example, a first language other than Swedish is a communicative resource only in a context with children who share two languages.

The study also highlights that activities differ in terms of the teacher's participation. For example, when the teacher is clearly leading the activity and guiding children's participation and communication within it; when the teacher is using children's ideas and interests to guide the communication; and when the teacher is not directly included in the activity. The results show how activities in a whole group, in a small group, and among children offer important opportunities for young multilingual children's language learning by creating an arena for proximal development (Vygotsky 1978).

There are other Nordic research findings by Eide et al. (2012) showing that children's opportunities to be participating and be part of decisions varies according to the group constellation, but also that it is possible for young children to become *active participants in the whole group*. The present study has shown that when *children are included in a whole group activity initiated and led by the teacher*, their knowledge of words and terms (in Swedish) is developed and extended through questions and explanations. Both verbal and non-verbal resources are used for communication, which appears to be important when trying to include children with different interests, experiences and knowledge in whole group activities. The nature of the activity, which has multiple participants and possibilities for imitation, can be understood as a way of creating an arena for proximal development (Vygotsky 1978).

Activities in small groups are also a common way of organising activities and have been shown to play an important role in children's learning (Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson 2006). In this study, the small group activity occurred at mealtime through *the child's own initiative* spontaneously when *the teacher became involved in it*. Guiding by asking questions seemed to be effective in creating a learning activity in which the children were given the opportunity to act

beyond their developmental level (Vygotsky 1978, 1986). Attention was paid to words and terms in a similar way to that seen in the whole group activity. The children participated in a dialogue with dimensions of creativity and topics beyond the situation, two important dimensions of learning (Gjems 2010; Sawyer 1997). The children at the table were able to participate in the dialogue by observing the interaction regardless of their different language skills, which is an important means of participating in a joint communication.

The study has also shown how *communication among children during play* is influenced by a typical teacher led preschool activity, in this case singing together. The children use singing as a common resource in their communication. In other words, experiences of activities and communication with the teacher are used as a resource even in peer interaction (see Kultti 2012). Another dimension that facilitates (first and second) language learning is the freedom of choice in that the *children are allowed to choose whom they will play with and which language to use in communication*. Their knowledge of two shared languages can be understood as a resource for communication.

This study contributes to an understanding of toddlers' experiences within the lived spaces of the education and care setting by illustrating the preschool environment as an arena for language learning. It shows how the organisation and structure of preschool activities, possibilities for participating in activities by using different communicative resources, as well as play with other children who share the same first language can be understood in this context. Different types of activities affect children's opportunities for language learning in which the whole group, small group, and peer interaction are valuable. Such informal interactions, which are common in preschool, are seen as learning activities when possibilities for participation are created. This means, for example, that teachers need to offer children opportunities to participate in the three kinds of activities discussed, not only in some of them, as Kultti (2013) has reported is the case for some multilingual children. Participation for children with a first language other than Swedish is about finding opportunities to allow all means and skills for communication and participation that young children bring with them to preschool.

The chapter concerns the preschool environment (institutional aspects); young, multilingual children (individual aspects); and activities, including artefacts (interactional aspects) (Hedegaard 2009; Rogoff 1990, 2008). The theoretical approach provides an extended perspective on multilingualism and activities in preschool as a learning arena, compared to perspectives that focus only on one of the aspects. The approach is useful in research as well as in preschool practice, because multilingualism and multiculturalism are complex issues in many societies today. This theoretical approach, another way of understanding learning and development for teachers in their practice, can be used to study children's learning in interaction with others, in line with the urgent request for analysing and documenting children's learning in policy documents (Skolverket 2010).

For young children to learn a second language in preschool becomes a natural way of participating with other children in play and other daily activities, and a big part of the play community.

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Chapter 12

Infant Signs Reveal Infant Minds to Early Childhood Professionals

Claire D. Vallotton, Tamesha Harewood, Ashley Karsten, and Kalli B. Decker

12.1 Introduction

The idea that infants communicate prior to their first words is not new to anyone who has spent time with infants. However, the recognition that preverbal children can communicate both intentionally and symbolically prior to speech, through use of infant signs, also known as symbolic gestures¹ or Baby Signs®, has opened a window into the mind of the infant for scientists, parents, and early childhood educators. For a parent, a child's use of signs can reveal the mental contents—desires, needs, memories—of the individual infant whose mind they most want to know. For scientists, symbolic gestures can reveal the general capacities of the infant mind—what preverbal children are capable of thinking, feeling, remembering, and representing about their lived experiences. For early childhood educators, who are charged with caring for groups of young children, and with continually enhancing their own knowledge of child development to develop as professionals, infant signs are a tool to both understand individual children in their care, and learn about the often underestimated social, cognitive, and communicative capacities of preverbal children.

Preverbal children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings have the challenge of eliciting responsive care from adults who may not know them well and who must split their attention between several children. Without access to a shared oral language, infant signs can provide preverbal children with a way to communicate specific needs and desires, as well as thoughts and feelings about their daily experiences. With this skill, infants and toddlers take an active role in initiating and modifying routines and interactions, and hold preverbal conversations with adults about their experiences and observations of the world around them.

¹Symbolic gestures are simple hand gestures, typically with an iconic relationship to a specific referent.

C.D. Vallotton (✉) • T. Harewood • A. Karsten • K.B. Decker
Human Development and Family Studies, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA
e-mail: vallotto@msu.edu; harewoo1@msu.edu;
karsten8@msu.edu; deckerk5@msu.edu

The use of infant signs has become an increasingly common parenting practice since the publication of *Baby Signs: How to Talk to Your Baby Before Your Baby can Talk*, by Linda Acredolo and Susan Goodwyn in 1992. Though slower to catch on in infant-toddler education and care settings, there are a growing number of university laboratory schools² and other high quality early childhood programs using infant signs. However, it may not be easy or effective to use this tool in all classrooms. Further, we question whether putting this communication tool into the hands of young children could intensify children's effects on quality of care. Particularly, could it intensify disparities in quality of care between children who are more and less motivated to communicate through signs?

In this chapter, we describe our theoretical frameworks for understanding the use of infant signs, summarize existing research on infant signs in early childhood settings, reflect on the effects it has on professional development, and describe the principles and practices for using signs effectively. Finally, we discuss our concerns and current questions about this practice.

12.2 Infant Signs as Powerful Tools in the Hands of Young Children: Embodying Explicit Communication and Higher Mental Processes to Affect Relationships and Development

As we study the use and effects of infant signs on children's relationships and development, we view this behavior through several theoretical lenses described below.

Innate motivation to communicate Infants' motivations and attempts to communicate begin long before they utter their first words (Wagner 2006). Infants are motivated to connect with others, share attention and information, and even help others (Tomasello 2003). These motivations prompt preverbal communication through gestures that can draw another's attention to specific objects within view, such as showing and pointing, beginning around 9 months of age (Crais et al. 2004). But children's interests quickly outgrow the *here and now* to encompass ever-broader arrays of objects, events, and ideas that cannot be perceived within the immediate environment. Thus, infants must find more specific and complex communication tools to share their expanding interests with others. Many infants find this toolset in symbolic gestures; most typically developing infants invent between one and five symbolic gestures (e.g., flapping arms for *bird*), even though parents do not intentionally model them (Acredolo and Goodwyn 1988). The gestures are borrowed

²University laboratory schools are ECEC centers typically located on university campuses and run by universities for the purposes of: (a) demonstrating high quality care and education; (b) educating student caregivers and teachers through supervised practicum experiences; and (c) facilitating research on child development and education for university students and faculty. More information is available from the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers: <http://campuschildren.org/about.html>.

from children's and parent's actions in the world (Bates 1979; Namy et al. 2000; Werner and Kaplan 1984) and the daily routines in which they participate (Goodwyn et al. 2000).

Gestures as mental tools As symbols, gestures can serve both the communicative and representational functions of language (Goldin-Meadow 2005). We hypothesize that children can actually use infant signs as mental tools (Vygotsky 1978), not only to communicate, but also to think. We believe infants can use signs to mentally manipulate ideas about the things their gestures represent, and even to regulate their own behavior. Though this idea needs further testing, there is preliminary evidence in published case studies (Pea 1980; Rodriguez and Palacios 2007), and in our own data on toddlers' use of symbolic gestures during distressing routines. Preverbal children's use of symbolic gestures to *talk* to themselves elucidates the intersection of embodied cognition and rudimentary mental representation.

Gestures as child effects In their communicative function, gestures serve as a naturally occurring child effect—that is, gestures are noticeable behaviors which cue adults to children's intentions in the moment, and to children's characteristics over time. Child characteristics or behaviors that vary across or within children are likely to influence the way adults perceive and respond to them (Bell and Harper 1977; Crockenberg and Leerkes 2003; Scarr and McCartney 1983). Importantly, the frequency and types of gestures children produce cue parents to provide richer language input (Goldin-Meadow et al. 2007), and prompt caregivers to be more responsive (Valotton 2009). Thus, children use gestures to modify the richness of their own care and education environments. Though children vary naturally in the frequency of common gestures (e.g., pointing, nodding, waving), as well as the number of symbolic gestures they invent, they can also be taught to use infant signs, which may enhance their own effects on their environment.

12.3 Preverbal Pragmatists: The Development and Use of Infant Signs in Infant-Toddler Education and Care Settings

The use of infant signs has been promoted as a parenting and child care practice, creating enriched gesturing environments for an increasing number of preverbal children. We conducted much of our research on the use of infant signs in a university laboratory school where infant signs were modeled by a head teacher and student caregivers studying child development who served as the teaching staff for one or more academic terms. Participants were 10 infants and 12 toddlers and their caregivers. Infants were 4.5–11.5 months and toddlers were 17.3–24.8 months when the study began. Children were videotaped during daily routines with caregivers; we filmed infants for 8 months during free play and snack routines, and toddlers for 3.5 months during separation from parents, diaper changes, and peer conflict. Child and caregiver gesturing behavior was coded in all videos. For infants we also coded

caregiver sensitivity; for toddlers we coded child affect, and child and caregiver vocalizations. Another set of qualitative data comes from the anecdotal records written by caregivers on a weekly basis; in these observations, we gain insight into children's behaviors as well as caregivers' perceptions of children.

Our research has shown that children in enriched gesturing environments, where infant signs are used consistently in daily routines, begin using infant signs between 9 and 10 months of age (Fusaro and Vallotton 2011), whereas previous research indicated children begin inventing and learning infant signs around 12 months (Acredolo and Goodwyn 1988). Learning new infant signs is slow at first, followed by a rapid spurt beginning between 11 and 12.5 months and lasting for about a month (Karsten et al. 2011; Vallotton 2010). Findings from our research and others' reveal that children can use infant signs to communicate about a variety of concepts; gestures for requests and concrete objects precede those for more abstract emotions or time concepts (Acredolo and Goodwyn 1988; Vallotton 2008).

Children in our sample use infant signs most frequently between 15 and 17 months, and the number of different signs children use peaks around 18 months (Karsten et al. 2011). Previous studies show that both infant signs and typical gestures (e.g., pointing, waving, head-nodding) are predictive of language development (Goodwyn et al. 2000; Rowe and Goldin-Meadow 2009). Pointing is one of the first gestures infants use, and our research has shown that more early pointing predicts both earlier increases and decreases in use of infant signs (Vallotton 2010). These trajectories indicate that infants use signs most frequently during a developmental period in which signs serve their communication needs, and signs taper off as they are replaced by words (Karsten et al. 2011; Vallotton 2010).

We have documented infants and toddlers using signs to engage people and environments in developmentally advanced ways. Children pair or sequence signs together, forming gestural *sentences* to represent more complex ideas; for example, "more, juice, please", "airplane broken", or "play, outside, ball" (Karsten et al. 2011; Vallotton 2011b). Children use infant signs to engage in conceptually focused *conversations* with adults, exchanging conversational turns via gesture (Vallotton 2011b). Further, children can use signs to express emotions (e.g., sad, scared) and physiological states (e.g., sleepy, cold) earlier than with oral language (Vallotton 2008). These concepts start to emerge between 11 and 13 months via sign, whereas children do not typically use these words until around 2 years (Bretherton and Beeghly 1982; Dunn et al. 1987).

One foci of our current research is infants' use of signs to regulate their own and others' behaviors. Here infant signs can be seen as both a set of mental tools—when children regulate their own behavior through self-reflexive signs—and as an effect of children on the care environments—when children use signs to regulate their interactions with caregivers or the routines that structure their time. Children use signs to guide themselves to wait or to be gentle, or to remind themselves that a parent will come back at the end of the day (qualitative examples of these uses of infant signs can be found in Vallotton 2008, 2011a).

Similar to the perspective of White (Chap. 16, this volume), we see infants and toddlers taking an agentic role in shaping their social experiences and the ways they

spend their time. As documented by others (e.g., Acredolo and Goodwyn 1992; Johnston 2005, Page et al. 2013), we have observed young children using signs to make requests around mealtime and diapering routines. Children also direct signs toward caregivers to initiate or modify routines, to share thoughts and observations, and to elicit help, information, or comfort. The qualitative anecdotes below, written by caregivers in the infant and toddler classrooms of the UC Davis laboratory school, provide insight into infants' capacities to shape their interactions and routines by revealing the contents of their minds to their child care providers.

12.3.1 *Infants and Toddlers Initiating and Modifying Routines*

Alana initiates snack-time Alana [15.6 months] walked to the row of chairs in the snack area and pulled one out, using her right hand to grasp the back of the chair and her left to hold the arm of the chair. Once she had scooted the chair out six inches, she turned around and touched Darla's shoulder. When Darla [a caregiver] turned around, Alana made the gesture for snack [fingertips touching mouth] and pointed to the chair. Darla looked at her watch and asked, "Are you telling me it's time for snack, Alana?" Alana smiled and gestured snack again. Darla stood up and took the sensory table outside to make room for the snack table.

Helene wants a different song at naptime At naptime, I rocked Helene [12.4 months] in my lap, and began our usual routine of singing *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. After the first time through the song, I asked "Again?" making the gesture for more. Helene began to fuss, then gestured "Fish" by opening and closing her mouth and holding her palms together and moving them in a swimming motion. I asked, "Helene, did you want to sing about the fish instead?" She looked at me, smiled, and gestured "Fish" again with her mouth. I sang "Look at all the fishes swimming in the water ..." while Helene accompanied me by gesturing to the song.

12.3.2 *Toddlers Sharing Observations*

Gerry hears an airplane Walking toward the toddler room with Gerry [19 months] in my arms, we heard a noise. I stopped walking and looked at Gerry. He touched his right ear with his right hand [the sign for "hear" or "sound/noise"] and said, "Oh!" I asked him, "What do you hear, Gerry?" He smiled, spread his arms apart then bounced from side to side. I said, "You're telling me you hear an airplane". I looked up at the sky and said, "Look, Gerry. There's the plane!" pointing at the sky. Gerry looked up at the sky, laughed, and clapped his hands.

Emma finds two kinds of cows³ Emma [15.1 months] and I were sitting by the manipulatives shelf. She pointed to the picture of the cow and made the gesture for cow [fist in 'Y' position, thumb touching head] while looking at the picture. I mirrored her gesture and said, "Yes, that is a cow". Emma smiled and walked over to the quiet area and brought back a stuffed cow. She again made the gesture for cow then pointed at the cow picture. I said, "They are both cows. You're right".

³This anecdote was previously published in Vallotton (2011a, p. 119).

Callie notices the cymbals are loud Daniel [22.9 months] was clashing the miniature cymbals together. Callie [18.8 months] walked towards Daniel, then smiled at me with widened eyes. She pointed to her ear [for “hear” or “sound/noise”], then clapped her hands together. I said, “Callie, do you hear the sounds [gesturing “sound”] Daniel is making?” Callie said, “Uh huh!” and nodded. I replied, “I hear them, too!” Callie pointed to Daniel holding the cymbals and said, “Me”. I said, “I don’t think Daniel is finished with ...”. Before I finished, Daniel handed Callie one of the cymbals. Callie hit the cymbal against the leg of a chair. Her eyes widened, she gestured “sound” and giggled.

12.3.3 Infants and Toddlers Asking Questions, Eliciting Information

Liza asks about the pictures Liza [9 months] crawled over to a poster on the wall near the doorway. She put both hands on the poster and pushed herself to a stand. She looked at me and made a “What?” or “Where?” gesture with her arm extended above her shoulder and palm out. I asked, “Are you asking me what this is?” She looked back at the poster and patted it with both her hands. I reported to her that it was a poster with lots of pictures on it. Then I pointed to the picture with a child reading a book. I gestured “book” [palms together, opening out], then commented on what each picture showed. Liza sat back down and crawled to the opposite end of the wall. She stood up and patted the poster with the babies. Again she extended her arm with palm out, signaling “What?” or “Where?” I asked “Are you asking me what is on the poster?” I replied, “I see you are patting the poster. All the babies are sitting down,” as I gestured baby [arms in cradling position over chest]. Then I asked her, “Do you see the toys the babies are playing with?” Again she did the “What/Where?” gesture, so I pointed to the toys the babies were playing with. She touched the babies and smiled. She patted the poster, then crawled back to the other poster and touched it. I narrated what she was doing. She went back and forth between the posters before going to play in the quiet room.

Monica asks about the noise Monica [25 months], David [another child], and I were outside by the water fountain. A weed-cutter was turned on and the children’s eyes opened wide. Monica gestured “What?” I said, “What is that noise? I think it’s a weed-cutter”. Then the machine was turned off and Monica gestured, “No more” [palms down, waving back and forth]. These were the first gestures Monica [spontaneously] initiated.

12.3.4 Toddlers Engaging Caregivers, Shaping Interactions

Esme wants her caregiver to stay and play Esme [23 months] and I were playing in the sand box, making cakes out of sand. I got up to find [another child] and Esme grabbed the leg of my pants and said [my name]. I looked down at her; she smiled at me and shook her head back and forth, then gestured, “More”. She said, “No go”.

Callie requests help with the play dough Callie [18.1 months] pointed to the play dough Table. I asked, “Do you want to go there?” She nodded and smiled, walked over to the table, and sat down. She looked at me, pointing to the heart-shaped cutter. She took my hand and pulled it to the heart cutter. I asked, “Do you want me to help you?” She nodded her head. I showed her how to flatten the dough and cut out the heart. I gave her the heart made of dough; she smiled. She gestured “More,” so I cut out another heart. She took the cutter from my hand and pressed it into the dough, cutting half of a heart. She picked up the heart and put it in my hand. She smiled and said, “Me!”

In these anecdotal records by caregivers, infant signs not only promote more sensitive responses from caregivers, but give children greater opportunities to influence the interactions and routines of their daily lives in child care in intentional and meaningful ways. Further, caregivers gain insight into the minds of the individual children in their care, and into the often unexpected capacities of preverbal children.

12.4 Infant Signs as an Opportunity for Ongoing Professional Development for Early Childhood Professionals

Although use of infant signs is increasing, it appears limited to high quality settings. This may be related to the low levels of training prevalent in ECEC environments in the United States of America (USA). From the time child care was established in the USA, it has been characterized by low wages, high turnover, lack of training, and an attitude that child care is akin to babysitting. The ongoing struggle to professionalize the care and education of young children is evident in the lack of a consistent approach to training staff. In the USA, 44 % of caregivers have a high school degree or less, and there are few requirements for preservice training (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010); further, whilst there are national accrediting agencies with quality recommendations, there are no federal mandates for quality of care. Therefore, early childhood staff seldom perceive much benefit in pursuing training, and may lack the skills and knowledge to understand the needs and behavior of young children, particularly infants and toddlers who cannot yet articulate their needs and intentions.

With infants and toddlers, caregivers often face the challenge of not knowing (and having to guess) what children need, which can be stressful for both caregiver and child. Providing responsive care is difficult to achieve without a deep understanding of children's development, and caregivers with minimal (or no) training are less likely to know about early receptive and expressive communication skills. We suspect that a combination of basic developmental training and use of infant signs may help reduce the burden of having to figure out what preverbal children need or want, and reduce the time spent in a *guessing game*. Using infant signs can help foster communication between preverbal children and caregivers, helping caregivers to observe and attend to children's individual developmental needs by allowing caregivers a glimpse into infants' thoughts, feelings, and desires (Valloton 2008, 2009, 2011a). However, the usefulness of infant signs for encouraging high quality child-caregiver interactions may be limited to child care settings in which quality is already high.

The UC Davis laboratory school where our data were collected used a model of reflective supervision to support caregivers. Reflective supervision is used to help caregivers think about their interactions with children and cultivate their ability to see from the child's perspective (Amini-Virmani and Ontai 2010). Thus, caregivers were routinely guided to think about infants' communicative cues, including

gestures, as a way to see from the child's perspective. In addition to benefiting from this climate of reflective practice and attention to infants' signs as meaningful communication, our studies show that the quality of care infants receive from caregivers is enhanced specifically during interactions in which the infant uses more gestures and signs (Vallotton 2009). When asked about their experiences using infant signs, caregivers from several different centers have said (Vallotton 2011a, p. 129):

I pay more attention to infants when I expect them to respond to me.

When I sign to the babies, I have to be facing them, looking at them, so I'm watching them more, too.

Infant signs give us something specific to talk to parents about when they pick up their children, and we talk to each other. Using [infant signs] in our classroom makes us feel more professional. It has really improved teacher morale.

When caregivers use infant signs, they pay greater attention to infants in anticipation of their responses (Vallotton 2009), and develop greater respect for children, seeing them as thinking individuals with specific intentions and needs that can be understood and met (Vallotton 2011a). Seeing the child as an individual and seeing the world from that child's perspective are fundamental abilities of caregivers who provide a secure base for children (Karen 1994). Thus, using infant signs in early childhood settings may contribute to improved quality of care (Vallotton 2009). However, thus far, the use of infant signs in child care has only been documented in high quality programs, and we are concerned that signing in low quality environments will be executed in a low quality manner. Because we do not know how infant signs will be implemented in lower quality programs, we recommend that caregivers receive basic training on early child development before using infant signs, and that implementation of infant signs be a thoughtful and collaborative process between caregivers and parents.

12.5 Recommended Principles and Practices for Using Infant Signs in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings

When used as an everyday communicative tool, infant signs can provide preverbal children and their caregivers with opportunities to understand one another and develop responsive relationships (Vallotton 2009, 2012). There are a number of strategies we encourage caregivers to follow to maximize the benefits of infant signs. First, it is important that caregivers recognize infant signs as a method of early communication, rather than a classroom activity, and use signs as an integral part of the classroom culture. Thus, caregivers must be committed to using infant signs consistently within their existing daily routines.

Although children's developmental maturation and exposure to signs will influence the age at which children produce signs, children typically do not use signs before

7–8 months old. Exposing children to signs is not harmful at any age, so caregivers can start at any time; however, it is important to keep in mind that they may not see signs from children immediately.

Before beginning the use of infant signs, it is important that all caregivers discuss the practice and make decisions together so they can remain consistent. For example, caregivers need to decide their method for learning signs—will they use an existing infant signs curriculum, take signs from an existing signed language (e.g., American Sign Language), or make up their own signs? If the children use a different version of a sign, will caregivers stick to the *classroom* version, or individualize the signs to match the *child's* version? Caregivers should also decide which signs they would like to learn first. It is helpful to start with a few signs and embed them thoroughly in classroom routines, then slowly increase the sign vocabulary of the classroom. The first signs chosen should be simple, motivating for children, and relate directly to daily activities, such as using *eat* and *more* during mealtime. It may be useful for caregivers to have reminders of these signs. We suggest placing small posters around the classroom describing how to do the signs relevant to that area; for example, posters in the snack illustrate *eat*, *drink*, *more*, and *all done*.

Caregivers should communicate with parents about how and why they use infant signs. As documented by McLeod and colleagues (Chap. 13, this volume), neither parents nor child care providers should assume that children use the same words or gestures at home and in child care, or that children's gestures will be understood in the same way in both environments. Thus, it is important to invite parents to use infant signs at home if they are interested, and provide a parent workshop and educational materials. We also encourage caregivers to explicitly address concerns parents may have; specifically, parents may need to hear that research has shown that using infant signs will not hurt children's oral language development, but instead gives them an opportunity to communicate more effectively and have their needs met more easily from an early age.

Even though the use of infant signs can promote effective communication, it is important to remember that infant signs are not a formalized language; therefore, there is no incorrect way for a caregiver or child to use infant signs. What is most important to this process is that caregivers use infant signs by modeling the sign and saying the word at the same time. We discourage caregivers from forcing children to sign; instead, caregivers should always respond to a child's needs, even if the child uses a sign differently than the way it is modeled, or does not use it at all. As an empowering communication tool, children may begin to invent new infant signs to communicate something that is important to them. In this case, caregivers should consider incorporating the newly invented sign, once they figure out what it means. Overall, the purpose of this practice is clear communication with preverbal children, and that goal should remain at the forefront of caregivers' minds as they use and respond to infant signs.

At first, caregivers may feel awkward, fear using signs *wrong*, or feel frustrated by a lack of immediate response from children. These are all typical feelings, and it is important for caregivers to be supportive of one another's attempts to sign, and aware that each child's use of infant signs will develop at an individual pace.

Once infant signs have become central to classroom functioning, these feelings and frustrations subside and caregivers can easily expand their use of infant signs by learning, modeling, and incorporating them into all daily routines. Thus, a supportive team of caregivers can help each other use signs and promote a classroom culture of effective and responsive communication.

12.6 Current Concerns and Next Questions

In general, we believe infant signs put the power of explicit communication into the hands of preverbal children. However, we are concerned that this could intensify children's effects on caregiver behavior in infant-toddler settings, and possibly increase disparities between children in the quality of care they receive. It is as yet unclear whether a child who naturally uses fewer common gestures (e.g., pointing, waving) would also use fewer infant signs, or whether infant signs would help a less communicative child increase the frequency and complexity of their communication. We have some evidence that children who point less often between 10 and 12 months are slower to develop infant signs, though eventually they use just as many as their peers (Vallotton 2010). Does this slower start to gestural communication disadvantage them in eliciting quality care from caregivers, compared to other children? Or are these children using infant signs to elicit more responsive care than they would otherwise have received? These are not mutually exclusive possibilities, but they do raise concerns that the use of infant signs could be more beneficial to some children than others, or even detrimental to those children who use them less. Quasi-experimental research will be necessary to detect whether the use of infant signs enhances care quality for all children, and whether it increases disparities in quality of care between children.

Our next questions relate to the potential of infant signs as a bridge to communication and to language, specifically for children learning two or more oral languages, and those with developmental delays affecting communication. For children whose primary language at home is different from the language in child care, we wonder whether infant signs could serve as a bridge between languages. Older children and adults learn vocabulary in a second language faster when they also learn signs which can be paired with the oral word in either language (Kelly et al. 2008, 2009). Thus, infant signs may serve as a conceptual bridge between two languages; but because the child growing up bilingual is learning two *new* oral languages, rather than mapping the vocabulary of a second language onto existing vocabulary from a first language, the use of signs may simply confuse children. Experimental research will be necessary to answer to this question.

Children with developmental delays often have communication deficits which affect relationships with peers and possibly with caregivers. We wonder whether using infant signs with these children—in infancy and toddlerhood, and as long as communication delays persist—may help them integrate into classroom activities more readily and engage their peers more easily. This line of research should begin

with descriptive studies of the use of signs by educators and children in inclusive classrooms then progress to experimental studies to determine whether signs can facilitate better child-peer and child-educator communication in inclusive settings.

12.7 Concluding Thoughts

Though many questions remain about the use of infant signs with preverbal children in infant and toddler education and care settings, the evidence thus far indicates that this practice promotes effective, explicit, bi-directional communication between children and caregivers. This practice gives children a tool to express their own desires, feelings, and thoughts, and to actively participate in shaping their interactions and routines within the classroom. Use of infant signs also promotes caregivers' responsiveness to children in general. Finally, caregivers benefit by learning more about the specific infants and toddlers in their care, and become aware of the mental and social abilities of preverbal children as infants reveal the contents and capacities of their minds through their use of signs.

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Chapter 13

What Infants Talk About: Comparing Parents' and Educators' Insights

Sharynne McLeod, Sheena Elwick, and Tina Stratigos

13.1 Introduction

Children's first words are eagerly anticipated and celebrated by their parents and others in their lives. Their first words reflect the context in which children live, words that are heard frequently, and things that may be important to children (Hart 1991; Hoff-Ginsberg 1992). There is some evidence to suggest that young children's language development varies by situational context and in direct response to what is spoken to them by their parents (Sabbagh and Callan 1998; Snow 1984). In this chapter, we explore the possibility that children's first words may also provide insights into important aspects of their lived spaces in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings.

We use the term *lived space* in this chapter to refer to the "spatializing space" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 284) of human experience where "being is synonymous with being situated" (p. 294). This space is not uniform or the same for each infant and is characterised by qualities such as proximity, connection, separation, attainability, unattainability, and it is particularly influenced by social relations and meanings (Fuchs 2007). Moreover, lived space is "dynamically connected with movement and development" (p. 426); for example, the lived space of an infant who has developed the skill of crawling offers different affordances than if the infant is less mobile.

S. McLeod (✉)

Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education,
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia
e-mail: smcleod@csu.edu.au

S. Elwick

School of Education, Charles Sturt University, Albury, NSW, Australia
e-mail: selwick@csu.edu.au

T. Stratigos

School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia
e-mail: tstratigos@csu.edu.au

As a result, lived space is continuously shaped by each infant's ongoing interactions with their environment. It comprises all living and non-living things the infant comes into contact with, is influenced by, and has potential influence on, for example, interactional partners (educators and other children), curriculum, pedagogy, policies, parents, other children, language, toys and objects.

Interactional partners within the infants' environment interpret verbal and gestural attempts as communicative overtures even before children begin to use conventional expressions (Bruner 1983; Snow 1984). ECEC settings frequently contain a number of interactional partners (Katz 1998). Different interactional partners can vary in their attribution of meaning to infant behaviours. For example, different carers can interpret a gesture as meaningful, or as a meaningless physical activity (Degotardi et al. 2008), and a vocalisation can be interpreted as a word or as meaningless babble (Meins and Fernyhough 1999). In this chapter we explore similarities and differences between the number and type of infants' spoken and understood words and gestures as identified by their interactional partners: educators and parents. However, it is important to note that reports of infants' comprehension, gestures, and first words need to be interpreted cautiously, since they comprise a mix between infants' capabilities and experiences as well as the interactional partners' perspectives, interests, and interpretive tendencies (Law and Roy 2008; Tomasello and Mervis 1994).

The main intent of this chapter is not to provide definitive answers. Rather, what we hope to achieve is to expand possibilities for thinking and talking about infants' lived spaces, and how infants' receptive and expressive language may provide insights into these spaces. Interpreting the meaning of similarities and differences in the infants' receptive and expressive vocabularies is complex and uncertain. Indeed, when contrasting parent and educator responses we have relied upon our own personal knowledge of the infant, our theoretical understandings of infants' development, language and capacities, and our knowledge of possible home and ECEC contexts (including policies and pedagogies) (Elwick et al. 2014). Therefore, although it is possible to write as if we may know the meaning of differences between parent and educator responses for particular infants, it is impossible to know with any certainty whether our interpretations adequately reflect the infant's lived space.

13.2 Research Study

13.2.1 *Infants' Lives in Childcare Project*

The Infants' Lives in Childcare project (see Harrison, Elwick, Vallotton, and Kappler, Chap. 5, this volume) comprised a team of nine researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, who each brought equally diverse philosophical and theoretical perspectives to the project. As far as possible the researchers aimed to investigate infants' lives from the *perspectives* of the infants themselves. This focus shifted slightly for some team members whose attention turned towards the epistemological (im)possibilities and ethical challenges of trying to know infants' experiences and

Table 13.1 Participant information

Participant number	Pseudonym	Sex	Age (months)	Site	Total forms/infant
1	Kate	Female	13	FDC	2
2	Sandi	Female	13	FDC	2
3	Charlie	Male	16	FDC	2
4	Harry	Male	16	FDC	2
5	Rosie	Female	20	FDC	2
6	Stephen	Male	20	FDC	2
7	Cathy	Female	20	CCC	4 ^a
8	Ben	Male	18	CCC	4 ^a
9	Anna	Female	23	CCC	4 ^a
10	Louise	Female	19	FDC	2

FDC family day care, CCC child care centre

^aFor each of these children one parent and three educators completed the forms

perspectives (e.g., Bradley et al. 2012; Elwick et al. 2014). Methodologically, the researchers' approach involved *crafting* and bringing into dialogue this diversity (Goodfellow et al. 2011). A mosaic of data collection methods were used to explore infants' experiences (Goodfellow et al. 2011; Sumsion and Goodfellow 2012; Sumsion et al. 2011) including the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory (MCDI) (Fenson et al. 2007). As part of the mosaic of approaches used to observe and *listen to* the infants (Press et al. 2012), it was hypothesised that important aspects of the ECEC experience could be captured in the first words spoken by the infants.

13.2.1.1 Participants

This chapter reports on the first words understood and spoken by ten infants who were participants in the Infants' Lives in Childcare project (see Table 13.1). Seven of the infants attended family day care homes and three attended a child care centre. The infants participated in the study on multiple occasions ranging from 3 visits over 5 weeks to 25 visits over 13 months. The average age of the infants was 17.8 months ($SD=3.3$, range—13–23 months) at the time that parents and educators completed the MCDI. The 10 infants described in this chapter were selected from 13 infants involved in the Infants' Lives in Childcare project because they had an MCDI form completed by both their parent and educator and were over 12 months at the time of data collection.¹ Typically, children say their first words at 12 months of age; so the timing of this study enabled the researchers to capture the early words and concepts understood and spoken by the infants.

¹Three children were not included: the first child's mother was her educator, so could not have two MCDI forms completed, the second child's parent did not complete the MCDI, and the third was <12 months old.

13.2.1.2 Data Collection Tool

The MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory: Words and Gestures (MCDI) (Fenson et al. 2007) is a standardised checklist to determine the vocabulary that is understood and spoken by young children aged 8–18 months.² The main portion of the MCDI comprises almost 400 words that are familiar to young children. The lists are organised under 19 topic headings, such as animals (real or toy), vehicles, body parts, food and drinks. The original purpose of the MCDI was to yield valid and reliable information on children's language development and has been used in research with large groups of children (e.g., Reilly et al. 2009), as well as a diagnostic tool for documenting individual children's language skills. The Australian adaptation of the MCDI (MARCS 2004) was used in the Infants' Lives in Childcare project. In this adapted version non-Australian vocabulary items were replaced with words that were more meaningful in the Australian context (e.g., *diaper* was replaced with *nappy*). The MCDI was designed as a parent report measure. Recently, teachers' reports on the MCDI have been used to supplement parental report, particularly for bilingual children (e.g., Vagh et al. 2009), with the recommendation that combining parent and teacher reports improves the estimation of children's vocabulary. In the Infants' Lives in Childcare project both educators' and parents' responses were sought.

Traditionally, the MCDI has been used as a diagnostic tool to indicate potential language impairment in children. However, the Infants' Lives in Childcare project did not use the MCDI in this way, and normative data were not applied to the infants. Instead, we extended the application of the MCDI to understanding children's communication in two ways. Firstly, we used the MCDI reports to inform our thinking about infants' lived spaces, and secondly, we contrasted educator and parent reports to provide insight into possible similarities and differences between children's child care and home settings.

13.2.1.3 Procedure

The infants' parents and educators were invited to complete the MCDI checklist by marking words that they had heard their infant say or that they knew that they understood, and gestures they used to communicate. For the 10 infants, 10 parents completed the MCDI and 13 educators completed the MCDI. The three infants who attended a child care centre had three educators who all completed the MCDI for each of these infants.³

²The age range of the children in the current study goes beyond the standardised age range of this version for the MCDI; however, this was considered to be acceptable since the MCDI was not being used as a standardised measure.

³For the purposes of comparing data (e.g., Tables 13.2, 13.3, 13.4, and 13.5), only one educator's form was used (i.e., the one that contained the largest number of identified words).

The completed parent and educator MCDI forms were collated and analysed in three ways. The types and number of words spoken and understood, and gestures used, were contrasted for: (1) individual infants; (2) for the ten infants as a group. Summary scores were computed for the five items in each of the two components of the MCDI: Early Words—first signs of understanding, phrases, starting to talk, vocabulary checklist; Gestures and Actions—first communicative gestures, games and routines, actions with objects, pretending to be a parent, imitating adult actions; and (3) Summary scores for parents and educators were compared using statistical analysis (paired sample *t*-tests).

13.2.1.4 Words Understood and Spoken by an Individual Infant (Case Study)

The MCDI provided opportunities to gain insights into important aspects of individual infants' lived spaces in ECEC contexts. We provide a case study of Charlie as an example (see also Sumsion, Stratigos, and Bradley, Chap. 4, this volume; Goodfellow, Chap. 15, this volume). At the time the MCDI was completed, Charlie was 16 months old and was the youngest of four toddlers cared for in a family day care home. Charlie attended family day care 1 day a week for around 8 h a day. At the time of the MCDI, Charlie had been attending family day care for 6 months.

The MCDIs completed by Charlie's mother and educator showed marked differences. Charlie's mother indicated that he could *understand or say* 153 words whereas the educator only indicated 64 words. A closer look at the words identified by the educator and mother helped to draw out possible reasons for these differences. Charlie's mother indicated he could say: *cheese, daddy, drink, fish, food, hello, help, more, shoe, grr, vroom, woof*; whereas the educator indicated he could say: *mummy* and *bye bye*. For words that were understood, in the animal names section, the mother indicated that Charlie knew the names of 13 animals and the educator only 1, *dog*. The pet dog in this family day care setting possibly explains why this animal related vocabulary item was identified by Charlie's educator. Many of the animals in the MCDI, for example, *elephant* and *monkey*, are encountered through toys and books, and the different responses between educator and parent may reflect the experiences Charlie had at family day care with toys and books. This was supported by digital video footage and observations that indicated that Charlie rarely engaged in book experiences at family day care. Perhaps this is why he did not share his animal word knowledge with the educator. The different words that were, and were not, included in the MCDI responses from parent and educator provided insights to Charlie's everyday experience in care.

Other differences in the MCDI responses between Charlie's mother and the educator indicate the potential for infants' daily experiences in ECEC settings to revolve around routines. For example, Charlie's mother indicated that he understood or could say the names for seven different items of clothing and eight items of furniture or rooms. In contrast, the educator indicated that he understood only three items of clothing (*nappy, hat, and shoe*) and one item of furniture (*cot*).

Each of these four items indicated by the educator was particularly related to routines of the day in family day care. These activities, no doubt, occur when infants are with their parents also. However, the difference in responses on the MCDI from the parent and educator could suggest that structured activities and daily routines may have a greater emphasis in the life of this infant when he is in group care compared to his life at home.

Of further interest is that Charlie's mother indicated on the MCDI form that he used Australian sign language (Auslan) adapted baby signs for the words *drink*, *food*, *hello*, *help* and *more*. In contrast, the educator's MCDI report did not indicate that Charlie could say or sign these words. It appeared that the educator was not aware of Charlie's signing until a later event when Charlie's mother and educator viewed and commented on segments of video footage of Charlie in the family day care setting. In the video footage, the children were each sitting in their highchairs waiting for their fruit to be cut up. Charlie's mother noted that Charlie was patting his chest with both hands and that this meant *more* meaning that he wanted some food. The educator's lack of knowledge that Charlie was signing meant that she was missing out on communicative attempts from Charlie that could have made a difference to his daily communicative experiences.

The difference in these two MCDI responses highlights the importance of parents, with their understanding of their own infants' communication strategies, and educators, for whom it may be difficult to recognise and interpret the potentially idiosyncratic communication strategies of the infants in their care, working together to ensure that infants' communication attempts are recognised.

13.2.1.5 Words Understood and Spoken by the Group of Participating Infants

Words Understood by the Infants

Table 13.2 provides a summary of the words most frequently understood by the infants (but not necessarily spoken). It does not list all of the words recorded by the educators and parents; instead, it lists the most frequent responses by the educators, and the corresponding responses by the parents. The words that the most educators recorded that the infants understood were: *nappy* (9), *eat* (9), *outside* (8), *push* (8), *dog* (7), *water* (7), *lunch* (7), *drink* (7), *sleep* (7), *hat* (7), and *wait* (7). Most of these concepts were also recorded by most parents as well (see Table 13.2). These words provide some insight into common experiences for Australian infants and combined provide an overview of daily events for many children in ECEC in Australia. Within a typical day, infants will have their *nappy* changed, they will *eat* their *lunch*, have a *drink* of *water*, have a *sleep*, put on their *hat* and *wait* to go *outside* and *push* a toy or another child (e.g., on a rocker or swing). The inclusion of *dog* in the most common words understood by infants may be because many homes (and some family day care settings) have dogs as pets or dogs are seen being walked past the centres and homes, and dogs are frequently portrayed in children's

Table 13.2 Most common words **understood** by the majority of infants (n=10) as identified by ten educators compared with the responses from ten parents from the vocabulary checklist on the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory

Words understood by the infants	Educators	Parents	Words understood by the infants	Educators	Parents
nappy (diaper)	9	8	cup	6	7
eat	9	7	dance	6	7
outside	8	6	doll	6	2
push	8	4	door	6	5
dog	7	6	empty	6	5
drink	7	7	go	6	4
hat	7	5	hello	6	4
kiss	7	5	in	6	2
lunch	7	6	look	6	7
sleep	7	6	mouth	6	7
wait	7	5	out	6	4
water	7	6	read	6	4
all gone	6	7	run	6	3
asleep	6	4	see	6	5
backyard	6	5	show	6	4
ball	6	3	sky	6	2
banana	6	6	slide	6	5
bite	6	4	sock	6	5
blanket	6	5	stroller	6	7
block	6	7	table	6	6
bottle	6	7	thirsty	6	6
child's own name	6	5	toy	6	5
cry	6	5	walk	6	6
			yes	6	6

literature and portrayed as toys. We note the words *outside* and *hat* may be context specific in this sample due to the harsh Australian sunshine. All Australian early childhood settings are required under the National Regulations (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2011) to have sun protection policies and procedures which generally include a *no hat, no play* policy. Staff enact the policies and children are often reminded to keep their hat on when playing outside. The words that parents indicated that most children understood were: *telephone* (9), *careful* (8), *nappy* (8), *dinner* (8). In contrast, educators indicated that fewer infants understood the words *telephone* (5), *careful* (5), and *dinner* (3).

Words Spoken by the Infants

The words that were spoken by most infants are shown in Table 13.3. These words are compiled from educators' and parents' responses on the Vocabulary Checklist

Table 13.3 Most common words **spoken by** the infants (n = 10) as identified by ten educators compared with the responses from ten parents from the vocabulary checklist on the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory

Words spoken by the infants	Educators (n)	Parents (n)
uh oh	6	6
daddy	5	8
mummy	5	7
ball	4	7
bye or bye bye	4	6
hello	4	5
meow	4	3
moo	4	4
quack quack	4	2
thank you	4	5
woof woof	4	4
baa baa	3	4
book	3	6
car	3	5
choo choo	3	3
fish	3	3
more	3	5
ouch	3	2
shoe	3	7
telephone	3	1
yum yum	3	3

Note: (n), No. of adults who indicated that this word was spoken by the infant.

and contribute to the summary scores in Table 13.5. According to the educators, the words spoken by the most children were *uh oh* (6), *daddy* (5) and *mummy* (5). The next most spoken words (4) were social words (*bye bye*, *hello*, *thank you*), onomatopoeic words (*meow*, *moo*, *quack*, *woof woof*) and the noun, *ball*. There were other words that were listed by parents that were not in the top list for educators: *baby* (6), *grandma* (6), *drink* (5), and *no* (5). These words identified by educators and parents capture common daily events (e.g., welcomes and farewells, playing with and reading books about animals) and people in homes and ECEC settings. The differences in the commonly spoken words may provide a global view of key concepts that are commonly spoken about and experienced in ECEC settings compared with the home environment. For example, *babies* and *grandmothers* may be more familiar at the home, rather than at the ECEC environments. It is unclear why *drink* and *no* were more likely to be included in the words that parents heard their children speak. It may be that children have more agency to make choices at home in contrast to the routines of ECEC settings. On the other hand, shaking head for *no* was a commonly recorded gesture by educators and parents (see Table 13.4) so children may have used the gesture for *no* rather than the word in child care settings.

Table 13.4 Most common actions and gestures made by the majority of infants (n=10) as identified by ten educators compared with the responses from ten parents on completion of the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory

Actions and gestures	Educators (n)	Parents (n)
Extends arm to show you something he/she is holding	10	10
Reaches out and gives you a toy or some object that he/she is holding	10	10
Waves bye-bye on his/her own when someone leaves	10	10
Shakes head "no"	10	10
Play peekaboo	10	9
Put telephone to ear	10	9
Push toy car or truck	10	10
Throw a ball	10	9
"Read" (opens book, turns page)	10	9
Extends his/her arm upward to signal a wish to be picked up	9	10
Dance	9	10
Wipe face or hands with a towel or cloth	9	8
Put on hat	9	10
Points (with arm and index finger extended) at some interesting object or event	8	10
Requests something by extending arm and opening and closing hand	8	10
Drink from a cup containing liquid	8	9
Push in stroller/buggy	8	6
Dig with a shovel	8	6
Nods head "yes"	7	6
Play chasing games	7	10
Blows kisses from a distance	6	6
Smacks lips in a "yum yum" gesture to indicate that something tastes good	6	7
Shrugs to indicate "all gone" or "where'd it go"	6	7
Sing	6	8
Eat with a spoon or fork	6	10
Stir pretend liquid in a cup or pan with a spoon	6	6
Put key in door or lock	6	3
Pound with hammer or mallet	6	7

13.2.1.6 Actions and Gestures Made by the Group of Participating Children

Part II of the MCDI is used to record actions and gestures made by children, since many children create symbolic gestures that can be precursors to verbal language. The most common actions and gestures made by the infants according to their educators and parents are presented in Table 13.4. The most common gestures recorded by both educators and parents were: *extends arm to show you something he/she is holding* (10/10), *reaches out and gives you a toy or some object that he/she is holding* (10/10), *waves "bye bye" on his/her own when someone leaves* (10/10),

shakes head “no” (10/10) and *extends his/her arm upward to signal a wish to be picked up* (9/10). It is interesting that these were common to both the early childhood and home settings, since they enable children to communicate important aspects of their lives through joint attention. There were also many similarities in the actions identified by educators and parents: *play peekaboo* (10/9), *put telephone to ear* (10/9), *push toy car or truck* (10), *throw a ball* (10/9), *“read” (opens book, turns page)* (10/9), and *dance* (9/10).

13.2.1.7 MCDI Components Summary Scores for the Group of Participating Children

The summary scores for educators' and parents' responses to the ten items that are assessed by the MCDI are presented in Table 13.5. Column 1 shows the maximum score that can be achieved for each item, with an example of the item questions in column 2. The summary scores computed for educators and parents are presented in Columns 3–6 as means and standard deviations (SD). Figures presented in Columns 3 and 5 show that parents reported a higher score than the educators on all Early Words items (first signs of understanding, phrases, starting to talk, and vocabulary checklist) and all Gestures and Actions items (first communicative gestures, games and routines, actions with objects, pretending to be a parent, and imitating adult actions). A comparison of parent versus educator means using paired sample *t*-tests (Columns 7–9) showed that only one Gestures and Actions item (actions with objects) was significantly different ($t=2.43, p<.05$). One Early Words item (vocabulary Checklist—understand and says) and a second Gestures and Actions item (games and routines) achieved a marginal level of significance ($t=2.15$ and $t=2.09$, respectively, $ps<.07$). The *t*-tests showed that no difference between parents' and educators' scores on the other four Early Words items and three Gestures and Actions items.

13.3 Concluding Thoughts

The Infants' Lives in Childcare project extended the application of the MCDI in an attempt to gain a better understanding of infants' lived spaces in ECEC settings through educators' and parents' reports of words and gestures used and understood by infants. This new application of the MCDI, when used in a mosaic of other data collection methods, has been shown to have the potential to generate insights into infants' lived spaces through their own first words and gestures. The MCDI afforded glimpses into infants' lives, including the similarities and differences between their lives in child care and at home.

Although this chapter has focused primarily on discussing how the MCDI may provide insights into infants' lived spaces in ECEC settings by comparing parents' and educators' responses, its additional potential for comparing responses within and across contexts is compelling. Our comparison of parents' and educators' responses

Table 13.5 Comparison between the average number of responses entered by parents and educators for the ten children

Category of responses	Example	Educators		Parents		t	df	Sig (2 tailed)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Part I: Early words								
1A. First signs of understanding (maximum=3)	Responds when name is called	2.7	0.9	3.0	0.0	1.000	9	.343
1B. Phrases (maximum =28)	Understands "Let's go bye bye"	15.9	11.1	22.1	5.0	1.753	9	.113
1C. Starting to talk (maximum=3)	Does your child imitate words?	1.3	0.8	1.4	0.8	.361	9	.726
1Da. Vocabulary checklist: Understands OR understands and says (maximum = 396)	Understands or says "cup"	152.4	105.1	197.9	94.5	1.601	9	.144
1Db. Vocabulary checklist: Understands and says (maximum = 396)	Understands and says "cup"	22.6	41.6	56.9	90.1	2.145	9	.061
Part II: Gestures and actions								
2A. First communicative gestures (maximum =12)	Shakes head "no"	9.3	2.5	10.1	2.0	.937	9	.373
2B. Games and routines (maximum=6)	Plays peekaboo	3.2	1.0	3.9	0.7	2.090	9	.066
2C. Actions with objects (maximum=17)	Pushes toy car or truck	9.2	2.9	12.4	3.3	2.434	9	.038*
2D. Pretending to be a parent (maximum= 13)	Puts doll to bed	4.1	3.9	4.6	4.3	.349	9	.735
2E. Imitating adult actions (maximum=15)	Reads (open book and turn page)	6.6	3.5	8.4	4.1	1.694	9	.124

Note: *Significant $p \leq .05$

for one child in family day care, and a group of ten infants attending infant-toddler education and care settings, demonstrates the usefulness of the MCDI for gaining insights into infants' relations with different interactional partners in different contexts.

In further research, the use of the MCDI could be extended to compare the responses of multiple educators in the same or different ECEC settings where an infant has more than one educator, or when an infant attends several different settings. Additionally, the insights generated by the MCDI may be enhanced by including follow up discussions with each respondent, parent and educator, as part of the larger mosaic of data collection. In this research, the children's early vocabularies and gestures seemed to us to provide insights into common or important aspects of their lives, and to facilitate some understanding of what life is like in child care for infants.

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Chapter 14

Expressing, Interpreting and Exchanging Perspectives During Infant-Toddler Social Interactions: The Significance of Acting with Others in Mind

Sheila Degotardi

14.1 Introduction

In philosophical terms, the word *experience* has traditionally been used to refer to the private, inner life of an individual. Individual perspectives, made up of perceptions, feelings, desires and thoughts, constitute a stream of consciousness that occurs in response to a particular state of affairs in any given context. When viewed this way, experience is subjective and personal: either in the form of introspective reasoning about, or the embodied experience of being in, the real world (see, for example, Gopnik 2009; Sokolowski 2000). While experience is considered to be connected to external events and objects, it comprises first person perspectives that are necessarily separate from the contexts from which they derive. Not only are individual perspectives considered distinct from real world events and objects, but also from the perspectives and consciousness of other individuals (Blackburn 2005).

The viewpoint advanced in this chapter contrasts with individualistic notions of experience to suggest that perspectives are not necessarily as private as some traditional and phenomenological philosophical standpoints would have us believe. I argue that, by virtue of membership of a social group, perspectives are regularly expressed and perceived during social interactions with others (Mead 1934). Experience, in this sense, is public and shared—occurring between individuals rather than within them—and perspectives are situated in the metaphorical space that is located within the individual’s relatedness to others (Rochat 2009). This space is interactive and interpretive, where shared meaning is established through the joint processes of expressing and interpreting perspectives.

Shared meaning, or *intersubjectivity*, is a contextual concept which involves the joint participation in experience of two or more people (Zlatev et al. 2008).

S. Degotardi (✉)

Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: sheila.degotardi@mq.edu.au

The sharing of experience occurs at two levels. The first comprises the physical context of play and/or social interactions and is behavioural and situational. The notion of intersubjectivity thus encapsulates a pragmatic connotation of *an experience* which refers to the activity context within which individuals jointly participate. The second level comprises the perceptions, feelings, intentions, and thoughts of the individuals involved and is, therefore, *perspectival*. It is when two or more individuals share their experiences on both behavioural and perspectival levels, a state of intersubjectivity can be argued to have been achieved.

Because experiences are linked to both practical and psychological activity, intersubjective experiences comprise *moments of meeting* on both an interpersonal and intrapersonal level. The idea that children's learning and development is co-constructed through social interactions is not new in early childhood education, where relationship based pedagogical approaches resonate in contemporary early childhood literature (e.g., Papatheodorou 2009). An integral aspect of relationship-based approaches to early childhood education is the acknowledgement that multiple perspectives exist about any particular state of affairs and that early childhood centres can be places where these multiple perspectives intersect during dialogue with others (Brownlee and Berthelsen 2006; Emde 2001; Moss 2007). The link between forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships and the pragmatic and perspectival aspects of intersubjective exchanges is captured by Katz (1998), who states:

... individuals cannot just relate to each other. They have to relate to each other *about* something. In other words, relationships have to have content of mutual interest or concern that can provide the pretext and texts for the interaction between them. (p. 36, italics added)

In this chapter, I explore some ways that intersubjective experiences were evident during the social interactions that took place in two Australian infant and toddler child care classrooms. While there is an ever-growing body of literature to highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships in these contexts for young children's development and wellbeing (e.g., Avgitidou 2001; Elfer et al. 2003; Honig 2002; Thompson 2005), I have argued elsewhere that the theoretical conceptualisation of these young children's relationships has, to date, been relatively narrow and has tended to focus on the role of the adult caregiver in supporting and promoting the formation of attachment relationships (Degotardi and Pearson 2009). Yet, in her treatment of relational pedagogy, Papatheodorou (2009) states that relationships comprise "the 'in between' space occupied by *all* those involved in the learning process" (p. 5, italics added). Her comment highlights the need to explore how infants and toddlers relate and respond to one another as well as to their educators, and the functions of relationships that extend beyond the development of secure attachments. If, as Katz (1998) argues, intersubjective exchanges provide a foundation for both relationship formation and learning to occur, then the focus needs to be widened to include the mutual contributions of these very young children towards the relationship context of their classrooms.

14.2 The Research Context

This chapter draws on observations derived from two research projects which sought to explore the nature of young children's relationships with, and relatedness to, others in their early childhood classrooms. The first project investigated the dynamics of relationship formation in an early childhood centre nursery, and comprised a case study of three infants, aged 8, 12 and 15 months, during their first 3 months of attendance. The second was a 6-week investigation of the characteristics and function of the interpersonal relationships of 1–3-year-old children, as evident during their interactions with peers and their teachers. In both studies, naturalistic observational methods were used to generate data about the infants' and toddlers' relationship based experiences. Both studies also adopted a multi-perspectival approach to understanding data by interviewing key centre staff and the children's parents in order to gain their insights about these children's relationships. The methodological details of each project are summarised in Table 14.1 below:

Table 14.1 Summary of research designs and methods

	Study 1	Study 2
Child participants	Three case study infants aged between 8 and 15 months at the commencement of the study	Two early childhood centre classes: (a) children aged 18 months to 2½ years; (b) children aged 2 years to 3½ years at time of observation
Adult participants	The infants' nursery team-leader (university-level early childhood teacher qualified) The infants' parents	The toddlers' room teachers/caregivers (qualifications ranged from diploma to university early childhood qualified) The children's parents
Data generation	Each case study infant was video-recorded for around 4 h each fortnight, for 3 months The lead teacher was interviewed each fortnight to gain her perspectives on the nature and formation of these infants' relationships within the nursery room The infants' parents were interviewed three times over this period to gain their perspectives on their infants' relationships formation as well as their family ideas, priorities and values about their infant's interpersonal relationships with others	A 6-week period of naturalistic observation, using field notes and digital images was used to construct narratives capture and describe episodes of social relatedness that took place between the children and their peers or their teachers The documented photo-narratives were shared with: (a) the children's room teachers and caregivers; and (b) the parents of the children involved in each episode in order to gain their perspectives about the nature, contributors and significance of the episode in terms of children's relationships with others in their centre

14.3 Adopting a Perspectival Stance

The starting point for the position adopted in this chapter is found in the theoretical ideas of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). Mead was a contemporary and close colleague of John Dewey, with whom he worked at the University of Michigan. During this time, he refined the notion of pragmatism, or *theory of action*, in which he argued that experience was simultaneously an internal, perceptual, as well as a practical, social process (Reck 1981).

While Mead's work covered many areas related to the development of self and society, of particular relevance to this chapter is Mead's (1938) treatment of the social act which he referred to as the fundamental "unit of existence" (p. 65). Social acts not only provide individuals with opportunities to express their perspectives to others, but also to interpret and respond to the ways that they are perceived by others. Accordingly, Mead (1934) argued that any study of development should focus on "the experience of the individual from the point of view of his conduct, particularly, but not exclusively, the conduct as it is observable by others" (p. 2). In other words, during engagement in sociocultural, joint activities, individuals orient themselves to one another (Martin 2005) leading to an intersection of first person (individual) and third person (others) perspectives (Rochat 2009). Mead's approach does not deny the existence of individual, private experience, but instead, argues that social acts are always undertaken with a consideration of both one's own and others' perspectives. Social acts are therefore relational, the nature of which is co-constructed because, in Rochat's words, human beings "always and inescapably have *others in mind*" (p. 14).

In the next sections, I use elements of Mead's perspectival approach to explore the nature and significance of shared social experiences that occurred in the two infant-toddler classrooms. Moving away from a dyadic approach to understanding infant relationships, I draw on selected Meadian concepts to explore how intersubjectivity not only involved the expressing, interpreting and exchanging of perspectives between the infant and one significant other but also encapsulated the perspectives of multiple others within the early childhood classroom community. I supplement Mead's ideas with more contemporary theoretical approaches with the dual aims of: (1) expanding the theoretical breadth of the interpretations; and (2) demonstrating some common threads that run through many approaches that endeavour to understand the processes involved in, and the significance of intersubjectivity, during infant and toddler social interactions. In this way, I explore how, during intersubjective exchanges, experiences and the perspectives that they entail, become collective as these young children entered, participated in, and learnt through, a community of minds (Nelson 1996, 2007; Rochat 2009; Tomasello et al. 1993).

14.3.1 *Expressing and Interpreting Perspectives*

The ability of very young children to purposefully express their intentions, feelings and ideas to others rapidly develops across the infancy period. While much of the literature focuses on the significance of capabilities including the use of conventional gestures,

such as pointing, and the emergence of conventional words as primary means of intentional communication (e.g., Bates et al. 1988; Franco and Butterworth 1996; Liszkowski et al. 2008; Tomasello 2008), others stress the importance of bodily actions, including posture, gaze and displays of emotional expression in communicative exchanges (Goffman 1976; Kendon 1990). A central concept in Mead's social perspectival approach is his concept of the *gesture*, which he defines as any social overture that is produced with the intention of evoking a response in the other (Reck 1981). Gestures, according to Mead, are produced with an anticipated response in mind, and therefore draw attention to the intentional action of the person producing as well as the person responding to the gesture. The scenario below illustrates how infants proficiently use a variety of expressions and actions to communicate non-verbally with one another and thus establish shared understandings about the nature of their play.

Scenario 1 (Study 1): Leo [21 months] laughs as he runs past the teacher who was sitting in the sandpit. Ben [17 months], who has been sitting by himself at the table on the veranda, looks up with a smile, and rapidly approaches Leo, who runs on the grassy side of a short barrier fence that separates the grassed area from the concrete floor of the veranda. Ben hesitates and smiles at the teacher before squeezing through a gap to the grassed side of the fence. Meanwhile, Leo has travelled the short length of the fence, and is standing at the far end, watching Ben approach with a broad grin on his face.

Ben walks slowly along the fence with his gaze fixed on Leo. Leo squeals excitedly, claps his hands, and runs towards Ben, stopping a short distance away. Their eyes meet, and Ben resumes walking towards Leo, who waits until he gets a little closer, then turns and runs around the far end of the fence and along the other side, laughing as he goes. Ben visually tracks him. Leo reaches the near end of the fence and pokes his head around to peek at Ben who remains watching from a distance. Still laughing, Leo runs back along the fence to where Ben is still standing. They are now on opposite sides of the low fence, and are looking and smiling broadly at each other. Ben moves towards the far end of the fence and Leo runs in the opposite direction. Leo laughs and again runs around so that he is on the opposite side of the fence. After a moment of face-to-face smiling, Ben walks around to the end again, and Leo again runs in the opposite direction.

In Scenario 1, we see a number of examples of Meadian gestures. We see Ben smile and look at the teacher, possibly to seek reassurance and encouragement. We also see Leo's playful laughing, clapping, eye contact, and peeking, all of which seemed to draw Ben in to the chasing game with Leo. The pragmatic, instrumental function of these gestures is explained by Mead, who wrote:

This field of gestures does not simply relate the individual to other individuals as physical objects, but puts him *en rapport* with their actions. (Mead 1912, in Reck 1981, p. 136)

In other words, the mutual expression and perception of own and others' intentions that accompanies the production and response to communicative gestures enables each individual to act with reference to the other. In Scenario 1, what resulted was a short episode of coordinated activity, which, although imbued with social relatedness, revolves around a shared delight in sharing a playful exchange; of playing together.

Trevarthen (2008) acknowledges the reciprocal, interpretive nature of human social actions when he writes that "every act we make, every feeling, has as much power to move others as it has to move our self" (pp. vii–viii). It is significant to note, though,

that gestures are not simply calls to action in the form of a stimulus and response. Gestures are imbued with intentions (Mead 1934) which, to be effective, have to be interpreted by the other in the way that the expresser intends. In terms of the play scenario above, what was required was the successful communication about the nature of the play itself; about the type of playful experience that Leo and Ben each wanted to engage in. Bateson (1973) proposes that this form of shared experience is made possible through the use of metacommunication which he defines as communications that “operate at many contrasting levels of abstraction” (p. 150). The first level consists of explicit messages in which, for example, a word denotes its referent or a facial expression represents a feeling. The second, meta-communicative level is implicit, whereby meaning is established on the basis of the interlocutors’ consensual interpretation of the message. According to Bateson, non-verbal and verbal meta-communicative devices are used as children set the play frame; communicating to one another that *this is play*.

Scenario 1 appears to contain such elements of metacommunication, as Leo and Ben *read* one another’s signals to establish shared intentions about the play and negotiate its progression. Furthermore, Ben’s initial hesitation and cautious observation of Leo supports Bateson’s claim that the interpretation of meta-communicative messages not only allows children to establish that *this is play* but also to have the question “Is this play?” answered by the other. In this way, not only are perspectives being shared, but the relationship between the players is negotiated as they strive to interpret the intentions of the other. As Bateson (1973) claims, “The subject of the discourse *is* the relationship between the speakers” (p. 151, italics added) in that the interpretation of the message is dependent on the players’ knowledge of one another in terms of their predicted actions and responses within the context of their shared game.

Short episodes of play like that described above form a context in which two individuals come to share both pragmatic action-based and psychological, perspective-based aspects of experience. The potential of play, however, extends beyond the establishment of intersubjective exchanges between two individuals, to involve a broader notion of community relationships and relatedness. Mead (1934) discusses this potential when he states:

In so far as the child does take the attitude of the other and allows that attitude of the other to determine the thing he is going to do with reference to a common end, he is becoming an organic member of society. (cited in Deegan 1999, p. 13)

According to Mead, when a child is part of a community, the *simple* play between individuals can develop into games, which comprise communally shared understandings of the roles and actions that the game entails. While such structurally organised games were traditionally seen as the realm of much older children (e.g., Piaget 1952), observational work in infant-toddler classrooms demonstrates that much younger children also engage in group games that entail collaborative expectations about roles and actions (Degotardi and Pearson 2010; Løkken 2000; Musatti and Panni 1981). Scenario 2 presents one such observation:

Scenario 2 (Study 1): Bella [14 months] is sitting next to Tabitha, her teacher, who is also sitting on the floor holding a younger infant. Tabitha has been singing songs, and some

of the older toddlers have been dancing enthusiastically. After a short pause, Bella rocks backwards and forwards and utters “Rosie”.

Tabitha addresses both Bella and the standing toddlers and asks: “We’ll do ring-a-ring-a-rosie?” Bella looks up at the toddlers, one of whom says, “Rosie? A rosie?” Tabitha begins to sing the words of the well-known song and the older toddlers quickly pair off, hold each other’s hands and begin to sway to the song. Bella alternates her gaze between the toddlers and Tabitha, as she rocks on her bottom to the song. At the conclusion, Tabitha asks Bella “Do you want to get up and do ring-a-ring-a-rosie?” Bella begins to get up and Tabitha helps her to her feet. Kieran [20 months] immediately approaches and takes Bella’s hands. Bella seems unsure at first, but gradually begins to sway as Tabitha sings the song. A few seconds later Bella grins broadly as she tilts her head to meet Kieran’s smiling gaze. They laugh as they bump down on their bottoms at the end of the song.

The singing continues until Bella notices the just-toddling Millie across the room. Tabitha calls out, “Come on Millie, come and join us”. Bella immediately takes off across the room and reaches out to grasp Millie’s hands. Bella then leads Millie in the swaying dance as Tabitha resumes her song. The communal singing and dancing continues for a few more minutes, culminating with a group “hip-hip-hooray” instigated by Bella who squeals excitedly as she throws her hands in the air.

Mead (1934) claims that, in order to participate in communally organised games such as the one described above, children must move beyond expressing and interpreting perspectives on an individual or dyadic level. It is during games, Mead argues, that children first gain experience with communally shared roles and expectations (Gillespie 2006). Mead (1934) refers to these shared intentions and understandings as “the generalised other” (p. 154), and claims that, during games, children have to express, interpret and act with reference to a network of individual perspectives in order to negotiate and establish communal ways of thinking and behaving. We see the beginning of this process in Scenario 2, when Bella requests a song that is personally known to her, but which also holds significance for the other toddlers in the room. During the course of her participation, we see Bella perceiving and responding to Kieran’s social gestures and demonstrating a shared understanding of the appropriate actions within the context of the game.

Mead (1934) argues that, as well as providing children with opportunities to experience the perspective of others, games also require them to move flexibly between their own points of view and those of the other players. In Scenario 2, we see Bella assuming the role previously adopted by Keiran when she leads Millie in to the dance. She thus adopts various perspectives throughout the course of the game and experiences in a concrete, interpersonal way, the intentions, expectations and understandings of the group. As a result, games provide young children with opportunities to participate in social activities which constitute elements of larger, societal practices. Engagement in childhood games form the basis of cooperative endeavours—of collective agency (Gillespie 2006; Martin 2007)—and thus support the establishment of a sense of community and belonging. Mead (1934) emphasises the shared, communal aspect of games when he describes children’s participation in such experiences as “a period in which he likes to belong” (p. 60). His approach resonates in recent work that explores the notion of group membership and *togetherness* in early childhood centres. van Oers and Hännikäinen (2001), for example, reflect the pragmatic and perspectival definition of intersubjectivity introduced

earlier, to claim that *togetherness* is established through shared activity, communication of perspectives and the sharing of motivations. Similarly, DeHaan and Singer (2001) argue that togetherness is achieved as children establish *common ground*, cooperate with one another and fulfil one another's needs and desires (p. 118). Bruner (1995) refers to the notion of togetherness as a *meeting of minds*, which is brought about when shared focus corresponds with shared context, motivations and background knowledge.

Their emphasis on the expression and interpretation of individual and group perspectives is reflected by Degotardi and Pearson (2010), who conceptualise processes which lead to intersubjective play in terms of the qualities of social relationships between children and significant others. Importantly, they argue that a consideration of perspectives should extend beyond those of the children, to include those of other members of the community (see also Emde 2001). Interviews with Bella's mother revealed that Bella frequently enjoyed participating in singing games with her parents and older siblings. The nursery activity therefore not only drew on common understandings from within that group, but also on wider community practices, values and perspectives. Degotardi and Pearson also note that the teacher, Tabitha, utilised her knowledge of Bella's likes and interests, her family life, as well as her own pedagogical intentions when she encouraged Bella to engage in singing games. This tendency to construct a deep, multi perspectival understanding of infants' behaviours has been described by Degotardi (2010) as *interpretive complexity* as it reflects "an understanding of the infant's subjective point of view as well as interconnections between the infant's behaviour, her/his psychological states and features of the social world" (pp. 28–29). From this viewpoint, the establishment of collective agency not only involves interactions between the perspectival world of the infants, but also relies on the interpretive stance of their teacher who draws on a deep and complex understanding of individual, group and community understandings to facilitate interpersonal relationships within the classroom.

14.3.2 *Exchanging Perspectives*

Stemming from his commitment to a perspectival notion of self and others, Mead stresses that a fundamental role of education is to draw children's awareness to the existence of multiple perspectives (Martin 2007). While Scenario 2 demonstrates the important role that the teacher, and in particular, the teachers' interpretive stance, has in supporting the establishment of shared experiences, Mead argues that the role of education is also to provide experiences where perspectives can be exchanged, discussed and debated:

Instruction should be an interchange of experience in which the child brings his experience to be interpreted by the experience of the parent or teacher ... instruction takes on frankly the form of conversation, as much sought by the pupil as the instructor. (Mead 1910, in Reck 1981, p. 114)

While Mead had older children in mind when he wrote his educational ideas, his principles can apply to pedagogical work with much younger children. As infants

become older, the emergence of language and the resultant participation in increasingly extended dialogues provides them with new opportunities to express, interpret and respond to one another's perspectives in group contexts. In the final scenario, I describe an experience that took place between the teacher and her group of 18- to 30-month-old toddlers which demonstrates the collective way in which perspectives were exchanged between members of the group:

Scenario 3 (Study 2): A workman has opened a manhole cover situated around 3 metres on the outside of the child care centre fence. As he feeds cables through the opening, he communicates with a co-worker on his mobile phone. A group of toddlers has gathered by the fence to watch the action, and Cathy, their teacher, walks over to join them, and brings a rug to sit on.

Before long, there is a group of at least ten children sitting with Cathy and she begins to chat with them about what she sees: "Look. He's reaching in to get the cables"; "He's pulling it through"; "He's telling his mate what he's doing". When the workman walks over to his car, she begins to ask questions: "He's going to his car. I wonder what he's doing?"; "Oh, he's got his gloves. Why do you think he needs gloves?"; "What do you think he's going to do now?"; "Do you think he might be fixing the light?"

The children now have two sources of attention—Cathy and the workman—and they alternate their attention between the two. They watch the workman intently, but also frequently chat to Cathy, responding to her questions and adding their ideas: "Maybe he needs more wire"; "I think his mate is down the hole"; "No, he's in the carpark. I saw him". The chatting and exchange of ideas continues as the workman, amused by his audience, works on.

In this scenario we see the potential of a rich discourse environment for very young children. Cathy's sensitive, authentic use of descriptive and questioning talk not only serves to focus the children's attention on the external event, but also invites them to share their understandings with her. Of particular importance is the occurrence of mental state, or *mind-minded* talk (Degotardi and Sweller 2012; Meins et al. 2001) which foregrounds the subjective opinions, thoughts and projections of the participants and *brings them out in to the open* for discussion and debate. Meaning is thus negotiated within what Wenger (1998) refers to as a *community of practice* which comprises the dynamic exchange of a multiplicity of perspectives within the context of social participation.

While individual thoughts and opinions are, by definition, abstract and intangible, their explicit labelling during discourse makes them the topic of shared focus, and thus "reifies", or makes them real (Wenger 1998, pp. 57–60). Wenger explains that, when otherwise abstract representations are given form, "we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized" (p. 58). What results is evidence of the collaborative construction of learning that is increasingly advocated in early childhood pedagogy. Collaborative learning, according to van Oers and Hännikäinen (2001), "requires reflection on one's own understandings and comparing understandings among participants in a discourse" (p. 105). Learning is therefore a relational process as teachers and children co-construct understandings through the interchange of thoughts and ideas during shared activity (Martin 2007). This relational aspect was recognised by Cathy and another teacher, Hasumi, when we discussed my documentation of this experience after the event. During our reflective conversations, they shared the following insights about the reciprocity of the dialogue:

Cathy: I suppose there's that close relationship between us ... I would say—they can trust—maybe that's what it is ... I suppose they respect my position in the relationship and

they know that I respect them. So it's that same level ... But also at this age, I find some people can be quite—I don't think they mean to do it—but they can be quite patronising in the way that “they're the children, so I have to be in control”. But I always find, being a teacher for so long so long and being with this age group ... I'm here to care and nurture for the children, but I will always have that respect for them on the same level as me, and not have that [searching for word] hierarchy.

Hasumi: Not only she is talking, talking, she gives time to children to think and then ask her too ... She shows respect to the children and the children show respect to her.

The learning potential for the toddlers was also recognised by their parents, who contributed the following perspectives:

M's mother: She's asking them questions to let them find out rather than telling them what's going on. Making them think about things, or prompting them to think about things. About why. She's not just telling them.

R's mother: I think the interaction here ... they know that it's an open relationship—that the kids can ask, and they can ask questions and they learn.

In all these comments, notions of respect, listening, and reciprocity were evoked, not only in terms of the establishment of the teacher-child relationship, but also for the realisation of learning potential and the toddlers' individual and collective agency within the learning experience. As a result, the toddlers' experience involved the collaborative construction of knowledge about the external state of affairs (in this case, the workman and his practices) as well as learning about the process of learning itself; of the way in which individual ideas, opinions and motivations interact with those of others to build new understandings and revise old ones. Through such experiences, young children come to think of themselves and others as *people with minds* (Carpendale and Lewis 2006; Nelson 2007) and all stakeholders—children, teachers and parents—are positioned as citizens who, by exchanging their perspectives, contribute to democratic practice within their centre (Moss 2007).

14.4 Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have explored the interpersonal and intersubjective dimension of infants' experiences in their early childhood centres. I have argued that when individual perspectives are expressed, interpreted and exchanged, infants and toddlers participate in the kinds of shared experiences that build a sense of togetherness and community within their classroom. The data presented highlights these young children's individual and collective agency in this process, as they strive to make sense of, respond to and participate in a perspectival, relational world. It also demonstrates how the perspectives of teachers, parents and the wider community are all implicated in the establishment of intersubjective exchanges during which infants gradually come to experience and participate in a community of practice and minds.

In concluding, I return to the conceptualisations of *experience* raised at the beginning of this chapter. While I have focused on the social, intersubjective nature of children's experiences, this is not to deny the existence of private, introspective aspects. Tensions exist because no individual can ever be absolutely sure of what

another person is feeling, wanting or thinking, but can only ever interpret and make inferences about these aspects by responding to situational and interpersonal cues. Shared experience, in an intersubjective sense, is necessarily interpretive, so there is some question of whether intersubjectivity can ever be achieved in the complete sense of the word.

Does this, then, pose a problem for those seeking to understand and conceptualise the social, shared nature of young children's experiences? This dilemma is addressed by Goffman (1981) when he writes:

... one routinely presumes on a mutual understanding that doesn't quite exist. What one obtains is a working agreement, an agreement 'for all practical purposes'. But that, I think, is quite enough. (p. 10)

According to Goffman, when shared understanding is not quite established, this sets the scene for the participants of any given experience to work towards clarifying the meaning by elaborating on and repairing their messages. When negotiations of meaning occur during social experiences, children not only are given opportunities to express their own and perceive others' perspectives, but they also come to appreciate the existence of multiple subjectivities. What matters is that partners come to a working consensus and an agreement as to the meaning attached to any particular communicative expression or social activity, not that they come to exactly the same understanding. As Rochat (2009) states, "The sense of shared experience (intersubjectivity) and relative social affiliation rises from a constant negotiation of the self with others" (p. 149). In other words, the process is ongoing and transformative in terms of the development of individual perspectives, shared understandings and the establishment of the social experiences upon which notions of self, other and community arise.

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Chapter 15

Infants Initiating Encounters with Peers in Group Care Environments

Joy Goodfellow

15.1 Introduction

Early childhood environments are spaces of human encounters. Designed to enhance learning and teaching, ideally, they are spaces that support engagement with both social and physical environments and the development of positive relationships that acknowledge culture, heritage and personal circumstances. Infants' encounters in these spaces are inevitably complex and reflect what Nelson (2007, p. 17) describes as the “active drama” of experience and learning.

In this chapter, I draw on examples from video data of a 14-month-old infant/toddler to illuminate the sophistication of preverbal infants' strategic approaches to peer encounters within an early childhood environment. In particular, I focus on the strategies Charlie (see also Sumsion, Stratigos, and Bradley, Chap. 4, this volume; McLeod, Elwick, and Stratigos, Chap. 13, this volume) used to initiate contact with similar aged peers and consider factors that contribute to such initiations within the “relational spaces” (Nelson 2007, p. 93). Finally, I reflect on the educator's role in scaffolding infant peer interaction. Before presenting the case study examples, I first address understandings about human encounter and the nature of experience.

15.2 Human Encounter and Experience

Interest in the nature of experience as it relates to education and learning can be traced back to Dewey who wrote about the context in which experience occurs as being transactional and interactional (Dewey 1938). Experience acts as an interface

J. Goodfellow (✉)

Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education,
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia
e-mail: jgoodfellow@bigpond.com

between the personal, social and physical world of the individual and is dependent upon the psychosocial conditions of the individual (memory, embodiment, inheritance) and the external world (ecological, social cultural) (Nelson 2007). Experience has an interpretative component, for every experience is personally modified according to an individual's interpretation of that experience. The embodied nature of experience means that emotions, perceptions and feelings are personal and part of our being, living and acting in the world.

While experience is culturally formed through our encounters with our social and physical environments (Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch 2003), it is also formed through an accumulation of encounters. Each experience then subsequently affects the quality of future experiences. Very young children already have an *experience history* that they bring to their human encounters.

Thinking and making meaning as well as feeling and acting are all part of the embodied nature of *being* and *living* in the experience (Lock and Zukow-Goldring 2010). The embodied nature of experience makes it difficult for the outside observer to gain insights into lived experience. This is particularly the case where infants and toddlers have not yet developed the verbal skills that would enable them to report on what was experienced.

15.2.1 Components of Shared Experience

Participation in early encounters means that very young children may engage in shared experience with peers in early childhood environments. Nelson (2007, p. 93) identifies three components of shared experience that are relevant to this discussion:

An Inside Component Reflecting what is experienced or the transactional aspects of *being*. The inside component encompasses key characteristics of the developing person such as temperament and disposition which in turn, influence experience and contribute to an individual's agency or capacity to shape the environment within which they live (Bronfenbrenner 1995, cited in Musatti and Mayer 2011). As Bandura (2001) says, people are "agents of experiences rather than simply undergoers of experiences" (p. 4). In taking an *agentic perspective* from social cognitive theory, Bandura identifies that "to be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions" (p. 2). Intentionality is deliberative, motivational, exploratory, goal directed and influential and becomes evident during developmental processes that occur during infancy (Bandura 2001; Berthelsen and Brownlee 2005; Bronfenbrenner 1995; Macfarlane and Cartmel 2008).

An Outside Component The observable involvement in an activity, including participatory actions and engagement with people and objects. While infants' engagement with peers may be around objects, engagement also has an affective component identifiable through eye contact and body language (Adamson and Bakeman 1985; Bradley 2005; Musatti and Mayer 2011; Williams et al. 2010b). Further, culture and context also shape experience (Bronfenbrenner 1995; Bruner 1990; Rogoff 2008).

Relational Space The interactional dynamics and reciprocal engagement between people. Relational space may be conceived of as the space between process and content. However, Prawat (1999) argues against this dualistic approach and highlights not only the *dialogic space* between people but between embodied thought (and the internal dynamics of meaning making) and the physical world (Prawat 1999, pp. 264–266). Nelson (2007) supports this understanding, indicating that what occurs in relational spaces reflects the embodied nature of experience and, as Lock and Zukow-Goldring (2010) argue, “intelligent action rests in processes that interconnect embodied actors and their world” (p. 414). While it may be relatively easy to gather behavioural evidence that demonstrates an infant’s capacity to engage dialogically with a peer, more focused attention on group behaviour also reveals infants’ social sense of being with others (Selby and Bradley 2003).

In order to further explore the relational dimension of preverbal infants’ encounters, I now present three sequences of still photographs captured from video in the Infants’ Lives in Childcare project being undertaken at Charles Sturt University (see Harrison, Elwick, Vallotton, and Kappler, Chap. 5, this volume; McLeod, Elwick, and Stratigos, Chap. 13, this volume; Sumsion et al. 2011). In particular, I focus on Charlie, a 14-month-old infant who attends family day care with similar age peers. Fragments extracted from 10 h of video taken over a 3 month period were also shown to parents and carers of infants involved in the project as part of a comprehensive mosaic of methodological approaches undertaken (described in Goodfellow et al. 2011).

15.2.2 *Infants’ Encounters with Peers*

Each of the three sequences that follow captures an episode reflecting Charlie’s initiations and responses in approaching a peer. My intent here is to provide images that will encourage further debate about the importance of relational spaces when considering the active drama of infants’ encounters in group care. The stills are from a 35 frame per second analysis of video and provide a context for reflection on a preverbal infant’s capacity to not only participate in, but initiate peer related human encounters.

Sequence 1 (Stills from 10 seconds of a 58 second episode involving Charlie and Angus around a tray table that contains autumn leaves)

Charlie is outside at a tray table crunching autumn leaves that made a crackling sound as he crushed them between his fingers. Angus [a similar aged peer], approached the table, moved into a position to look at Charlie’s face and made a sound, “Hi!” (Fig. 15.1a). Charlie looked at Angus’s face and made eye contact. Charlie watched as Angus crunched leaves on the table in front of him (Fig. 15.1b). Angus reached over in front of Charlie to take a plastic scoop Charlie had been playing with (Fig. 15.1c). Charlie let go of the plastic scoop then reached back across Angus to play with the leaves that were in front of Angus. Charlie placed his hand in the leaves where Angus was playing and smiled at Angus (Fig. 15.1d).

In these stills that depicted a very short 58 s episode, Charlie’s engagement with his peer included making eye contact, looking at the peer’s activity, offering



Fig. 15.1 (a) Angus moves to make eye contact with Charlie and greets him with “Hi”. (b) Charlie watches Angus playing with the leaves. (c) Charlie looks at Angus’s face as Angus takes the scoop. (d) Charlie smiles at Angus and plays with his leaves (Source: Reproduced with permission from the participants. Copyright 2011 by Infants’ Lives in Childcare project research team)

and taking objects, and smiling. These can be broadly described as looking and listening-in behaviours (Sumsion and Goodfellow 2012) and are important elements in his social encounter. However, Charlie also participated in reciprocal interaction and demonstrated a degree of social competence with his peer through the giving/taking of the scoop and his subsequent affectivity. Furthermore, the peer interaction observed here may well have been facilitated through play with objects; the plastic scoop and the leaves. Williams et al. (2010b) explain, while social

competence with peers begins as early as infancy, peer interactions tend to be around objects.

When invited to view (and interpret) the piece of video from which these stills were extracted, Charlie's parent commented:

Maybe he doesn't really know what to do, so he's sort of looking for a bit of guidance as to what should I do maybe or what could I do? And, yeh, "What's the purpose for these being here? There's these leaves collected in this area here, what's the game, what do we do here?"

He watches and observes everyone and everything . . . and finds out what to do. "What are they doing and I should copy that?"

Indeed, was Charlie just enjoying the social aspects of being in the company of his peer? Did he experience being engaged with another child in a shared activity? Was he seeking information from the other infant about the activity and what to do with the leaves or was his behaviour simply self-exploratory? While it is difficult for others to appreciate what Charlie actually experienced in this encounter, additional examples help build up a picture of typical behaviours he used in his social encounters.

The second sequence, which further illuminates the role of objects in social interaction, is from an episode with Bianca, another infant of similar age. In this sequence Charlie is the one who initiates contact.

Sequence 2 (Stills from 33 seconds of a 3.10 minute episode around a toy cash register where the cash register is opened by inserting coloured money pieces in a colour matched slot)

Charlie was sitting on a mat where other children had been playing with toys. One of the children, Bianca, got up and moved to a low table where there was a toy cash register. Subsequently, the carer joined Bianca and showed her how the cash register worked by placing coloured plastic money in colour matched slots. The carer pointed to a yellow piece of money and said, "Yellow, put it here". Needing to find some other pieces of money, the carer said to Bianca, "See if we can find some more money". Charlie, who had been listening to and watching the carer's instruction to Bianca, got up from the mat, went to pick up a piece of money from the floor, then carried it to the table where he pushed a small chair over to sit next to Bianca. The carer says to Bianca, "You show Charlie which one". The carer then moved away to attend to another infant. With the piece of money in his hand, Charlie first looked to make eye contact with Bianca (Fig. 15.2a), touched her on the arm and then passed the money to her (Fig. 15.2b). She accepted the money and attempted to place it in a colour matched slot in the cash register (Fig. 15.2c). She was unsuccessful and moved to leave the table (Fig. 15.2d). Charlie repositioned himself in order to make eye contact with Bianca. However, she continued to move away.

As already indicated, an important social skill for infants is to approach an object that another child is playing with (Williams et al. 2010b). In Sequence 1, Angus (a peer) approached Charlie with a greeting followed by engagement over an object (i.e., the plastic scoop and the leaves). In this second sequence Charlie used an object (i.e., the plastic money) to move into play with Bianca. He also used other strategies such as body positioning and eye contact, touching Bianca on the arm and then offering the money piece to Bianca for her to place in the cash register. Following Carpenter's (2009) definition of joint action as being a situation where two or more individuals coordinate their actions towards a goal, it could be argued that Sequence 2 provides evidence of intentional behaviour and a possible desire by Charlie for shared cooperative activity with Bianca. However, in this sequence involving the giving and

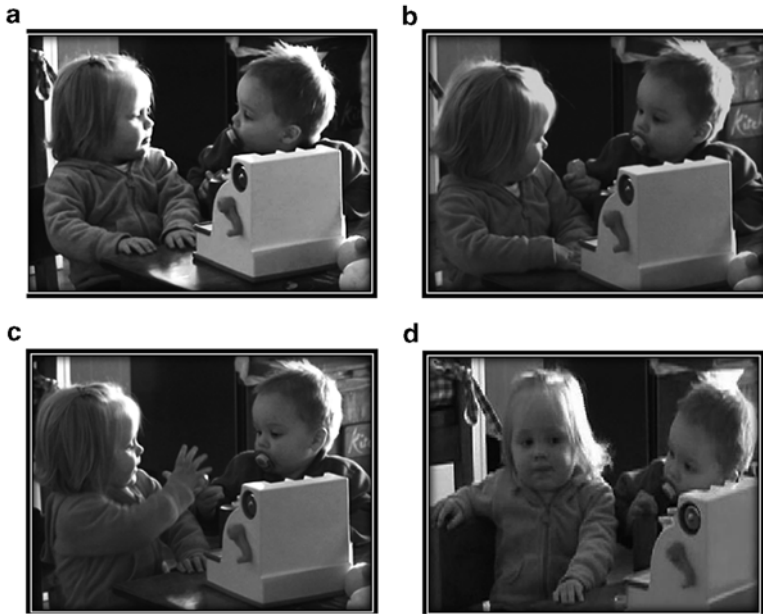


Fig. 15.2 (a) Charlie has money piece in his hand and turns to makes eye contact. (b) Charlie offers money piece to Bianca. (c) Bianca takes piece from Charlie. Both focus on the money piece. (d) Bianca turns to leave the play and Charlie repositions himself to make eye contact with Bianca (Source: Reproduced with permission from the participants. Copyright 2011 by Infants' Lives in Childcare project research team)

taking of an object (i.e., the plastic money), Charlie's intent may have been for Bianca to show him how to make the cash register work. While peer engagement through eye contact and the handling/receiving of an object may be evident, and the purpose may have been engagement in cooperative activity, the sharing of newfound knowledge also seemed important. Charlie's *looks* in order to gather information may also be reflective of what is referred to as *social referencing* (Atkins 2000). Whatever Charlie's intent, he tried to re-engage with Bianca by looking towards her face as she moved away from the activity.

In both Sequence 1 and Sequence 2, Charlie used eye contact as a strategy to engage with a peer around an object. The last of the three sequences presented here provides further evidence of the strategies that Charlie uses when purposefully and intentionally approaching a peer. In this third sequence, Charlie's behaviour centred on a personal object (a dummy/pacifier) belonging to a peer. This sequence displays a situation in which, unlike in the previous sequences, the peer cooperated but was not engaged in joint activity.

Sequence 3 (Stills from 60 seconds of a 1.30 minute episode around another child's dummy)

Earlier in the day Charlie had engaged in an interaction with Ed [similar age peer] over a dummy. Charlie was in the room when Ed awoke from his sleep. Charlie went to Ed's cot and purposefully dropped his own dummy into Ed's cot. While Ed had his own dummy

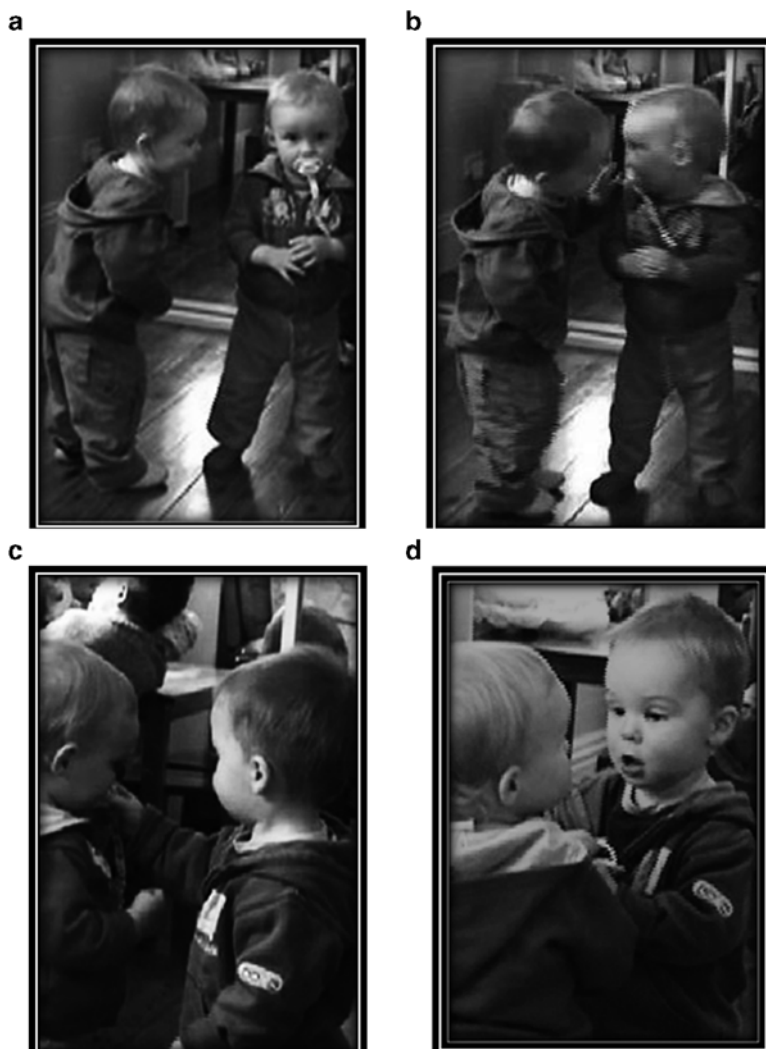


Fig. 15.3 (a) Charlie leans towards Ed looking at his face. (b) Charlie reaches towards Ed's dummy. (c) Charlie takes Ed's dummy out of his mouth. (d) Charlie prepares to place the dummy back in Ed's mouth (Source: Reproduced with permission from the participants. Copyright 2011 by Infants' Lives in Childcare project research team)

pinned to his shirt, on this occasion, Ed picked up Charlie's dummy and placed it in his own mouth.

Charlie and Ed are now in another room. Charlie approached Ed and moved to make eye contact with him (Fig. 15.3a). Following eye contact, Charlie moved to take Ed's dummy out of his mouth (Fig. 15.3b). Charlie carefully watched Ed's face as he took the dummy out (Fig. 15.3c) and then attempted to place it back in Ed's mouth (Fig. 15.3d).

In this sequence of stills, Charlie is particularly proactive in his encounter. He appears to focus on the dummy, however, he uses body positioning and eye contact as strategies in order to take the dummy from and then replace it in Ed's mouth. While Charlie's intent in taking the dummy from Ed is unknown, the incident supports the view that Charlie has a repertoire of strategies that he uses in initiating contact with his peers. In this sense, he may well be engaged in "meaning making" and "meaning sharing" within his social world (Nelson 2007, pp. 10, 250). Given earlier observations of Charlie's behaviour, this may well be a further example of Charlie's ability to engage in a social encounter with one of his peers through play with an object.

15.2.3 Commentary

Each of these three episodes illuminate what Nelson (2007, p. 17) identified as the "active drama" of experience and learning that is evident in infants' encounters with peers. The active drama of encounter is not just attention *to* something but *engagement with* others. Individually and collectively the episodes illustrate ways in which Charlie initiated contact with a peer and responded to their behaviour. Dyadic relationships are often facilitated around shared objects (Tomasello and Carpenter 2007), which appeared to be central to Charlie's engagement. His involvement in taking, sharing and offering these objects required him to display a degree of social and communicative competence (Williams et al. 2010a).

Turn taking and reciprocity; tuning-in; collaboration; recognition of the social and cultural context; relational dimensions and mutual positioning that goes with communication; the existence of an interactive process between felt meaning and the act of expression, are all instrumental in enabling language to develop as a tool for communication (Laevers et al. 2011). When we add the cognitive, functional and personal aspects of communication developed within ever changing contexts, we begin to appreciate the nature and extent of meaning making within the human encounters.

15.2.4 Educators' Role in Scaffolding Infants' Naturally Occurring Social Encounters with Their Peers

One of the issues arising from the very brief sequences presented in this chapter is the matter of the educators' role within peer initiated encounters. The episodes presented in this chapter have one common denominator; they are sequences of events depicting Charlie's life in group care. While it is not possible to generalise from one infant to others and even to truly gain insights into how one infant experiences being in group care, the episodes can act as springboards for further discussion. Some questions that immediately come to mind with respect to the sequences and the three components of shared experience identified by Nelson (2007) are:

- To what extent were Charlie's actions deliberative, motivational, exploratory, and/or goal directed? Has he already learnt a *script* for approaching and participating with his peers in a non-threatening way?
- What are the cultural/contextual elements that may have shaped Charlie's capacity to use particular strategies in his approach to and engagements with peers?
- How do we know the extent to which Charlie has a social sense of being in dyadic relationships with peers and what role does an adult have in the interactional dynamics that occur?

It might be said that the episodes were only brief and that there is a role for adult intervention particularly where infants are in groups. To some extent, children in early childhood environments need to become enculturated into a culture of *groupness* with its structure, expectations and accepted ways of being. For those infants who experience peer group environments, one has to move beyond the individual to think about individuals *living* within groups. Peer sociability then becomes important. Educators (including carers) have a role to play in supporting infants' naturally occurring social exploration and in scaffolding and bridging peer play (Williams et al. 2010a). Further, Musatti and Mayer (2011) suggest that the adult's role is critical to sustained engagement and this may well apply to the example of Charlie and the cash register. However, when thinking about the unknowns of intentionality, motivation and an infants' personal/social history around peer encounters, how can educators know when it is best to step in and step out of infants' play? Human encounters provide a context within which infants learn strategies that enable them to enter the broader social world of life. It behoves adults who work with those infants to provide supportive physical, social, relational and respectful contexts in which the infants as developing human beings, can thrive.

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Chapter 16

A Dialogic Space in Early Childhood Education: Chronotopic Encounters with People, Places and Things

E. Jayne White

16.1 Introduction

Infants¹ in formal early childhood education settings encounter a unique social experience because they are: (a) under the care of a professional teacher who simultaneously holds responsibility for several other children; (b) in the prolonged presence of a peer group; and (c) move between the (often) diverse settings of the home, community and centre environments on a daily basis. I begin with the proposition that the social experience of infants in full day education and care settings extends well beyond what has been documented in existing literature that typically emphasises dyadic relationships between mothers and their babies in the home. As such, this chapter seeks to understand the infant's experience as a dialogic phenomenon that takes place in communication with people, places and things that comprise the unique landscape of contemporary care and education for under 2-year-olds. In doing so, I focus this work on the pedagogical role of the teacher and their decision making around paradoxical issues they face in contemporary settings.

The early childhood education landscape is encountered through the chronotope, described by Holquist (2009) as “the clock and the map we employ to orient our identity in the flux of existence” (p. 10). Central to this idea is the notion that an individual or culture can go *beyond its own bounds* with the additional insights of *other*. In other words, seeing the world from alternative standpoints or perspectives enables an individual to transgress the limits of their own experience. Thus, the world is not merely passed over to an individual as a complete whole, but through unfolding (axiologic) relationships with people, places and things across time and space. The limits and opportunities that exist within these relationships frame the chronotopes that orient a sense of what is *real*, and by association, what can or

¹For the purposes of this chapter the term *infant* refers to infants and toddlers under the age of 2 years.

E.J. White (✉)

Professional Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand
e-mail: whiteej@waikato.ac.nz

should be valued within a particular time and place. As such, Morson and Emerson (1990) suggest that chronotopes underpin all activity, and therefore offers a way of understanding experience.

I approach the chronotope through dialogic means (White 2009); more specifically, through the use of polyphonic video footage, observations and various dialogues with teachers spanning three separate studies that have taken place over the past 3 years. The first, a 6 month investigation of infant experience in a New Zealand education and care centre based on teacher, parent and researcher interpretations, illuminates the agentic nature of engagement within this social space (White 2011). The second, a pilot investigation of teachers' decision making, highlights the complex nature of infant pedagogy (White 2012b). The third, based on teachers' pedagogical decision making during outdoor experiences, illustrates the challenges and opportunities of intersecting chronotopes (Kelly and White 2012, 2013). Drawing on teachers' dialogue about their practice, the chapter reveals convergent and oppositional practices that take place as lived chronotopic spaces of infant education. Seen in this light they represent a dialogic site of social exchange that is not merely a zone that learners briefly occupy in a moment but, instead, a space that "deconstructs at the same time as it constructs" (Wegerif 2013, p. 62), as chronotopes of time and space intersect or collide. I suggest that this space illuminates the complexity of pedagogy by recognising the various tensions evident in a contemporary chronotopic threshold where infants are simultaneously positioned as competent subjects *and* vulnerable objects.

16.2 The Chronotope as a Landscape for Investigation

In its broadest sense, the chronotope represents time (temporal) and space (spatial) dimensions that frame the way experience can be understood. Drawing on the philosophy of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), Holquist suggests that chronotope lies at the centre of knowledge since what is valued in one place and time may differ from another. The coordinates of time and space, says Holquist (2009), are both ideologic orientations and ways of understanding human experience. Every chronotope is characterised by its boundaries that are determined by "the specific views that society attached to them in any particular space and time" and resist fusion (White 2013, p. 17). Chronotopes are *seen* through encounters which orient their meaning and value. As such, chronotope underpins all activity and offers a way of understanding experience (Morson and Emerson 1990) and recognising "the systematic unity of culture" (Bakhtin 1999, p. 301). Thus chronotopes offer a "means of penetrating dialogic understanding through artistic appreciation of other" (White and Peters 2011, p. 4).

Clark and Holquist (1984) explain that the intersection of different chronotope act as a threshold, a bridge between disparate worlds. For Bakhtin (1981), such thresholds offer opportunities for creative exchange as it is here where "the sphere of meaning is accomplished" (p. 258). I suggest that this concept is closely aligned to what can be now described as a *new normality* for infants and toddlers in formal

care and education, whose social experience is characterised by negotiated social spaces that take place between, within and across education and home settings (Carroll-Lind and Angus 2011). In the sections that follow, I explore this *new normality* as a set of chronotope now occupied by infants and toddlers (and teachers) in relation to people, places and things. I begin with the chronotopic threshold that positions infants within this dialogic space.

16.2.1 Introducing the Chronotopic Threshold

The *official* landscape for infants in New Zealand early childhood education can be summarised as one which is now politically, socially and somewhat ironically oriented towards education *and* care. The experiences of very young children are no longer influenced solely by the family in the privacy of home; but instead, in partnership with qualified (and unqualified) teachers in the company of larger numbers of peers in public institutions that are governed by the state (Education Review Office 2009). As a result, the experiences that are provided for infants are now public and teachers highly accountable to wider society for what they do, and how they do it. A heavily prescribed accountability system evident in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Licensing Criteria (Ministry of Education 2008) means that physical spaces are largely dictated by national criteria where safety aspects are paramount and, use of space is legislated. Routines are frequently rostered around peers, rosters and parents' work hours; whilst access to a wider societal influence on what constitutes *good* infant experience (and associated values) is greater. At the time of writing there is an ideological struggle at play between what is currently articulated as *standards-based* and *quality* approaches to education that are heavily influenced by new right ideologies in the official realm. A corresponding threshold phenomenon exists within two chronotope—one which potentially positions very young children as vulnerable objects for adult debate, and long-term commodities for public good—while simultaneously featuring infants as competent subjects in their own right through the tenets of New Zealand's early childhood curriculum *Te Whariki* (1996).

Very young children are spending significant periods of time within the walls of the institution, sometimes engaging in more waking hours with their teacher than their family. Enrolments for under 1-year-olds in New Zealand early childhood education have increased by 58 % since 2002 (Sector Advisory Group 2012). These differences suggest that infants are likely to have a vastly different experience in formal education settings than traditional or international research has reported; and that investigation of their lived experiences represents a chronotopic threshold between the public and private spaces they locate. Here teachers must grapple with the associated challenges alongside their limited access to professional knowledge in how best to work with infant and toddlers. On this basis the contemporary New Zealand experience of infants in formal education provides a unique opportunity to explore contemporary pedagogical issues that are worthy of consideration.

Against this backdrop, I explore the chronotopic threshold through various means; all of which can be best captured under the concept of *dialogism*. Dialogism can be loosely described as “an interaction that values all the discourses in communication” (Oliva 2000, p. 41). Employing a dialogic approach to investigation requires keen attention to the way participants give form to each other’s experience through dialogue in its broadest sense. From a Bakhtinian standpoint, knowledge *is* dialogue rather than as an outcome of dialogue and therefore lies at the heart of pedagogy. Drawing on chronotope as a means of locating these personal standpoints makes it possible to foreground the spatiotemporal nature of lived experience from the perspective of those who are directly involved. Chronotope can therefore be identified by investigating events, location, time (in the language of *Te Whariki*, “people, places and things”) and the values that underpin these. To do this I draw on three studies which, for the purposes of this chapter, I have named Tahī (Study 1), Rua (Study 2), and Toru (Study 3). In all three cases only qualified and registered teachers (totalling 5 years formal professional education) were involved (Table 16.1).

Taken together, these studies draw on the perspectives of teachers as they encounter and negotiate the experiences of infants and toddlers with people, places and things that comprise their life-worlds. Based on their dialogues, teachers illuminate the impact of the chronotopic threshold on pedagogical exchanges that take place between teachers and infants.

16.2.2 *Examining Dialogues*

Central to discussions that took place across all three projects was the considerable paradox teachers faced in their work with infants. Significant authorial forces were constantly at play; working both towards and against the priorities teachers drew from in making their pedagogical choices. Teachers drew upon their knowledge of what was *right* according to regulations, centre philosophies and, in the absence of specialist theoretical knowledge, their own prior experiences. They then weighed these up against official requirements, parental preferences, and relational knowledge of each individual child. Contemplating these against the social and political context in which their work was located, pedagogical choices made by teachers were characterised by a series of converging and diverging points of view. Each suggest that the lived experiences of infants in education and care settings are oriented by the negotiating role of the teacher who resides at the interface. It is here where choices must be made in the everyday reality of these contexts.

16.2.2.1 **Beliefs Versus Practice**

The teachers described a number of complex and sometimes risky pedagogical choices they made in their interactions with infants and toddlers throughout their day. These were largely determined by the ideological views each teacher brought

Table 16.1 Introducing three studies

Tahi (Study 1)	Rua (Study 2)	Toru (Study 3)
Mixed age (birth-5 years)	Single age infant (under 18 months)	Single age toddler (18–26 months)
Education and care centre	Education and care centre	Education and care centre
An examination of one teacher's interpretations of toddler experience (emphasising genre ^a) using video <i>cam-hats</i> which were placed on the heads of both a toddler (aged 18 months) and her key teacher ^b (White 2009). Coupled with video taken by the researcher in the centre (to a total of over 20 h) that was then converted to a three way time synchronised, split-screen, <i>polyphonic footage</i> was shared with the teacher and the family who separately coded the film according to its communicative potential ^c . Several hours of re-probing interviews subsequently took place in order to explore interpretations based on assessment of toddlers. This approach enabled interpretation of the same experience from multiple visual fields and, most importantly, from the visual field of the toddler herself, to contribute to analysis	A pilot study (White 2012b) explored pedagogical choices two teachers made in their interactions with two infants. The study employed the same polyphonic approach as tahi. In this case <i>two</i> infants (aged 4 and 8 months) wore cameras, instead of one (as was the case in the previous study) in order to capture some of their education and care experience as peers. As part of this study teachers were asked to select no more than 20 min footage that they could then discuss in relation to their pedagogy	A team of six infant teachers recorded themselves using video diary following weekly excursions with groups of toddlers. The study was part of a larger action research project (Kelly and White 2012). Following weekly outings beyond the centre gates, teachers employed video diary as a research method to record oral reflections of their experience (Bliss and Fisher 2010). Teachers were provided with the DATA reflective model (Peter 1991, cited in O'Connor and Diggins 2002) by describing, analysing, theorising and planning for action following their weekly outings

^aGenre is described as “a speech plan or will, which determines the entire utterance, its length and boundaries” (Bakhtin 1986, p. 77). Participants were asked to identify verbal and non-verbal forms of language and their interpreted potential meaning

^bIn this setting the key teacher was the person who completed assessment documentation for the same child over a 3-month, rotated period. This is very different to the key teacher system in Rua and is based on a *whanau* model (that is, extended family of multiple caregivers)

^cThe wider study asked participants to identify form (that is, the way the language was conveyed) and content (its metaphorical meaning, or potential)

to their decision making which were at odds with the *official* chronotope, or that of the home. For example, *Toru* teachers were committed to toddlers' free exploration of spaces beyond the setting gates. This was reflected in their articulated beliefs about learning in comments such as: “We fully encourage puddle jumping; it's a great way to explore the water”. While not in opposition to outings, the ECE Criteria has strict guidelines about how excursions are managed that created potential barriers for this practice. Yet, such were the teachers' convictions that they were prepared to go to considerable efforts to ensure toddlers had access to the outdoors every week regardless. This included the employment of an

additional relieving teacher² to cover the necessary ratios in the centre while two staff went on the excursion, and a detailed risk analysis.

A similar conviction was evident in dialogues with *Rua* teachers. The centre upheld a strong commitment to a *Key Teacher system* (Hose 2010, cited in Ormond 2010), despite the fact that this system was not endorsed by policy within the official choronotope.³ Emphasis was placed on the infant forming a strong attachment with one teacher in order to ensure that individual needs of the infant and family were upheld and relationships were strong. The commitment of these teachers to prioritise such attachments required them to work in flexible and responsive ways. During fieldwork there were episodes where the key teacher worked outside of paid hours to ensure that a settling infant had access to her throughout the day. Tea breaks were brokered around infant routines rather than staff rosters, and a great deal of emphasis was placed on accurate record keeping and personal engagement with families. Such practices required a collaborative effort on the part of all staff in the centre to ensure that each infant had access to the adult who knew them best throughout the day while at the same time providing opportunities for the infants to become familiar with others. Similar team efforts were seen as essential for *Toru* teachers who relied a great deal on the trust of their colleagues during outings. They recognised the importance of team approaches to ensure that infants were able to engage in an authentic experience according to the principles they held dear even when they were difficult to uphold within the official realm.

The teachers at *Tahi* were unable to be so adventurous in their decision making. The centre operated along a tight roster, a *whanau*⁴ model and a mixed age peer group. This meant that teachers did not have special responsibility for one infant but worked in the environment according to activity, staff tea breaks and supervision requirements. The key teacher described her pedagogy as responding to “who needs me the most”. These systems made close relationships with individual toddlers difficult at the outset of the study. However, as the teacher’s appreciation of the toddler increased, so too did her attachment. With this strengthened relationship, the teacher became an advocate for the toddler. Her insights were then shared with the staff who gained access to a similar appreciation. As the supervisor stated, “We’re seeing a [toddler] that’s deeper”. An outcome of this process was that the toddler’s acts, such as biting, became an opportunity for teachers to examine their roster system, rather than a means of labelling the toddler as *deviant* (as had previously been the case). Teachers began to see the relationship between emotion and behaviour, implicating themselves in the process (White 2012c).

² A reliever came to the centre for 3 h at a cost of \$51. Over a 40-week year this represents a commitment of \$2,040 in order for outings to take place.

³ In New Zealand the Key Teacher system is not a requirement and, at the time of these studies, ratios were—and still are—1:5. It is important to note that these centres operated at ratios of 1:3 with a significant cost to themselves and families.

⁴ A *whanau* model is one that attempts to emulate the structure of an extended family who all share ties to one another.

16.2.2.2 Freedom Versus Intervention

A lot of teacher judgments, regardless of the environment in which they were placed, were associated with the extent to which the teachers were directive or passively engaged with the children. *Rua* teachers working with infants spent most of the infants' waking time in close proximity or in some kind of embrace. Here, bottle feeding and beginning introductions to solid food took place on the teacher's knee; while for older infants there was a low table and chairs for them to sit together during mealtimes. For the 4-month-old infant, being held by his teacher was a common feature of his experience as he was entirely reliant on teachers to respond to his physical or linguistic cues. On other occasions infants were placed on the floor so that they could engage in movement according to their developmental milestones (which teachers wrote about in their learning records⁵). For one infant this posed a challenge because she used a walker⁶ at home. This practice was not condoned by the teachers (who based much of their philosophy on Hungarian Emmi Pikler⁷). Based on their beliefs about movement, teachers supported the infant to persevere. In the absence of the walker, the infant eventually learnt to propel herself backwards and forwards with much encouragement from her key teacher.

Rua teachers made constant choices about who would be held, who would be on the floor, and how infants could be supported to develop peer relationships with their younger and older peers safely (that is, without eye gouging or body stomping). Teachers fulfilled an advocacy role for the infant by reminding toddlers to "be careful with your feet" to avoid standing on the infants lying on the floor. Yet such occasions were seldom necessary since teachers held high expectations for these children. When a parent viewed footage of his daughter Harry enthusiastically waving a toy in front of an infant, he expressed his concern that the infant may be harmed. The teacher explained that she trusted Harry implicitly and invited the parent to watch the entire episode so that he could gain this appreciation also. He did so with some degree of pleasant surprise.

Like *Rua*, *Tahi* teachers were committed to offering the toddlers an indoor-outdoor flow of spaces. A covered verandah between both spaces often acted as a safe portal for toddlers to engage in the outdoors while maintaining proximity to the safety of the indoor setting. This space also housed the sandpit which offered a particularly favourite locale for toddlers to engage with others in a contained space. One of the toddlers in the study, however, chose to spend almost all his time outdoors on the trikes that he rode enthusiastically with his older peers. This choice represented significant challenges for the teacher in trying to interpret his language because she was often rostered indoors: "I kept thinking, 'What am I missing? ... I should have been out there...'", She explained: "To really know a child you've got to be there...". Her dutiful response to serving the official chronotope, through

⁵For an explanation of New Zealand assessment records see Ministry of Education (2002).

⁶A piece of equipment that places the infant in an upright harness with wheels.

⁷In New Zealand many infant teachers (e.g., Dalli and Kibble 2010) are examining the potential of a Pikler philosophy of respect for their practice (<http://pikler.org/PiklerPractices.html>).

diligent supervision of the indoor and outdoor environment, impacted negatively on her ability to *know* the toddler.

In contrast *Toru* teachers described their increased recognition of the importance of supporting toddlers to enjoy spaces *without* teachers' physical intervention in the outdoors. As one teacher explained, "Actually it's the process rather than the destination", while another said, "If you get to a specific place, that's great, but if you don't, that's OK. I think that's different to what the preschool are doing. Our children are still learning about how to explore the environment with other children and with their bodies". Teachers who shared this belief were able to support toddlers to freely explore large spaces. Their ability to do so was based on their knowledge of each child, ensuring that children had repeated opportunities to attend nature-based outings with the group, understanding the environments they were entering and trusting other adults to support one another. Their pedagogical work involved regular discussions as a group of staff regarding attitudes to learning, as well as developing strategies that supported consistency across staff during experiences outside the centre gates. As one teacher explained in the case of a flight of very high, slippery concrete steps they encountered one rainy day: "I felt that [teacher] and I made the decisions together about risk and children were able to learn to walk carefully. One child was very, very pleased when she was able to get up the steps by herself and we celebrated that achievement".

The extent to which teachers felt comfortable with infants in these environments was determined by a combination of factors, such as: knowing the infants sufficiently to predict their actions, feeling comfortable with other staff on the outings, weather, or simply "not wanting to have to jump in myself" if someone fell into the lake. Some risks could be easily ameliorated in practical ways, such as wearing heavy coats in the rain or walking on a different track from where the poisonous plant might be located, but others were embraced as an opportunity for learning. For instance, one teacher saw crossing the road as a deliberate learning opportunity "to slow them down at the road and discuss 'could they see any cars' ... draw on their recall from different trips ... make them actively look both ways ... take ownership for their walk and make their own decisions with the aid and support of building empowerment". In this case the teachers did not attempt to divert toddlers from danger by avoiding the road as a site for lived experience; but instead supported them to make judgements about their personal engagement with risk. Teachers saw the wider environment and all its risks as a learning opportunity rather than an impediment. They actively engaged the spaces around them as potential opportunities for both spontaneous and planned learning; for themselves as well as the infants.

16.2.2.3 Intimacy Versus Boundary

Alongside their engagement with larger spaces, infants across all three studies also spent a great deal of time in the close proximity of their teachers. Infants were regularly cuddled, cajoled, whispered to, and even kissed by the *Rua* teachers. They enjoyed their relationships with the infants, narrating, in almost lyrical tones, what

was happening next or asking permission before some sort of intervention. Such moments were often evident immediately after bottle feeding, or waking from a sleep. Soothing sounds and actions were used constantly and teachers often used their bodies as a means of comfort; holding the infant close to their chest in order to offer the familiar sound of a heartbeat, warmth and a familiar smell. In *Rua*, it seemed as if each teacher had their own kind of intimate language with their key infants.

On several occasions the infants' visual field rested on the teacher's body, paying special attention to the curve of their breast or the feel of their skin. In *Tahi* the toddler pointed to her teacher's breast and said, "Milk". The teacher quickly adjusted her t-shirt and pointed out a child passing by to shift the topic elsewhere. On a different occasion the toddler climbed on her teacher's lap and fondled her closely in the presence of the toddler's parents. The teacher later expressed her discomfort with this level of intimacy: "It was a lovely feeling, it was a really lovely feeling and she seemed very relaxed ... but then at the back of my mind was, I kept thinking, 'What are mum and dad thinking?'"

Such paradox highlights the importance of articulating an infant pedagogy that legitimises the intimacy of teacher relationships with infants, alongside their role in supporting parents (and other teachers) to recognise that it is not a threat (a point also raised by Jools Page in Chap. 9, this volume). However, the professional guidelines located in the official chronotope do not explicitly emphasise such qualities. Nor do they have a place in the *professionalism* discourse within the wider educational context, despite the obvious immediacy of the teacher's body and use of affection in a curriculum for infants (Dalli et al. 2011).

16.2.2.4 Routines Versus Rights

Teachers' interplay with the needs and desires of families versus their own judgments about what was *good* for the infant permeated across all three projects. As part of their commitment to relationships with families, all teachers tried to initiate verbal dialogue with every parent at the end of the infant's day. This took place in addition to daily notebook entries and regular learning stories. The younger the child the more likely such sharing focused around everyday needs such as feeding and sleeping, but gradually as the infants grew to toddlers the dialogues shifted to those about activities and social experience. Teachers saw their role as a tentative balance between advocacy for the family and the infant.

Sleep time was a discussion topic that featured in every context. Working parents often wanted their child to arrive home at the end of the day ready for tea, a bath and bed. Yet in order for this to occur the timing of sleeps during the day had to be *managed*. Sleep spaces occupied a significant amount of time and physical space in these centres. Infants were put to bed at varying intervals of the day in bedrooms that were shared with other children. On several occasions one crying infant woke up two others and required teachers to make decisions about who should get up, who should stay in bed, and who could cope with these distractions or not.

Since sleep times were recorded on a chart on the wall parents could easily check to see how much their infant had slept and at what time. Parents often had very specific wishes for these routines, and asked teachers to either keep their infant awake (so they would be ready for a sleep when they got home), or put them to bed early. Depending on the time of day, sleep might take place in a car seat, at the request of the parent, to facilitate ease of transition between home and centre.

The teachers responded to these parent requests in one of several ways. As advocates for the infant, they tried to respond to his or her cues for sleep. In the following excerpt *Rua* teachers discuss their options together with the infant:

“Does Harrison want to go to bed?” asks his key teacher while she cuddles a four-month-old infant. “Well, he’s looking quite happy at the moment” says another teacher. “Well, that’ll be quite good ‘cos he can have his bottle later” says his key teacher. She faces the infant, “So nice and peaceful isn’t it Harrison?” Harrison gurgles in response. “Yes, it is, it’s peaceful.” Harrison grunts. The other teacher comes and lies beside Harrison. “Are you looking a bit zoned out, hmmm?” Harrison gurgles as both teachers focus on him and match his sounds.

As advocates for the other children in the centre, teachers also needed to ensure that group needs were met. If an infant was likely to distress others by crying in the sleep room, alternative strategies were sought (such as sitting with the infant until others had settled). As advocates for the parent, teachers sought to have the infant ready for response to the parents’ needs when they got home or upon arrival to the centre. Of course these feats were not always simultaneously possible, but key teachers did their best to negotiate between these requests to support the family, often at great cost to themselves.

But there were occasions where, no matter how effective the system in place, family requests could not be fully catered for. In such cases, the teacher called upon her relational abilities to dialogue with families about why their preferences could not be upheld, and what alternatives might be possible. Teachers who had ready access to a strong rationale for their practice fared better in this regard, as did families who shared the same cultural background. Yet even in such cases communication was constant and often involved careful dialogues so as not to offend either party or their deeply held beliefs.

These different pedagogical events highlight the importance of teachers having a means of *knowing* the learner in the visible and invisible spaces they occupy, rather than merely knowing the *toddler* or *infant* in a developmental sense or in terms of *outcomes*. Through an analysis of the chronotopes that map and orient their experience, it is evident that such knowing is not isolated to the infant or the education and care setting itself. These findings suggest that teachers need to know *themselves* in order to reflect on their pedagogy and its impact on others. Moreover, they need to know the chronotopic boundaries of the family, the state and their profession also; each underpinned by ideologies that must be examined critically. Such insights were not available to the teachers without significant adjustments to their practice; not least of which concerned their conviction to respond to the infant, rather than expecting the infant to adapt to the centre, as is often the case when rosters and routines are the priority. These professional skills require both specialised

understanding and structural support; neither of which were consistently offered to New Zealand centres at the time. That these teachers were committed to negotiating these spaces in the absence of external support suggests that there are opportunities for learning in complex chronotopic intersections that now take place in formal educational contexts for infants, and that these hold potential for expanding and articulating infant pedagogy.

16.3 Concluding Thoughts

The chronotopic threshold in which these New Zealand teachers work with infants and toddlers signals an untold reality. Clearly, there are multiple agendas at play when diverse and somewhat paradoxical chronotopes are brought together in formal educational settings for infants. Returning to Holquist's notion of the orienting clock and map, it is clear that there are competing discourses at play that the teacher must encounter. The official, authoritative discourse, resides in a chronotope that is driven by a scientific and neoliberalist view of the vulnerable, potential infant; the professional, psychological, chronotope positions the infant as a competent learner; the chronotope of the family posits a view of the centre as fulfilling a service to them; and the personal lives of teachers are invisible, though omnipresent, at all times.

In such negotiated, uncertain, emotional, and sometimes conflicted chronotopic interfaces, teachers must continually exercise their professional judgment to ensure that infants and toddlers have access to what they believe to be the best possible education and care. This is not easy since, as this chapter has portrayed, infants and toddlers now occupy multiple chronotopic spaces—each imbued with unique and sometimes contrasting ideologic accountabilities and aspirations—and teachers operate at the threshold within, and between, competing discourses. Located within an educational context, teachers working with infants and toddlers must therefore respond to both the competent child required by the state, but also the vulnerable infant for whom they must advocate in the absence of a loving parent. As Eva Johansson points out, teachers ignore the latter at their peril:

there is a risk that researchers and educators contribute to a new (Western) universal construction of a strong active participating child where vulnerability, ambiguity and complexity is overlooked and developmental dimensions of a child's life are ignored. (Johansson and White 2011, p. 4)

In the examples provided within this chapter I have explored the thresholds of these spaces where teachers have needed to push beyond, or transgress, what is currently known or desirable (and to whom) in order to ensure that the *best interests* of the infants and toddlers are fulfilled. This is not easy, since the teacher must face uncertain, even risky, terrain. Knowing (or trying to know) the infant was central to all pedagogical decisions and reinforces the idea that a teaching space is one in which the teacher “becomes a learner of learners” (Rule 2011, p. 938) rather than a mediator of pre-existing learning. For the infant and toddler in dialogue with their

teacher, these dialogic spaces exist between negotiated relationships with people (teachers-teachers; teachers-infants and toddlers; infants and toddlers-peers; teachers-parents); places (indoor; outdoor; beyond the centre gate) and things (e.g., artefacts, professional documents) that reside in a much larger and somewhat dichotomised political and social landscape. As a result, the teacher must work across, within and between these chronotope; negotiating their meaning with and for those in their care. In doing so, they adopt practices that bridge both notions of competency (by upholding the agentic potential of young children through freedom and choice) and vulnerability (acting as advocates and nurturers). Taken together, they articulate a pedagogy that significantly alters the meaning of education and care for this age group, and posits infant teachers' work as highly complex indeed.

Acknowledgements This chapter is a tribute to the commitment and passion of the many teachers involved in these projects. Their willingness to interrogate pedagogical practice through dialogue suggests that infant pedagogy is much more than a task to be fulfilled, or an accountability to be met. I applaud their conviction and salute their integrity.

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Chapter 17

Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Education and Care: Implications for Policy?

Frances Press and Linda Mitchell

17.1 Introduction

The chapters in this book are indicative of a recent groundswell of research on the experiences of infants and toddlers in formal early childhood environments. This research interest is relatively new in its breadth and foci, and reflects the growing commonality, in many parts of the world, of very young children regularly attending some form of formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) setting. The collection of chapters in this book emanate from a variety of national contexts and collectively utilise a rich array of theoretical frameworks to explore the infant and toddler experience and how this is manifest in, and mediated by, the many *spaces* of the care and education environment. In this chapter we consider the implications of this research, as well as extant literature, to discuss policy for, and its implementation within, infant and toddler education and care.

Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner (1979), we commence with a brief discussion of policy and policy contexts. We then situate the research contained in this book within an understanding of preceding research trends in early childhood education. We note the significance of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) for children's policy, before considering policy implications derived from the studies contained in this book. As there are national differences between the types of qualifications required for adults who work with infants and toddlers in ECEC, we have chosen the terms *educators* and *practitioners* to refer to all staff working directly with infants and toddlers in such programs.

F. Press (✉)

Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia
e-mail: fpress@csu.edu.au

L. Mitchell

Early Years Research Centre, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand
e-mail: lindamit@waikato.ac.nz

17.2 Policy Context

The value laden nature of policy (Taylor et al. 1997) is readily discernable in policy related to ECEC, perhaps especially so in relation to policy arrangements concerning infants and toddlers. Debates about the direction of early childhood policy are bound up in questions concerning its primary purpose, including who (or what) is assumed to be its primary beneficiary (for example, parents, the economy, schools, or children themselves), and what types of outcomes are sought from children's participation in early childhood programs. In addition, markedly divergent values are apparent in many debates concerning the desirability or otherwise of government support for infant-toddler ECEC programs.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological model of child development foregrounds the contextual nature of child development and thus provides a useful framework for considering the influence of policy upon infant-toddler ECEC. Bronfenbrenner illustrates the multiplicity of individual and contextual features, both proximal and distal, which impact upon children's development and their interactive nature. Resting in the sphere of the macrosystem, the decisions and actions of government contribute to shaping the spaces within which human development occurs (Bowes et al. 2012; Brooker, Chap. 3, this volume). In relation to infant-toddler care and education, government policy can determine, among other things, ease of access to programs, staffing arrangements, and the curricula shaping pedagogy within these settings.

Around the world, governments address the issue of infant-toddler care and education in diverse ways. In many minority world countries parental leave, followed by informal and/or formal home-based and centre-based care, is a fairly typical arrangement for the very young children of working parents. Nonetheless, there is considerable variation in the amount of parental leave available and its remuneration, as well as the quality and availability of infant-toddler programs. While there has been growing support for the provision of universal access to early education for children over 3 years of age, in many parts of the world, the wisdom of caring for infants outside the home has been contested. Dr Jay Belsky, a child development researcher, has written extensively and, at times, controversially, on the negative impact of child care (Belsky 2001, 2003), although his critiques have tempered somewhat in recent years (e.g., Belsky 2007). Citing Belsky, Australian Dr Peter Cook has published a book entitled *Early Child Care: Infants and Nations at Risk* (Cook 1997). Another Australian writer, Stephen Biddulph, has written scathingly about infant day care in the United Kingdom in *Raising Babies: Should Under 3s go to Nursery?* (2006). Such writings tend to dichotomise the policy debate, arguing for policy frameworks that support parent (usually mother) care and against those that support infant-toddler ECEC. Other researchers and authors, however, have argued that high quality education and care programs can enhance the lives and opportunities for under 2-year-olds. Some of this literature focuses on the value of such programs as a protective factor for *at risk* children, such as the evaluations of the Early Head Start program (Love et al. 2005). Studies such as

those contained in this volume are especially welcome because they enable us to understand more fully children's lives in ECEC. Through their close attention to the lived spaces of infant-toddler early childhood programs, the studies provide rich and nuanced insights into infants' actual experiences in a way that can be informative for early childhood policy and practice.

To date, policy recommendations regarding environments for infants and toddlers have relied upon studies that emphasise the quality of the early childhood program and highlight the need for appropriate structural elements to provide the conditions within which good quality programs are likely to ensue (for example, Dalli et al. 2011; Press 2006). Structural elements include such factors as the content and nature of staff qualifications; numbers of staff to children; stability of staff, including staff continuity; group size; and staff wages and conditions. However, these elements only *contribute* and do not, in themselves, *produce* a high quality program (Wangmann 1995). Of critical importance are children's actual experiences within and through early childhood settings. This book facilitates a fuller understanding of these experiences by illuminating the multiple spaces of infant-toddler education and care and its social, relational, pedagogical and emotional dimensions.

17.3 Waves of Research

Bronfenbrenner (1979) recognised the impact of time on children's development through incorporating the chronosystem in his model. In its most immediate sense, the timing of significant life events (for example, the death of a parent) will affect the nature of their potential impact upon a child's development. Significantly for this discussion, the chronosystem has a sociohistorical dimension which recognises that contexts and understandings change over time (Bowes et al. 2012). The sociohistorical aspect of the chronosystem is evident in the body of research within this volume, reflecting as it does the changed realities of children's and families' lives, especially in relation to what E. Jayne White coins as the *new normality* of infant-toddler care and education (Chap. 16, this volume). Further, the capacity of the studies within this book to illuminate the many spaces of such infant-toddler environments in new ways has been facilitated by a legacy of previous research, scholarship and debate.

Wangmann (1995) and Dalli et al. (2011) identify the presence of three waves of research concerning early childhood environments: the first wave was concerned with the question of whether child care harmed children's development; the second, with the identification and measurement of child care quality; and the third, with understanding quality and its impacts in relation to sociocultural contexts, including the interrelated impacts of both the home and the child care setting. The question of whether "child care is bad for children" was prompted by the then emerging trend of increasing numbers of children attending formal early childhood programs. This concern for young children's wellbeing was closely related to the discourse of maternalism which positioned exclusive maternal care as best for children's

development (Wangmann 1995). A number of studies concluded that child care was not inherently harmful to children, and further, that high quality environments could be beneficial. Hence, the second research wave sought to identify the elements of high quality education and care so that policy and practice might better support it. Through such attention to quality and its impact, it became apparent that children's development could never be ascribed to discrete causal factors and thus the third wave of research focused upon the complex interplay of factors impacting upon children's development including the nature of the home and the early childhood education and care setting, the sociocultural context and their interrelationship (Dalli et al. 2011; Wangmann 1995). Subsequent scholarship has pushed us to think about the perspectival nature of quality and its situatedness within the discourse of modernity (for example, Dahlberg et al. 1999) and the cultural specificity of many of the assumptions made about the course and nature of child development (for example, Cannella 1997; Penn 2009; Woodhead 1999). It has also generated an interest in understanding what quality might mean and look like from multiple perspectives (Dalli et al. 2011; Press 2006).

Relatedly, the re-emergence of a discourse of children's rights has generated renewed attention to how children are positioned within early childhood programs, and the constructions and images of children and childhood informing the work of early education and care.

17.4 Child Rights

For the exercise of their rights, young children have particular requirements for physical nurturance, emotional care and sensitive guidance, as well as for time and space for social play, exploration and learning. These requirements can best be planned for within a framework of laws, policies and programmes for early childhood, including a plan for implementation and independent monitoring... (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child [CRC] 2005)

A significant international development cogent to our reflections on policy is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). The UNCRC is more widely ratified than any other international human rights treaty and is unique amongst human rights treaties in its inclusion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (Department for Education 2013). Having ratified the Convention, governments are expected to review relevant legislation and policy in the light of its Articles. The rights within the Convention are often described as falling within the categories of provision, protection and participation. Initially, the predominant application of rights for children in their earliest years focused upon provision and protection in recognition of their increased vulnerability and dependence. More recently, participation rights have come much more into focus (Alderson 2008) as is evident in the assertion of the CRC (2005) that "young children should be recognized as active members of families, communities and societies, with their own concerns, interests and points of view" (p. x).

The capacity of even the youngest children to exercise agency, including the assertion of their views and preferences, is evident throughout the book. These chapters also bring into sharp relief the fact that the recognition and facilitation of such preferences is heavily reliant upon the actions of adults. As White asserts in this volume, discourses compete to shape educator approaches to working with infants and young children, who are variously positioned as vulnerable, full of potential, competent, and—in conjunction with families—as service users. In reality, children are all these things. Hence, the CRC (2005) recommends that early childhood spaces should:

... encourage recognition of young children as social actors from the beginning of life, with particular interests, capacities and vulnerabilities, and of requirements for protection, guidance and support in the exercise of their rights. (p. x)

The UNCRC has prompted interest in children's citizenry rights as a goal for policy development in ECEC, both in relation to how we conceptualise children and childhood, and how we envisage the possibilities of early childhood services. Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho (2012) assert that children's construction of knowledge requires "a social and educational context that supports, promotes, facilitates and celebrates participation" (p. 24). Dahlberg et al. (1999) reconceptualise ECEC services as public spaces where adults and children engage together in a variety of projects of social, cultural, political and economic significance. In this respect they become democratic communities where children, families, educators and local community members are offered space for their participation in shaping the nature of provision and contributing to it. Moss (2008) gives examples of values that need to be shared among the early childhood community for democratic and experimental practice to flourish: respect for diversity, recognition of multiple perspectives and paradigms, welcoming curiosity and uncertainty, and critical thinking. The construction of ECEC as a democratic space is supported by Article 29 of the UNCRC which calls for children's education to be concerned with "the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples" (np).

17.5 What Do Understandings of the Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Early Childhood Education and Care Offer Policy?

While children are biologically immature, cultures decide how childhood is understood. These understandings are reflected in policy design and pedagogy and have repercussions for the expected roles of children, teachers, families, communities and government, as well as the purposes and outcomes of early childhood education and care (Mitchell 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2001, 2006; Rigby et al. 2007). As Liz Brooker observes, a "whole set of beliefs and practices derived from generations of human activity—informs environments which children experience, and in turn shape" (Chap. 3, this volume).

Through fine grained foci on the lived experiences of infants and toddlers in early childhood settings, this book holds the potential to challenge assumed knowledge about infants' dispositions and capacities. Through directing our attention to the mediations and often intimate connections which surround the infant-toddler experience, the infant-toddler as an agentic being is illuminated; as is the presence and importance of peer friendships; and the complex mediating role of the educator. In the following discussion, we explore the implications of these for policy through discussing the various spaces that open with these understandings: spaces for children's agency; for social relationships; for emotion; and for professional enquiry.

17.5.1 Space for Children's Agency

Policy usually positions children as passive recipients of its intended outcomes. This positioning of children is at odds with the commitment to children's active participation advocated by UNCRC and challenged by, for example, the social constructionist paradigm of childhood that understands children as "social actors shaping as well as shaped by their circumstances" (James et al. 1998, p. 6). A recent literature review of quality early childhood education for under-2-year-olds (Dalli et al. 2011) emphasised that "research findings over several decades have supported an understanding of infants and toddlers as active and sophisticated participants in the social processes of learning and development, actively seeking emotionally satisfying and engaging relationships" (p. 68). Studies discussed in this book examined children's agency in spheres as diverse as their interactions with adults and peers, their use of physical space, their appropriation of objects, and their abiding influence on adults' perceptions, routines, and physical provision.

Brooker emphasises the *mutually constitutive* nature of the relationship of infants and toddlers with their early childhood settings (Chap. 3, this volume). Both she and Niina Rutanen draw attention to children's active contribution to their early childhood environments through their appropriation of space and resources, and intentional overtures to form relationships with those around them. Further, Rutanen's conceptualisation of lived space as "the space of imagination" reminds us of the power of the imaginative realm for children's re-creation of the physical space of early childhood education and care (Chap. 2, this volume).

According to Brooker, a society's goals for children are reflected in the "spaces, resources, routines, curriculum, pedagogy and practices of early childhood settings" (Chap. 3, this volume). She argues that these are these are the "immediate backdrop to the agency" shown by the children observed in her study. It is evident that the realisation of infant and toddler agency requires thoughtful and responsive adult mediation. As White explains, teachers must simultaneously hold notions of competency and vulnerability in mind as they uphold children's "agentic potential ... through freedom and choice" and, as they recognise vulnerability, act as advocates and nurturers (Chap. 16, this volume). Both Brooker and White illustrate how the capacity of infants and toddlers to forge a sense of belonging in their environments

was facilitated by allocation of a key person (or key worker), who actively observed, responded to, and supported, each child as they sought to establish the space as their own.

17.5.2 Space for Sociability

The potential of early childhood education and care to be a positive social space for infants and toddlers is evident throughout the book and represents a significant shift from traditional understandings of the quality of the infant-toddler caregiving environments as centering predominantly, upon the dyadic relationship between the infant and adult caregiver. Joy Goodfellow describes early childhood settings as “places of human encounter” (Chap. 15, this volume), while White asserts their capacity to offer a “unique social experience” (Chap. 16, this volume). Shelia Degotardi’s observations of intersubjectivity in toddlers’ interactions with others, including peers, provide an insightful, and at times, joyful, picture of socialisation and sociability within early childhood programs (Chap. 14, this volume).

The research and analyses of Degotardi, Goodfellow, and Rutanen cause us to be attentive to the social capacities of infants and toddlers, and the importance and influence of others in the same age group. Each of their chapters provides closely observed illustrations of toddlers’ overtures to, and interactions with, their peers. If practitioners operate within a paradigm that positions infants and toddlers as too young to form, or be interested in such friendships, than these overtures will be overlooked. Similarly, if the culture of the early childhood services is primarily one of supervision and risk management, than children’s friendship overtures might be interpreted as gestures signalling potential conflict (for example, Rutanen, Chap. 2, this volume).

17.5.3 Space for Emotionality

Previous research has suggested that practitioners readily recognise that the quality of infant-toddler programs is related to their capacity to provide emotional support to infants (Brownlee et al. 2007). However, the writings of Robyn Dolby et al. and Peter Elfer, E. Jayne White and Jools Page (Chaps. 7, 8, 16, and 9, this volume) underscore the emotionality of the work for educators themselves. Dolby et al. refer to its emotional intensity; White describes the work as both intimate and professional; Elfer discusses the *emotional labour* of infant-toddler pedagogy and highlights the need to recognise and understand “the emotional life of the nursery”; while Page coins the term *professional love* to capture the intellectual understanding that must be brought to the deep encounters of care which are inevitably a part of good quality infant-toddler care and education.

Elfer's chapter draws attention to the need for practitioners to emotionally engage with infants and, simultaneously, be sufficiently detached to reflect upon the details of their interactions. This is difficult work and requires "considerable personal insight and openness" requiring reflection to be facilitated both for individuals and for teams. Fully attuned engagement might be hindered as practitioners experience the emotional impact of repeatedly forming close attachments and experiencing ongoing separations. Further, White and Page both note the discomfort that can arise for infants' teachers and caregivers around their intimate moments with infants, especially in the presence of the parents (Chaps. 16 and 9, this volume).

The challenging pedagogical work required of educators is made more complex by the deep emotional engagement that they need to form with infants and toddlers. The writings of these three authors underscore the need for the intimate and emotional dimensions of this work to be openly acknowledged and discussed, so that its impact can be understood, interrogated and negotiated.

17.5.4 Space for Pedagogy

Anne Kultti and Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson describe "learning orientated environments of excellent quality" as characterised by child-centred negotiation whereby "teachers' show awareness of and interest in the child's world and thinking" and there is "an additional intention [is] to develop, in an interactive and conscious manner, young children's understanding of the world around them" (Chap. 11, this volume).

The research reported in this book causes us to reflect upon the unique nature of infant-toddler pedagogy. As has been elucidated, infant-toddler programs are characterised by emotional attachment, intimacy, relational pedagogy and inter-subjectivity. Building a sense of belonging and wellbeing, which, as Brooker and Dolby et al. (Chaps. 3 and 7, this volume) portray, is foundational to children's identity formation and requires strong collaborations with children, families, and community.

As James Elicker and his colleagues point out, "...the daily interactions that build relationships, are central to the care and education of children under 3 years" (Chap. 10, this volume). Infants and toddlers need to be able to form attachments with key adults. These strong relationships in turn provide infants with a secure base from which to explore. This security is further fostered when adults expressly address the potential anxieties that face young children. For example, Brooker and Dolby et al. illustrate the value of staff and parents deliberately and explicitly addressing the experience of transition from home to the setting. So too, infant and toddlers reliance upon multimodal means of communicating and making meaning—vocalisations, gesture and body language—necessitates "educators' and parents' collaborative efforts to understand infants' emerging communicative strategies" (McLeod et al., Chap. 13, this volume) lest infants' attempts at communication be overlooked or misinterpreted. For infants to have a sense of belonging and agency, educators need to be attentive to and familiar with each infant and toddler's

communicative repertoire. Claire Vallotton et al. explore the potential of infants' signs "to influence the interactions and routines of their daily lives in child care" (Chap. 12, this volume). Kultti and Pramling Samuelsson examine the strategic use of whole group, small group and peer interactions in selected Swedish preschools to facilitate the participation of children whose first language is not Swedish, as well as to promote language learning.

In an infant-toddler curriculum, educators must balance responsiveness to individual demands and interests with building a sense of community belonging; allowing space for infant-toddler initiated interactions, and the timely provision of educator input. A good quality program involves educators developing close, responsive and reciprocal relationships with infants and toddlers, their families and communities, and displaying a willingness to be uncertain, to learn from families, to engage in shared critical enquiry, and to hold in mind a holistic curriculum focused on community goals.

17.5.5 Space for Critical Inquiry

The studies in this book utilised a rich array of data generation methods that enabled children's experiences to be directly captured and mediated through insights from practitioners, family members, researchers and professional development advisers. Direct observation of interactions between children and between adults and children were commonly used in most of the studies reported in this book. Observations were facilitated through structured rating scales of dimensions of communication, interactions, activities or the environment, or followed a less structured format, using parental interviews or surveys, and staff discussion linked to criteria. While access to technological tools is not necessary for data collection, use of video recordings provided powerful insights in some of the reported studies. These offered the potential to be analysed again and again, and from different perspectives—other practitioners, external advisers and mentors, children and family members.

Critical inquiry emerges as pivotal to better supporting and extending infant-toddler exploration and learning strategies. Thoughtful and analytic examination of the lived experiences of participants within the setting, and the affordances (Kress 2000) of the environment and educator practices, is difficult pedagogical work that is likely to challenge practitioners' own assumptions and practices.

It is often hard to generate critical thinking, defined by Rose (1999) as:

... partly a matter of introducing a critical attitude towards those things that are given to our present experience as if they were timeless, natural, unquestionable: to stand against the perceived maxims of one's time, against the spirit of one's age, against the current of perceived wisdom. It is a matter of introducing a kind of awkwardness into the fabric of one's own experience, of interrupting the fluency of the narratives that encode the experience and making them stutter. (p. 20)

Drawing on one perspective alone offers a circumscribed and limited understanding, and may not be sufficient to challenge views and practice. Deep critical

inquiry can be encouraged through collaboration with and exposure to the views of others (Meade 2009; Mitchell and Cubey 2003; Ramsey et al. 2006).

Elfer's chapter reinforces the value of expertly facilitated discussion spaces that enable practitioners to engage in deep critical reflection upon their work. Dolby et al. show the power of filming observations as children arrive at and leave child care for use by the educator, family and child and family worker in analysing the life of infants and toddlers "as it is lived". Valloton et al., in an early childhood program attached to a university, use a model of reflective supervision to cultivate the capacity of preservice caregivers to think about children's communicative cues, to gauge their perspective. Elicker et al. adopt a carefully devised observation tool to focus on interactions and relationships in order to understand children's lived experiences in early childhood programs. They argue that increased understanding of daily experiences will "come about most fully when investigated using multiple theoretical and research approaches, firmly grounded in everyday practice" (Chap. 10, this volume).

Many of the practitioners in these studies who were engaged in analysing their own practice had opportunities to work collaboratively in data gathering and analysis with professional development advisers and researchers, and access to theoretical ideas and academic resources. Such informed and guided reflection helps develop new insights into practitioners' interactions with children, family members and colleagues; and upon the cues, perspectives and intents of infants and toddlers.

17.6 Policy Implications?

Policy decisions influence the nature of the early childhood education and care environment and hence the context of infant-toddler lived experiences. Although axiomatic, these earliest years are foundational. Danziger and Waldfogel (2000, p. 14) among others (e.g., Heckman 2006) emphasise that what happens in these years lays the groundwork for later development; the impacts are cumulative and compound over time. At the same time, as is starkly evident in the preceding chapters, children's experiences within ECEC determine to a significant extent the quality of their daily lives. Hence the nature of the lived experience of children within infant-toddler programs is extremely important.

Policy may offer more or less facilitating conditions for early childhood provision and practice, which shape the experiences of infants and toddlers. Chapters in this book have emphasised that relationships within the early childhood setting and the interactions amongst participants, infant and toddler peers, educators and families are powerfully influential. It is not surprising that recommendations for supporting high quality infant-toddler early childhood environments typically emphasise measures related to staffing. In group care, infants need adults who understand them, understand child development, and the individual and cultural nuances of such development. Educators need to build strong relationships with children and their families, and have the capacity to reflect upon their work and plan

accordingly. As a result, policy recommendations often focus upon ensuring specialist training and/or qualifications; sufficient numbers of staff to children so that staff are able to give individualised, responsive attention; and limits on group size (Dalli et al. 2011; Press 2006). Specialised training is associated with more positive, higher quality interactions and less detached caregiving (Burchinal et al. 2002; Clarke-Stewart et al. 2002; Fischer and Eheart 1991). The quality of programs offered to infants and toddlers is closely linked to having sufficiently high numbers of staff to children so that educators are more able to interact with children responsively, warmly and supportively and in a way that is more attuned to their individual characteristics (Lally et al. 1994; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] 1996; Phillipsen et al. 1997). The NICHD study (1996) on infant care revealed that the closer the ratio is to 1:1 for infant care, the more sensitive the care offered. The study also further emphasised the role of small groups for positive caregiving. The American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend staff to child ratios of 1:3 and group size of no more than six, for children under 2 years (cited in NICHD 1996). Relatedly, consistency of staffing counts. For these reasons, wages and conditions that appropriately recognise the complexity of working with infants and toddlers are recommended to compensate fairly for specialist qualifications, enhance staff satisfaction in the work space/environment and reduce the likelihood of staff turnover (Goleman et al. 2000; Helburn 1995; Smith 1996).

Policy contributes to conditions that enable or constrain educators' capacity to engage in attuned, responsive interactions with infants and toddlers and their families, and meaningful critical reflection. Specialist knowledge, appropriate numbers of staff to children, small group sizes and consistency of staffing are facilitative; they create the environment in which good quality infant-toddler care and learning can occur. However, it is the actual decisions, actions and interactions that take place within these conditions that ensure a high quality program (see, for instance, Fenech et al. 2010). The official or enacted curriculum will articulate the principles and outcomes that are believed to matter for infants and toddlers. A holistic curriculum reinforces the importance of attending to the sum total of a child's experiences. Key principles within curricula developed in the twenty-first century emphasise early childhood as a space where identities are constructed. Belonging and wellbeing are foundational to identity and are incorporated as principles in a number of curricula, including the New Zealand, Australian, British Columbian and Irish curriculum frameworks.

Through close attention to infants' worlds in early childhood education and care, collectively these studies reveal a sophisticated, complex world that may be unseen, overlooked or unacknowledged. From these we understand that government and site-based policy must create the conditions that make it possible to take into account the agency of infants and toddlers as well as their vulnerability, the important mediating and nurturing relationships they have with adult caregivers, and the significance of their friendships with one another. All children develop in the context of relationships. When key relationships in children's lives are warm, developmentally-attuned and responsive, children are given the opportunity to thrive. Not only must

early childhood practitioners develop such relationships, they must be able to recognise the importance and multiplicity of children's connections with others, within and outside of the early childhood setting. As such, educators must strive to develop collaborative, respectful relationships with parents. In this book, Dolby focuses on how facilitating an attachment relationship with educators functions as a *secure base* for infants. Brooker and White refer to the practice of allocating a *key person* to each infant so that every child and family is provided with the opportunity to develop a close and ongoing relationship with a *special person*. The function of the close attuned relationship is affirmed by Elicker et al. who propose that quality in infant-toddler programs is intrinsically linked to interactions. They identify six observable dimensions of caregiver-child interactions as important: sensitive responsiveness; support for autonomy; positive emotional tone; cognitive/language stimulation; warm, sensitive limit setting; and the promotion of positive peer relationships. White draws attention to the "negotiating role of the teacher" and the need for adults to afford infants and toddlers opportunities to influence how their lives are understood and acted on by others. The writings of Page, White, and Elfer ask us to legitimise the intimacy and emotional dimensions of the teacher-infant relationship, to open up space for the acknowledgement and discussion of emotion in teachers' professional discourse. Degotardi, Rutanen, and Goodfellow, among others, draw our attention to the social capacities and propensities of infants and toddlers.

Educators' capacity to expertly mediate a rich learning environment for infants and toddlers is affected by their expectations, which is in turn, affected by their knowledge base. Deficit assumptions and/or low expectations can prevent educators from understanding and appreciating children's and parents' expertise, experiences and knowledge. A deficit approach to children's development can be associated with family ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, especially when these differ from the practitioners' background, as well as the child's age (Mitchell and Cubey 2003). In turn, this hinders practitioners' ability to support children's sense of belonging, wellbeing and contribution. An early study of Palmerus and Pramling (1991) found practitioners in three Swedish child care centres had a limited understanding of the potential to educate toddlers. This changed, however, when practitioners covered theories and empirical findings about children's development and participated in an intervention program which provided staff with the opportunity to look at and analyse video recordings of their interactions. Kultti and Pramling Samuelsson (Chap. 11, this volume) highlight the powerful role of the teacher in guiding participation and communication. Their study suggests that, in combination, the organisation and structure of preschool activities to enable participation in whole group, small group and peer interaction and use of different communication resources offer a depth of opportunities for language learning.

Infant-toddler pedagogy is complex. A professionally qualified and educated workforce is better able to engage in analysis of theory and their own practice. The content of preservice education for early childhood must cover the infant-toddler years in ways that illuminate the complexity of this developmental period and uncover the sophisticated interactive worlds inhabited by infants and toddlers in early

childhood settings. Previous Australian research, which examined the relationship between child care worker and director's beliefs and quality in infant's care and education environments, stressed the role of appropriate professional learning in improving quality and proposed a focus on deep learning and critical reflection, both in professional preparation courses and through ongoing professional development (Brownlee et al. 2007).

As this volume attests, our understandings of infants and toddlers are being constantly challenged and extended as their experiences are investigated and interrogated from numerous perspectives. This underscores the need for ongoing professional development to support practitioners' understandings of infant-toddler pedagogies and the reasons for them.

... professional development can make significant contributions to enhancing pedagogy in early childhood settings in three key areas: challenging teachers/educators' beliefs and assumptions from a deficit view so that the knowledge and skills of families and children are acknowledged and built on; collecting and analysing data from the participants' own setting; and supporting change in participants' interactions with children and parents. (Mitchell and Cubey 2003, p. viii)

If early childhood settings are to be learning communities for teachers as well as children, parents and others, there need to be opportunities within the work environment for reflection, experimentation, documentation and planning. In several studies, spaces were opened for practitioners to critically analyse their practice within teams and as individuals. These spaces were often externally, and expertly, supported and included Work Discussion Groups; regular release time to analyse video recordings of interactions; training and reflective supervision for preservice educators; and the provision of professional development. This approach is consistent with the findings of other studies. Carr et al. (2000), in a New Zealand study, found that an external facilitator helped "challenge the tendency of staff to want to justify findings that were unfavourable" (p. 34). In an Australian study, staff in early childhood centres externally rated as high quality, identified the existence of an intentional learning community within their centres as an important contributor to the quality of their work (Fenech et al. 2010).

17.7 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has analysed policy from a social ecological model, locating policy within the sphere of the macrosystem. Policy influences, and is influenced by, sometimes competing values about concerning the desirability and necessity of infant-toddler care and education outside the home. In turn, policy helps shape the spaces of the early childhood environment, often directly influencing aspects such as access, and the nature of staffing and pedagogy.

In summary, the structural elements of policy for infants and toddlers are important. But their importance lies in their enabling capacities. Infant-toddler research is sharpening our senses to the lived experiences of the very young in the space of

early childhood education, in ways that alert us to its many dimensions. As such, policy also needs to recognise the complexity and sophistication of infant-toddler pedagogy by providing support for informed professional engagement and reflection that recognises its emotional dimension, and challenges limiting views of infant-toddler capacities and dispositions. Additionally, policy must provide space for strong family and community collaborations to be nurtured. A research agenda that makes use of differing theoretical approaches and multiple methods to find out about the experiences of infants, toddlers and their families both broadens and deepens our understandings.

Debates about the image of the child, cultural priorities and desirable outcomes for children feed into relevant policy and pedagogy. Explicit societal goals for early childhood education and care policy matter. A construction of infant care only as a policy objective linked to workforce participation for parents provides a very different focus to one that is based on the citizenship rights of every child, no matter how young. This book provides insights into the infant-toddler experience that allow us to envision early childhood programs which are children's spaces—not just built for children, but spaces imbued with a sense of belonging and a sense of delight.

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