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Abstract: In this article, we describe an observational approach, 'looking and listening-in,' that we have used to try to understand the experience of an infant in an Australian family day-care home. The article is drawn from a larger study of infants' experiences of early childhood education and care settings. In keeping with the mosaic methodology of the larger study, 'looking and listening-in' encompasses constructs drawn from diverse (phenomenological, socio-cultural, social cognition) theoretical perspectives. In the context in which we are using it, looking and listening-in has dual utility: as a methodological approach for helping us to edge closer to understanding the infant's experience, and as a way of describing how the infant made meaning of his experience. The infant's looking and listening-in is illustrated and analysed through a visual narrative.

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Abstract:

In this article, we describe an observational approach, 'looking and listening-in', that we have used to try to understand the experience of an infant in an Australian family day care home. The article is drawn from a larger study of infants' experiences of early childhood education and care settings. In keeping with the mosaic methodology of the larger study, 'looking and listening-in' encompasses constructs drawn from diverse (phenomenological, socio-cultural, social cognition) theoretical perspectives. In the context in which we are using it, looking and listening-in has dual utility: as a methodological approach for helping us to edge closer to understanding Charlie's experience, and as a way of describing how Charlie made meaning of his experience. Charlie's looking and listening-in is illustrated and analysed through a visual narrative.

In diesem Artikel beschreiben wir eine Beobachtung, die 'Sehen und Hören' heisst. Hierbei haben wir versucht Kleinkinder, die in einem Kinderstagesheim untergebracht sind, zu beobachten und ihre Entwicklung zu analysieren. Es handelt sich um eine grösseres Studie, in der Kleinkinder schon im frühesten Alter an Toyesmütter abgegeben werden. Im Einklang mit der Mosaikmethode umfasst die Studie 'Sehen und Hören' alle theoretischen Perspektiven, wie zum Beispiel phänomenologische, sozio-kulterelle und soziale Wahrnehmung. Im Zusammenhang dieser Studie gibt es eine zweifache Beobachtung: Auf der einen Seite können wir besser verstehen die Erfahrung von Charlie zu schieben. Auf der andere Seite sehen wir, wie Charlie seiner Erfahrung Bedeuten gibt. Diese Erfahrungen, die wir durch Charlie gemacht haben, ist durch eine visuelle Erzählung analysiert.

En este artículo describimos un enfoque de observación, 'mirando y escuchando desde dentro', el cual hemos utilizado para comprender la experiencia de un niño en un hogar de cuidado diario de la familia australiana. Este artículo se extrae de un estudio más grande de experiencias de niños en educación temprana y contextos de cuidado de la niñez. De acuerdo con la metodología 'mosaico' del estudio más grande, este enfoque abarca constructos provenientes de diversas perspectivas teóricas (la fenomenológica, la socio-cultural y la de cognición social). En el contexto en el que lo utilizamos, tiene una doble utilidad: como enfoque metodológico, nos permite comprender más de cerca la experiencia de Charlie, y como forma de describir cómo Charlie le da sentido a su experiencia. La manera como Charlie 'mira y escucha desde dentro' se ilustra y analiza a través de una narrativa visual.

Abstracts in French and German still to come

'Looking and 'listening-in': A methodological approach to generating insights into infants' experiences of early childhood education and care settings

Infancy (birth to 18 months) is now almost universally recognised as a period of foundational development and heightened sensitivity to the effects of positive and negative experiences (see, for example, National Scientific Council of the Developing Child 2004). Not surprisingly, therefore, increasing attention is being given to infants' experiences of early childhood education and settings. Few studies, however, endeavour to investigate, from the perspectives of the infants themselves, what their daily lives are like in these settings, most likely because of the multiple and complex challenges involved. In this paper, we describe an observational approach, which we refer to as 'looking and listening-in', that we have used to try to understand the experience of one infant, Charlie, in an Australian family day care home. Encompassing constructs from a range of theoretical perspectives, looking and listening-in has dual utility: as a methodological approach for helping us, as researchers, to edge closer to understanding Charlie's experience, and as a way of describing how Charlie, himself, made meaning of his experience.

The article begins with a brief overview of the still relatively small corpus of naturalistic studies that have investigated infants' experiences of ECEC settings. We then describe the larger study from which this article is drawn. Next, we explain what we mean by looking and listening-in and provide a brief overview of the

phenomenological, socio-cultural and social cognition perspectives from which we derived this notion. After introducing Charlie, we explain our methodology. We then construct and 'read' a visual narrative as an example of Charlie's looking and listening-in and of the insights that can be gleaned through the use of video as an observational tool. Finally, we reflect on the utility of our looking and listening-in on Charlie's looking and listening-in as a methodological approach, and its potential for researching in participatory ways with infants.

Investigations of Infants' Experiences of Early Childhood Education and Care

Settings

A relatively small number of studies reported in Englishⁱ have used naturalistic methods to investigate the experiences of infants aged up to 18 months in ECEC settings. Several have focussed on infants' experiences of their transition to their ECEC setting (see, for example, Dalli 2000; Datler, Datler & Funder 2010; Degotardi 2008; Thyssen 2000). Others have investigated infants' emotional lives (Elfer 2006), social style (Løkken 2000), communicative styles (White 2009), and friendships with peers (Greve 2009) including their 'greeting and welcomes' (Løkken 2004), while Leavitt (1994) explored power and emotion in the lived experience of infants and toddlers in ECEC settings.

The richness of these studies in illuminating aspects of infants' experiences has highlighted the value of broadening investigations beyond the earlier reliance on

psychological studies of infants in ECEC settings. Collectively, these naturalistic studies have employed a variety of theoretical and interpretative lenses, including phenomenology (Greve 2009; Løkken 2000; 2004), psychoanalysis (Elfer 2006; Datler et al. 2010), and Bakhtinian social philosophy (White 2009). In what she describes as a multi-theoretical interpretative approach, Leavitt (1994) drew on phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and critical, postmodern and feminist theory, while Dalli's (2000) 'critical polytextualist reflections' were informed by social constructionist, attachment and temperament theories.

The Infants' Lives in Childcare Project

Like the Dalli (2000) and Leavitt (1994) studies, the Infants' Lives in Childcare project (Sumsion, Harrison, Press, McLeod, Bradley & Goodfellow, 2008-11), from which the present article is drawn, is also underpinned by a commitment to theoretical eclecticism. It aims to investigate the experiences of infants in Australian family day care homes and centre-based long day care and to edge closer to the possibility of understanding the lived experiences of infants' settings from the perspectives of the infants themselves. A secondary and related aim is to contribute insights into ways of researching with infants in participatory and inclusive ways. The study focuses on infants aged up to approximately 18 months, at a time of life when they are not usually able to articulate their experiences easily through words. By lived experience, we refer to ways in which infants make meaning of 'what is going on around and "within" them, a process that mixes memory, desire, anticipation,

relations with others, cultural patterns, bodily feelings, sights, smells and sounds' (Bradley 2005, 7-8).

We are using mosaic methodology, derived from the mosaic approach (Clark 2005, Clark and Moss 2001) to draw together data gathered from and interpreted by members of our research team, carers, parents, and where possible, older children attending the ECEC setting and the infants themselves. Our commitment to theoretical eclecticism as an important aspect of mosaic methodology stems from our belief in the value of bringing together different theoretical perspectives into productive dialogue. It also guards against the 'certainty' and premature closure that can arise when working with only one theoretical perspective. In reminding us of the impossibility of conclusively knowing or understanding infants' experiences from their perspectives, it engenders a necessary tentativeness and humility concerning the limits of our insights.

Theoretical frames

In keeping with the theoretical eclecticism characterising the larger project, this article, too, is informed by several theoretical perspectives, namely phenomenology, social constructivism, and social cognition. Other theoretical perspectives (e.g., psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, narrative) offer equally valuable insights and are utilised in the larger project – but for reasons of manageability are not incorporated into this article.

We have drawn on phenomenological perspectives with the aim of presenting an ‘insider’ (i.e., the infant’s) view of life in family day care. Experience is social as well as personal (Dewey 1938), however, and ECEC settings are social and cultural contexts in which infants encounter life in groups. Hence, we also draw on understandings from socio-cultural theory – particularly that learning is mediated through complex interactions involving multiple agents (Plowman and Stephen 2008; Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez and Angelillo 2003) – to examine how Charlie, the infant at the centre of this article, engages in shared endeavours. In addition, we turn to social cognition theory for insights into the complex interplay of social skills that develop during infancy (Carpenter, Nagell and Tomasello 1998; Striano and Reid 2006; Williams, Ontai and Mastergeorge 2010), including the ability to interpret observed behaviour and to create shared understandings in order to interact effectively with others (Frith and Frith 2007; Moll and Tomasello 2007). Underpinning and connecting these diverse theoretical perspectives is our recognition of infants’ sophisticated abilities to ‘express meanings through their bodies, with their voices and with their whole appearance’ (Greve 2010, p. 79). Indeed, gestures and expressed emotion can constitute an infant’s first language (Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson and Hundeide 2010). As researchers, we need to find ways of understanding that language, if we are to come near to understanding what life is like for infants in ECEC settings, from the perspectives of the infants

themselves. Looking and listening-in, we suggest, offers a potential way forward in understanding infants' language and perspectives.

'Looking and Listening-in'

Each theoretical perspective referred to above contributes different concepts to our notion of looking and listening-in, a deliberately broad term with scope to encompass a diversity of observational-related ways of making meaning, as we elaborate below.

Phenomenological perspectives

Writing from a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective derived from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, van Manen (1990) highlights the value of close observation. By close observation, he means endeavouring to reduce the distance between researcher and those who are the focus of the research. Thus, to understand infants' lifeworlds in ECEC settings, ideally we would find a way to enter their lifeworlds. In practice, that is impossible, but van Manen suggests that we can edge closer by cultivating hermeneutic alertness. According to van Manen, hermeneutic alertness involves being alert to experiential narratives – in this case, from infants' lifeworlds – and reflexive when interpreting their meaning. Hermeneutic alertness may seem unremarkable in an adult researcher's looking and listening-in repertoire, given adults' generally extensive experience of narrative and, presumably, the inclination of qualitative researchers to reflexivity. With its focus on narrative awareness and

reflexivity, the relevance of hermeneutic alertness to infants' looking and listening-in, however, may seem questionable. Yet Nelson (2006), presents compelling evidence of narrative comprehension and construction, and implicitly reflexivity, in the monologues of a two year old child. Conceivably, then, younger, pre-verbal infants could engage in narratively-organised, unspoken monologues as a way of making sense of their experiences.

Van Manen's (1990) notion of close observation shares some similarities with Rinaldi's (2005) notion of listening. Both emphasise openness, sensitivity, deep awareness, interpretation, and simultaneously, a suspension of judgement. This kind of listening, according to Rinaldi (20), involves 'listening not just with our ears, but with all our senses (sight, touch, smell, taste, orientation)'. In that sense, it is deeply phenomenological. It is also intentional in that it is often triggered by 'curiosity, a desire, a doubt, an interest' (2). While Rinaldi's interpretation seems readily applicable to infants' meaning-making, it could also describe ways in which adult researchers might try to gain insight into the meaning that infants make of their experiences.

Socio-cultural perspectives

In contrast to the social-ontological and corporeal emphasis of phenomenological perspectives, socio-cultural perspectives emphasise the intentional and interconnected nature of looking and listening and their centrality to learning

through participation. As Rogoff et al. (2003, 176) point out, 'children everywhere learn by observing and listening-in on activities of adults and other children'. To Rogoff et al. observing and listening-in is an active, intentional process that involves paying focused attention; it is not passive or incidental. Observing and listening-in, is generally a prelude to joining in and participating in a shared endeavour. Infants, for example, often observe and listen-in to what is going on within play activities as a precursor to gaining access to other children's play (Greve 2009). Learning through observing and listening-in, for infants and adult researchers alike, is mediated through complex interactions with multiple agents, including people, objects and cultural tools, such as language, artefacts and social practices (Wertsch 1998). Thyssen (2000) highlights the importance of infant-object interactions in facilitating relations with others, while more recently, Olsson (2009) and Lenz Taguchi (2010) have drawn attention to material objects as active agents in constructing young children's experiences of their ECEC settings. In the looking and listening-in episode documented in the visual narrative later in this article, a toy cash register seemed to play an important part in mediating Charlie's experience. Equally, the video equipment and technologies used in the current project actively mediated our research team's looking and listening-in.

Social cognition perspectives

We now turn to social cognition perspectives for examples of socio-psychological constructs that can provide insights into social behaviours. Space constraints

preclude us from including more than a small number here, but elsewhere (Sumsion, Harrison, Press, McLeod, Goodfellow and Bradley in press) we have discussed infant gaze (Aslin 2008). These constructs are premised on the assumption that it is possible to make inferential interpretations about the meanings of particular actions (Sommer et al. 2010). From this premise, infants' social behaviours reflect their capacity to initiate intentional and culturally appropriate actions, and to read the intentions and predict the behaviours of others (Barresi 2007; Moll and Tomasello 2007; Tomasello et al. 2005). Social cognition perspectives provide tools for interpreting in fine grained detail how infants go about gathering and making sense of information from their environment (Clearfield, Osborne and Mullen 2008). Used 'sensitively and empathetically', they can assist in reconstructing infants' assumptions and intentions from observations of their 'expressivity, actions and utterances' (Sommer et al. 2010 120).

Social looking is one aspect of social behaviour. Infants use many kinds of social looking for a wide range of purposes, including initiating interactions, seeking comfort and sharing emotions (Clearfield et al. 2008). Carpenter et al. (1998) identify five major social-cognitive and communication skills associated with infants' social looking: joint engagement (looking at the face of the other person); communicative gestures (bringing an object into a space between themselves and the other person); attention following (attempting to determine what the other is actually focussing

on); imitative learning (following the behaviour or intention of the other); and referential language (using linguistic symbols).

Social referencing is a particular kind of social looking behaviour that involves 'the use of another person's emotional reaction to guide our responses to novel situations' (Frith and Frith 2007, 2). Infants' social referencing is generally considered to include 'an **observation** of an event or object, a feeling of **uncertainty**, followed by **a look**, and an intention to **seek information**' (Clearfield et al. 2008, our emphases).

Collectively, then, phenomenological, socio-cultural and social cognition perspectives contribute a rich mosaic of constructs for understanding observational-related ways of making meaning through 'looking and listening-in'. In the remainder of this article, we explain methodological details of our looking and listening-in; construct a visual narrative to portray an episode of Charlie's looking and listening-in; and, drawing on constructs introduced earlier in this article, write our interpretative account of the narrative. First, though, we briefly introduce Charlie.

Charlie

Charlie is 14 months old. At the time data collection commenced, he had been attending family day care one day a week for four months. Charlie is the youngest of

five infants in this family day care setting, and one of two infants in the setting who participated in the Infants' Lives in Childcare project.

Our looking and listening-in: Methodological details

Ten visits were made to Charlie's family day care setting across an eight week period. Visits were usually two to three hours in duration. Data were generated via a range of methods including observational and reflective notes, video, parent and carer interviews and the completion of a time use diary. Approximately 10 hours of video footage were taken, with the intent of conveying experiences and behaviours that seemed typical of Charlie's lived experience in the family day care setting and to generate data that can provide more detail than a written observational record.

From this footage, the research team identified episodes for closer analysis, using criteria that varied according to the nature and focus of proposed analyses. As Charlie appeared to spend a lot of his time in the setting looking and listening-in, this article reports on an analysis of an episode that captures instances of his looking and listening-in.

Selected episodes of his looking and listening-in were compiled and condensed into a 15 minute edited video. The video served as the basis for a group discussion involving Charlie's carer, his mother, and two members of the research team. The main purpose of the discussion was to elicit the interpretations of Charlie's carer and mother. We also wanted to gain their feedback on our interpretations and to invite

and co-construct alternative readings. The discussion was videotaped and some sections subsequently transcribed. In effect, we engaged in what Ødegaard (2006) describes as the construction of 'co-narratives' drawn from information and interpretations provided by several participants. Co-narratives allow differing voices to be blended, and elaboration of the local, socio-cultural contexts in which the events occurred.

Comments from Charlie's mother and carer reaffirmed our initial impression that Charlie indeed did a lot of looking and listening in, both at home and in the family day care setting. For example, after viewing segments of the edited video, Charlie's mother responded:

All the time, he watches everything we do ... things that you wouldn't even think he was watching ... making dinner or cups of tea, that sort of thing. He's recently taken to pushing a chair close to ... the kitchen bench and he'll get up there and try and do, like he knows about putting tea bags in cups and that sort of thing ... he watches and observes everyone and everything, I feel, and finds out what to do: 'What are they doing?' and 'I should copy that'.

To understand more about what Charlie's looking and listening-in entailed, and what part it might play in his experiences in his ECEC setting, we selected several instances for closer analysis. Consistent with van Manen's (1990) notion of hermeneutic awareness, we gave priority to episodes that conveyed to us a cogent

narrative. By narrative, we mean an account of events about 'people acting in a setting, and happenings that befall them', with those happenings having some relation to the people's 'intentional states' (Bruner 1991, 7).

In this article, we focus on a brief representative episode of Charlie's looking and listening-in. Initially, we watched the episode repeatedly, including frame-by-frame (35 stills-per-second) when we wanted a particularly fine grained view. We then transcribed the episode using Inqscribe video analysis software (Inqscribe©, 2005-2009). Next we selected from the transcribed video a series of photographic stills that best conveyed the essence and sequence of those episodes. The stills were from a time period of one minute, 33 seconds (see photographs #1 to #11). We chose stills in preference to the video footage itself because they lend themselves to fine-grained and repeated examination of images and provide detail that may have gone unnoticed, had we relied on our capacity to observe miniscule details in video footage.

In constructing the visual narrative we were guided by Labov and Waletzky's (1967) analytic method, as cited in Patterson (2008) and interpreted by Mishler (1986). According to Labov and Waletzky (1967) cited in Bruner (1991), narratives are essentially about two overarching questions: What happened? And why is what happened worth telling? Moreover, Labov and Waletzky contend, underlying those

questions are a series of questions that all narratives set out to address (Patterson 2008).

Labov and Waletzky's method has limitations, particularly in its focus on events rather than on the teller's experience of those events (see Patterson 2008). However, its usefulness for analysing narratives of specific events is particularly relevant for our purpose in this article. Essentially, it involves extracting narratives from textual and visual data and presenting the narrative in the form of numbered sentences or clauses, and analysing them according to their functions. Functions and questions, as summarised by Patterson (2008), typically include some or all of the following,

- Abstract – what is the story about?
- Orientation - who, when, where?
- Complicating action - then what happened?
- Result / resolution - what finally happened?
- Evaluation - so what? Why is it worth telling?
- Coda – how does what happen relate to the present?

We used this structure to construct and read, or interpret, the following visual narrative. The abstract and orientation precede the visual narrative which consists of the photographs portraying the complicating actions and ends with a resolution. The evaluation and coda that follow represent our reading of the visual narrative.

Charlie's looking and listening-in

(Abstract) The visual narrative involves Charlie, Bianca (a same-aged peer), a toy cash register and the carer, who is out of range of the camera. It represents one episode that highlights Charlie's extensive repertoire of looking and listening-in strategies.

(Orientation) Bianca is sitting at a low table with the carer. She is playing with a toy cash register that requires plastic 'money' to be inserted into colour matched slots. To open the cash register till, the corresponding colour-coded lever on the front must be pushed. Bianca has not yet made an association between colour coded plastic pieces (i.e. the money), the colour coded levers and how these will open the cash register.

Charlie is sitting nearby on a mat with some toys. He is alone as other infants and the carer have moved away to do other things. He looks around and notices Bianca playing with the cash register. He gets up from the mat, moves to the table and climbs onto a chair next to Bianca.

The carer points to where the money should be placed in a slot in the cash register and says to Bianca: 'Put it in. See if we can find some more money'. Charlie, aware of the carer's directions to Bianca, and also aware of a piece of plastic 'money' on the floor, gets down from his chair and picks up the money. Charlie stands up and is about to walk back to his chair. He stops, then looks at the carer but she does not

make eye contact with him. The carer says to Bianca, 'Keep going. ... Good girl', then turns toward Charlie and says: 'Got some money? Good boy. Bring it over'.

(Complicating actions) We now move to the first photograph in the visual narrative (See Figure 1). The multi-panel representation conveys that events are taking place concurrently as well as sequentially.

Please insert Figure 1 here

Reading the Visual Narrative

In keeping with Labov and Waletzky's (1967) notion of evaluation as a component of narrative analysis, we now ask, 'So what? What do we see in the detail of this narrative that is worth telling? And more specifically, 'What does this particular sequence of photos tell us about Charlie's looking and listening-in?' Before proceeding though, we note that multiple lines of interpretation could be followed in reading the visual narrative. For example, following Charlie's mother's observation of his behaviour at home, referred to previously, he may have simply wanted to do what others were doing. Or, consistent with Williams et al.'s (2010) conclusion that object-oriented behaviours can act as a catalyst for peer interaction, Charlie may have approached the cash register primarily as a means of engaging socially with Bianca. Alternatively, he may have viewed Bianca as a more knowledgeable peer who could show him how the cash register worked.

As noted previously, the narrative begins with Charlie sitting on the mat before approaching the table where Bianca was playing with the cash register (see orientation). Tuning in to what was happening in other parts of the room, he seemed aware of, and sensitive to, the 'listening context' (Rinaldi 2005, 21). Interest and desire often lie 'behind the act of listening' (Rinaldi, 20), and Charlie may have been thinking, 'Something interesting seems to be happening over there ... I'll go over and find out about it'.

Once at the table, he observed closely the activity around the cash register and listened intently to the carer's directions to Bianca (see orientation). He responded to the carer's directions, although they were not intended for him, by picking up a piece of plastic money that, unknown to the others, was lying on the floor, and which he presumably had noticed previously. Here Charlie's actions embodied the focused looking and listening-in on the activities of adults and other children that, from socio-cultural perspectives, generally precedes joining in and participating in those activities (Greve 2009; Rogoff et al. 2003). They also show how observant his earlier scanning of the room had been.

Photograph #1 shows Charlie carefully positioning the chair, again highlighting the intentional and purposeful nature of his looking and listening-in. ('There is something interesting about this object. I want to find out about it. I'm going to set myself up so that I can reach it'). Photograph #2 captures Charlie's exploration of the

functions of the cash register ('How does this work?'). His focus on the cash register (not Bianca), reminded us of the active role of material objects in mediating infants' experiences (Lenz Taguchi 2010; Olsson 2009; Thyssen 2000).

Photographs #3 to #9 portray a new complicating action: the carer asking Bianca to show Charlie how to use the cash register, just as Bianca appeared ready to leave the table. The cash register now became a focus for potential social engagement. In an example of attention following (Carpenter et al. 1998), Charlie turned to Bianca, as if to ascertain what she was focussing on and, possibly, her intention. ('Do you want to show me? Do you know how it works?') (#3). Touching Bianca's arm for emphasis, an example of social referencing (Clearfield et al. 2008), Charlie then appeared to verify his interpretation of the carer's comment to Bianca ('So you think Bianca can help me?') (#4). In #5, he moved his upper body forward, seemingly in an encouraging gesture to Bianca ('I'd like you to help me; let's give it a go'). Two kinds of social looking occurred here: joint engagement (Carpenter et al. 1998) and social referencing, this time to Bianca (Clearfield et al. 2008). Photographs #6 and #7 illustrate a further example of social looking in Charlie's communicative gesture to Bianca (Carpenter et al. 1998), and his careful watching as the plastic money changed hands. In #8, consistent with socio cultural perspectives and in yet another type of looking and listening-in, Charlie seemed to be hoping to learn from Bianca whom he may have now anticipated would be more knowledgeable than he.

The third, and final, complicating action takes place in Photographs #9 to #11, when Charlie appeared to realise that Bianca didn't know how to use the cash register, and so couldn't show him how to use it. As Bianca started to get down from her chair, Charlie physically repositioned himself, as if trying to re-engage with her ('Why are you going? Don't go yet! We've got more work to do') (#9). As an attempt at joint engagement (Carpenter et al. 1998), it was ultimately unsuccessful. Once more, Charlie looked intently at the cash register (#10) before directing another social referencing look (Clearfield et al. 2008) to the carer ('Why did Bianca leave? Are *you* going to show me how it use it?') (#11). Having gained little response from either Bianca or the carer, and still not knowing how to use the cash register, Charlie climbed down from his chair and moved away (resolution).

Discussion and conclusion: the coda

In this coda to the narrative (Labov and Waletzky 1967) we ask two questions. First, what have we learnt from our looking and listening-in on Charlie's looking and listening-in? Second, to what extent has our looking and listening in enabled us to edge closer to understanding Charlie's experience?

Our sustained and carefully focussed attention enabled us to 'see' repeated examples of what we subsequently called Charlie's looking and listening-in. As we watched and re-watched video data and closely examined still photographs of his looking and listening-in, we began to appreciate the fine-grained detail of fleeting, yet

critical, moments that otherwise may have been impossible to see. In addition, by expanding our interpretive resources, the use of multiple theoretical frames sensitised us to many possible meanings that most likely would have eluded us had we limited ourselves to a single perspective. We believe that sharing, revisiting and reinterpreting these fleeting moments afforded us at least some insights into Charlie's ways of negotiating his life world. At the very least, it has heightened our appreciation of and respect for the sophisticated social and cognitive capacities that infants bring to their everyday negotiations of ECEC settings.

We interpreted Charlie's looking and listening-in as intentional, strategic and social. Indeed, his openness to and awareness of his environment, the purposefulness with which he pursued what was of interest to him, and the range of strategies he used resonated with how we would like to think of ourselves as researchers. Our looking and listening-in, as we sought to understand Charlie's looking and listening-in, engendered a sense of having entered into a dialogical relationship with Charlie, grounded in an 'empathetic knowledge' (Brown, 2006, 188) derived from the experience-in-common of looking and listening-in. Whether our experience in trying to understand what life is like for Charlie in his family day care setting, may have given us some insights into his experiences of looking and listening-in as he negotiated the setting is debatable. It has reinforced, however, our belief that openness, humility and inconclusiveness are fundamental to developing and

sustaining research relationships with infants and renewed our commitment to continuing to explore possibilities for participatory ways of researching with them.

To this end, the cash register vignette reported in this article is best seen as an initial endeavour. Like any study involving intense scrutiny of very young children, it raises many ethical issues concerning, for example, surveillance, power, agency and infants' capacity to give their assent to their participation. As we explain elsewhere (Sumsion et al. in press), we are continuing to grapple with these and other ethical challenges. We are doing so, in part, through consciously cultivating our reflexivity – for example, by questioning our authority to make even tentative claims about infants' experiences of ECEC settings, least of all from their perspectives (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000), and by developing our capacity to engage in 'sustained meditation on a situation' and our patience to wait for that situation, and our understandings of it, to evolve (Brown, 2006, 185).

Painstakingly, and drawing on a range of data, methods and theoretical lenses, we hope to piece together fragments of understanding about Charlie's experience of family day care. We anticipate that, over time and collectively, these fragments will provide an increasingly comprehensive picture of Charlies' experiences, although we doubt whether we will ever confidently claim to represent Charlie's voice about his family day care experiences.

Already, and not surprisingly, we have learnt that no one infant's experiences can be considered representative. At the same time, however, we recognise that policy decisions and efforts to improve professional practice cannot wait for a 'perfect' study that produces incontestable and transferable evidence to guide policy and practice directions and developments. The visual narrative presented in this article highlights the sophistication of the strategies Charlie uses to negotiate his family day care setting, along with the possibility that those strategies may go unnoticed. Thus it reinforces the importance of pedagogical practices that recognise and build on infants' sophisticated capacities and structural conditions (for example, group size and adult-child ratios) in ECEC settings that support these practices.

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ⁱ Several studies have been reported in European languages.