A CASE STUDY OF BELONGING
FOR AN INFANT IN FAMILY DAY CARE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certificate of authorship iv  
Ethical approval v  
Acknowledgements vi  
Statement of contribution viii  
Other publications and presentations arising from the doctoral project x  
List of figures xii  
Abstract xiv  
Part 1 Introduction to the thesis 1  
  Introduction 3  
  Research aims 5  
  The policy context of infant family day care in Australia 5  
  Overview of the research project 7  
    Participants, data generation and analytic strategies 10  
    Smooth and striated space 12  
    Assemblage of Desire 13  
    Materiality 15  
    Micropolitics and segmentarity 16  
  Structure of the thesis 17  
  References 19  
Part 2 Literature review 25  
  Paper 1: Infants in Family Day Care: Stories of Smooth and Striated Space 27  
  Paper 2: Infants, Family Day Care and The Politics of Belonging 29  
Part 3 Methodology 31  
  Introduction 33  
  My role as researcher 33  
  The Infants’ Lives in Childcare study 36
Case study 36
Recruitment of participants 38
The case study context 38
  The family day care home 38
  Participants 39
Entering the family day care home 41
Data generation 41
  Visiting the family day care home 41
  Video observations 42
  What should and should not be videoed 43
  How to video – framing, zooming and positioning 44
  Video-stimulated interview 45
  Baby cam 47
  Data management 49
Selecting and working with data – encounters of theory, data and writing 50
Trustworthiness 53
Ethical considerations when conducting video research with infants 55
  Consent, assent and dissent in video research with infants 55
  Anonymity in video research with infants 56
References 58
Part 4  Encounters with data 63
  Paper 3: Assemblages of Desire: Infants, Bear Caves and Belonging in Early Childhood Education and Care 65
  Paper 4: Processes of Categorisation and the Politics of Belonging in Early Childhood Education and Care: An Infant’s Experience in Multi-Age Family Day Care 67
  Paper 5: Babies and Big Boys: Power, Desire and the Politics of Belonging in Early Childhood Education and Care 89
Part 5  Discussion and concluding thoughts 91
Paper 6: Macropolitics and Micropolitics of Belonging in Infant Early Childhood Education and Care

Thesis Conclusion

Contributions of the doctoral project

Contributions to family day care support services and educators

Contributions to policy

Challenges, limitations and future possibilities

The important (im)possibilities of researching infants’ perspectives and experiences

Expanded examinations of the role of materiality in belonging

The challenges and possibilities of researching in a single family day care home

Concluding comments

References

Appendices

Appendix A Family Day Care in Australia

Appendix B Parent Information Sheets

Appendix C Parent Consent Forms

Appendix D Educator Information Sheets

Appendix E Educator Consent Forms

Appendix F Sample Visit Summary Sheet

Appendix G Baby Cam Chapter

Appendix H Image Consent Forms
CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, understand that it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services, Charles Sturt University or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of thesis, subject to confidentiality provisions as approved by the University.

Tina Stratigos
5 August 2015
ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval for the research contained in this doctorate was obtained from the Charles Sturt University Human Research Ethics Committee (2009/19).
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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

This is a statement of my contribution to the journal papers prepared for and contained within this thesis. Listed below are the titles and publication status of the journal papers written by me under the supervision of Professors Jennifer Sumson and Ben Bradley.

I certify that all data generation and analysis was completed and all papers were written by me. The first two papers listed below include both of my supervisors as co-authors. In these cases I had primary responsibility for all aspects of the papers including conceptualisation of the papers, review and interpretation of the literature, and manuscript preparation and revision. The co-authors of these two papers agree to their inclusion in this doctoral research submitted for examination.


Please note that all the above papers are presented in the thesis in their submitted or published format, hence some variation in formatting and referencing exists in accordance with the required style format for the various journals and inevitably some repetition exists across the papers.

16 July 2015
Tina Stratigos
Date

15 July 2015
Jennifer Sumson (Principal Supervisor)
Date

16 July 2015
Ben Bradley (Associate Supervisor)
Date
OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS ARISING FROM THE DOCTORAL PROJECT

Publications


Presentations


LIST OF FIGURES

Methodology

*Figure 1.* Ages and attendance patterns of children at start of data generation 40

*Figure 2.* Three views of Peter wearing baby cam 48

Paper 3

*Figure 1.* Peter approaches and attempts to enter the bear cave

*Figure 2.* Peter looks toward Cheryl

*Figure 3.* Peter cries briefly

*Figure 4.* Peter enters the bear cave while Cheryl speaks with the children

*Figure 5.* Peter inside the bear cave while the children wait for Cheryl to return

*Figure 6.* Peter and another child look out of the bear cave at Cheryl

Paper 4

*Figure 1.* Peter sits in his highchair and looks towards the older children 76

*Figure 2.* The older children sit together around the table 76

*Figure 3.* Mitchell approaches Peter for a cuddle and kiss 77

*Figure 4.* Ryan cuddles Peter 78

*Figure 5.* Ryan gives Peter what he called a 'sloppy kiss' 78

*Figure 6.* Ruby pulls Peter back towards her before taking the toy and placing it out of his reach 79

*Figure 7.* Ruby directs the boys as they push trucks past Peter 79

*Figure 8.* Peter appears startled as Ruby suddenly pulls him away from Mitchell 80

*Figure 9.* Ruby closes her eyes and places her cheek on Peter’s head 80

*Figure 10.* Peter becomes increasingly distressed as Ruby tries to restrain him 81
Figure 11. Peter leans his body forward as he watches the boys on the seesaw

Figure 12. Peter on the seesaw with Ryan as Mitchell watches on

Figure 13. Approximation of Peter’s view while on the seesaw captured by a head mounted camera worn by Peter

Paper 5

Figure 1. Toby points to Peter’s dummy (pacifier) or ‘soot’

Figure 2. Toby laughs about not having a bottle

Figure 3. ‘He’s a baby’, says Cheryl inclining her head to the side

Figure 4. Peter leans into the car

Figure 5. Cheryl tells Toby he can stay in the car

Figure 6. Peter hits Toby’s hat

Figure 7. Toby abandons the toy bike as Peter reaches for it
This thesis is about belonging in infant early childhood education and care (ECEC). A sense of belonging is widely acknowledged as an essential aspect of young children's wellbeing and plays a central role in a number of early childhood curriculum frameworks internationally, including Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF). However, the limited conceptualisation of belonging in the EYLF and what a focus on belonging might do in ECEC have been questioned. Indeed, belonging tends to be poorly defined and theorised across a range of disciplines and is often used as a taken-for-granted or self-explanatory concept. The EYLF focuses on the experience of belonging, particularly social, cultural and emotional belonging; but ignores the dynamic, political processes through which belonging works. The risk is that the emphasis on belonging, which holds the potential to contribute to social justice perspectives in ECEC, is dismissed simply as a romantic notion. It is important, therefore, to seek more complex ways of thinking about belonging and develop understandings about how belonging works in young children’s everyday lives in ECEC.

Infants’ social lives in ECEC are most commonly theorised in terms of attachment theory rather than through the lens of belonging. However, the applicability of attachment theory, with its almost exclusive focus on dyadic adult-infant relationships, to the complex social environments found in ECEC has been questioned. For example, it has been argued that attachment theory offers insights into only one aspect of infants’ social worlds and that other, broader lenses might reveal more of infants’ complex social abilities. Questions remain about what insights into infants’ social lives in ECEC might be afforded by a belonging lens.

The aim of the doctoral project reported in this thesis was to investigate how belonging ‘worked’ for an infant in ECEC, particularly in relation to his belonging within the multi-age group of children, and what roles he played in how belonging worked. To this end, a 10-month longitudinal case study of belonging was conducted with Peter between the ages of 8 and 18 months in a family day care (FDC) setting. Data generation included video observations of Peter at FDC with accompanying field and reflective notes and a video-stimulated interview with Peter’s educator and parents. The data were brought into an encounter with concepts from Deleuze (such as
assemblage, desire and micropolitics) and ideas from existing literature about how belonging operates (such as axes and politics of belonging) in an effort to produce new thinking about how belonging worked for Peter in the FDC setting.

The study suggests that belonging for Peter was not just about a dyadic relationship with a significant adult, but a complex and dynamic political process that was negotiated through interactions and relationships within the whole FDC group. The important roles played by materiality and processes of categorisation in how belonging worked for Peter in ECEC were revealed. Vulnerabilities and competencies were identified in Peter’s capacity to access power and engage in active ways in political processes of belonging. The findings suggest that a political perspective on belonging is important and can contribute to and destabilise our accustomed ways of thinking about the social worlds of children in ECEC. In relation to infants, the politics of belonging have the potential to capture more of the complex and dynamic social worlds of infants beyond those afforded by more common theories of infant sociability such as attachment theory, with implications for theory, curriculum and practice.
PART 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS
Introduction

In 2009, *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations, 2009) was released. The EYLF is Australia’s first national curriculum framework for early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and outlines the principles, practices and outcomes that guide educators in their daily work with all children including infants. Fundamental to the EYLF is “a view of children’s lives as characterised by belonging, being and becoming” (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations, 2009, p. 7, emphasis in original). The EYLF describes the experience of belonging as “knowing where and with whom you belong” and “integral to human existence” (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations, 2009, p. 7). Belonging influences how children come to know themselves and others (Vandenbroeck, 1999) and contributes to the happiness and wellbeing of young children in ECEC (Brooker, 2014; Woodhead & Brooker, 2008). Sumsion and Wong (2011, p. 39) argue that “the centrality of the notion of ‘belonging’ in the EYLF holds potential for radical transformations” of ECEC into more inclusive and welcoming places thus making a “substantial contribution to the building of a more socially just society”.

While the emphasis on belonging in the EYLF has been welcomed, there has been criticism of the “limited” (Giugni, 2011, p. 14) or “everyday” (Peers & Fleer, 2014, p. 2) conceptualisation of belonging in the EYLF. Indeed, belonging tends to be poorly defined and theorised across a range of disciplines and is often used as a taken-for-granted or self-explanatory concept (Antonsich, 2010; Sumsion & Wong, 2011). In addition, a tendency in the literature for belonging to be conflated with other phenomena has resulted in little attention to belonging in its own right (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). In the EYLF the focus is on the experience of belonging, particularly social, cultural and emotional belonging (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). Belonging, however, is not a “static state” but “both a dynamic and political process” (Sumsion & Wong, 2011, p. 33). The political aspects of belonging are not acknowledged in the EYLF which pays “little attention to the limits and ethics of belonging” and which thereby “potentially obscures the possibility of not belonging” (Sumsion & Wong, 2011, pp. 37-38). A focus on the politics (Yuval-Davis, 2011) or axes (Sumsion & Wong, 2011).
of belonging provides a means for developing understandings about how belonging ‘operates’ or ‘works’ in ECEC. A political perspective on belonging means attention to, for example, the roles of power, resistance and desire in belonging; who does and does not belong, how this is decided and by whom; and how various belongings are performed, constructed and resisted (Sumsion & Wong, 2011).

Investigations into the complexities of how belonging works in ECEC have the potential to enliven the concept of belonging in the EYLF which Sumsion and Wong (2011) argue currently lies somewhat dormant.

In terms of infant ECEC, the emphasis on belonging in the EYLF poses challenges and possibilities. Unlike many equivalent early childhood curriculum documents, the EYLF does not have a specific focus on infants and toddlers as distinct from older children (Sumsion et al., 2009). Thus all the principles, practices and outcomes of the EYLF apply equally to infants as to 3- to 5-year-olds including, for example, that they will “develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities” (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations, 2009, p. 26). The lack of an explicit focus on children under 3 years of age has resulted in some educators questioning the relevance of the EYLF to their work with infants and toddlers (Arthur, Barnes, & Ortlipp, 2011).

While belonging has been used as a lens to examine the social lives of older children in ECEC (see for example Bone, 2014; Ebbeck, Yim, & Lee, 2010; Giugni, 2011; Macartney, 2012; Skattebol, 2005, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Richardson, 2005), it is rarely applied to thinking about the social lives of infants. Brooker (2014) is a notable exception, using belonging, among other concepts, to examine the transition of infants and toddlers into ECEC. Instead, much thought about the social lives of infants in ECEC is informed by attachment theory and focuses on the importance of dyadic adult-infant relationships. The predominance of dyadic adult-infant relationships as a conceptual frame for understanding infants’ social lives is challenged, however, by the increasing recognition of infants and toddlers as socially capable (Degotardi & Pearson, 2009; Press & Mitchell, 2014; Salamon, 2011; White, 2014). Degotardi and Pearson (2009) argue that new approaches to understanding the social lives of infants in ECEC that extend beyond attachment theory are required. While attachment theory tends to position an infant’s contribution to relationships as “relatively passive, fuelled by innate motivations and emotional needs” (Degotardi & Pearson, 2009, p. 149), Brooker
(2014, p. 32, emphasis in original) argues that a belonging lens can draw “attention to the child’s active contribution” to the ECEC setting. Thus examining the social lives of infants through the lens of belonging has the potential to make a contribution to theories of infant sociability by extending beyond a focus on dyadic adult-infant relationships and conceptualising the infant not as passive, but as an active agent in the processes of belonging.

**Research aims**

This thesis aims to examine belonging for an infant, Peter, in family day care (FDC). It does so by reporting on a longitudinal case study of belonging guided by the research questions:

- How does belonging work for Peter at FDC, particularly in relation to his belonging within a multi-age group of children?
- What roles does Peter play in how belonging works at FDC?

The remainder of this Introduction establishes the context in which this doctoral project was undertaken. I begin with a discussion of the policy context of FDC and infant care in Australia. I then provide an overview of the research project. In the overview I discuss participants, data generation and analytic strategies including the conceptualisation of belonging in the doctoral project, the use of Deleuze’s philosophy, and the focus on Peter’s experiences of belonging. The Introduction finishes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

**The policy context of infant family day care in Australia**

As in many other industrialised nations, rising workforce participation rates of Australian mothers of young children means that increasing numbers of infants are attending childcare for increasing periods of time. Before their second birthday, 22% of Australian children attend childcare (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Family day care, sometimes referred to internationally as family child care or childminding, is a widely used form of childcare in Australia in which a small group of children are cared for in the educator’s home. Details about the nature of FDC in Australia can be found in Appendix A. According to Family Day Care Australia (2008, p. 1), the non profit peak body representing FDC nationally, FDC is a “major provider of infant care”.

5
Family Day Care Australia (2014) contends that the unique offerings of FDC - small groups, one consistent educator, sibling care and a home like environment - are determining factors in many families choosing FDC. As discussed further in Paper 1 of this thesis, despite playing an important role in the ECEC landscape, FDC is under-researched. Very little research exists that can tell us about the daily experiences of the children who spend their time in FDC, or with a particular focus on the experiences of infants in FDC. This doctoral project makes a contribution to the limited research in this area.

Data generation for the doctoral project, in 2010 – 2011, occurred at a time of transition in Australian ECEC as a result of the introduction of the National Quality Framework. The National Quality Framework, established by the Australian Government in 2012, represents a major reform “to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services” nationally (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, p. 3). The introduction of the National Quality Framework meant a significant change for FDC from the previous licensing and regulatory system which was fragmented across states and territories and a quality assurance scheme designed specifically for FDC (Ishimine & Tayler, 2012). The National Quality Framework comprises a new National Law, National Regulations and National Quality Standard assessment and rating system that applies to FDC and centre-based services. The National Quality Framework has resulted in greater policy attention on FDC as a key sector of ECEC in Australia and changes to key aspects of FDC provision. FDC educators have been the focus of increasing professionalization (Cook, Davis, Williamson, Harrison, & Sims, 2013; Ishimine & Tayler, 2012). Whereas historically, FDC has been the least-qualified sector of ECEC (Ishimine & Tayler, 2012), from 2014 all FDC educators must hold or be working towards at least a Certificate III level education and care qualification. In addition, the number of below school age children that FDC educators can care for has been reduced from five to four.

The introduction of the EYLF was one of the first steps in the establishment of the National Quality Framework (Sims, Mulhearn, Grieshaber, & Sumsion, 2015). While FDC educators were not required to work with the EYLF until 2012, they were encouraged to implement the EYLF from its release in 2009. Data generation for the doctoral project, therefore, took place during a phase-in period when FDC educators and coordination units were beginning to work towards complying with the EYLF,
including the imperative to consider belonging in their work with young children. With the introduction of the EYLF, FDC educators were required, for the first time, to develop their program in accordance with a mandated curriculum framework. In the EYLF, all early childhood practitioners are referred to as educators. The application of this terminology to FDC practitioners highlights not only the increased qualification requirements but also the construction of their work as educational in nature (Cook et al., 2013). The emphasis on education can be opposed to a more traditional view of FDC before the EYLF as being primarily about care (Cook et al., 2013). This shift in thinking about FDC from emphasising care to a more educational focus is particularly relevant for how FDC educators work with infants. FDC educators who emphasise the care aspect of their work typically prioritise their own experiences of mothering and an attachment based pedagogy of dyadic mother-child relationships over formal training in their work (Cook et al., 2013). This shift from a care perspective to an educational perspective and the requirement to work with the EYLF, therefore, may have implications for how FDC educators think about belonging and the social lives of infants in FDC.

Overview of the research project

The doctoral project was embedded within the *Infants’ Lives in Childcare* (ILC) study which aimed to develop understandings about the lived experiences of infants (birth to 18 months) in ECEC (see Press et al., 2011; Sumson et al., 2011). The overarching question guiding the ILC study was “what is life like for infants in childcare?” The ILC study adapted Clark and Moss’ (2001) Mosaic approach, designed to assist educators to listen to young children in ECEC using a range of participatory approaches. This meant the bringing together of different disciplines and theoretical frames, as well as diverse types of data, in order to piece together understandings about the infants’ lives. The study aimed to develop understandings, as far as possible from the perspective of the infants themselves, about their lived experiences in both FDC and centre-based ECEC. The ILC study was grounded in a “commitment to recognising and valuing infants as competent social agents, co-constructors of and active participants in their social worlds, and capable of conveying their experiences” (Sumson et al., 2011, pp. 114-115).
The ILC research team included six chief investigators and three PhD students, supported by the Australian Research Council and industry partners Family Day Care Australia and KU Children’s Services (a major non-profit provider of centre-based ECEC services). I began with the ILC study as a research assistant generating data involving six infants, including Peter, in four FDC homes and also spending much time viewing, talking and thinking about the data with the ILC team. Part way through data generation I made the transition to doctoral student.

Although I am qualified and have worked as an early childhood educator, I have never worked in infant care and prior to my involvement with the ILC study had little knowledge of FDC. As a research assistant I became inspired by the work of the FDC educators I spent time with. In particular I was impressed by Cheryl’s dedication to her work and the children in her care. I felt strongly that representing FDC and the experiences of children in FDC in the ECEC literature was an important aim. I was also inspired by the powerful, in-depth video observations that had been generated. I felt that as I had been the one generating the data, I wanted to be involved in the processes of working with and writing about the data. As I spent time in FDC homes as a research assistant, I developed a strong interest in the relationships and interactions between the infants and older children at the multi-age FDC setting. Much of what I saw seemed to contradict what I had been taught in my undergraduate early childhood teacher education program about the social development of infants. This interest grew to inform the focus on belonging in this doctoral project.

The transition from research assistant to doctoral student, combined with conducting the doctoral project as part of a larger study afforded many opportunities. For example, I gained much valuable experience before commencing my doctoral project, working as a part of a multidisciplinary team of experienced researchers. I was able to share the data I was generating and engage in inspiring collegial discussions with the team which provided a network of support and critical friends. I also had the opportunity to work on a large, Government sponsored study that was well funded and planned by an experienced multidisciplinary team of researchers. Here, however, I wish to describe three challenges that arose from this situation and how these were addressed.

First, the aims of my doctoral project had to fit within the overall scope of the larger study – to develop understandings about what life is like for infants in childcare.
The scope of the ILC study was broad and could easily accommodate my growing interest in infants’ social lives with the other children in FDC and, eventually, belonging. The Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) of the ILC study implied that my doctoral project could fit neatly into the larger study and allow me to develop my own unique contribution to the overall picture of infants’ lives in childcare. From an epistemological and ontological perspective, however, the Mosaic approach of the ILC study was not a neat fit with the Deleuzian approach of my doctoral project. A mosaic implies that the various small parts will fit together precisely to form one distinct, larger image. This assumption is inconsistent with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) philosophy in which nothing is ever fixed or static, but is instead characterised by constant movement, becomings and heterogeneous connections. For myself, and some of the Chief Investigators of the ILC study, there was an epistemological and ontological shift over time. This shift involved moving away from the framing of the larger study as a mosaic with a distinct image as various aspects of the ILC study, including this doctoral project, began to take on lives of their own. This shift opened more possibilities for the doctoral project to develop in a way that still fitted within the broad intent and scope of the ILC study but without being limited by undue concern for how the doctoral project worked with other aspects of the larger study to form a cohesive and unified picture. This was particularly important for the development of the research questions that guided the doctoral project, the data selected for analysis and how the data were analysed. The issue of selecting data for the doctoral project is discussed further in the following two points.

The second challenge I want to focus on is that, in some ways, many decisions about what types of data were generated, and how, were made for me. As a research assistant for the ILC study, my role involved generating many kinds of data, such as temperament scales, vocabulary records, photographs taken by older children and time use diaries (see Sumsion et al., 2011). When I commenced the doctoral project, I needed to make decisions about which data, from the larger corpus of data already generated, were appropriate to helping me answer the questions of my doctoral project and fitted with the theoretical framework of the doctoral project. Conversely, I needed to recognise which kinds of data did not help me to achieve these aims. The subset of data utilised in the doctoral project and my rationale for selecting that data is
explained in detail in Part 3 of this thesis. Data not utilised in the doctoral project has contributed to the work of the ILC study team outside of this doctoral project.

Thirdly and relatedly, as a research assistant in a large study, I generated a greater quantity of data than I would have for the doctoral project alone. This necessitated decisions about how much of the data could reasonably be used given the in-depth, fine-grained manner in which I wanted to work with the data. I needed to consider the ethical aspects of this decision in terms of respecting the contributions of participants and obligations to Government and industry partners who funded the research. However, again, it is important to remember that this doctoral project was a part of the broader ILC study and that other members of the team would also be drawing on the data I generated. The decision was eventually made to develop a case study of belonging for just one infant to provide a stronger focus for the doctoral project and further define the subset of data being utilised. This decision fitted the conceptualisation of the ILC study as a series of case studies (Sumsion et al., 2011). The rationale for choosing the particular case study site is discussed briefly in the following section and in more depth in Part 3 of the thesis.

Participants, data generation and analytic strategies
I conducted a case study of belonging for Peter in Cheryl’s multi-age FDC home. Following Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 231), I chose Peter for the case study based on “information-oriented selection”, in other words because of the richness of the data available. Peter had been with Cheryl from 8 weeks of age and attended FDC three days a week. Cheryl had been a FDC educator for 17 years and was studying for a diploma level education and care qualification. Cheryl and Peter’s parents were very supportive of and enthusiastic about the research. I made 26 visits to Cheryl’s FDC home when Peter was aged between 8 and 18 months. The longitudinal nature of the case study made it possible to look at data from when Peter had limited mobility, then crawling, and finally when he was able to walk competently. Approximately 24 hours of video data and accompanying field and reflective notes were generated, a video-stimulated interview was conducted with Cheryl and Peter’s parents and a small amount of baby cam (camera worn by an infant on a headband) video generated.

The methodology was underpinned by a commitment to working within the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989) which asserts that the views and
opinions of children should be listened to and respected in matters that affect them. This thesis is consistent with calls for research that attempts to understand infants’ experiences of ECEC. For example, White (2011) argues that as a result of the international trend for increasing numbers of infants attending formal ECEC, greater research attention needs to be focussed on attempting to understand how infants themselves experience ECEC. More recently there has been a “groundswell” of research focussed on the experiences of infants and toddlers in ECEC (Press & Mitchell, 2014, p. 225). Press and Mitchell (2014, p. 227) argue that “rich and nuanced insights into infants’ actual experiences ... can be informative for early childhood policy and practice”. Thus in this doctoral project I have drawn on fine-grained video observations that afford close attention to Peter’s communication and behaviour that might express something about what was particularly meaningful to Peter or influential on his daily lived experiences at FDC in terms of how belonging worked. As discussed in more depth in Part 5 of the thesis, I have not taken the notion of understanding the experiences of a preverbal infant uncritically and am aware that any claims to understandings about how Peter experienced belonging must be tentative. I believe, however, that it is important to attempt to develop understandings, not from the perspective of Peter’s educator or parents as might be more typical in research with infants, but from the perspective of Peter’s experience and what appeared to matter to him.

The data were brought into an encounter with ideas from existing literature about how belonging operates, and concepts from Deleuze, in an effort to generate understandings about belonging for Peter at FDC. I draw on Yuval-Davis’ (2011) work around the politics of belonging and Sumsion and Wong’s (2011) axes of belonging to conceptualise belonging in the doctoral project as a complex, multidimensional and dynamic political (in the sense that it involves the exercise of power) process. I understand belonging, not just as a feel good concept, but as having the potential for a “darker side” (Woodhead & Brooker, 2008, p. 3) that involves inclusion as well as exclusion, nurture as well as discipline (Nagel, 2011). Belonging is never finalised, but is a political process that necessitates attention to flows of power as belonging is performed, constructed, challenged and negotiated in daily life. Thus developing understandings of how this political process of belonging works for different children in a range of ECEC contexts is important in helping educators to work in a meaningful
way with the notion of belonging in the EYLF. In Paper 2 of this thesis I examine the various ways belonging has been conceptualised across a range of disciplines in more detail.

Given the focus on how belonging worked, Deleuze and co-authors Guattari and Parnet were particularly useful for this doctoral project because of their fundamental interest in “how something works”, “the circumstances in which things happen: in what situations, where and when does a particular thing happen, how does it happen, and so on” (Deleuze, 1995, pp. 21, 25). Deleuze’s philosophical concepts were very much “a response to real problems” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 136) and were intended to be applied creatively to real life situations outside of philosophy where they could “make a difference in the world” (Massumi, 2010, p. 9). As the doctoral project has the potential to make a contribution to conceptualisations of belonging in ECEC and broader understandings about infant sociability, I felt that it was important to work with the data in a way that afforded the opportunity for new ways of thinking about belonging and infants. Theory and philosophy are useful in this respect because they provide something to think with in research beyond “normalized discourses” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 614) and “open new possibilities for thinking and doing” (MacLure, 2010, p. 277). The use of Deleuze’s philosophy in this doctoral project is examined in more depth in Part 3 of the thesis as well as Papers 3, 4 and 5 that make up Part 4. Following is a brief introduction to the main concepts from Deleuze used throughout the thesis, how they have been used in other ECEC research and how they are used in this doctoral project.

**Smooth and striated space**

For Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 475-476), smooth space is unbounded and heterogeneous, a space of variation and heterogeneity where tangled lines follow their own trajectory, “infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction”. Striated space, however, has clear boundaries and is characterised by fixed, predetermined reference points, structure and homogeneity. Importantly, neither space is considered better than the other and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that smooth and striated exist together in mixture, with the potential for flow back and forth. In ECEC, smooth and striated space have been used by researchers to “go beyond” (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 3) taken-for-granted or habitual ways of understanding practice, learning environments, and children’s behaviours. For example, Lenz Taguchi (2010) describes
the influence of a more or less smooth or striated space on the activities, spaces and materials provided for young children and how these influence what children are able to do, as well as the ways teachers observe and document children’s behaviours. Sellers (2013) drew on the same concepts to reconceptualise understandings of the relationship between children and curriculum in ECEC, and how children’s understandings of curriculum are performed through play. Gallacher (2005) develops understandings about how ECEC can be (re)smoothed and (re)striated by describing the interplay between adult control through rules, routines and structures, and toddlers’ developing abilities to take control of space, transgress boundaries and break or circumvent rules.

In this doctoral project, I put smooth and striated space to work in Paper 1 which examines the research literature in relation to infants in FDC. Lenz Taguchi (2010, p. 77) suggests that smooth and striated space can be used to analyse the “practices of structuring human thinking and action”. I use the concepts to develop understandings about the thinking and actions of researchers. Putting the concepts to work in relation to how research is approached contributes understandings about how smooth or striated space influence what researchers believe research can do, the questions researchers ask, the methods chosen to answer them, and ultimately, the research stories told.

Assemblage of Desire
Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of assemblage refers to “heterogeneous elements ... diverse things brought together in particular relations” (Wise, 2005, p. 78, original emphasis). These things, and the way they come together through a process of constant movement, express and do something (Wise, 2005). In recent years, assemblage has been increasingly used by researchers to understand the complexities of daily life in ECEC and challenge dominant ways of understanding children, educators and practice (see, for example, Blaise, 2013b; Duhn, 2012; Giugni, 2011; Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw, & Rowan, 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Sandvik, 2012). For example, Sandvik (2012, p. 207) describes assemblages of control and silence during an event between children and student teachers, developing understandings about the “complexity in pedagogical practices” and challenging the notion that educators are, and should be, in control in ECEC. Giugni (2011, p. 11) uses assemblage to address “political, historical and geographical entanglements of relationality between the
human and the non-human” in her activist practices in ECEC. Pacini-Ketchabaw (2012, p. 156) describes “clock-educator-child” assemblages in everyday ECEC events. Through these assemblages, the “productive, professional, and orderly early childhood educator” is produced while the “children materialize as ‘unruly’ human beings in need of intervention to encourage more organized behaviours” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012, p. 158).

In this doctoral project, as reflected in Papers 3 and 5 of this thesis, I have been particularly influenced by the work of Olsson (2009) on assemblages of desire. Olsson’s work has been important for my doctoral work for two reasons. Firstly, Olsson explicitly links Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of assemblage and desire. Deleuze and Guattari (2004) conceptualise desire in an unconventional way, not as a desire for something that is lacked, but as a productive “process of increasing expansion, connection and creation” (Colebrook, 2002, p. xxii). In ECEC research, Knight (2009) uses desire to understand young children’s urge to draw, and what they draw. Mozère (2006) troubles how young children’s identity is assigned and produced through social processes in ECEC that encourage control and conformity. She makes a connection between desire and agency and describes how desire can provide lines of flight away from predetermined identities. This link between desire and children’s agency is important for my doctoral project because it allows a re-imagining of infants, not as lacking or needy, but as capable of influencing their own life in ECEC through desire (Olsson, 2009). The French childcare centres in which Mozère (2007) researches are described as increasingly subject to external control that shapes the behaviours of educators and children. She argues that when educators are empowered to listen to children’s “languages of desire”, there is the possibility of escape from the strict boundaries demanded of staff and which influence their interactions with children (Mozère, 2007, p. 291). Importantly, and as reflected in the work of Olsson (2009), for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), assemblage and desire are intertwined. Assemblages are “compositions of desire” because the “rationality, the efficiency, of an assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it as much as it constitutes them” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 399). Thus when working with assemblage as an analytical tool in this doctoral project, I considered desire and how it works as a key aspect of assemblages.
The second way in which Olsson’s (2009) use of assemblage is influential on this doctoral project is the attention she pays to the various components of assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe assemblages as operating on two axes. On the first axis are the machinic assemblage, which refers to content, and the assemblage of enunciation, which refers to expression. On the second axis are processes of (re)territorialisation which stabilise, and deterritorialisation which destabilise the assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 503-504) are clear that it is important to pay attention to all these components - “[i]t is necessary to ascertain the content and the expression of each assemblage ... both what is said and what is done”, and “[t]he first concrete rule for assemblages is to discover what territoriality they envelop, for there always is one”. Olsson (2009) pays attention to each of these aspects as she analyses assemblages of desire in ECEC and it was this approach that influenced the way I used assemblage in this doctoral project. Purposefully paying attention to all aspects of assemblage pushed me to look for more in the data, opening new possibilities for thinking about how belonging was working for Peter at FDC.

**Materiality**

Materiality is not a Deleuzian concept however the work of Deleuze and Guattari can be conceptualised as post-humanist (Blaise, 2013a) and their work has made significant contributions to “the material turn” or “post humanist turn” in ECEC research (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 526). Materiality is closely associated with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of assemblage because it highlights “the relationships, not only between subjects and objects, but of a multiplicity of materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations that shift over time and through space” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012, p. 156). For example, researchers, many of them influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, are increasingly paying attention to the active role that non-human or material forces play in ECEC (see, for example, Blaise, 2013a; Gallacher, 2006; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Lenz Taguchi, 2010, 2011; MacRae, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Renold & Mellor, 2013). These researchers strive to recognise that we do not live in a purely social world, made up of only humans, but there are many other non-human forces that are “equally at play and work as constitutive factors in children’s learning and becomings” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 527). Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010, p. 527) argue that paying attention to what they call a relational materialist approach can challenge “habitual
and anthropocentric ways of seeing that are most often taken for granted in analysis of
educational data”. In addition to paying attention to non-human things, other ECEC
researchers have turned their attention to “the materiality of the body” (Skattebol,
2006, p. 513) and “the complexity of what a body presents in a material sense”
(Rossholt, 2009, p. 57). The materiality of the body is important in ECEC because
young children are often defined through their smaller, less able bodies (Skattebol,
2006), particularly for the youngest in ECEC whose bodies are undergoing rapid
changes (Rossholt, 2009). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Rossholt (2009)
argues that it is important when researching with very young children who have little
verbal language to pay attention to what bodies do, and what the affects of the body are.

In this doctoral project, the focus on materiality is directly related to Deleuze
and Guattari’s (1987) concept of assemblage. As previously suggested, it is important
to pay attention to all aspects of assemblages, including both content and expression.
Thus the role played in assemblages by material things, including bodies, objects, and
spaces must be considered. This materiality is not only significant in an assemblage for
what it does, but also for what it expresses.

**Micropolitics and segmentarity**

For Deleuze and Parnet (2006), the social world is political and made up of three types
of tangled lines – rigid lines of segmentarity, supple lines of segmentarity and the line
of flight or rupture towards an unknown destination. Looking for the various lines and
how they work affords the development of understandings about how the political
social world works. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 213, original emphasis) also argue
that “every politics is simultaneously a *macropolitics* and a *micropolitics*”.
Macropolitical processes are associated with rigidity, homogeneity, hierarchies,
standardisation and the known, while micropolitical processes are unpredictable,
supple flows of possibility that leak from and escape the macropolitical (Deleuze &
Guattari, 1987). In ECEC research, micropolitics and segmentarity have been used to
discuss the image of the child, the binary that separates children and adults in ECEC,
the rigidity of the influence of the State on ECEC, and the possibility for unpredictable
lines of flight to emerge in everyday life in ECEC (Olsson, 2009). Cumming, Sumsion,
and Wong (2015) discuss the importance of attending both to macropolitics and
micropolitics in discussions of workforce sustainability in ECEC. Blaise (2013a, p. 189)
draws on micropolitics and segmentarity to uncover new possibilities in gender/sexuality research in ECEC, paying attention to “small, everyday encounters as significant to the processes of change”.

In this doctoral project, I draw on the concepts of micropolitics and segmentarity in Papers 4 and 6. In Paper 4, I use Deleuze’s concept of segmentary lines developed with co-authors Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and Parnet (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006) to develop understandings of how processes of categorisation, as an important aspect of the politics of belonging, were at work for Peter at FDC. Paying attention to the three types of lines afforded understandings about the different ways that processes of categorisation were at work in Peter’s everyday life at FDC and played a role in Peter’s relationships and interactions with the other children. In Paper 6, I describe four micropolitical flows that were identified throughout the doctoral project, and which have the potential to disrupt and challenge macropolitical thinking about how belonging works in ECEC, how belonging is conceptualised in ECEC curriculum, and theories of infant sociability.

**Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is organised into five parts and consists of six papers interwoven with additional writing. Four of the papers are published, one is in press and one is currently under review. Two of the papers were led by me and co-authored with my supervisors and four of the papers are sole authored. Each of the papers is presented in this thesis in its published or submitted format therefore referencing styles differ to accommodate requirements of each journal and inevitably there is some repetition across the papers. An outline of the five parts of the thesis follows.

**Part 1** comprises this Introduction in which I introduce the research topic, outline the aims of the research, explain the policy context in which the research was conducted and provide an overview of the research project including participants and methods of data generation and analysis.

**Part 2** consists of two published papers. In Paper 1 – ‘Infants in family day care: Stories of smooth and striated space’ (published in Global Studies of Childhood, 3(3), pp. 265-275, special issue on Deleuze and Early Years Education, 2013) – I examine the research literature in relation to infants in FDC over the last 20 years. The concepts of smooth and striated space from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) are used to tease out
complexities in the research questions asked, the methods used to answer the questions and the stories the research tells. The paper highlights how little research is conducted with infants in FDC, particularly research that can tell us about infants’ everyday lives in childcare. In Paper 2 – ‘Infants, family day care and the politics of belonging’ (published in *International Journal of Early Childhood, 46*(2), pp.171-186, 2014) – I examine conceptualisations of belonging across disciplines in an attempt to begin problematising the notion of belonging in ECEC, particularly in relation to infants in FDC. The politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011) is identified as a potentially productive focus for research into belonging in ECEC.

**Part 3** comprises a detailed introduction to the methodology. I provide a rationale for the case study approach and discuss details of participants, methods of data generation and analysis, as well as addressing trustworthiness and ethical considerations associated with conducting video research with infants.

**Part 4** comprises three papers that present my thinking and writing produced through encounters with the data and concepts from the philosophy of Deleuze and co-authors Guattari and Parnet. Paper 3 – ‘Assemblages of desire: Infants, bear caves and belonging in early childhood education and care’ (published in *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 16*(1), pp. 42-54, 2015) – draws on an episode between Peter at age 15 months and the older children at FDC. The dynamic, complex, political and always unresolved nature of belonging and the roles played by objects, bodies, words and repeated actions are discussed. Paper 4 – ‘Processes of categorisation and the politics of belonging in early childhood education and care: An infant’s experience in multi-age family day care’ (in press *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 16*(3), 2015) – examines a key aspect of the politics of belonging: processes of categorisation. I draw on the earliest data of Peter when he was 8 to 9 months old and argue that while processes of categorisation play a complex and dynamic role in Peter’s experiences of belonging, they cannot tell the full story of belonging. Finally, Paper 5 – ‘Babies and big boys: Power, desire and the politics of belonging in early childhood education and care’ (published in *Global Studies of Childhood*, online first, 2015) – draws on two episodes of Peter with another child who was close in age to Peter and who joined the FDC setting towards the end of data generation. I draw on Sumsion and Wong’s (2011) three axes of belonging with a particular interest in what role Peter played in the politics of belonging.
Part 5 consists of a paper and a thesis conclusion. Paper 6 – ‘Macropolitics and micropolitics of belonging in infant early childhood education and care’ (under review International Journal of Early Years Education) – synthesises the major findings of Papers 4, 5 and 6 and discusses the contribution of the findings to understandings of belonging and infants’ social worlds in ECEC with implications for curriculum, theory and practice. In the thesis conclusion I address further contributions of the doctoral project for FDC and policy. I also address some of the challenges and limitations of the doctoral study and possibilities for future research.

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PART 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

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PART 3

METHODOLOGY
Introduction
In Part 2, I suggested that although belonging is an important and potentially powerful concept for early childhood education and care (ECEC), its limited conceptualisation in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) as well as the ambiguous conceptualisation of belonging across multiple disciplines, might render it meaningless. Thus I argued that the politics of belonging might provide a productive focus for research in ECEC because it would allow for investigations into the dynamic complexities of how belonging operates or works in everyday life in ECEC, thereby contributing to conversations about how belonging can be conceptualised and the work it can do in ECEC. In addition, Part 2 highlighted the lack of research in two areas. Firstly, despite family day care (FDC) being a widely used form of ECEC in Australia, there is little research conducted in Australian FDC settings. Secondly, there is little research that can tell us about the everyday experiences of infants in FDC.

In Part 3, I describe the methodological approach that guided my doctoral project that attempts to respond to these issues by examining how belonging worked in the everyday experiences of an infant, Peter, in FDC and what roles Peter played in how belonging worked. The Methodology begins with an examination of my role as researcher before describing the Infants’ Lives in Childcare study within which this doctoral project is situated, the case study approach, recruitment and details of the participants and FDC home, methods for generating and analysing data, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

My role as researcher
There are multiple aspects to how I as researcher was positioned in the research context, including my role in relation to Peter’s educator, Cheryl; my role in relation to the children; and my role in relation to the academy. The multiple positions can be described as simultaneously insider and outsider. In relation to Cheryl, there were three things that I believe helped me achieve, in some small way, insider status. Firstly, although I had never worked in FDC, I was a fellow ECEC educator and thus was familiar with aspects of everyday life in ECEC as well as some of the challenges educators face. Secondly, I was a ‘local’, researching in the Blue Mountains community in which I live. Finally, I am the mother of children who were, at the time, similar in age to those in the FDC home. Thus I was aware of the joys and challenges of
spending long periods of time in the home with young children. As the amount of time I spent in Cheryl’s FDC home increased, sitting on the carpet in the lounge room, on the grass in the backyard, standing by the fridge in the kitchen or squatting by the sandpit, clutching the camera and trying not to get in the way, I began to feel more like an insider. I got to know the families of Cheryl and the children, and Cheryl often chatted with me when the camera was off about such things as daily life and enquiring how the research was coming along.

At the same time as I began to feel in some small ways an insider in the FDC home, it is important to remember that I was, still, an outsider. I was not a usual presence in what was simultaneously an ECEC setting and a private home. Although I doubt Cheryl saw me as some sort of ‘expert’, I was still there on ‘official’ university business. I was the one, as Jones and McNamara (2004, p. 285) describe it, “wielding the camera” as opposed to “those being filmed”. Although I made all attempts to flatten any potential hierarchies, there was a divide between researcher and participant with potential implications for the flow of power (Jones & McNamara, 2004). I cannot know for certain the extent to which Cheryl may have felt my presence, at times, as an intrusion, and how much power she truly felt she had over the research process. I believe that Cheryl felt easier about my presence and observation because I made it clear that although at times she was being filmed, I was interested in Peter’s experience, not in making any assessment of Cheryl or her work.

I now turn to my role in relation to Peter and the other children. Fleer (2014, p. 6) argues that it is important for researchers working with young children in ECEC to think carefully about the way they are positioned “because the role they take gives different possibilities for building a respectful and genuine interaction between the child and the researcher, thus enhancing the validity of the data”. She suggests that researchers take:

an active role in the study context, not as someone who plays with children (anthropological or ethnographic view), or as someone who observes objectively (like a fly on the wall), but rather as holding the role of ‘the researcher’ with a specific position and task in the context. (Fleer, 2014, p. 5)

This was the stance that I took in relation to the children in the case study site. I felt that it would be unethical to refrain from any communication or interaction with the children, particularly when child initiated, however I did not want them to see me as
another educator because I felt that would compromise my ability to capture the ‘normal’ everyday life of FDC. At the same time I needed to acknowledge that I was part of the social situation being observed (Sørensen, 2014).

White (2011, p. 193) states that “it is nonsensical to think that an adult researcher can remain invisible in an early childhood setting or that their presence, and research activity, will leave no trace on participants”. She also suggests that researchers must “engage with young children sufficiently” to assist them “to interpret nuances with some contextual understanding” (White, 2011, p. 188). In my opinion it is impossible for a researcher not to be communicating something when generating data. The question becomes, then, what is it that I, as a researcher, wish to and/or do communicate? Is it that I am an unfriendly, non-communicative being that hides behind a camera, or is it that I am open to you and interested in your world? Lokken (2011) took a non-responsive observer stance in her research with toddlers so that her adult presence didn’t interrupt the toddler greetings she was videoing. Nevertheless, she found that the children noticed her and at times were interested in interacting with her. This led to feelings of unease on her part when she did not respond to children’s attempts to communicate with her. She also found that although she tried hard to be non-responsive with the toddlers, she inevitably was unconsciously communicating with the children anyway through her own facial expressions, even if this was only her “own (unconscious) frowning and/or smiling when behind the camera” (Lokken, 2011, p. 175).

When researchers engaging in video research in ECEC take a “respectful and engaging position with the child in the research context”, the research is more “authentic and holistic” and the “data is deemed ethically valid” (Fleer, 2014, p. 6, emphasis in original). The children in the case study site indicated that they accepted my role and presence in a number of ways. For the most part they paid me little attention (presumably because I was uninteresting) and appeared to carry on with their normal daily life. As I spent more time in the setting, however, the children at times engaged with me, not as an educator, but as a trusted adult who was interested in their lives. For example the older children in the case study site sometimes asked, “Where is Tina?” if they wanted to show or tell me something, or “Is Tina coming today?” At times older children asked me to read them a story or asked me to watch them perform a task. Peter showed his interest in me and comfort with my presence
Part Three: Methodology

by occasionally offering me an object or crawling over and sitting on my lap. In such situations I usually decided it was time to turn the camera off and instead follow the children’s lead. I felt that it was important to respond positively to these overtures to reinforce that I was a friendly, or at least benign, presence. I reasoned that if the children were uncomfortable with my presence this was more likely to influence their ‘normal’ way of being in the setting, than if they saw me as a potential partner for interaction. In this way I also communicated that they as individuals were more important to me than the data I might potentially generate (Sørensen, 2014). Thus while I didn’t actively encourage them to see me as a playmate or another educator, I did not actively discourage child-led interactions. In this way the children’s relationship with me was led by the children themselves as they offered me opportunities to help them develop a sense of comfort with the research process.

The Infants’ Lives in Childcare study

As explained in Part 1, this doctoral project fitted within the Infants’ Lives in Childcare (ILC) study which aimed to develop understandings about the lived experiences of infants in ECEC. The overarching question guiding the study was “what is life like for infants in childcare?” The study was conceived as a series of case studies of individual infants within the context of their early childhood settings. It aimed to bring together different disciplines and theoretical frames, as well as diverse types of data, in order to piece together a mosaic of understandings about the infants’ lives. Ethical approval for this doctoral project was covered by ILC study.

For the doctoral project I undertook a case study of belonging for Peter between late July 2010 and early June 2011. The data that I draw on for my doctoral work includes video observations and accompanying field and reflective notes, an interview with the infant’s educator and parents that used selected segments of video as a stimulus, and to a lesser extent, ‘baby cam’ (Sumson et al., 2011) footage.

Case study

A case study is an “intensive approach” to research that focuses on the in-depth study of a “phenomenon or a process as it develops within one case” (Swanborn, 2010, pp. 2, 9, emphasis in original). Through a case study, context-dependent, nuanced, intimate knowledge is developed that is essential for complex, expert understandings (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and for provoking new ways of thinking about the research topic.
This doctoral project is a case study of belonging for one infant in FDC: how belonging worked for the infant and what roles the infant played in how belonging worked. New understandings and ways of thinking were important for this project because of the lack of research conducted in FDC, the limited research that addresses infants’ experiences in ECEC, and the need for critical interrogations into what belonging can mean and how it works in ECEC.

The power of a case study is achieved through what Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 228 original emphasis) calls “the force of the example”. Massumi (2002, pp. 17-18) argues that the example is powerful because it is “singular … defined by a disjunctive self-inclusion: a belonging to itself that is simultaneously an extendibility to everything else with which it might be connected”. Thus a case study may be an example of belonging for a single infant but it can have far reaching effects beyond the local to capture something about the bigger picture of belonging and infants in ECEC more generally. St. Pierre (2011, p. 620) argues that the participant can be seen, not as “an object of knowledge – but rather a line of flight that takes us elsewhere – participants as provocateurs”. I argue that the same can be said for a case study.

I strove, as much as possible, to work in a smooth space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) as it is described in Paper 1 of this thesis. Firstly, this meant that I aimed to work with a close vision so that I was able to tell in-depth stories about belonging in Peter’s daily life. Secondly, I wanted the research to be characterised by shifting points of reference. This meant trying not to have predetermined ideas about what would be important but being open to the twists and turns that evolved throughout the research process. Thirdly, rather than telling a homogenous story of belonging that was in some way generalizable to all infants, I strove for heterogeneity and variation in which the story of individual experience is important. I decided therefore to focus on how belonging worked for just one infant. Yin (2009, p. 4) suggests “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena … [and] the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events”. This was especially important to me because I felt that what I saw happening at FDC was complex social phenomena and I wanted to engage with this complexity in a deep way. Focussing on a single case of belonging gave me the greatest scope to do this.
Recruitment of participants

Recruitment of participants involved a number of phases. Two of the chief investigators of the ILC study and I attended a meeting with my local FDC coordination team. Once the support of the coordination team was obtained, official approval was gained from the local council who sponsor the FDC coordination team. A member of the coordination team suggested Cheryl’s FDC home as a potential site and spoke with Cheryl about the research during a routine visit. Once it was ascertained that both Cheryl and Peter’s parents were interested in the study, I arranged to visit the FDC home to answer any questions and provide detailed information and consent sheets for participants. Appendices B, C, D and E contain parent and educator information sheets and consent forms.

The case study context

The selection of the case to study is an important consideration. One strategy suggested by Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 230) is “[i]nformation-oriented selection” in which case studies are selected “on the basis of expectations about their information content”; in other words, looking for those cases that are rich in the information they offer. This is the approach that I took. I chose to conduct a case study of belonging for Peter, an infant who I had visited at FDC for 10 months between the ages of 8 and 18 months. The following section provides details of the FDC home and participants.

The family day care home

Cheryl’s FDC home was situated in the Blue Mountains, a distinctive region that lies west of Sydney and is composed of towns and villages that lie along a ridge within the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park. The Blue Mountains region is less culturally and linguistically diverse than the greater Sydney region. According to the most recent census, 78% of Blue Mountains residents are Australian-born compared with 59.9% in the greater Sydney region (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). English is the only language spoken in 90.3% of Blue Mountains homes compared to 62.3% in the greater Sydney region (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Cheryl’s FDC home and the families who used her service reflected the dominant demographics of the region: Australian-born, English speaking. Both Cheryl and Peter’s parents expressed to me that they felt there was a good fit between the culture of Cheryl’s FDC setting
and Peter’s home and family. Peter’s mother suggested that Cheryl was considered by her children to be like a member of the family.

Cheryl was self-employed but worked within a FDC scheme run by the Blue Mountains City Council. The coordination unit of the scheme provided resources, support and monitoring to Cheryl and the families who used the service. For example, Cheryl was visited regularly by a member of the coordination unit who could offer support and advice, and she also attended a play group with other FDC educators one day a week. Cheryl’s husband and two adult sons also lived in the FDC home and were often home during FDC hours. Cheryl described her family as being very supportive of her work and they often interacted with the children and families. The children spent most of their indoor time in Cheryl’s lounge room where they had access to a variety of toys, books and objects stored in baskets and on shelves. Cheryl often borrowed books and toys from the library to provide variety. The children ate in the kitchen where the highchair and low children’s tables and chairs were located. Peter slept in a portable cot located either in the hallway or the master bedroom depending on the time of day. Nappy changes happened on a change mat on the floor wherever the group was located. A number of steps led down from the kitchen to the outdoor play space in the backyard. This was a large flat grassy area with some portable climbing equipment and a large sand pit. During summer Cheryl often set up water play on the grass with tarpaulins for shade. To one side was an enclosed vegetable patch where the children enjoyed activities such as exploring for snails, picking vegetables and growing sunflowers. There was a hard surfaced area where tables and chairs were located that were sometimes used for outdoor meals or to set up outdoor craft activities. A shed contained wheeled toys and other outdoor equipment.

Participants
Peter began at Cheryl’s FDC when he was 8 weeks old. His older sister Ruby started with Cheryl at a similar age. Their parents worked full time and Peter attended FDC three days a week from around 7.00am to 5.00pm and was cared for by his grandmothers on the other two days in his own home. Peter was 8 months old when data generation began and not yet crawling. By the end of the data generation phase of the study Peter was 18 months old and walking competently. Peter appeared to be very confident at FDC and to have a close and positive relationship with Cheryl. By 18
months of age he was physically very competent; however he showed little interest in communicating with words.

The group composition of the other children in care and their attendance patterns were stable and varied depending on the day of the week. All of the other children at FDC were significantly older than Peter, ranging from 20 months to 3 years and 4 months older than Peter. Peter’s older sister Ruby attended FDC with him one day per week. Figure 1 contains details of the children’s ages and attendance patterns at the start of data generation. Pseudonyms are provided for children who are reported on in Part 4 of the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter (age: 0.8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruby (Peter’s sister, age: 3.3)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan (age: 2.9)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>E (male, age: 2.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O (A’s twin, male, age: 2.4)</td>
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*Figure 1 Ages and attendance patterns of children at start of data generation*

Early in 2011 the attendance patterns changed. Peter changed his attendance to Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. This meant that he only spent 1 day a week with the much older group and 2 days a week with the younger group that included A and O. When Peter was 14 months old, an additional child, Toby, joined this younger group 1 day a week. Toby was only 11 weeks older than Peter.

Cheryl began as a FDC educator when her own children were young and other than a couple of short breaks, had been a FDC educator for around 17 years. She was studying for a diploma level qualification in ECEC and hoped to study early childhood education at university in the future. Over time Cheryl had cared for many babies, often caring for multiple siblings in the same family. Cheryl was interested in and enthusiastic about the research and I found her to be very thoughtful and articulate about the children in her care and her practice.
Entering the family day care home

Jones and McNamara (2004) write that it is important in video research in early years settings to carefully consider ways to establish trust and negotiate acceptance of the camera and the researcher. In addition, developing familiarity with the context and people in the research setting are an important aspect of successfully conducting video research in ECEC (White, 2011). Once all the appropriate consents were in place, I made two half-day visits to the FDC home before attempting to generate any video data. During these visits, in my capacity as research assistant, I completed a Time-Use Diary (see Harrison, Elwick, Vallotton, & Kappler, 2014) which involved a checklist noting what Peter was doing, where Peter was and who Peter was with. The Time-Use Diary data was not used for the doctoral project, however it helped me to begin building understandings of Peter as well as the culture, routine and physical layout of the FDC setting while building rapport with Cheryl and the children before using the video camera.

Data generation

In this section I discuss the methods for data generation beginning with how the visits to the site were managed followed by a rationale for and description of the three methods of data generation: video observations and accompanying field and reflective notes, an interview with Peter’s educator and parents that used selected segments of video as a stimulus, and baby cam footage. I also describe the data management process. The decision to use video in ECEC research raises many interrelated methodological and ethical issues. In this section I discuss these issues in terms of the data generation, specifically how I chose what to video and what not to video, and my decisions about how to use the video camera including issues such as framing, zooming and positioning. Later in the Methodology I discuss broader ethical considerations in relation to conducting video research with infants.

Visiting the family day care home

Building democratic processes into video research in early years settings is an important aspect of attempting to lessen participant discomfort with the research process including feelings of intrusion or surveillance (Jones & McNamara, 2004). I wished to draw on Cheryl’s knowledge of Peter and the FDC group, respect her willingness to open her home to research and acknowledge Cheryl as a partner in the
research with much to contribute to its success. Therefore the days and times of visits were decided in consultation with Cheryl considering, for example the routine of the FDC home, Peter’s changing routine over time, the attendance patterns of various children and the needs of the other children in care. For example, Cheryl considered one day of the week inappropriate for data generation because she felt that two children who attended that day would be distressed by the presence of an unknown adult (children A and O). On one occasion a planned visit was postponed by Cheryl because the children were having an unsettled day.

All aspects of Peter’s experiences in FDC were of interest and thus visits were made at a range of times to correlate with arrivals, departures, meals, transitions, and inside and outside play. A total of 26 visits were made to Cheryl’s FDC home across a 10-month period commencing late July 2010 and concluding early June 2011. Visits lasted for an average of 2 hours depending on the timing of the visit and Peter’s routine. The shortest visit was 1 hour and the longest was 2.5 hours. For the first 5 weeks visits were made twice a week and approximately an hour of video data was generated each visit. After the first 5 weeks I aimed to visit fortnightly, however, on some occasions there was a longer break between visits, for example there was a 7 week break over the Christmas holiday period and a 6 week break over the Easter holiday period. During fortnightly visits between 60 and 90 minutes of video data was generated. Approximately 24 hours of handheld video data of Peter was generated in total.

**Video observations**

Research that aims to understand the experiences of preverbal infants raises a number of complexities. Johansson (2011a, p. 2) suggests the relative lack of educational research with infants and toddlers has resulted in “little knowledge on methods and approaches available for researchers working with children of this age”. Research that attempts to understand very young children’s experiences, therefore, has a tendency to be placed in the “too hard basket” (White, 2011, p. 186). Increasingly, however, researchers attempting to understand the everyday experiences of young children in ECEC are turning to visual methods such as video (see Fleer & Ridgway, 2014) and such methods have been used to provide a ‘voice’ for infants and toddlers (see Johansson & White, 2011). I used video to develop rich, fine-grained observations of Peter’s everyday experiences in FDC.
Fleer (2014, p. 7, emphasis in original) argues being “mindful of what the [research] tools will afford in relation to not just the research question but the specific context being researched represents a form of tool validity in researching with young children”. Unlike research with older children, who may be competent verbal communicators, researchers working with infants must rely on other modes of communication. Video is a powerful research tool because it captures fine-grained details of the complexities of infants’ communication and social environment, for example, body movements, facial expressions, gaze, gestures, vocalisations and interactions with others. In addition, video also captures details of infants’ physical and cultural environment such as the size of rooms, available light, how the furnishings are arranged, materials provided and how these are used. Thus researchers can develop understandings about infants’ experiences through “hours upon hours of observation and video of children during everyday events” (White, 2011, p. 187).

After a visit, while watching the video, I completed a visit summary sheet that included details to accompany the video with space for field notes such as who were present and an outline of the observed events, as well as reflective notes about interesting issues or themes that arose from the visit. A sample visit summary sheet can be found in Appendix F.

**What should and should not be videoed**

Pink (2007) suggests that both the participant and the researcher should have control over the content of visual data. I have already described how decisions about days and times for data generation were decided in consultation with Cheryl. In addition, Cheryl and Peter’s parents were given the option of viewing any data they wished, asking for the camera to be turned off at any time, and asking that particular data be deleted. Neither Cheryl nor Peter’s parents used these options. Importantly, it was clear to the adults when the camera was in use because it had a red light on the front during recording.

Other more fine-grained decisions about the content of the video observations were based upon my own beliefs regarding what was appropriate to capture about Peter’s life on video. For example, I felt it would be inappropriate to video nappy changes and bathroom episodes. Also, while I did video Peter preparing for sleep, for example being swaddled and placed in his cot, I did not film him as he fell asleep. Other researchers with infants and toddlers have described uneasiness with depicting
intimate moments such as nappy changes or infant distress, however White (2011, p. 192, emphasis in original) argues that “by not including such moments the toddler is denied a fuller representation”. Similarly, Johansson (2011b) suggests that if researchers wish to capture the complexity of infants’ and toddlers’ worlds then the researcher has a responsibility to explore both positive and negative dimensions. I did feel a sense of discomfort occasionally, for example filming Peter crying when Cheryl was busy with other children. I think this sense of discomfort probably stemmed from a feeling that I should attempt to calm Peter or assist Cheryl in some way. I felt strongly that I didn’t want her to feel that I, or the camera, were passing judgment on her work. I believe it is important for researchers to pay attention to such feelings, particularly in light of the power relations that might be at play between researcher and participants when video research is conducted in early years setting (Jones & McNamara, 2004). Although I felt that I had an open and positive relationship with Cheryl I’m not sure how comfortable she would have felt asking me to turn off the camera. Thus decisions about when to turn the camera on and off were left to my own judgement on a moment by moment basis.

**How to video – framing, zooming and positioning**

MacLure et al. (2010, p. 546) argue that traditional methods of videoing in research that involve a fixed camera recording at a distance with little panning and zooming “have limited potential to animate the viewer – to spark new thoughts, sensations or reflections”. Thus consideration has to be given to how the videoing is conducted. Although I experimented with using a tripod I eventually abandoned it as I found that I needed the camera to be mobile. In order to capture Peter’s interactions and expressions it was important to be able to move the camera about the FDC home or outdoor environment quickly and easily. When Peter was lying or sitting on the floor, I positioned the camera low to the ground so that facial expressions could be captured. This way of working had the added advantage of placing me in amongst the children rather than removing me to stand behind a tripod and is closely related to the previous discussion about my role as researcher. The tripod may have made, at times, for smoother, less shaky images than holding the camera by hand, but it is also important to consider Pink’s (2007) argument about what impact this additional, more professional looking piece of equipment might have on the participants. For my part, I
certainly felt that when I was using the tripod I was more removed and felt separate from the participants.

When a researcher decides to hold a video camera in their hands, there are additional considerations regarding how this is actually done. I used the fold out screen on the camera and held the camera away from my face as much as possible. Pink (2007) and Quiñones and Fleer (2011) describe how holding the camera in a way that does not hide the researcher’s face makes the researcher more available for interaction with participants. In addition, Wright (as cited in Pink, 2007) found that using the fold out screen on the camera allowed the researcher a kind of dual vision, both the whole situation in front of them and what is being captured by the camera, allowing the researcher to decide where to focus the camera’s attention. At times I used the fold out screen on the camera to attempt to relieve the children of my unrelenting gaze. I would watch them on the small screen rather than directly with my eyes. Perhaps it could be argued that this was deceptive, that the children might not realise they were being watched. I felt, however, that at times this was appropriate, particularly if the children were engaged in an interesting interaction and I did not want my observation of them to interfere with how the event unfolded.

Maclure et al. (2010, p. 549) drawing on Deleuze’s (2005) cinema writing in relation to the face and close-up, discuss the “power and the passion in children’s faces as loci of affect” in research. I found at times that zooming in on the action was very powerful and I often found myself using the zoom when I felt that something interesting or unusual was happening, as if I was being drawn in by the situation. It can be argued that by zooming in on one or two children contextual information is lost and there were instances in which this was regrettably the case. For the most part, however, I found that zooming in was a powerful tool for capturing affective and detailed images. In addition, the dual focus provided by the fold out screen helped me to make decisions about where to focus the camera’s attention keeping in mind the broader context of the situation. The decision to use the zoom or not was made moment by moment based upon my own personal judgement.

**Video-stimulated interview**

Jones and McNamara (2004, p. 279) argue that video can be a “catalyst for promoting rich dialogue that supports multiple perspectives, meanings and interpretations of ... events” in early years settings. Once video data generation was complete, I compiled a
series of short edited segments of video to be shared with Cheryl and Peter’s parents together, as a stimulus for reflection and discussion. Rowe (2009) suggests that interviews in which video is used to stimulate recall of situations in which participants took part, while of recent origin, are increasingly used in education research. In my project, however, Cheryl and Peter’s parents were asked to provide their perspective on video footage taken not of themselves, but of Peter. For the most part, these were events that took place when Peter’s parents were absent, and sometimes they were events that Cheryl was unaware of, perhaps because she was busy with other children at the time. Thus my approach was not one of video stimulated recall, but closer to what Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa (2009, p. 5) call “video-cued multivocal conversation”, although on a much smaller scale. In “video-cued multivocal conversation” video of events in early years settings are shown to groups of adults, who may or may not have been present at the time of videoing. As they engage together in dialogue with each other and the researchers, they provide another perspective about the events (Tobin et al., 2009).

The aim of the video-stimulated interview was to generate insights into the perspectives of Cheryl and Peter’s parents about what was happening for Peter in the video. The purpose of the interview was not to see their words as capturing the truth (MacLure, 2009; Mazzei & Jackson, 2009) of Peter’s experience or perspective, nor was it intended as a kind of member checking (Baxter & Jack, 2008) in which they could confirm or deny my own developing understandings of Peter’s experiences. Instead, Cheryl and Peter’s parents are recognised as having deep understandings of Peter, and the FDC context, that could contribute another aspect to the growing mosaic of understandings about belonging for Peter.

The interview took place on a weekend and both Peter’s parents were present. Cheryl was given the opportunity of viewing and approving the videos to be shared with the family beforehand, however this was declined. Keeping in mind the contribution that Peter’s family and particularly Cheryl had already made to the study, the interview was limited to 1 hour. I had spent much time viewing, talking and thinking about the data with other members of the ILC research team. I chose a range of short, edited video segments to share, ranging in length from around 30 seconds to a maximum of 4 minutes. The video segments were ones that I found particularly interesting, unusual or confusing, or which I felt would stimulate interesting reflection.
and discussion. For example some of the video segments were about interactions between Peter and the other children at FDC such as the bear cave episode I draw on for Paper 3 of this thesis, whereas others were about the role played by particular objects such as the ride-on toys I draw on for Paper 5. I prepared more video segments than could be used within the hour so that I could be flexible in my choice depending on the flow of the discussion. A total of 10 short clips were shared during the hour long interview. The interview was recorded on a tripod mounted video camera which allowed me to engage freely in the discussion without being concerned about taking notes. It also meant that details of non-verbal communication that are important in understanding responses were captured, such as gestures and head nodding during the conversation and looks of surprise or pleasure on the faces of Cheryl and Peter’s parents as they watched particular video segments.

The interview was open-ended and conversational, “a conversation with a purpose” (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010, p. 225). As such, I did not draw up a list of interview questions, but instead allowed the video segments I had chosen to function “as a nonverbal question, a cue to stimulate a response that will provide insight into the beliefs of an informant” (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 8). I did, however, provide some contextual information regarding why I had chosen the clip, or perhaps what I thought was interesting or puzzling about it before asking for their thoughts. Cheryl and Peter’s mother in particular appeared to very much enjoy the viewing and discussion of the video segments. The engagement in back and forth dialogue, particularly between Cheryl and Peter’s mother throughout the interview was particularly productive. After watching a segment of video they would, for example, share stories of related incidents from home or FDC, or discuss their thoughts about relationships between Peter and particular children, Cheryl’s philosophy for her FDC service, or the role of a particular toy in the children’s interactions. I might ask for clarification or more information before moving on.

**Baby cam**

A small amount of video data was generated through baby cam, a term generation by the ILC research teach for a small, cylindrical-shaped camera that is placed on a headband worn by an infant. The aim of using baby cam was to capture video that might provide an awareness of “what the infant is seeing, in the hope of gaining some insights into the infant’s experiences, from the perspective of the infant” (Sumsion et
Baby cam offered the possibility of seeing the world from the physical perspective of Peter as well as developing understandings of where Peter was interested in focussing his attention. It also held the possibility of researching in more participatory ways with Peter. It was used in conjunction with the handheld video camera to simultaneously generate video data about Peter’s visual perspective and the broader context of the episode. Baby cam provided “a visual perspective that we can rarely access” and “potentially offers an innovative way to further destabilise our accustomed researcher frames of reference” (Sumsion et al., 2011, p. 120). As well as wearing the baby cam on a headband, Peter also wore a modified t-shirt with a pocket in the back to hold the recording device which was attached to the headband camera by a wire. See Figure 2 for images of Peter wearing baby cam. Given the potentially intrusive and uncomfortable nature of baby cam for Peter, it was only used occasionally and for short periods of time of up to 10 minutes. Baby cam was only used when Peter appeared well, happy and content, and during either inside or outside play or meal times. Peter was monitored closely for any signs of distress or dissent. If he attempted to remove the headband by tugging on it, or showed any kind of discomfort, the baby cam was removed.

Figure 2 Three views of Peter wearing baby cam

The use of baby cam raised many technical, ethical and methodological issues. For example, the baby cam technology was cumbersome and difficult to use. It was difficult to ensure the camera was well placed on Peter’s head to ensure the best approximation of his visual field. Although Peter seemed unconcerned about wearing baby cam for the most part, I felt that it was an imposition, particularly as I tried to fit the t-shirt and position the headband as accurately as possible. For these reasons,
baby cam was not used with Peter often. Five successful baby cam data generation sessions resulted in approximately 47 minutes of baby cam video data. I also held concerns about the extent to which baby cam contributed to a more participatory approach to research with Peter and what insights it enabled into Peter’s experience beyond what could be captured with the handheld video camera. Pink (2007) suggests that video research that involves the active participation of participants can be empowering and is collaborative in that participants are actively involved in the processes of knowledge production. I held concerns about the extent to which the potentially empowering and collaborative nature of baby cam was relevant to Peter given his limited potential to understand what the baby cam was and what it was used for in terms of the research project. These technological, ethical and methodological issues associated with baby cam are discussed in further detail in the chapter I co-authored with other members of the ILC team in Appendix G. I did not specifically draw on baby cam data other than one image used on page 83 in Paper 4. This image was chosen to accompany the images from the handheld video camera because I felt it gave an additional insight into Peter’s experience of being included by the older children as a peer.

**Data management**

Pink (2007) is critical of the suggestion that visual data should be transcribed into words. She suggests this approach is based upon an assumed hierarchical relationship between images and words meaning that knowledge cannot be produced from visual images themselves, but only when they are translated into words. Pink (2007, p. 119) argues for a different approach in which “the purpose of analysis is not to translate visual evidence into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) knowledge”. I did not transcribe any of the video data other than those sections that were used in the preparation of written research reports. The process of selecting which data to work with is discussed in the following section. I felt that the visual aspects of the data, including the video-stimulated interview, were so rich and valuable that I did not want to rely solely on a text based translation. Thus I constantly referred back to the video as I worked with the data and only transcribed when it was required for the purposes of research writing.

An important aspect of working closely with video data is choosing an appropriate method of storing, categorising or logging data for easy identification and
retrieval (Pink, 2007). All of the video data, including from the handheld camera, baby cam and the video-stimulated interview was transferred from tape into Studiocode™ software (http://www.studiocodegroup.com) allowing for easy storage, retrieval, viewing and tagging of particular moments. Each visit to the FDC home was sequentially dated and given its own folder in which all of the video files and the visit summary sheet for that visit were stored. The visit summary sheet provided a textual means for locating and contextualising particular video data. See Appendix F for an example of a visit summary sheet. The video from baby cam was synched in Studiocode™ with the corresponding video from the handheld camera so that the two views were electronically linked and could be watched together, side by side. This made it easier to make sense of the baby cam images as the video camera footage provided the broader context in which the baby cam images were captured.

Selecting and working with data – encounters of theory, data and writing

White (2011, p. 196) argues that selecting which data to work with is a key decision for researchers working with video requiring “a means of narrowing down what can amount to vast amounts of footage, into shorter sequences/excerpts/events or sub-events”. I had 24 hours of video observations of Peter at FDC with accompanying notes, baby cam footage and the interview video to work with. Thus if I wanted to be able to provide fine-grained, rich descriptions of Peter’s experiences of belonging, it was important that I narrow down the data to examples that could be used as the focus for my writing and thinking.

St. Pierre (2011, p. 622, emphasis in original) argues that “it is impossible to disentangle data, data collection, and data analysis”. This was certainly true for my doctoral project. In reality I had already begun a kind of analysis as I generated the data. I chose where to point the camera, when to turn it on and off, when to zoom in. My thinking about the data, therefore, didn’t start when I officially began the ‘analysis’. This is evident in Paper 3 of this thesis in which I explain that the segment of data was chosen because even at the time of taking the video it stood out as something significant, interesting and out of the ordinary. In other words, the piece of data attracted my attention, it had a “glow” (MacLure, 2010, p. 282, emphasis in original) from the moment I captured it.
Another way in which a kind of analysis, or thinking about the data, began before the official ‘analysis’, was that I spent many hours viewing the data to find interesting segments to share with the larger research team. A couple of times a year the team would get together for data sharing sessions in which myself and another doctoral student would share select, edited segments of data that we thought the research team would find interesting. At these sessions much discussion and reflection ensued between the research team from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Thus before beginning the official ‘analysis’ I already knew the data well and had spent much time viewing, talking and thinking about selected segments.

Other data, however, were identified during the ‘analysis’. St. Pierre (2011, p. 621, emphasis in original) describes data as “what we think with when we think about a topic”. She argues that “[u]ntil one begins to think, one cannot know what one will think with. In that sense, data are collected during thinking and, ... especially during writing” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 621). For St. Pierre (2011, p. 621), “writing is analysis”. Thus analysis can be thought of as an entanglement of researcher, writing, thinking, data and, importantly, theory. Theory and philosophy are important because without them “we have nothing much to think with during analysis except normalized discourses that seldom explain the way things are” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 614). The value of theory for research “lies in its power to get in the way: to offend and interrupt”, thus it can “block the reproduction of banality, and thereby, hopefully, open new possibilities for thinking and doing” (MacLure, 2010, p. 277).

I conceptualised the complex and entangled process of analysis as an encounter between writing, thinking, myself, data, the writing of others about belonging, and the poststructural philosophy of Deleuze and co-authors Guattari and Parnet. Deleuze suggests “[s]omething in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (2004, p. 176, emphasis in original). This encounter could be conceptualised through Deleuze as an assemblage, a process of connection, intersection, interaction and transformation (Colebrook, 2002; Wise, 2005). Deleuze (Boutang, 2011, n.p.) advises, “never interpret, go experience/experiment with assemblages, search out the assemblages that suit you”. The encounter can also be described as “plugging the theory and the data into one another” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. vii) or “thinking with” philosophical concepts (Mazzei & McCoy, 2010, p. 504). This is how my analysis worked as I
experienced with bringing together the data, thinking, writing, the writing of others, and Deleuzian concepts into an encounter. A methodology of encounters can interfere with “habitual ways of thinking”, help researchers “rethink data” and create “new opportunities for apprehending” leading to greater complexity (McCoy, 2012, p. 770).

The challenge of using Deleuzian concepts in research is to “think with” them “in a way that might produce previously unthought questions, practices, and knowledge” (Mazzei & McCoy, 2010, p. 504). This is possible because “concepts do things” (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 8, emphasis in original). Deleuze (1995, p. 136) suggests “[p]hilosophers introduce new concepts, they explain them, but they don’t tell us, not completely anyway, the problems to which those concepts are a response”. Concepts, however, should be “a response to real problems” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 136), they should engage with the world (Massumi, 2010). In other words they can be applied creatively to real life situations. The “value of a philosophy is always the product of a collaboration”, influenced by “how it is remobilised outside philosophy” (Massumi, 2010, p. 9). Philosophical concepts foster creative processes when they encounter the world outside philosophy, they “make a difference in the world” (Massumi, 2010, p. 9). Philosophy can “contribute to change ...[and] herald the new” (Massumi, 2010, p. 3).

As I experimented with the research assemblage I tried various techniques to enact different encounters between data, writing, thinking and philosophy. Having all the video data stored in Studiocode™ meant that I had access to a kind of database that made the raw data organised and easily retrievable (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Studiocode™ also meant that the video could be slowed down, even watched frame by frame so that fine details could be reviewed. Another function of Studiocode™ allowed for the creation of movies compiled of coded instances. For example I experimented with coding the data for ‘belonging’, looking for episodes that seemed to express something about belonging and how it worked, and in particular instances that seemed to matter to Peter or for his experiences.

MacLure (2013, p. 164) suggests that although the practice of coding “offsends, particularly against some of the key tenets of poststructural ... research” there is “a languorous pleasure and something resolute in the slow intensity of coding – an ethical refusal to take the easy exit to quick judgement, free-floating empathy, or illusions of data speaking for itself”. Importantly, “coding demands immersion in, and
entanglement with, the minutiae of ‘the data’” (MacLure, 2013, p. 174). “During the process of coding, some things gradually grow, or glow, into greater significance than others, and become the preoccupations around which thought and writing cluster” (MacLure, 2013, p. 175). Once the instances were coded across all the video data, Studiocode™ allowed me to bring them together in one ‘belonging’ video. This allowed me to look for patterns or for segments of video that stood out or did not seem to fit for some reason, providing another means of bringing data into the research assemblage. Focussing on these episodes caused me to think particular things or make connections with particular Deleuzian concepts and then go back to the data again either to look at other specific observations that I could remember, or a discussion that took place in the video-stimulated interview, or perhaps to look at interactions between particular children, with particular objects or at particular times of day.

**Trustworthiness**

Writing from a poststructural perspective, Lather (1993, p. 674) suggests that the question of validity is one “that repeatedly resurfaces, one that can neither be avoided nor resolved”. While acknowledging the difficulty of developing universal criteria applicable across the vast breadth of qualitative research approaches, Tracy (2010) suggests eight markers of quality in qualitative research – worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. Many of Tracy’s markers are addressed in other areas of the thesis. For example aspects of the ethics marker are addressed in the next section which looks at ethical considerations when conducting video research with infants, and aspects of the sincerity marker are addressed in the examination of my role as researcher that began this Methodology. In this section I wish to draw attention specifically to three of Tracy’s markers of quality in qualitative research - rich rigor, credibility and resonance - that I believe increase the trustworthiness of the doctoral project.

Rich rigour is achieved when “qualitative research is marked by a rich complexity of abundance” (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). This can be accomplished through generous and rich descriptions, theoretical constructs, data sources and analysis (Tracy, 2010). I worked towards rich rigour in a number of ways. Abundant data were generated through many visits to the case study site over a significant period of time.
Part Three: Methodology

and many hours spent in the case study site on each visit. Video observation allowed for complex, rich observational data that could be repeatedly viewed in detail and shared with others. The abundant, fine-grained data supported in-depth description in research reports. The use of Deleuze’s philosophy provided a complex and rich theoretical frame for thinking with the data. This opened the research to the potential, not of representing the ‘truth’ of Peter’s experiences, but of “new ways of seeing and of conceiving this world that, rather than true or false, are interesting, remarkable, or important” (May, 2005, p. 22).

Credibility refers to the “plausibility of the research findings” and can be achieved through research reports that are persuasive with “thick description”, “in-depth illustration” and “abundant ... detail” (Tracy, 2010, pp. 842, 843). I worked towards credibility through the provision of detailed vignettes to illustrate key pieces of data. Such details allow readers to draw their own conclusions about the data described rather than relying solely on myself as author to tell them what to think (Tracy, 2010). Another way in which I worked towards credibility was the use of still images taken from the video data. Using images allowed me to “show” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843, emphasis in original) the complexity of the data to readers and thus work towards increased trustworthiness of research reports. The ethics of the publication of images of infants is discussed in the next section.

Resonance refers to “research’s ability to meaningfully reverberate and affect an audience” and its potential value “across various populations and contexts, even if it is based on data from a unique population during a specified moment in time”(Tracy, 2010, pp. 844, 845). I strived for resonance in two ways. First, by providing vivid and engaging narratives in the research reports (Tracy, 2010). Second, despite being a single case study of belonging for an infant in FDC, I believe that the understandings about belonging that have been developed through the doctoral project may have resonance in other settings such as centre-based care and the development of policy in ECEC, and also for other populations such as other infants and children from diverse cultural backgrounds in ECEC.
Ethical considerations when conducting video research with infants

Consent, assent and dissent in video research with infants

Informed consent is generally considered a hallmark of ethical research; however it is problematic when researching with preverbal infants. Informed consent implies that the participant understands the purpose of the research, the ways in which it will be conducted and reported, and is capable of giving or denying consent to participate. While it can be argued that this is a problematic notion even for adults (Pink, 2007; Wiles et al., 2008), an infant’s ability to participate in such a process is limited. Although it is possible to employ creative methods to attempt informed consent with quite young children (Harcourt & Conroy, 2011), such methods may not be appropriate for research with infants. I sought informed consent from a parent as proxy. Consent for participation in the study was given by Cheryl, Peter’s parents and the parents of the other children who shared the FDC home.

Parental consent, however, did not relieve me of the obligation to work ethically with young participants and as a result I considered notions of assent and dissent. White (2011, p. 193) argues that:

\[
\text{[a]ssent takes place in an ongoing manner throughout the research process and requires the researcher to continually monitor the infant or toddler’s interactions in order for them to gauge levels of agreement ... Dissent, on the other hand, denotes a withdrawal from the research process – either by silence, withholding or declining to be involved.}
\]

I monitored Cheryl, Peter, the other children and parents for signs of reluctance or distress on an ongoing basis. I relied on my own judgement as well as the educator’s knowledge of the children, as to whether the children were comfortable with my presence and that of the video camera.

In relation to research with infants and toddlers, White (2011, p. 189) suggests that “[w]hile we cannot say for sure that these young children were aware of research agendas, it is evident that they were highly aware of the researcher’s gaze upon them”. This was true in my research also. Older children showed their awareness of the purpose of the video camera by, for example, asking me to take their ‘photo’, or standing next to me as I filmed and looking at the small screen on the camera while narrating for me what they could see. Pink (2007) argues that it is important for researchers to understand the ways in which video is (or is not) a part of the culture in
which they work. The children were used to being photographed at FDC by Cheryl as she documented their play and learning. Pink (2007) also discusses the need for researchers to pay attention to the kind of video camera used and how this might influence participants. The camera I used was of the small, domestic variety. Thus it was potentially not dissimilar to a video camera that the children’s families might use at home. The children did not appear at any point to be upset by the presence of the video camera. For the older children it was at times an object of some interest. Although it could be argued that this awareness of the camera might invite performance from the children, most of the time they paid little attention to it and appeared unconcerned about being filmed.

When it comes to the issue of consent and ethical research with infants, I believe researchers need to be aware that despite the best intentions of participatory research and innovative methods, infants may never have an understanding of why we are observing them, or of the implications. My approach in the doctoral project was reminiscent of the “ethical stance” advocated by Flewitt (2006, p. 31) for visual research with young children “that evolves out of researcher/participant relationships, where ethical dilemmas are resolved as they emerge in the field, in their local and specific contexts, on a minute-by-minute basis”. I relied on an open and collaborative relationship with Cheryl, close observation of the children’s reactions to the research process, and my own personal judgement, constantly reminding myself of my ethical obligations towards the very young participants, particularly that consent/assent/dissent must be re-assessed on an ongoing basis.

**Anonymity in video research with infants**

In addition to informed consent, protecting the anonymity of participants is traditionally considered a hallmark of ethical research. With the increasing use of visual methods, however, issues of anonymity and confidentiality have come under scrutiny (Wiles et al., 2008). In the doctoral project I sought and received consent from Cheryl and the children’s parents to use images in research reports (see Appendix H). Consent to participate in the research was separate and not contingent on consent to publish images. Image consent was sought at the end of data generation when Cheryl and the parents had a better understanding of, and were more comfortable with, the kinds of images that had been captured. While seeking consent for the use of individual images may be considered more ethical than blanket consent, it would
also place onerous demands on Cheryl and the parents, particularly as the time between data generation and publication increases.

Flewitt (2006, p. 32) raises concerns that the use of images makes participants easily recognisable and “puts children at particular risk and renders parents and practitioners vulnerable to criticism, anxiety and self-doubt”. Some researchers employ methods to de-identify images such as pixelating, blurring or otherwise obscuring faces and using software to convert photos into line drawings (Flewitt, 2006; Pink, 2007). Unfortunately in attempting to de-identify images, it is inevitable that fine-grained details of facial expressions and gaze will be lost (Flewitt, 2006). Such details were the reason why I employed visual methods in the first place. Depicting Peter’s face in research reports increases the potential for him to communicate with readers. It provides an opportunity for Peter to be present in the research when he does not have words to do so. Considering the argument of MacLure et al. (2010) about the power of the face in visual research, to obscure these faces is to reduce the infant’s ability to affect readers. To remove Peter’s face is to deny him an opportunity for a genuine presence in research reports and goes against the aspirations of the project to attempt to work with infants’ perspectives. I decided, therefore, not to purposely obliterate these details in images used for publication.

Despite parental consent, researchers must still grapple with a range of ethical issues associated with the publication of images of infants and young children. The response of Peter’s parents to publication of images has been positive. For example, Peter’s parents were given a copy of a book that contained his image. Cheryl (personal communication, March 2, 2012) described to me that Peter’s father “treasured the book with his son’s picture in it as a family heirloom”. Despite such positive responses from parents, it is not possible to know how Peter and the other young children depicted will feel about the images when they are older. Other researchers working with children, young people and people with disabilities, however, have found that participants often wish to be identified in visual images and “have argued for their right to be made visible” (Wiles et al., 2008, p. 22). This is an important consideration because my project focussed on two aspects of ECEC that are currently under represented in the research literature: the everyday lives of infants in childcare, and FDC settings. By depicting everyday images of Peter in his FDC home, the study is
providing an opportunity for these currently under-represented aspects of ECEC to become more visible.

Pink (2007, p. 152) argues that visual researchers should “present images in ways that encourage or inspire readers to reflect on the meanings they give to the texts themselves”. Allowing readers to make their own meanings from the images I chose to present in research reports, however, means that readers’ interpretations, from their own diverse perspectives, are out of my control (Flewitt, 2006; Pink, 2007). The choice of what images to publish was important, therefore, as they would become a part of this process of interpretation. It was important for me to consider the “social, cultural and political contexts in which the published photographs will be viewed and interpreted” (Pink, 2007, p. 166) and the possible implications of this for Cheryl, Peter, the other children and their families. While I felt strongly that I wanted to help provide a presence for FDC in the ECEC research literature, I was also aware that the images were of people’s private homes. I was concerned that viewers might make judgements of the FDC environments depicted based upon their understandings of quality ECEC environments provided in centre-based care. For example, other researchers in the ILC study have described a visiting early childhood expert viewing footage of an infant in a FDC home declaring that she felt “uncomfortable seeing the infant in a small room as it is detrimental to the quality of her experience” (Elwick, Bradley, & Sumsion, 2014, p. 197). I was reluctant to place educators in a position in which their homes, and FDC more broadly, might be judged in ways that educators might not anticipate, when this was not the purpose of the study. A partial solution to this situation for me was attempting to crop images to focus in more on the people and crop out aspects of the setting that weren’t necessarily relevant to the discussion.

Methodological issues are further addressed and expanded in Part 4 which contains Papers 3, 4 and 5 in which I discuss understandings of belonging for Peter as informed by selected data.

References


PART 4
ENCOUNTERS WITH DATA

Paper has been removed from the thesis due to copyright restrictions.
Part Four: Encounters with Data


Abstract

Belonging is emerging as an important concept for early childhood education and care. However, it is one that requires further theorisation beyond everyday or romanticised understandings. The politics of belonging provides a potentially productive focus for thinking about belonging in early childhood education and care because of its attention to how belonging in all its complexity works. A key aspect of the politics of belonging is processes of categorisation, or how social categories influence who does and does not belong, who decides and on what basis. In this paper I complicate the notion of categorisation by bringing it into an encounter with the concepts of lines and segmentarity from Deleuze. I then use these concepts to look at video data of an infant aged eight to nine months in family day care, in an effort to illustrate how processes of categorisation, lines and segmentarity were at work. The data suggests that the category of ‘baby’ played a complex and dynamic role in the infant’s experiences at family day care. Nevertheless, the encounter between the data and Deleuze’s concepts suggests that categories cannot ever tell the whole story, and that looking for situations in which categories no longer appear to work, in which they leak and rupture, might lead to new understandings about how belonging works in different early childhood education and care contexts.

Introduction

In this paper, I continue my project of attempting to open up new possibilities for thinking about belonging in early childhood education and care (ECEC) (see also Stratigos, 2015; Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). In psychology, belonging has been theorised as a fundamental human need and motivator of behaviour since the 1930s (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In early childhood, the importance of relationships with others for the health and wellbeing of infants and young children has been acknowledged for some time - for example, by Bowlby’s (1969) attachment theory and Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems theory. More recently, in ECEC a specific interest in belonging has emerged (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). Belonging
Part Four: Encounters with Data

plays a central role in early childhood curriculum documents such as *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) from New Zealand and *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations, 2009). This has stimulated questions about the role of belonging in documents such as the *Early Years Learning Framework* (Peers & Fleer, 2013; Sumsion & Wong, 2011). Peers and Fleer (2013) and Sumsion and Wong (2011) argue that, for belonging to be a useful concept in ECEC, it is important to move beyond everyday or romanticised notions and move towards more critical, reflective and theoretical understandings of belonging.

For the purposes of this paper, I focus on one particular aspect of belonging - processes of categorisation, as conceptualised by Yuval-Davis (2011) and Sumsion and Wong (2011). Processes of categorisation refer to the ways in which social categories influence who does and does not belong, who decides, and on what basis (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). I draw on video data collected with an infant, Peter, in family day care (FDC) and bring this into an encounter with concepts from the philosopher Deleuze. In looking at how belonging and processes of categorisation were at work for Peter at FDC through a Deleuzian lens, I hope to open new possibilities for thinking about belonging and categorisation in ECEC more generally. Thus, I hope to contribute to an emerging research conversation about the ways in which belonging works and might be put to work in ECEC.

The paper begins with an outline of the research context. Next I introduce Yuval-Davis’ (2011) conceptualisation of belonging as a politics of belonging, with a particular focus on processes of categorisation. The notion of categorisation is further examined in terms of its relevance in ECEC. I then begin to trouble received understandings of categorisation by bringing it into an encounter with the philosophy of Deleuze, in particular his concept of lines and segmentarity as developed with co-authors Parnet (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006) and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Next, I put these ideas to work in relation to the data with the aim of opening up new regions for thinking about categorisation and belonging in ECEC. Finally, I conclude with thoughts on the usefulness of processes of categorisation and Deleuze’s concepts of lines and segmentarity for thinking about the politics of belonging in ECEC.
Research context

This paper stems from my doctoral studies, which are a part of the Infants’ Lives in Childcare study. The broad aim of the Infants’ Lives in Childcare study was to attempt to understand what life is like for infants (0-18 months) in ECEC and my doctoral research is particularly focussed on belonging and how it works, or the politics of belonging. I have taken a case study approach, focussing on one infant. Peter was 8 months old when I began visiting him at FDC and 18 months at the end of data collection. I made 26 visits to Peter’s FDC over 10 months and collected approximately 24 hours of video, with accompanying reflective notes. Short segments of video were also captured on babycam, a head mounted camera worn by Peter. I shared select segments of the video with Peter’s parents and his educator, Cheryl, and recorded the discussion this stimulated.

Like many other FDC settings, Peter’s was a multi-age one. Peter spent most of his time at FDC with up to four other children aged between two and four. Towards the end of the data collection, another boy who was only 11 weeks older than Peter joined the group one day a week. Peter attended FDC three days a week, and his older sister, Ruby, shared the FDC setting with him on one of those days. Most of the children at FDC were boys, with some days exclusively male and only one girl attending on other days. Peter, like his sister before him, had been attending Cheryl’s FDC since he was eight weeks old. The wide age range of the children, smallness of the groups and family groupings often found in FDC mean that it provides a potentially productive focus for research into belonging (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014) and, in particular, categorisation.

Processes of categorisation and the politics of belonging

In this study, belonging is recognised as being complex, dynamic, diverse and multidimensional (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). I draw on the notion of the politics of belonging as it is conceptualised by Yuval-Davis (2011). The politics of belonging provide a useful focus for ECEC research because rather than focussing on a sense of belonging which is subjective and can give the impression of being fixed, the politics of belonging focuses on processes of belonging, or how belonging in all its complexity and diversity works (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). Yuval-Davis
Part Four: Encounters with Data

(2011, p. 18) argues that the “politics of belonging involves not only constructions of boundaries but also the inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do this”. An important aspect of Yuval-Davis’ conceptualisation of the politics of belonging, therefore, is the notions of social categories, particular people and groupings.

Yuval-Davis (2011) uses the term social location to refer to the idea that a person belongs to a particular group based upon, for example, their gender, race, class or age. According to Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 13), these social categories construct the “grids of power relations” at work within a group and have “certain positionalities along axes of power that are higher or lower than other such categories”. It is the intersection of and relationships between social categories that place an individual at a particular location on the “grids of power relations”. Similarly, Sumson and Wong’s (2011) cartography of belonging identifies processes of categorisation as an important aspect of how belonging operates. They describe processes of categorisation as related to notions of insiders and outsiders, inclusion and exclusion, and power relations. While Sumson and Wong (2011) and Yuval-Davis (2011) draw attention to the importance of processes of categorisation in the politics of belonging, they also acknowledge that categories may be contested, challenged and resisted.

Like other social settings, in ECEC, categories may play an important role in the politics of belonging. Entering ECEC is often children’s first experience of diversity and intensive contact with people outside their family (Vandenbroeck, 1999). Children’s understandings of the groups to which they do and do not belong begins to develop, raising questions about themselves and others (Vandenbroeck, 1999). Nutbrown and Clough (2009, p. 195) describe young children as being “keenly interested in difference”. Children’s understandings of differences and similarities can provide the basis for inclusion and exclusion, impacting on belonging. Woodhead and Brooker (2008) argue that the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are learned early in life, and the fundamental need to belong may result in the rejection of others. Nutbrown and Clough (2009) provide a list of 22 potential areas of inclusion/exclusion in ECEC settings, including age, disability, obesity, language and ethnicity. Australian research into belonging conducted in ECEC with 3- and 4-year-old children suggests a number of categories at work amongst the children including gender, skin colour, culture,
ethnicity (Skattebol, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Richardson, 2005), stage of development and age (Skattebol, 2006). For children who are ‘different’, therefore, experiencing a sense of belonging may be more difficult (Kernan, 2010). It is important to note, however, that “[y]oung children have their own particular views of inclusion and belonging which are often different from those held by adults” (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009, p. 202). In addition, the social categories that are relevant, as well as the boundaries and meanings of social locations, will be different in different groups, times and places (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Yuval-Davis (2011) argues that the rendering visible of the social categories that affect different people in different contexts is crucial. An emerging research conversation about belonging in ECEC suggests that preschool-aged children are aware of and participate in the politics of belonging and processes of categorisation. However, little similar research has been conducted with infants or in FDC settings (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). We know little, therefore, about how processes of categorisation and the politics of belonging operate for infants in multi-age settings such as FDC (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014). The literature provides some clues. Some conceptualisations of belonging suggest that a sense of fitting in based on a perception of similar or complementary characteristics is an essential aspect of belonging (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996; Mahar, Cobigo, & Stuart, 2012). Such conceptualisations suggest that “[i]f the individual does not possess or is unable to achieve similar or complementary characteristics, then their sense of belonging may be at risk, regardless of whether they feel that they are valued and involved in the group” (Stratigos, Bradley & Sumsion, 2014, p. 177). It could be proposed, therefore, that in a multi-age setting such as FDC, infants may experience barriers to belonging because of their difference from the other children in terms of their age, communication skills, size and physical abilities. This proposal is supported by Skattebol’s (2006) research with 4-year-old children, which argues that perceptions of age and associated notions of maturity, physical size and posture are important aspects of young children’s membership claims to particular powerful categories. Skattebol (2006, p. 509) suggests that the children in her research may have been aware that there were certain “privileges of age”, and argues that notions of development and becoming older may be particularly important to young children.
Although the youngest children were not a focus of Skattebol’s (2006) research, she briefly mentions that they were, on occasion, excluded by the older children because they were ‘little’. In addition, Singer and de Haan’s (2011) research with Dutch 2- and 3-year-old children in ECEC found that conflict around who can join in was the most common type of conflict between older and younger children. They also found that the smaller the age difference between children, the more likely they would become friends. Further research is required to help shed light on how processes of categorisation work for infants in multi-age ECEC. Next, I turn to the work of Deleuze in an attempt to begin troubling the notion of categorisation.

**Deleuze and categorisation**

According to Deleuze, much of our thinking assumes that the world is a stable entity which we can accurately conceive and represent in thought, knowledge and language (May, 2005). Deleuze (2004) critiques this kind of thinking, which he calls the ‘dogmatic image of thought’. Categories are a key aspect of the dogmatic image of thought because they allow us to organise what we perceive in a stable manner and “retain the integrity of strict borders, clearly marked boundaries”, between things (May, 2005, p. 74). May provides the following example of how the dogmatic image of thought works in relation to recognising a cow:

> The cow is a cow and nothing else. Its image is the image of that cow and nothing else. The category is that of “cow” and nothing else. And at every point, what is passed along is what is there and nothing else. (May, 2005, p. 75)

Such thinking conforms to the familiar as we fit our experiences into pre-existing categories (May, 2005).

Deleuze encourages us to abandon our old ways of thinking and be open to the possibility that there is more to the world than the dogmatic image of thought allows (May, 2005). This does not mean that we should entertain the notion that a cow may, in fact, be a house or a flower, but that the cow may be more, might overspill what the category of cow, or any other category we may apply to it, allows. May describes it as follows:
Suppose we consider the possibility that there is more to our world than we can perceive, and more than we can conceive. Suppose the world overflows the categories of representation that the dogmatic image of thought imposes upon it. This is not to say that our particular categories are lacking something that other, better categories would give us. Our imagination must go further than that. We need to consider the possibility that the world ... outruns any categories we might seek to use to capture it. (May, 2005, p. 81)

From a Deleuzian perspective, categorisation is problematic. No category is stable and no category can adequately capture the complexity of the world. Deleuze might seem an unusual choice, then, for research that is interested in processes of categorisation. Deleuze is not entirely dismissive of categories, however. Indeed, Deleuze accepts that categories are at work in the social world. For Deleuze, categories are a means for society to make sense of the complexity and variability of the social world:

Bodies are not static entities but exist in a state of continuous change. In order to make sense of this, bodies become stratified; arranged within grid-like categories such as sex, gender, colour, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, age and ability. Such categories can be extremely useful, for they create a stable sense of ‘self’ and enable the production of the thinking, speaking, political subject. Yet they are also limiting, for they reduce the body to particular modes of being and interacting; affecting not only how the body is understood, but its potentiality; its future capacity to affect and be affected (Hickey-Moody & Malins, 2007, p. 5).

Hickey-Moody and Malins (2007, p. 5) go on to suggest that “identity categories might conceal as much as they express” and that individuals “cannot but exceed the identity categories which seek to contain them”. Deleuze’s philosophy affords the possibility of acknowledging the categories at work in the social world while also opening the possibility that there is more at work than the notion of categories might allow. Deleuze does not deny that social categories are politically relevant, but he does deny “their exclusive right to determine our political thought” (May, 2005, p. 135). In this paper, I attempt to look in a critical way at processes of categorisation as they occurred for Peter at FDC. I do so by bringing the data into an encounter with
Part Four: Encounters with Data

Deleuze’s philosophy. In my previous work, I have conceptualised the politics of belonging as an assemblage (see Stratigos, 2015). In this paper, I look particularly at the lines that Deleuze and Parnet (2006) argue are always at work in any assemblage. I draw on Deleuze’s discussion of lines and segmentarity in Dialogues with co-author Parnet (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006) and A Thousand Plateaus, with co-author Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I will now briefly introduce Deleuze’s concept of lines before putting it to work in relation to the data.

Deleuze and Parnet (2006, p. 93) begin their discussion of lines by stating “Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines”. They go on to describe three types of lines that are tangled up together in the politics of the social world. The first kind of line is characterised by rigid segmentarity - “they speak to us, saying: ‘Now you’re not a baby any more’; and at school, ‘You’re not at home now’” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 93). Rigid lines work by binaries “of social classes; of sexes, man-woman; of ages, child-adult; of races, black-white” and “cut us up in all sorts of directions” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 96). The rigid line is made up of recognisable categories (May, 2005), such as those that might be at work in the politics of belonging in ECEC - for example, child-baby, boy-girl, walker-crawler. According to May (2005, p. 135), these lines are “not rigid in the sense that nothing can get past them”. However, “the fiction that there are only segmentary lines prevents us from seeing other ways of living” (May, 2005, p. 136).

The second kind of line is still segmentary, but in a more supple way. These supple lines “trace out little modifications, they make detours, they sketch out rises and falls” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 93). Because this line is supple, “[m]any things happen on this second kind of line – becomings, micro-becomings” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 93). Rather than the cut of the rigid line, the supple line is associated with a crack that can cause categories to leak. The supple line is more ambiguous and “shakily drawn”, oscillating between the rigid line and the line of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 201). It is a “compromise” that “seems to resist the cut [rigid] line while still fearing it will sink into the rupture [line of flight]” (de Miranda, 2013, p. 116).

Deleuze and Parnet (2006, p. 94) describe a third kind of line as being “even more strange: as if something carried us away, across our segments [rigid lines], but
also across our thresholds [supple lines], towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent”. This is the line of flight that is associated with rupture. According to Blaise (2013, p. 191), ECEC is “criss-crossed by lines of flight and it is on these lines where something new, including the acceptance and production of difference, can be made”. Lines of flight happen in ECEC as children interact with each other, ideas, materials and adults (Blaise, 2013). Because the line of flight is new, we cannot know what it might look like before it happens.

For Deleuze, no line is better or worse than the others. It is not the case that the line of flight is good and the rigid line is bad. Instead, they each have their advantages and their dangers. For example, Deleuze and Parnet (2006, p. 103) argue that although the rigid line is necessary because “it is so much a part of the conditions of life; including our organism and our very reason”, it is also dangerous because it is so reassuring that it calls us to retreat, to revert back to the known. Likewise, the line of flight not only runs the danger of reverting back to a rigid or supple line, but it also holds the potential of destruction “in spite of its message of joy” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 205). Deleuze encourages us to look for the lines at work in the social world. I now turn to the data and attempt to look for the lines at work in the politics of belonging for Peter at FDC.

**Tangled lines**

For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to draw on 10 hours of video footage collected when Peter was 8 and 9 months of age, before he could crawl. I am particularly focusing on the data when Peter was the youngest because this is the period in which he is most different to the older children in terms of his size and abilities. In this way, I hoped to maximise the opportunities for seeing categorisation at work. I looked for examples where it seemed that different kinds of lines were at work and played a role in Peter’s experiences at FDC, particularly with respect to his relationships and interactions with the other children. Many such examples were identified; only a few can be presented here.

The most obvious rigid line illustrated by the data created a baby-child binary. Peter was often referred to by both Cheryl, his educator, and the older children as a ‘baby’. This line often appeared to create separation between Peter and the older
children. For example, during meals, Peter sat in a highchair separate from the other children, who sat together around a small table and enjoyed interacting physically and verbally with each other (see Figures 1 and 2). During these times, Peter often watched the other children at the table, but there was usually little other interaction between Peter and the other children.

Figure 1 Peter sits in his high chair and looks towards the older children (FDC07-100810-3-TS)

Figure 2 The older children sit together around the table (FDC07-100810-3-TS)

A conversation one morning between Cheryl and Ryan, an older child at FDC, further illustrates this rigid line at work and the cut it created between Peter and the other children:

Only Peter and Ryan have arrived at FDC this morning and they are having breakfast. Cheryl explains to Ryan that two of the older children who usually attend FDC will not be attending today. Because Ryan’s usual playmate will not be there Cheryl asks him: “Can you play with Mitchell today?” At the end of breakfast Cheryl
mentions the mess that Peter has made under the highchair. Ryan comments: “Peter’s still a baby”. Cheryl replies: “He is, yeah, he is a baby.”

In such daily occurrences it is possible to see rigid lines at work. Peter was sitting in his highchair as usual, physically removed from Ryan. When Cheryl discussed who Ryan would play with, there was no suggestion that he might play with Peter. Presumably because Peter is a baby, he is not considered a potential playmate for an older child. These might seem like small, insignificant examples, however for Deleuze, “small, everyday encounters” are significant (Blaise, 2013, p. 189). Children’s lives in ECEC are made up of these kinds of daily encounters and routines.

At times, cracks appeared in the binary that separated Peter from the older children, and the rigid line became a supple line. On such occasions, the children interacted with Peter and sometimes made him the focus of their activities and play. Although this was a supple line, it was still segmented baby-child as the children engaged with Peter as a baby, often in quite stereotypical ways. Thus, the supple line made its “little modifications” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 93) to the baby-child binary, making it a point of connection rather than separation. For example, the older children often wanted to kiss and cuddle Peter (see Figures 3, 4 and 5) - something they never did with their similar-aged peers.

Figure 3 Mitchell approaches Peter for a cuddle and kiss (FDC07-030810-1-TS)
At other times, the older children’s interactions with Peter almost seemed to move beyond a ‘baby’ categorisation to objectifying him as an object to be played with. The following episode between Peter and his sister Ruby (aged 3.4) which lasted around seven minutes, illustrates these ways of interacting with Peter:

Peter sits on the floor surrounded by small toys which he is manipulating and mouthing. Ruby approaches and begins sweeping the toys away from Peter, removing toys from his hands and throwing them away. “I’ll fix you up”, she says, and begins tugging Peter towards her. Cheryl, the educator, asks, “Are you right with him Ruby?” Ruby asks if Peter can sit on her knee and Cheryl positions Peter on the floor between Ruby’s outstretched legs. “We’ll have to move some things [toys] close because he wants to reach them”, says Cheryl. Regardless, Ruby removes toys from Peter’s hands and throws them out of his reach three times. Peter often tries to lean away from Ruby to reach for interesting objects or get into a more upright sitting position, however
Ruby continually pulls Peter back so that he is leaning against her (see Figure 6). At one point Ruby says she wants Peter to lay on her lap. Cheryl counters with comments such as “He doesn’t want to lay back, he wants to sit up so he can see clearly, doesn’t he?” and “I don’t think he likes it. Have a look at him, do you think he is struggling to sit up?”

![Figure 6 Ruby pulls Peter back towards her before taking the toy and placing it out of his reach](image)

When the three older boys push large trucks past, Ruby pulls Peter towards her and wraps her arms around him, saying “Don’t run him over”. Cheryl asks, “Are you protecting your brother from getting bumped, are you Ruby?” “Yeah”, Ruby replies. After Cheryl reassures Ruby that the boys do not pose a threat to Peter, Ruby turns her attention to directing the boys as they push their trucks by again, saying, “Go, go, go, go, guys go, go go”, and waving her arm in the direction they are travelling (see Figure 7). Peter watches the boys go past.

![Figure 7 Ruby directs the boys as they push trucks past Peter](image)
Mitchell approaches and kneels down beside Peter, reaching out to stroke his head. Ruby pulls Peter away with a jerk, saying: “Don’t!” Peter kicks his legs and waves his arms (see Figure 8). Ruby looks angrily at Mitchell saying, “I will poke your ...”. Cheryl intervenes but, in the meantime, Mitchell has moved away.

![Figure 8 Peter appears startled as Ruby suddenly pulls him away from Mitchell](image)

Throughout the seven minutes, Ruby engages in a number of other interactions with Peter, such as leaning forward to look at his face and saying “Peek-a-boo, little man”, patting his tummy, kissing his cheek and head, closing her eyes and rubbing her cheek on the top of his head, singing to him and rocking him from side to side (see Figure 9). Peter appears to ignore many of these interactions. Some he appears to enjoy, laughing, kicking his legs and waving his arms. These interactions are punctuated by comments from Cheryl, such as: “Just be gentle, not too rough a cuddle or he won’t like it much will he?”

![Figure 9 Ruby closes her eyes and places her cheek on Peter’s head](image)
In the final minute, Peter becomes increasingly upset. He begins to vocalise unhappily, wriggling his body around and trying to lean away from Ruby. Ruby continues to try to keep him on her lap, pulling on his shoulders and shirt collar (see Figure 10). Peter’s distress increases when Cheryl leaves the room to help another child in the bathroom. When Cheryl returns, she removes Peter, saying: “Alright, Ruby, I think we have to let him go now because he’s not happy with all those cuddles, is he.”

Many of Ruby’s actions can be viewed as responding to stereotypical ideas about babies - for example, that babies are rocked and cuddled, sit or lie on laps, and need to be protected and, in Ruby’s words, “fixed up”. Thus, although this is a supple line allowing interaction and play between Peter and the older children, it is still segmented baby-child. Ruby plays what appears to be a ‘caring’ role. In enacting this role, however, Ruby seems to be playing a game in which Peter is more a baby doll to be controlled and played with than a human baby with feelings, desires and rights. Yuval-Davis (2011) argues that relations of care are associated with asymmetrical relationships and particular positions of power. The caring role allows Ruby to control Peter’s access to resources, physically restrain him and control his bodily posture. Just as the segmentarity affords particular roles for Ruby, so Peter is expected to play his role - of the passive and compliant baby. Throughout the episode, Ruby appears to be continually disciplining Peter’s body to comply with her expectations, at one point even commenting that he is being a “wriggly worm”.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that segmentarity can occur in a circular fashion of ever larger circles. Circular segmentarity recognises that we belong to
several different groups and networks (Blaise, 2013). When all of the circles converge to resonate with a single centre, the segmentarity becomes increasingly rigid (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). It is possible to see the convergence of circular segmentarity in this episode. The segmentary circles of baby, brother and boy resonate together, making the segmentarity more rigid. This is illustrated by Ruby (the only girl at FDC) incorporating Peter (her baby brother) into her game, in which she ‘protects’ him from the boisterous play of the older boys, and controls his bodily posture and his access to toys and other children. Thus, although the supple line allowed for interactions between Peter and the older children, its segmentarity meant that these were particular kinds of interactions based upon his categorisation as a baby. The convergence of multiple categories led, at times, to this supple line becoming more rigid.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 216), “[t]here is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations”. It is possible to glimpse a line of flight at Peter’s FDC. On such a line, binary segments such as baby-child completely rupture and are no longer relevant, as the following episode illustrates:

**Ryan, Peter and Cheryl are in the sandpit.** When Cheryl enquires what he would like to do, Ryan responds that he wants to go on the seesaw and walks across the grass away from Peter and towards the seesaw. Two others boys want to go on the seesaw with Ryan. One waits nearby while the other goes first. Peter watches the boys across the yard, grasping the edge of the sandpit and using it to pull his body up and forward, leaning towards the seesaw and the boys (see figure 11).

![Figure 11 Peter leans his body forward as he watches the boys on the seesaw](image-url)
Soon, Ryan asks Cheryl, “Can Peter come on the seesaw with me?” Cheryl looks down at Peter and says: “We could do that because you like seesaws, don’t you?” It sounds as if Peter says “Yeah”. “Yeah, you do”, says Cheryl. “Will we go on the seesaw?” she asks as she picks Peter up. “Oh, he’s excited, his legs are kicking,” says Cheryl as she carries him across the yard. Cheryl positions Peter on the seat and holds his waist and the back of the seat. Peter holds onto the handles and Ryan begins to work the seesaw (see Figures 12 and 13).

**Figure 12 Peter on the seesaw with Ryan as Mitchell watches on**

**Figure 13 Approximation of Peter’s view while on the seesaw captured by a head mounted camera worn by Peter**

Hugh approaches and asks: “What is Peter doing?” “Well what do you think he’s doing?” Cheryl asks. “Going on the seesaw”, Hugh replies. While on the seesaw Peter excitedly kicks his legs back and forth, laughs and vocalises, and Cheryl discusses with the children that this shows he is enjoying it and wants more. Soon Mitchell asks to go
on the seesaw with Peter also. Cheryl asks Ryan to allow Mitchell to have a turn. Ryan acquiesces unhappily but stays close by, climbing on the climbing frame. Eventually, Peter becomes distracted by the play of some other children and Cheryl takes him off the seesaw. Peter spent around 8 minutes on the seesaw with the two boys. FDC007-2500810-8-TS

When Ryan walks away from Peter towards the seesaw, it seems as if the rigid line is at work again. Peter is separated from the other boys physically and he cannot move his body toward them. It seems as though he has no chance of riding on the seesaw, although his body language suggests he would like to. A line of flight emerges, however, that “disturbs the binarity”, the segments, and “carries them off” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 98). Perhaps Ryan noticed Peter’s bodily communication because soon he invites Peter onto the seesaw. Peter appears to respond to the invitation by communicating with a word. Peter then engaged with the older boys in an activity that was highly valued by them and not typically considered a baby’s activity. It appears that the rigid and supple lines have become indiscernible or even ruptured. Hugh appears to notice this change when he asks what Peter is doing, despite the answer being obvious. For a short period of time, the ‘baby’ category appears to have disappeared altogether.

Concluding thoughts

I began this paper by arguing that processes of categorisation may play an important role in the politics of belonging in ECEC, particularly for infants in multi-age settings such as FDC. The data has illustrated that, for Peter, being categorised as a baby by the educator and older children played a role in his experiences at FDC. The role played by the ‘baby’ category, however, was a complicated one. At times, being in a different category to the others at FDC appeared to create a sense of separation between Peter and the older children, supporting the notion outlined earlier that children who are ‘different’ may find experiencing a sense of belonging more difficult (Kernan, 2010). In contrast, at other times, the ‘baby’ category appeared to become a point of contact rather than separation between Peter and the older children. At these times, it appeared that it was Peter’s difference from the older children that became the basis for his inclusion in the group, affording a particular kind of belonging to Peter. In the
final data episode, it appeared that the ‘baby’ category was no longer discernible or relevant. The role of categories in the politics of belonging in ECEC, therefore, is complex and dynamic.

Peter’s experience suggests that it is important for ECEC educators and researchers to remain open-minded about the role categories might play in particular settings, rather than assuming that difference always suggests exclusion or that particular categories might always be stable and relevant. The alternative is to risk falling victim to the ‘dogmatic image of thought’ that Deleuze warns us about. The danger is that the ‘baby’ category becomes, to adapt Hickey-Moody and Malins’ (2007, p. 5) words, “limiting” in terms of how an infant is “understood” and its “potentiality” to belong in multi-age ECEC. Thus, while categories do play a role in the politics of belonging in ECEC and are a productive focus for researchers and educators working with belonging, it is important to remember that categories cannot ever tell the whole story. Looking for situations in which categories no longer appear to work, in which they leak and rupture, might lead to new understandings about how belonging works in different ECEC contexts.

Finally, it is important to remember that Peter spent his time in FDC, a distinctive ECEC context. There are aspects of this setting that are not commonly found in centre-based ECEC - small, family, multi-age groupings with one consistent educator. Also, the gender balance at Peter’s FDC setting was unusual. It is possible that the line of flight that led to Peter being included on the seesaw may have been influenced by his categorisation as a boy, the dominant gender in this setting. Perhaps when it comes to this kind of physical play, being the ‘right’ gender is more important than being the ‘right’ age. It is possible that, as one line is rigidified, it can create leakages in another. There are many tangled lines at work in the politics of belonging in ECEC. Some are rigid, some are supple and some are lines of flight. Attention to all of these lines may lead to a fuller picture of how belonging works, and might be put to work, in ECEC.
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1 Family day care, also known as family child care and childminding, is early childhood education and care that takes place for a small group of children in the educator’s home.


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PART 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

**Abstract**

Notions of belonging are recognised as playing an important role in young children’s experiences in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and are evident in a number of early childhood curriculum documents including *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF). The inclusion of belonging as a central concept of the EYLF has the potential to contribute to social justice perspectives in ECEC. The conceptualisation of belonging in the EYLF, however, is limited to the experience of belonging rather than the complex political processes through which belonging operates. Through an examination of the macropolitics and micropolitics of belonging in ECEC, particularly in relation to infant care, I argue that viewing belonging as a political process is imperative if the full potential of the concept of belonging in the EYLF is to be realised. Drawing on the findings of a longitudinal case study of belonging for an infant in family day care, I identify four micropolitical flows with the potential to disrupt and challenge macropolitical thinking about belonging in curriculum, and theories of infant sociability.

**Introduction**

Belonging is a central concept in at least three national early childhood curriculum frameworks: the widely regarded *Te Whāriki* from New Zealand (Ministry of Education 1996), the more recent *Aistear* from Ireland (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2009), and *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations 2009). Experiencing belonging has long been acknowledged in psychology as fundamental to good health, influencing the emotions and behaviours of individuals (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Gere and MacDonald 2010). In early childhood education and care (ECEC) belonging is acknowledged as playing a crucial role in young children’s wellbeing and happiness (Woodhead and Brooker 2008) and influencing how they develop understandings of themselves and others (Vandenbroeck 1999). Belonging is a concept that has ‘allure’ and which ‘speaks, almost seductively, to a deep-seated
desire for connectedness’ (Sumsion and Wong 2011, 37). We all want to belonging and we all want children to experience belonging.

Sumsion and Wong (2011, 39) argue that ‘the centrality of the notion of “belonging” in the EYLF holds potential for radical transformations of early childhood settings’ into places that are more welcoming and socially just. Despite this, they suggest that the potential of belonging lies ‘somewhat latent’ (Sumsion and Wong 2011, 37). One reason for this latency might be that the conceptualisation of belonging in the EYLF is ‘limited’ (Giugni 2011, 14) and inadequately theorised (Peers and Fleer 2014). The problem of conceptualising belonging is not unique to ECEC, as it tends to be poorly defined and theorised across a range of disciplines and is often used as a taken-for-granted or self-explanatory concept (Antonsich 2010; Sumsion and Wong 2011). One of the limitations of the conceptualisation of belonging in the EYLF is that it focuses predominantly on the experience of belonging rather that the complex, dynamic and political processes through which belonging operates (Sumsion and Wong 2011). When viewed as a political process, belonging is no longer just a feel good concept. It has a ‘darker side’ (Woodhead and Brooker 2008, 3) that can include as well as exclude, nurture as well as discipline (Nagel 2011). Understanding belonging as a political process necessitates attention to flows of power and raises questions about who can and cannot belong, how this is decided and by whom, how belongings are enacted, and the opportunities for challenge or negotiation (Sumsion and Wong 2011).

The lack of attention to the politics of belonging in the EYLF can, in part, be attributed to the political climate in which the document was developed (Sumsion and Wong 2011). The government was ‘quick to tame’ the first version of the EYLF that conceptualised early childhood as a political space and was framed around democratic participation and social justice principles (Millei and Sumsion 2011, 77). This was replaced with a ‘requirement for the use of unrelentingly positive language’ and ultimately resulted in a ‘politically conservative and cautious’ document (Sumsion and Wong 2011, 29, 38). Nonetheless, Sumsion and Wong (2011, 38) argue that the very inclusion of belonging in the EYLF, while conservative in nature, can be understood as ‘creating space for critical interrogations’ of belonging in local contexts. They argue that working with the EYLF in ways that focus not just on the dimensions of belonging, but also on the politics of belonging, may enliven its transformative potential for ECEC.
In this paper I understand the relationship between belonging in the EYLF itself and the transformative potential of the ways it is engaged in practice as an interaction between macropolitics and micropolitics. I draw my understandings of politics from Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 213) for whom ‘everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics’. The distinction between the two politics, however, is not a question of size. Rather macropolitical processes are associated with rigidity, homogeneity, hierarchies, standardisation and the known while micropolitical processes are unpredictable, a supple flow of possibility that leaks from and escapes the macropolitical, making new connections and becomings possible. While macropolitics can offer us a view of how the world works, it is an inadequate one, limited by rigidity (May 2005). Micropolitics, on the other hand, offer the possibility of seeing more, of glimpsing something new because of the ability of the micro to ‘continually reshuffle and stir up’ the macro (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 218; May 2005). While macropolitics and micropolitics are intertwined and both are necessary if we are to attempt a full picture of the world, it is through micropolitical processes that change is possible.

The purpose of this paper is to bring together the macropolitics and micropolitics of belonging in a particular context of ECEC - infant family day care (FDC). In doing so I demonstrate how understandings of both the macropolitical and micropolitical are important and significantly, how these understandings can contribute to debates about how belonging can be conceptualised and the work that belonging can do in ECEC. First, I discuss two predominantly macropolitical forces - curriculum (in this case the EYLF and its use of belonging) and theories of infant sociability. Next, I move to the micropolitical, drawing on a 10-month longitudinal case study of how belonging worked for an infant in FDC. I discuss four micropolitical flows that emerged from the case study which have the potential to disrupt the macropolitical forces. First, the importance of multiple significant relationships for infants; second, the complexity of processes of categorisation and their role in belonging; third, the influential role of materiality in how belongings are constructed, challenged and resisted; and finally, the active role that infants can play in the political workings of belonging in their daily lives. Drawing on findings from the case study I suggest that while the EYLF is essentially a macropolitical document that attempts to govern and control the work of educators and children in ECEC, when combined with a
micropolitical perspective grounded in everyday contexts, understandings of belonging in curriculum, practice and theory can be expanded and recognised as complex, dynamic and above all, a political process. I also argue that when viewed as a political process, belonging has a powerful potential to open new possibilities for thinking about the social lives of infants in ECEC with implications for theory and practice.

**The case study**

In this article my understandings about the micropolitics of belonging are drawn from the findings of a case study of how belonging worked for an infant in FDC. Olsson (2009, 74-75) writes that curriculum is ‘a macro-political decision; but when it encounters preschool practices, an enormous creativity is released that completely and continuously transforms and defines the curriculum and its accompanying practices in a reciprocal relationship’. Thus what happens at a local level in ECEC can be considered a micropolitical flow that not only leaks away from the macropolitical, but most importantly has the potential to bring about change. In micropolitics, ‘small, everyday encounters [are] significant to the processes of change’ with the ‘potential to destabilise existing power relationships’ such as ‘the dominance of developmental discourses’ (Blaise 2013, 189).

I conducted a 10-month longitudinal case study of belonging for Peter, an infant in a multi-age Australian FDC setting. Peter had been in the same FDC setting from 8 weeks of age and spent three days a week, from around 7.00am to 5.00pm with up to four other children who were older than him, the oldest of whom was 4 years old. On some days Peter’s older sister also attended FDC. Data were generated when Peter was aged between 8 months and not yet crawling and 18 months and walking competently but showing little interest yet in communicating in words. Peter appeared to be very confident at FDC and to have a close and positive relationship with his educator. Data generation consisted of video observations over 26 visits resulting in approximately 24 hours of video footage with accompanying field and reflective notes. I also conducted an hour long interview with Peter’s educator and parents during which ten short, edited video segments were shared and discussed. The video segments were selected because I found them interesting, unusual or confusing, or for their potential to stimulate reflection and discussion about Peter’s experiences at FDC.
For the case study, belonging was conceptualised through Yuval-Davis (2011) and Sumson and Wong (2011) as a complex, multidimensional and dynamic political (in the sense that it involves the exercise of power) process (Stratigos, Bradley and Sumson 2014). I understand belonging as never finalised, but constructed and negotiated in daily lived experiences. I recognise that a sense of belonging is essentially a subjective feeling that is experienced when ‘one is valued by, and has a place within, a group’ (Stratigos, Bradley and Sumson 2014, 178). Such a highly subjective notion poses difficulties for research, however, particularly with pre-verbal infants. As a consequence in the case study I focussed particularly on the processes of how belonging was at work for Peter that lend themselves more readily to investigation. At the same time I attempted to grasp something of Peter’s experience of belonging by focussing on episodes that appeared to make a difference to his daily life at FDC or in which he appeared to be expressing that this situation mattered to him.

The findings of the case study emerged from an encounter between the data, the writings of others about how belonging works (see, e.g., Sumson and Wong [2011]; Yuval-Davis [2011]), and concepts from the poststructural philosophy of Deleuze and co-authors Guattari and Parnet. This encounter can be described as a process of ‘plugging the theory and the data into one another’ (Jackson and Mazzei 2012, vii) or ‘thinking with’ philosophical concepts ‘in a way that might produce previously unthought questions, practices, and knowledge’ (Mazzei and McCoy 2010, 504). Findings from the case study have previously been reported in more depth elsewhere (Stratigos 2015a; 2015b; forthcoming). In this article I work with these findings at a macro level, to try to understanding their combined contribution and significance in terms of understandings about belonging and infants in ECEC.

**Macropolitics and curriculum**

Curriculum documents, as official mandates from the State about what will actually occur in ECEC settings, are a macropolitical force at work in ECEC. Olsson (2009, 59-60) describes how ECEC is seen as ‘an extension of the State and as a tool for governing and educating citizens’, meaning it has a ‘predetermined and well-defined task’. One of those tasks, according to the EYLF is to work with concepts of belonging. Thus the EYLF attempts to govern what children and educators will do in ECEC, mandating
belonging as an important concept and encouraging educators to think about how they might develop a sense of belonging for all children in ECEC. Data generation for the case study reported on in this article was conducted in 2010 and 2011 during the phase-in period of the EYLF which was released in 2009 but not compulsory until 2012. The introduction of the EYLF represented a significant change for FDC: it was the first time that FDC educators were required to work with a curriculum document. The EYLF represents a shift in thinking about the work of FDC educators from a more traditional view of FDC as being primarily about care to emphasising the educational outcomes of their work (Cook et al. 2013).

Curriculum may appear to be a rigid macropolitics at work, however things may be more supple than they seem. For example, since the introduction of the EYLF there has been some criticism of the way it conceptualises belonging as simply ‘knowing where and with whom you belong’ (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations 2009, 7). Giugni (2011, 14) argues the EYLF offers a ‘limited way of understanding belonging’. Peers and Fleer (2014, 915) find the ‘everyday’ meaning attributed to belonging in the EYLF inadequate and oppose it with more ‘philosophical’, ‘theoretical’ or ‘scientific’ understandings. There is a danger that while belonging is an enticing notion, the benign manner in which it is conceptualised in the EYLF may lead to it being dismissed by some as meaningless, simply a ‘romantic platitude’ (Sumson and Wong 2011, 37).

The broad conceptualisation of belonging in the EYLF, however, can be viewed as affording a supple micropolitical flow. Indeed, this suppleness was a large part of the appeal of the belonging, being and becoming motif to the developers of the EYLF (Sumson and Wong 2011). Rather than dictating in a rigid way what belonging is and how it should work, belonging in the EYLF is open enough to be developed from a variety of perspectives and invite creative, localised interpretation (Sumson and Wong 2011). Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 215) warn, however, against ‘believing that a little suppleness is enough to make things “better”’. Olsson (2009, 60) suggests that while under such conditions, ECEC might ‘formulate their task differently, no longer as the extension of a centralized State apparatus, but more in accordance with what works in local contexts’, this may simply represent a ‘new way of governing’ ECEC. Olsson links this new way of governing with Deleuze’s (1995) prediction of a move away from a disciplinary society in which people are disciplined from the outside, to a control
society in which control comes from within. Regardless, it appears that the EYLF is predominantly a macropolitical force which forms a part of the official rating and assessment of the work of ECEC services by the State.

**Macropolitics and infants**

The second macropolitical force that I wish to discuss is that of the category of infant and associated theories of infant sociability. Seen through macropolitics, ‘infant’ is a stable construct that separates the youngest children in ECEC from the older children and adults through what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 212) describe as ‘rigid segmentarity’. This segmentarity has implications for how belonging is thought of in relation to the very young and introduces another powerful macropolitical force, that of theories of infant sociability. For some time, thinking about infants’ social lives has been significantly shaped by developmental theories, and in particular, Bowlby’s attachment theory. The primary focus of attachment theory is the importance of a secure dyadic relationship between a significant adult (usually the mother) and an infant. With increasing numbers of infants spending time in out-of-home care, however, understandings about attachment have been extended to educator-infant relationships. As a result, attachment theory’s ‘influential force’ is evident in ECEC policy, curriculum documents, research and practice (Degotardi and Pearson 2009, 146) across Europe, the United States of America, and Australia (Elfer 2014). Research in FDC suggests that those educators who draw on more traditional views of FDC base their work with young children on their own experiences of mothering and an attachment based pedagogy modelled on dyadic mother-child relationships (Cook et al. 2013).

Again, however, there is a more supple line intertwined with the macropolitical. Rigid theories of infant sociability are increasingly challenged in the early childhood literature which recognises that infants and toddlers in ECEC are socially capable (Press and Mitchell 2014; Degotardi and Pearson 2014, 2009; Salamon 2011). The predominance of dyadic adult-infant relationships as a conceptual frame for understanding infants’ social lives has been critiqued both within the fields of ECEC (Degotardi and Pearson 2009; White 2014) and psychology (Lamb 2005; Bradley 2010). A major criticism is that such relationships are insufficient for understanding the ‘unique social experience’ of infants in ECEC which affords relationships and
interactions with many adults and also with peers (White 2014, 211; Degotardi and Pearson 2009; Lamb 2005). Regardless of this suppleness, theories of infant sociability still constitute a powerful and pervasive macropolitical force in ECEC that has the potential to limit understandings of infants and how they might experience belonging.

**Micropolitics of belonging at work in the case study**

In this section I focus on the micropolitics of belonging drawn from the findings of the case study of belonging for Peter at FDC. I identify four micropolitical flows that emerged from the case study that have the potential to disrupt the macropolitics of theory and curriculum.

**Multiple significant relationships**

The EYLF suggests that young children develop a sense of belonging when they ‘develop attachments and trust those that care for them’ however it also clearly states that a goal for all children, including infants, is to ‘develop a sense of belonging to groups’ (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations 2009, 20, 26). The findings of the case study suggest that for Peter belonging was not just about a dyadic relationship with his educator. Peter was also interested in the other children and appeared, at times, to communicate both to them and his educator a desire to be included as a member of the peer group (Stratigos 2015a; forthcoming). For Peter, therefore, flows of power, access to spaces and objects, inclusion and exclusion, and ultimately belonging, were negotiated through interactions and relationships with the whole FDC group. Psychological research supports the notion that infants are capable of and interested in interacting not only in dyadic situations with adults and other children, but also as members of groups (Bradley and Selby 2004; Selby and Bradley 2003). It is not just relationships with adults that matter for infants in ECEC, therefore, but interrelated and significant interactions and relationships with multiple others, including other children, both in dyads and groups. Micropolitical understandings about belonging for Peter illustrate a vision of infants’ social lives as more than just attachment relationships. A micropolitical stance does not suggest that attachment relationships are not significant for infants, but that belonging for infants is characterised by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987, 25) ‘and...and...and...’, connections with a range of adults AND other infants AND other children AND ....
Understandings of belonging for infants that acknowledge the importance of multiple significant relationships within dyads and groups have the potential to disrupt the macropolitical force of theories of infant sociability. This is significant because there is a concern that the predominance of rigid theories such as attachment theory in ECEC might lead to infants’ complex social worlds and the significance of peer relationships being overlooked (Salamon 2011; Press and Mitchell 2014; Degotardi and Pearson 2009). For example, research suggests that even very young children in ECEC construct their identities both by focussing on themselves, and viewing themselves in relation to others, including other children (Puroila and Estola 2013; Ahn and Filipenko 2007). Press and Mitchell (2014, 231) argue that a change in focus from dyadic adult-infant relationships to understandings of ECEC as a social space for infants that includes relationships with a range of others represents a ‘significant shift’ in thinking. Micropolitical understandings of infants’ social worlds in real life contexts, therefore, are important in helping this significant shift to occur, making way for what Blaise (2013, 185) calls ‘postdevelopmental’ thinking in ECEC in which the ‘narrowness of developmental discourses in early childhood’ are contested.

**Complex processes of categorisation**

Social categories are political because they have implications for the positioning of people on ‘grids of power relations’ within a group (Yuval-Davis 2011, 13) and for notions of insiders and outsiders, inclusion and exclusion (Sumison and Wong 2011; Stratigos forthcoming). Findings from the case study suggest that processes of categorisation were an important aspect of how belonging worked for Peter. While categories such as boy and brother appeared to play a role in Peter’s belonging, the ‘baby’ category was dominant and influential in Peter’s experiences. Being categorised by the educator and older children as baby created separation between Peter and the older children and at times led to Peter being excluded from particular spaces or activities (Stratigos 2015a) or not considered an appropriate playmate (Stratigos forthcoming). The older children had the power to request Peter’s removal and this was encouraged by the educator to avoid potential conflict (Stratigos 2015a). These findings are supported by research in ECEC that suggest children’s perceptions of age, maturity and physical size can be important in processes of categorisation, power and exclusion (Löfdahl and Hägglund 2006; Puroila and Estola 2013; Skattebol 2006). In addition, conceptualisations of belonging that foreground the importance of similar or
complementary characteristics (see, e.g., Hagerty et al. [1996]; Mahar, Cobigo, and Stuart [2013]) suggest that an infant in multi-age ECEC might find developing a sense of belonging difficult because of their difference from the other children (Stratigos forthcoming).

The role of the baby category, however, was complex and dynamic. In addition to creating separation, at other times it lead to particular kinds of inclusion for Peter which appeared to stem from his difference from the older children, for example kissing, cuddling, holding, protecting, controlling and restraining Peter (Stratigos forthcoming). Even when the baby category created inclusion for Peter it was still the older children who appeared to hold much of the power. The workings of the baby category, however, were more complex still. While the baby category had some negative consequences for Peter, it also appeared to have its own rewards and power that were only available to him. It offered Peter a close physical relationship with, and at times almost exclusive access to, a powerful resource at FDC - the educator (Stratigos 2015b). In fact, as Peter became older, he appeared at times to desire this baby belonging to the point of attempting to exclude a similar aged child from this close physical relationship with the educator (Stratigos 2015b).

Understandings of processes of categorisation have the potential to disrupt simplistic conceptualisations of belonging in ECEC curriculum and practice. Peter’s experiences suggest that at a micropolitical level, belonging is more than just ‘knowing where and with whom you belong’ (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations 2009, 7). If this were the case, then we might consider it appropriate for Peter to know that often he belongs outside of the group of children, or that if he wants to be included then he must accept a particular role. At a micropolitical level, belonging is far more complex. In the EYLF infants are not identified as a separate category to older children in an attempt to avoid potential ‘othering’ of infants (Sumsion et al. 2009). Peter’s experience suggests that this ‘othering’ can occur regardless. A balance of both macropolitical and micropolitical understandings, therefore, is important. While it may not be desirable to further entrench the macropolitical force of the infant category, it remains important to be aware of its potential influence while at the same time ensuring it does not limit how we understand infants. Becoming aware of the social categories at work in particular settings and the roles they play in how power, inclusion and exclusion work in
children’s everyday experiences, therefore, is an important aspect of understanding and working with belonging in ECEC. At the same time it is important to be open to the dynamic nature of categories. Particular categories are not always stable and relevant and difference doesn’t always suggest exclusion (Stratigos forthcoming).

Attention to both the macropolitics and micropolitics of belonging can provide insights to support the challenging of social categories at work in particular settings and move towards more open understandings about who can belong, how belonging works, and ultimately more inclusive ECEC for all.

**Materiality**

The EYLF hints at the significance of materiality for belonging when it states that children’s ‘relationships with people, places and things’ influence how children learn about themselves and ultimately develop a sense of belonging (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations 2009, 20, my emphasis). The findings of the case study suggest that material objects and spaces did play an important role in how belonging worked for Peter. As with processes of categorisation, however, the micropolitics are more complex and again it is because of an association with power. At Peter’s FDC the educator and older children appeared at times to designate particular spaces as appropriate either for babies or older children. For example Peter was excluded from particular play spaces by the older children because of his baby categorisation (Stratigos 2015a) and at meals Peter was separated from the older children when confined to a high chair (Stratigos forthcoming). Importantly this was not a case of Peter choosing the space he thought appropriate for himself as in Puroila and Estola’s (2013) study, but the use of space being chosen for him and enforced by others. These findings are supported by research that suggests the control and ownership of space is one way power is exercised in ECEC on a daily basis (Skattebol 2005; Taylor and Richardson 2005). Everyday objects found in ECEC settings also played an important role in how belonging worked for Peter. For example, objects such as a dummy (pacifier) and bottle were recognised by the educator and other children as expressing ‘baby-ness’ whereas objects such as torches, seesaws and ride-on cars appeared to express ‘big boy’ status (Stratigos 2015a; 2015b; forthcoming). For Peter, this meant that at times he was denied access to particular ‘big boy’ objects (Stratigos 2015a; 2015b). Thus access to certain spaces and objects may be controlled by and associated with particular social categories and age related power. Previous
research supports the notion that young children may believe particular objects are appropriate to particular groups of children, small and big kids, in ECEC (Puroila and Estola 2013).

As Peter became older and was more mobile, he appeared to use material objects and spaces in ways that were about challenging or performing particular belongings. For example, on one occasion Peter attempted over and over to return to the spaces from which the older children repeatedly excluded him (Stratigos 2015a). He was also able to associate himself with particular objects that expressed ‘big boy’ status, for example the ride-on toys that held high status amongst the older children (Stratigos 2015b). Indeed, he was able to deny another, similar-aged child access to these powerful and desirable toys. By denying another child access to these toys, Peter was potentially performing ‘big boy’ belonging in a way that the older boys had done toward him on previous occasions (Stratigos 2015b). Materiality, therefore, afforded Peter the possibility of constructing and performing a new way of belonging at FDC and new opportunities for power flows.

A focus on the micropolitics of belonging affords the possibility of seeing the influential role not just of people but of the more-than-human for belonging in ECEC. This is significant because it has the potential to complicate conceptualisations of belonging beyond the realm of human agency. A recognition of the role of materiality in belonging also represents a challenge to theories of infant sociability such as attachment theory which tend to focus predominantly on relationships and interactions between adults and ‘relatively passive’ infants (Degotardi and Pearson 2009, 149). The current case study suggests that not only can spaces and things express power and status, influencing how belonging works, but that infants can appropriate materiality to actively perform and resist particular kinds of belongings. In order to gain a fuller understanding of how belonging works in ECEC, therefore, it is important not just to pay attention to people and what they do, but also to objects and spaces, what they express, how they are used, by whom, and what they mean for processes of categorisation and flows of power.

**Infants as political beings**

Nagel (2011, 120) asserts that ‘belonging is, above all, a political process’. Findings from the case study of Peter’s belonging suggest that it is important to consider flows of power when attempting to understand how belonging is at work in particular
settings. I have discussed the relationship between power, processes of categorisation and materiality. I wish to take this one step further by arguing that infants can be viewed as political beings in that they are able to exercise power and have influence in their everyday life experiences and ultimately how belonging works. From a macropolitical understanding of infants, this might appear impossible. When infants’ social lives are viewed through an attachment lens, the image of the infant can be one of passivity and innate motivation (Degotardi and Pearson 2009), rather than as having any kind of political agency. Micropolitical understandings of belonging can help us to see categories such as infant as less fixed and natural, and more ‘fluid and changeable’, reintroducing suppleness to our thought and helping us to see how ‘people are connecting in ways that cut across traditional political categories’ (May 2005, 127, 130). Such connections, between infant and infant, infant and older child, infant and group are political because ‘[t]hey involve ways of living together; they involve power’ (May 2005, 131). In addition, thinking about the possibilities for infants to exercise what I am calling political power with Deleuze can open up the potential not only of conceptualising power in a traditional, repressive way, but also a more positive conceptualisation of ‘power to’ (Colebrook 2010, 215) or ‘power of action’ (Boutang 2011, n.p.; Stratigos 2015b). This new conceptualisation of power means that it is available to anyone, including infants (Stratigos 2015b). Thus infants can be seen as having access to power to make things happen in their world, the capacity to engage in and play a role in how belongings are performed, constructed and resisted.

The EYLF (Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations 2009) asks educators to understand infants as simultaneously competent and vulnerable, something that is echoed in the early childhood literature (White 2014, Degotardi and Pearson 2014). Thus a view of infants as political beings needs to be balanced with an awareness of the vulnerabilities of infants in the social world of ECEC. This was particularly so for Peter who was in ECEC with children who, for the most part, were significantly older than him. Both competencies and vulnerabilities were evident in Peter’s social world as belonging was negotiated. As previously stated, Peter was, at times, denied access to particular objects and spaces because he was categorised as a baby (Stratigos 2015a). On another occasion an older child treated Peter almost like a baby doll, physically restraining him and controlling his body posture (Stratigos forthcoming). Even in these moments of vulnerability, however,
Part Five: Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

Peter was able to exercise power to influence his world. For example, he could enlist the help of his educator through forms of communication such as crying, unhappy vocalisations, looking, and moving his body in expressive ways (Stratigos 2015a; forthcoming). At such times, the educator was able to act as an advocate for his rights. While expressions such as crying might typically be thought of as identifying an infant as vulnerable and needy, the Deleuzian conceptualisation of power affords a different view as ‘a powerful and productive means for Peter to influence his world’ (Stratigos 2015a, 50). Peter could also powerfully contest being positioned by the other children as other or outside by repeatedly returning to the spaces they tried to exclude him from (Stratigos 2015a) and communicate his interest in the other children by watching them intently, leaning his body in their direction, kicking his legs and vocalising happily (Stratigos forthcoming). As an older infant, Peter repeatedly used power to deny a similar aged child access to particular desirable toys (Stratigos 2015b). Peter was able, therefore, to draw on both verbal and non-verbal communication as well as materiality to actively negotiate belonging and flows of power within the group.

Micropolitical understandings that reveal the infant as a political being offer a challenge to macropolitical theories of infant sociability and thus to practice with infants in ECEC. These understandings suggest that it is important to consider an infant’s vulnerabilities and competencies in negotiating and understanding belonging in ECEC. Infants are not just passive, shaped by the social context, but can play an active role in how belonging works in the ECEC group. Close attention to the fine details of infants’ interactions with people, spaces and objects; and how they use their bodies and vocalisations to express their desires are important, therefore, in order to see infants’ potential to access and use power in their social lives. Increased awareness of infants’ political capacities may result in greater attention to infants’ desires in terms of belonging and how infants can be assisted to use their increasing capacities to negotiate those desires.

Concluding thoughts

Belonging is a powerful concept that is ‘at the heart of a rights-based approach to early childhood’ (Woodhead and Brooker 2008, 3). Its inclusion as a foundational concept in the EYLF represents an opportunity to examine the complexities of how the social worlds of young children work, with a view to making ECEC places where everyone has
the right to experience belonging with fair and equitable access to resources and participation. The fact that the EYLF is silent about the politics of belonging does not mean that a vision of belonging as a complex, dynamic and political process is not possible or valuable in real life contexts. The findings of the case study suggest that when belonging is viewed as a political process, the concept can do much to contribute to and destabilise our accustomed ways of thinking about the social lives of young children including issues such as inclusion and exclusion, flows of power, processes of categorisation and the roles of materiality. Such understandings are particularly important given that young children are living in a world that is increasingly marked by difference and where the ‘ethical and political challenge of learning how to live well together and to flourish with difference’ is paramount (Taylor and Giugni 2012, 109).

A political perspective on belonging is imperative, therefore, to develop understandings of the powerful influence of belonging on children’s experiences.

Belonging offers an expansive means of thinking about issues of inclusion in ECEC. Others have argued that inclusion can be misconstrued as ‘mere physical presence’ (Macartney 2012, 181) or ‘sharing of locations’ (Nutbrown and Clough 2009, 196). Young children can be physically included in play in accordance with centre rules which emphasise inclusion, while at the same time being socially excluded through the ways they are treated during play (Löfdahl and Hägglund 2006). Thus even in settings that appear to be open to all, a sense of belonging may be difficult to achieve (Crisp 2010). Importantly, belonging is not simply learning about, recognising and tolerating difference, but being valued, respected and accepted for who you are, in other words, because of your difference. The importance placed on belonging in the EYLF, therefore, is an opportunity to work towards pedagogy that ‘enables difference to be part of who can “belong” in a community’ (Giugni 2011, 17) and ‘making difference positive rather than negative’ (Nutbrown and Clough 2009, 195, emphasis in original).

In relation to infants, Degotardi and Pearson (2009, 144) argue that ‘practitioners, policy makers, and researchers need to adopt a wider, more dynamic approach to relationships that includes, but extends beyond, that afforded by attachment theory alone’. I argue that a focus on belonging, and in particular how belonging works through attention to both macropolitics and micropolitics offers such an approach. The politics of belonging have the potential to capture more of the complex and dynamic social world of infants, including infants’ competencies and
vulnerabilities in negotiating the politics of belonging with implications for theories of infant sociability, curriculum and practice.

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http://www.ncca.biz/Aistear/pdfs/PrinciplesThemes_ENG/PrinciplesThemes_ENG.pdf


Thesis Conclusion

The doctoral project reported in this thesis examined belonging for an infant, Peter, in family day care (FDC). A 10-month longitudinal case study of belonging was conducted guided by the research questions:

- How does belonging work for Peter at FDC, particularly in relation to his belonging within a multi-age group of children?
- What roles does Peter play in how belonging works at FDC?

Part 4 of the thesis identified four new insights generated through the research project. First, belonging for Peter was not just about a dyadic adult-infant relationship. Instead, belonging was negotiated through interactions and relationships with multiple others, including other children, both in dyads and in groups. Second, the complex processes of categorisation, and in particular the ‘baby’ category, were important aspects of how belonging worked for Peter with implications for flows of power, the kinds of interactions between Peter and the older children, inclusion and exclusion, and access to particular spaces, objects and activities. Third, materiality played an important role in the politics of belonging for Peter and appeared to be interrelated with processes of categorisation and flows of power. Spaces and objects expressed power and status, influencing how belonging worked at FDC. As Peter became older he appeared to appropriate materiality to actively perform and resist particular kinds of belongings. Fourth, Peter was able to play an active role in the politics of belonging at FDC through both ‘power over’ and ‘power to’. He could communicate his desire to be included in the group and contest being positioned as ‘outside’ through a range of strategies. When Peter was older he appeared to perform a new ‘big boy’ belonging by using power to deny a similar aged child access to a highly desirable toy that was associated with the older children.

In Paper 6, I discussed the implications of these findings for conceptualisations of belonging in ECEC curriculum and practice, and theories of infant sociability. By way of concluding the thesis I now discuss some further contributions of the doctoral project for FDC and policy. Finally I discuss some of the challenges and limitations of the doctoral project and the possibilities for future research that stem from these.
Contributions of the doctoral project

Belonging is a potentially powerful concept in ECEC. When belonging is viewed as a political process it affords new possibilities for thinking about the social lives of young children in ECEC. The politics of belonging has the potential to draw attention to complex aspects of children’s social lives such as flows of power, processes of categorisation and the roles of materiality. Such understandings afford educators the opportunity to firstly recognise these processes at work in ECEC settings, and secondly to work with children to construct, perform, challenge and negotiate the politics of belonging in ways that mean everybody has an opportunity to experience a sense of belonging and ECEC settings are fair and welcoming spaces for all. This is important not just for educators who work with infants, but for all ECEC educators.

Unfortunately, the everyday conceptualisation of belonging (Peers & Fleer, 2014) and lack of attention to political dimensions of belonging (Sumsion & Wong, 2011) in the EYLF means that the potential of belonging is at risk of remaining unrealised. Thus a major contribution of this doctoral project is the importance of recognising belonging as a political process and developing understandings about the work that the politics of belonging can do in ECEC.

Contributions to family day care support services and educators

FDC educators may need considerable support and professional development to be able to develop more complex understandings about belonging and how it works in their FDC home. FDC educators as a group are the least-qualified educators in the ECEC sector (Ishimine & Tayler, 2012). They work autonomously and in isolation with high levels of responsibility, relying strongly on their coordination unit for support and professional development to comply with the EYLF and improve outcomes for the children in their care (Davis, Harrison, Priest, & Williamson, 2011). Substantial numbers of FDC educators work with children with disabilities or developmental delays, and from culturally diverse backgrounds including children from non-English speaking and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families (Davis et al., 2011). In addition, particular characteristics of FDC may have important implications for how belonging works in FDC settings. For example, this doctoral project suggests that the multi-age nature of FDC had implications for Peter’s experiences of belonging. Viewing belonging as a political process may be a useful way for FDC educators to look at how materiality, flows of power and processes of categorisation are at work and impact on
inclusion, exclusion and the possibilities for belongings that are available to different children. Given that the opportunities for working with belonging in a political sense are only “coded” in the EYLF (Sumsion & Wong, 2011, p. 38), FDC educators may need considerable support to recognise the full potential of the concept of belonging for their work with young children.

Research suggests that many FDC educators emphasise the caring and maternal aspects of their work, drawing on their own experiences of mothering and emphasising attachment based dyadic mother-child relationships as a way to understand their work with young children (Cook, Davis, Williamson, Harrison, & Sims, 2013). Political understandings of belonging could afford FDC educators an alternative way of thinking about the social worlds of the infants they care for that offers more possibilities for active infant participation and recognition of the importance of peer relationships than attachment theory alone.

Contributions to policy
It is hard not to feel that although the importance afforded belonging in the EYLF is welcome, it is also a missed opportunity to put the concept to work in a very powerful way. Earlier draft versions of the EYLF were based upon democratic principles, for example by urging “early childhood educators, children, families and communities to work ‘together to create a just and fair society’” and framing the early childhood educator as “an agent of politics who is reflective about ‘issues associated with power, control and social justice’ and works with children to “challenge power assumptions and ... promote equity, fairness and justice” (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, as cited in Millei & Sumsion, 2011, p. 75). Unfortunately, “the political space opened up by the first version of the Framework [was] tamed” and the final published version is “apolitical” (Millei & Sumsion, 2011, p. 79). This doctoral project argues that for the concept of belonging to achieve its full potential in ECEC curriculum, it must be recognised as a political process. The everyday meaning given to belonging in the EYLF means that it might be taken for granted and opportunities could be missed for recognising how the politics of belonging are at work in ECEC settings, and to work with children to challenge and negotiate belongings. Recognising belonging as political in future curriculum documents is important to ensure the concept of belonging can be put to work in ways that make a difference in the everyday lives of children in ECEC.
Challenges, limitations and future possibilities

All research has its share of difficulties and limitations. In this section I discuss some of the challenges and limitations of the doctoral project. As a result of these challenges, I also discuss possibilities for future research.

The important (im)possibilities of researching infants’ perspectives and experiences

While this doctoral project fitted within a larger study that aimed to develop understandings from the perspective of infants themselves, I do not make claims of having insight into Peter’s perspective, or of ‘knowing’ his experience with certainty. The extent to which it is possible to either capture or understand infants’ perspectives is debatable (Elwick, Bradley, & Sumsion, 2014; Johansson, 2011; White, 2011). Instead, and in keeping with the aim to research within a smooth space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) described in Paper 1, I attempted to develop understandings about how belonging worked for Peter drawing on episodes that appeared important to him and to impact on his daily experiences at FDC. These understandings were developed through close attention to Peter’s communication and behaviour, for example his reaction to being excluded from the bear cave in Paper 3, his joy in riding on the seesaw with the big boys in Paper 4 and his repeated behaviour with the ride-on toys in Paper 5. In this way I attempted to develop understandings about how belonging worked, not from the perspective of Cheryl or his parents as might be more typical in research with infants, but from the perspective of what appeared to matter to Peter. I do not claim, however, that attempting to develop understandings about what mattered for Peter is unproblematic. It is a fundamental difficulty of research with infants that they are not yet able to challenge researchers’ understandings with words.

One increasingly used method of attempting to develop understandings about very young children’s experiences in ECEC is through close observation via visual methods of data generation such as the video observations used extensively in this doctoral project (White, 2011). It is important to acknowledge, however, that using video, although a powerful research tool, does not make infants’ perspectives knowable. White (2011, p. 197) suggests “there are, and will be, increasing demands upon researchers to make their data available for public scrutiny, as a form of validity and/or reliability”. Such demands seem to be based upon the idea that an image provides some sort of evidence to back up the author’s claims - that the camera cannot lie. Pink (2007) cautions, however, that images are subjective representations.
which may be interpreted in multiple ways, not absolute truths. Similarly, Wiles et al. (2008) argue that although images are often viewed as representations of reality, they are actually constructions that are influenced by the researcher and the subject. This thesis, therefore, is influenced by where I have chosen to point the camera, the images that I chose to publish, and importantly the understandings I developed about those images throughout the research encounter. Ultimately although I have tried to offer a ‘voice’ for Peter’s experiences of belonging in FDC, the voice that is most present in this thesis is my own. Because of the associated difficulties, Elwick et al. (2014, p. 210) describe researching infants’ perspectives as an “(im)possible project”. Green (2010, p. 1) describes (im)possibility as being concerned with both possibility and impossibility at once, the two being inextricably linked, “inescapably contaminated each with the other”.

Despite the challenges, I argue that it is still imperative that researchers continue to develop understandings about what being in ECEC means for infants themselves. Much of the public discussion about infant care in Australia revolves around the perspectives of Government, parents and providers of ECEC focussing on, for example the higher cost of infant care, whether care is ‘good’ for infants, the availability of places for infants in ECEC and the influence on national productivity if more mothers of young children are in the workforce. The reality is that many infants are living out their lives in ECEC at this moment and little is known about their daily experiences in care. Thus although researchers must accept that ultimately it is impossible to understand the world from an infant’s perspective, it is still imperative that we continue to experiment with research assemblages that will help us to develop understandings about what life is like for the growing numbers of infants who spend increasing amounts of time in ECEC. This means a research focus not just on the perspective of educators, policy or parents, but on infants’ experiences however tentative.

Expanded examinations of the role of materiality in belonging

In Part 4, I addressed the role that material objects and spaces played in how the politics of belonging worked between Peter and the older children. I have not, however, addressed the possibility of children developing a sense of belonging to an object such as a toy, or a space such as a particular area of a room. Sumsion and Wong (2011) argue that there a multiple, interrelated dimensions or ways of belonging that
are possible including belonging to spaces, environments and landscapes. They also argue for an emotional dimension of belonging (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). Drawing on the concept of assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) it is possible to imagine a child developing an emotional sense of belonging in relation to an object or space. To some extent, such belongings fall outside the scope of the doctoral project which was interested in how belonging worked for Peter, particularly in relation to his belonging within a multi-age group of children. An expanded examination of the roles played by materiality in the politics of belonging for young children in future research, however, may well prove fruitful in further developing understandings of the work that belonging can do in ECEC.

The challenges and possibilities of researching in a single family day care home

Despite playing an important role in the Australian ECEC landscape, FDC is under researched (Bohanna, Davis, Corr, Priest, & Tan, 2012). As discussed in Paper 2, FDC is a unique context for ECEC that is attractive to many families because of its familiar home environment and family-like setting (Family Day Care Australia, 2014; Hand, 2005). A lack of research, however, means we know little about how these unique characteristics of FDC play out in the everyday experiences of the children in childcare. Because of the single case study design of the doctoral project I was not able to say as much about the role of the FDC context in Peter’s belonging as I might have liked.

Some of the characteristics of the FDC home that are not commonly found in centre-based care, however, did appear to play a role in Peter’s experiences of belonging. For example, the multi-age nature of the FDC home appeared to be influential in processes of categorisation and how belongings were constructed, performed and contested. Without further research in FDC contexts, however, it is difficult to begin teasing out the complexities of how the home environment and family-like setting play a role in children’s experiences. I was left wondering, for example what role having one stable educator played in Peter’s experiences of belonging. For example, Brooker (2014) suggests that a Key Person system used in some centre-based care may be an important aspect of infants and toddlers developing a sense of belonging in ECEC. This system happens by default in FDC. In addition I wondered what role the small, stable group of children including his sister meant for how belonging worked for Peter. Did these factors make Peter feel more supported to explore relationships with the other children?
While the single case study design of the doctoral study afforded an in-depth, intimate look at belonging for a particular infant in a particular context, it also has its limitations. Having clearly defined boundaries around the case is important because it ensures the study is reasonable in scope and supports understandings of what is and is not being studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The choice of case study site, however, is an important influence on the research findings. It is possible that the same kind of study conducted in a different FDC context might have generated different understandings. For example, might a case that involved a child whose home language and culture were different from the dominant culture at FDC generate even more nuanced understandings about the politics of belonging? What might research into belonging in a predominantly Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ECEC community reveal about indigenous perspectives on belonging? Ultimately this is one of the difficulties of a single case study design. No two infants or FDC homes are the same. A single case study is not generalisable in the traditional sense. More research into how belonging works with a range of children in a range of contexts, including FDC homes, is important in furthering understandings about how belonging works in ECEC. I argue that FDC should become the focus of more research not only because it is currently under researched, but because of its unique characteristics that can help us to develop new understandings about the roles of various aspects of different ECEC contexts in children’s daily experiences.

**Concluding comments**

Maslow (1987, p. 20) suggests “we have largely forgotten our deep animal tendencies to herd, to flock, to join, to belong”. I agree with Maslow that the desire for belonging is deeply held. I don’t believe, however, that we have forgotten that desire. It is just that we don’t think about belonging until it is absent or at risk. It is then that a political perspective on belonging is valuable. Belonging “becomes articulated, formally structured and politicized only when it is threatened in some way” (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 10). The EYLF asks the ECEC community to think about belonging whether they think it is at risk or not. This in itself is valuable. A political perspective on belonging, however, has the potential to transform how we think about inclusion, exclusion and social justice, how inequities can be challenged, and ultimately how the wellbeing, happiness and daily experiences of young children in ECEC can be improved.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A Family Day Care in Australia

In Australia, family day care (FDC) is a widely used form of childcare that has been operating for over thirty years with around 190,000 children enrolled (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2014). It appears that FDC is an increasingly popular choice with Australian families. There was a rapid increase of 40% in the number of approved FDC services over the 12 month period 2013-14 and growth is projected to increase by a further 30% over the next 15 years (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014). The number of families using FDC in Australia increased by around 25% over the 12 months to June 2014 (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2014). The popularity of FDC in Australia is often attributed to the family- and home-like setting, one consistent educator and small group of children (Family Day Care Australia, 2014). In addition, FDC can provide care from birth up to 12 years of age outside school hours meaning that families can have all of their children cared for in one multi-age setting. Families who use FDC are eligible for financial assistance from the government in the form of the child care rebate and child care benefit.

Educators in Australian FDC, while working independently in their own homes, operate within a scheme that includes a coordination unit, often run by a local government or community based organisation. Coordinators must have at least a diploma level education and care qualification. The coordination unit provide educators with resources and support, making face-to-face visits to FDC homes, monitoring educators and assisting them to satisfy legal and regulatory requirements. They also offer support and advice to families and help to connect families and FDC educators.

References


Appendix B Parent Information Sheets

Parent Information Sheet

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the 'lived experience' of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

Researchers from Charles Sturt University are conducting a study of the experiences of babies and toddlers in childcare. The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by our Industry Partners - KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. You are warmly invited to participate.

The aim of the study is to investigate how babies and toddlers experience childcare. The study involves researchers, carers, parents, and older children in the childcare setting working together to try to understand the experiences of babies and toddlers in long day care and family day care environments. The study will try to capture the perspectives of the babies and toddlers themselves.

If your child is in long day care, a member of our research team would like to visit your child’s care setting for two half days per week for up to 6 months. If your child is in family day care, a researcher would like to visit for two half days per week for up to two months.

As a Parent, if you decide to participate in the study, you participation would involve:

- Possibly being videoed with your infant. This will most commonly be at drop-off or pick-up times but may also occur at other times when you are in the care setting.
- Providing a list of gestures and words produced by the infant in the home setting.
- Viewing edited video segments in which your child appears (as many or as few as you would like) and discussing your interpretation of infants’ experiences with the researcher in an attempt to understand the messages the infant is communicating about what they are experiencing. This meeting would be videotaped to enable a full record of the discussion.

If you decide to participate in the study, as an infant participant, your child’s participation would involve:

- Being observed in their care setting with field notes, photographs, and on some occasions, video footage collected focusing on, for example, movements, interests, routines and interactions. Decisions about when and what to video will be made in consultation with your child’s carer. More information about videoing is provided on the next page.
- Collecting video footage from the perspective of the infant by wearing a babycam (a small video camera that infant wears on a hat or headband) for short periods of time (no longer than 15 minutes). If an infant shows any signs of discomfort, the babycam will be removed immediately.

The information on the next page outlines how carers and older children would be involved.
Appendices

Carer

- Making available (with parents’ permission) to the researcher contextual information relating to the infant (such as portfolios and developmental records).
- Providing a list of gestures and words produced by the infant in the care setting.
- Allowing the researcher to observe, make field notes and, on some occasions, video in the care setting. Decisions about when and what to video will be made in consultation with carers.
- Viewing edited video segments and discussing the carer’s interpretation of infants’ experiences with the researcher.
- Meeting with the researcher, and where possible, with the infants’ families to share interpretations of a small number of video segments.

Older children:
Older children who share the setting with the infant may be videoed as they interact with the infant. They will be invited to provide a child’s perspective by using a digital camera to record their ideas about infants’ most/least favourite places/activities/events/interactions. Older children may also be invited to view edited video segments and discuss their interpretation of infants’ experiences.

In relation to video footage, two types of camera will be used, a tripod mounted handycam and babycam. The focus will be on trying to understand infants’ experiences and may involve footage of you interacting with your child. Videoing will only take place for short periods of time.

Please note that parents will have the following rights:

1) To ask that the video be turned off at any time,
2) At the end of a filming session, to require that any section in which they/their child appear be deleted,
3) When viewing edited videos, to require that any section in which they/their child appear be deleted,
4) To give or deny permission for snippets of videos or stills in which they/their child appear to be used for presentations / journal articles, etc.

The legal obligation in relation to mandatory reporting of child abuse would take precedence over these rights.
In relation to babycam, please note this method of data collection is a small part of a wide range of data collection techniques. It will be used at pre-arranged times and for short periods. Infants will be closely monitored for any signs of reluctance or distress and the use of babycam halted if such signs are evident.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any point.

The findings of the research will be communicated through a range of publications. Participants will not be identified without their consent. They will be able to access reports of the study through KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. The study will provide improved knowledge of what life is like in childcare for infants leading to more informed parental choices, improved public policy related to infant care and continuing enhancement of professional practice in childcare.

If you agree to participate in the research project, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Please retain this information sheet as your own record. If you have any questions about the project or about any other issues relating to your/your child’s involvement in the project please do not hesitate to contact one of the researchers.

This project will be conducted by the following Research Team:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prof Jennifer Sumston</th>
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<th>Ms Fran Press</th>
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School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst
jsumston@csu.edu.au
Ph: 02 6338 4423 (Jennifer Sumston)

Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or concerns about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact:

Executive Officer,
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Appendices

Parent Information Sheet - Longitudinal

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

Thank you for participating in the study of infants’ experiences of childcare conducted by researchers from Charles Sturt University, with the support of the Australian Research Council and our Industry Partners - KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. We very much appreciate your support and involvement. We would now like to invite you to participate in a longitudinal case study, as part of the larger study.

The longitudinal case study component will investigate how babies and toddlers experience childcare over time and will involve researchers, carers, parents, and older children in the child care setting continuing to work together to try to understand the experiences of babies and toddlers in long day care and family day care environments.

The researcher with whom you have been working would like to continue to visit your child’s care setting for one half day per fortnight for up to 18 months to gain insights into infants’ experiences over time.

As a Parent, if you decide to participate in the longitudinal case study component, we would ask that you continue to contribute in the same ways that you have already been doing. This would mean continuing to:

- Possibly being videoed with your infant. This will most commonly be at drop-off or pick-up times but may also occur at other times when you are in the care setting.
- Providing a list of gestures and words produced by the infant in the home setting.
- Viewing edited video segments in which your child appears (as many or as few as you would like) and discussing your interpretation of infants’ experiences with the researcher in an attempt to understand the messages the infant is communicating about what they are experiencing. This meeting would be videotaped to enable a full record of the discussion.

If you decide to participate in the longitudinal case study component, we would ask that your infant, as a participant, continue to contribute in the same ways that they have already been doing. This would mean continuing to:

- Being observed in their care setting with field notes, photographs, and on some occasions, video footage collected focusing on, for example, movements, interests, routines and interactions. Decisions about when and what to video will be made in consultation with your child’s carer. More information about videoing is provided on the next page.
- Collecting video footage from the perspective of the infant by wearing a babycam (a small video camera that infant wears on a hat or headband) for short periods of time (no longer than 15 minutes). If an infant shows any signs of discomfort, the babycam will be removed immediately.

The information on the next page outlines how carers and older children would be involved.
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- Providing a list of gestures and words produced by the infant in the care setting.
- Allowing the researcher to observe, make field notes and, on some occasions, video in the care setting. Decisions about when and what to video will be made in consultation with carers.
- Viewing edited video segments and discussing the carer’s interpretation of infants’ experiences with the researcher.
- Meeting with the researcher, and where possible, with the infants’ families to share interpretations of a small number of video segments.

Older children:
Older children who share the setting with the infant may be videoed as they interact with the infant. They will be invited to provide a child’s perspective by using a digital camera to record their ideas about infants’ most/least favourite places/activities/events/interactions. Older children may also be invited to view edited video segments and discuss their interpretation of infants’ experiences.

In relation to video footage, two types of camera will be used, a tripod mounted handycam and babycam. The focus will be on trying to understand infants’ experiences and may involve footage of you interacting with your child. Videoing will only take place for short periods of time.

Please note that parents will have the following rights:

1) To ask that the video be turned off at any time,
2) At the end of a filming session, to require that any section in which they/their child appear be deleted,
3) When viewing edited videos, to require that any section in which they/their child appear be deleted,
4) To give or deny permission for snippets of videos or stills in which they/their child appear to be used for presentations / journal articles, etc.

The legal obligation in relation to mandatory reporting of child abuse would take precedence over these rights.
In relation to babycam, please note this method of data collection is a small part of a wide range of data collection techniques. It will be used at pre-arranged times and for short periods. Infants will be closely monitored for any signs of reluctance or distress and the use of babycam halted if such signs are evident.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any point.

The findings of the research will be communicated through a range of publications. Participants will not be identified without their consent. They will be able to access reports of the study through KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. The study will provide improved knowledge of what life is like in childcare for infants leading to more informed parental choices, improved public policy related to infant care and continuing enhancement of professional practice in childcare.

If you agree to participate in the research project, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Please retain this information sheet as your own record. If you have any questions about the project or about any other issues relating to your/your child’s involvement in the project please do not hesitate to contact one of the researchers.

This project will be conducted by the following Research Team:

Prof Jennifer Sumson  Assoc Prof Linda Harrison  Ms Fran Press
Prof Sharynne McLeod  Prof Ben Bradley  Dr Joy Goodfellow
Ms Sheena Elwick  Ms Anne Stonehouse  Ms Tina Stratigos

School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst
jsumson@csu.edu.au
Ph: 02 6338 4423 (Jennifer Sumson)

Charles Sturt University's Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or concerns about the ethic conduct of this project, you may contact:

Executive Officer,
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Parent Information Sheet – Older Child

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

Researchers from Charles Sturt University are conducting a study of the experiences of babies and toddlers in childcare. The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by our Industry Partners - KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. Your child is warmly invited to participate.

The aim of the study is to investigate how babies and toddlers experience childcare. The study involves researchers, carers, parents, and older children in the childcare setting working together to try to understand the experiences of babies and toddlers in long day care and family day care environments. The study will try to capture the perspectives of the babies and toddlers themselves.

A member of our research team will be visiting the setting your child attends for two half days per week for up to 18 months.

As an older child participant in the study, your child may be videoed as they interact with infants in the setting. Your child may be invited to provide a child’s perspective by using a digital camera to record their ideas about infants’ most/least favourite places/activities/events/interactions. Your child may also be invited to view edited video segments and discuss their interpretation of infants’ experiences with the researcher in an attempt to understand the messages the infant is communicating about what they are experiencing. This meeting would be videotaped to enable a full record of the discussion. You have the right to view video or photographs that are used in the study and contain images of your child if you wish. At this time you may request that particular images of your child be deleted. You will also have an opportunity to give or deny permission for snippets of videos or stills in which your child appears to be used for presentations / journal articles, etc.

Your child’s participation is entirely voluntary. Should you agree for your child to participate you are free to withdraw at any point. If you agree for your child to participate in the research project, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Please retain this information sheet as your own record. If you have any questions about the project or about any other issues relating to your child’s involvement in the project please do not hesitate to contact one of the researchers.
This project will be conducted by the following Research Team:

Prof Jennifer Sumson    Assoc Prof Linda Harrison    Ms Fran Press
Prof Sharynne McLeod    Prof Ben Bradley          Dr Joy Goodfellow
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Appendix C Parent Consent Forms

Parent Consent Form

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

I, ________________________________________________, consent/do not consent to myself and my child, __________________________________________, participating in the research project titled, What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have read and understood the information sheet given to me. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers.

I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about myself and my child are confidential and that neither my name, my child’s name nor any other identifying information will be published without my written permission.

I have read and understood the information provided about the ways in which video-taping and digital photography will be used for the purposes of the study. I give permission for my child and myself to be filmed as part of the case study. I also give permission for my child to wear a babycam for short periods of time to assist in creating a video of his or her experience in childcare. I further give consent for this video and photographs to be shown to the research team and the staff and children at my child’s care setting for the purposes of analysis.

I also give consent for my child to be observed during the normal course of the day and for the researchers to access my child’s developmental and portfolio records.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by our Industry Partners, KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. The study has been approved by the Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee. I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about this research I can contact:

Executive Officer,
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Participant ________________________________  Researcher ________________________________
Signature __________________________________  Signature ________________________________
Date ________________________________  Date ________________________________
Parent Consent Form - Longitudinal

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the 'lived experience' of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

I ____________________________ consent/do not consent to myself and my child, ____________________________ participating in the longitudinal component of the research project titled, What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the 'lived experience' of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have read and understood the information sheet given to me. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers.

I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about me and the children in my care are confidential. No identifying information will be published without my written permission.

I have read and understood the information provided about the ways in which video-taping and digital photography will be used for the purposes of the study. I give permission for myself to be filmed as part of the case study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by our Industry Partners, KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. The study has been approved by the Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee. I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about this research I can contact:

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Charles Sturt University  
Private Mail Bag 29  
Bathurst NSW 2795

Participant ____________________________  
Signature ____________________________  
Date ____________________________

Researcher ____________________________  
Signature ____________________________  
Date ____________________________
Parent Consent Form – Older Child

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

I, ____________________________________________, consent/do not consent to my child, ____________________________________________, participating in the research project titled, What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have read and understood the information sheet given to me. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers.

I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about my child are confidential and that neither my child’s name nor any other identifying information will be published without my written permission.

I have read and understood the information provided about the ways in which video-taping and digital photography will be used for the purposes of the study. I give permission for my child to be filmed as part of the case study. I further give consent for this video and photographs to be shown to the research team and the staff and children at my child’s care setting for the purposes of analysis.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

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Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Parent ________________________  Researcher ________________________
Signature _____________________  Signature _________________________
Date __________________________  Date _____________________________
Appendix D Educator Information Sheets

Carer Information Sheet

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the 'lived experience' of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

Researchers from Charles Sturt University are conducting a study of the experiences of babies and toddlers in childcare. The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by our Industry Partners KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. You are warmly invited to participate.

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If you are working in long day care, a member of our research team would like to visit your setting for two half days per week for up to 6 months. If you are working in family day care, a researcher would like to visit for two half days per week for up to two months.

As a Carer, if you decide to participate in the study, you participation would involve:

- Making available (with parents’ permission) to the researcher contextual information relating to the infant (such as portfolios and developmental records).
- Providing a list of gestures and words produced by the infant in the care setting.
- Allowing the researcher to observe, make field notes and, on some occasions, video in your setting. Decisions about when and what to video will be made in consultation with you. More information about videoing is provided on the next page.
- Viewing edited video segments (as many or as few as you would like) and discussing your interpretation of infants’ experiences with the researcher.
- Meeting with the researcher, and where possible, with the infants’ families to share interpretations of a small number of video segments in an attempt to understand the messages the infant is communicating about what they are experiencing. Older children who are familiar with the infant and the setting might also be involved in the meeting. This meeting would be videotaped to enable a full record of the discussion.

The information on the next page outlines how infants, parents and older children would be involved.
Infants:
Infants will be observed in their care setting and field notes, photographs and video footage will be collected focusing on, for example movements, interests, routines and interactions. Footage capturing the infants’ perspective will be collected by infants wearing a babycam (a small video camera that infant wears on a hat or headband) for short periods of time (no longer than 15 minutes). If an infant shows any sign of discomfort, the babycam will be removed immediately.

Parents:
Parents may be videoed with their infants. This will most commonly be at drop-off or pick-up times but may also occur at other times when the parent is at the service. Parents will be invited to view edited video segments of their infant in your childcare setting and discuss their interpretation of infants’ experiences. Parents will be asked to provide a list of words produced by the infant in the home setting.

Older children:
Older children who share the setting with the infant may be videoed as they interact with the infant. They will be invited to provide a child’s perspective by using a digital camera to record their ideas about infants’ most/least favourite places/activities/events/interactions. Older children may also be invited to view edited video segments and discuss their interpretation of infants’ experiences.

In relation to video footage, two types of camera will be used, a tripod mounted handycam and babycam. The focus will be on trying to understand infants’ experiences and may involve footage of you interacting with infants. Videoing will only take place for short periods of time.

Please note that carers will maintain control over when videoing occurs and have the following rights:

1) To ask that the video be turned off at any time,
2) At the end of a filming session, to require that any section in which they appear be deleted,
3) When viewing edited videos, to require that any section in which they appear be deleted,
4) To give or deny permission for snippets of video in which they appear to be shared with others in the workplace or with parents,
5) To give or deny permission for snippets of videos or stills in which they appear to be used for presentations / journal articles, etc.

The legal obligation in relation to mandatory reporting of child abuse would take precedence over these rights.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any point.

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Carer Information Sheet - Longitudinal

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The researcher with whom you have been working would like to continue to visit your setting for one half day per fortnight for up to 18 months to gain insights into infants’ experiences over time.

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- Meeting with the researcher, and where possible, with the infants’ families to share interpretations of a small number of video segments in an attempt to understand the messages the infant is communicating about what they are experiencing. Older children who are familiar with the infant and the setting might also be involved in the meeting. This meeting would be videotaped to enable a full record of the discussion.
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**Older children:**
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jsumson@csu.edu.au
Ph: 02 6338 4423 (Jennifer Sumson)

Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or concerns about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact:

Executive Officer,
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Appendix E Educator Consent Forms

Carer Consent Form

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

I ______consent/do not consent to participating in the research project titled, What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have read and understood the information sheet given to me. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers.

I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about me and the children in my care are confidential. No identifying information will be published without my written permission.

I have read and understood the information provided about the ways in which video-taping and digital photography will be used for the purposes of the study. I give permission for myself to be filmed as part of the case study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by our Industry Partners, KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. The study has been approved by the Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee. I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about this research I can contact:

Executive Officer,
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Participant ___________________________ Researcher ___________________________
Signature ___________________________ Signature ___________________________
Date ___________________________ Date ___________________________
Carer Consent Form - Longitudinal

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the 'lived experience' of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

I _______________ consent/do not consent to participating in the longitudinal component of the research project titled, *What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the 'lived experience' of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.*

The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have read and understood the information sheet given to me. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers.

I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about me and the children in my care are confidential. No identifying information will be published without my written permission.

I have read and understood the information provided about the ways in which video-taping and digital photography will be used for the purposes of the study. I give permission for myself to be filmed as part of the case study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

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Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Participant ___________________________  Researcher ___________________________

Signature ___________________________  Signature ___________________________

Date ___________________________  Date ___________________________
Appendix F Sample Visit Summary Sheet

Visit Summary Sheet – Visit 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>Outside play. Peter is in the red car. Cheryl leads Peter to a small toddler slide and he climbs the steps and slides down. Peter wanders around the yard before going to the trampoline and bouncing.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>Cheryl goes inside to get the esky with the food so the children can have lunch outside. Peter cries and she takes him with her.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.29</td>
<td>Peter sits at the outside table (the first time I have seen him at the table instead of in his highchair) while the older children wash their hands at the tap. Peter vocalizes loudly, gesturing toward the esky at one stage.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.38</td>
<td>Still at lunch time R and Cheryl discuss Peter’s head shaking – whether he means no or whether he just likes shaking his head. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.41</td>
<td>Peter starts throwing his food on the ground so Cheryl takes him on her lap and feeds him yoghurt. Peter is wanting to use the spoon himself.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>Peter gets down to play. He goes straight to the red car and climbs in. He can’t make it go but seems to like to sit in it. He wanders around and then returns to the red car. He goes to get in but H pushes it away. Peter wanders off again. He returns to the car again. M doesn’t want him to get in. He is saving it for H. Cheryl helps Peter get in. He turns the wheel from side to side. H returns from the bathroom and approaches the red car. M is sitting close by on a tricycle. They are waiting for Peter to get out. Eventually Peter wanders away and H gets straight in.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>Peter is again sitting in the red car, turning the wheel and vocalizing. He stays in for quite a while this time. Cheryl gets him out so they can go inside. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>Children wash hands inside ready for story time. All the children sit on the floor, Peter on Cheryl’s lap for a story. Peter quickly loses interest and wanders away.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>Cheryl takes Rs and R to bed. M is playing with a computer keyboard. Peter approaches and M moves Peter’s hand away and removes the keyboard. Peter vocalizes unhappily. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>Peter has his nappy changed. H, M and Peter play inside. Cheryl and Peter play with a round box and lid, putting it on their heads. M, Cheryl and Peter sing and play with the dinosaurs.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Inside play continues. Rs and R are still asleep. Peter and Cheryl play with a Duplo tiger, making animal noises. Cheryl shows Peter how to push a car down the ramp of the toy garage. They take turns. Peter watches M intently as he plays with a pull toy. Peter seems to want a turn, vocalizing at M.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Video taken, see master tape FDC07-010311-20-TS and ** see FDC07-010311-21-TS
What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?
This is the first time I have seen Peter sit at the table with the other children for a meal instead of sitting in his high chair. He seemed to enjoy the experience but it made things a lot more difficult for Cheryl to balance the needs of the other children.

Lots of wandering around outside from one thing to another. The red car seems to be attracting his attention a lot.

Peter watches M very intently during inside play. He also watches Cheryl and copies her with the Duplo tiger and toy cars.

Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?

What do you need to do on next visit?
Cheryl has suggested I try coming on a Friday as a new toddler, T, who is only slightly older than Peter has joined the group and she feels that Peter interacts differently with this younger group of children. She feels that Peter has noticed that T is sitting at the table for meals and he wants to sit there too rather than in the highchair. Previously I have not attended on Fridays as two of the other children, A and O did not like new people visiting. Cheryl thinks it might be worth trying again. She will speak to T’s family about consent.

Any concerns?
None
Appendix G Baby Cam Chapter

Chapter 10
‘Baby Cam’ and Participatory Research with Infants: A Case Study of Critical Reflexivity

Jennifer Sumson, Benjamin Bradley, Tina Stratigos, and Sheena Elwick

Introduction

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 291) advocate presenting one’s research as a process of exposure: ‘... in which you expose yourself, you take risks’; a process of making public ‘muddled, cloudy’ thinking in all ‘its fermenting confusion’ (original emphasis). Yet, too often, they argue, the brush strokes – ‘the touching and retouching’ – are rendered indiscernible with the research revealed only in its ‘finished state’. (p. 219, original emphasis) (Sumson in press)

In this chapter, we continue our efforts to render visible the uncertainties, risks and confusions that have been such a large part of the Infants’ Lives in Childcare project (Sumson et al. 2008–11). The project aims to investigate the experiences of very young children (aged up to approximately 18 months) in Australian early childhood settings – from the ‘perspectives’ of the infants themselves. Like Agbenyega (Chap. 9, this volume, pp. 153–168), and following Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), we believe in the importance of ‘reflexivity ... and critical mindfulness’ concerning the social worlds that we, as researchers, ‘conjure up’ in our research. Reflexivity, in the sense we are using it here, means cultivating the capacity ‘to stand back from “the game”’ (Crossley 1999, p. 451) and the immediacy of the challenges of the research. Conversely mindfulness, as we use it, refers to being

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alert to and fully experiencing or ‘living’ those challenges – metacognitively, corporeally and ethically – in the moments they are encountered (Bishop et al. 2004; Elwick et al. in press-a). Being critically reflexive and mindful requires us to interrogate our epistemological and ontological assumptions, the theoretical and methodological resources that we employ, the practices in which we engage and the meanings that we assign. It involves looking beneath the surface, going beyond the commonly accepted, being wary of theoretical and methodological fads and attending to power relations and their effects. It also means recognising that our desires to formulate revolutionary ways of seeing (Agbenyega, Chap. 9, this volume) may blind us to the limitations of those ways of seeing and lead us, inadvertently, to reproduce the social, theoretical and methodological status quo and in doing so possibly exacerbate the inequities that we may have set out to address. We are committed, as a research team and individually, to becoming critically reflexive and mindful in all aspects of our research and to advocating for critical reflexivity and mindfulness in all research concerning young children.

Our specific purpose in this chapter is to offer a case study of critical reflexivity concerning our use of ‘baby cam’ (our term for small head-mounted cameras worn by infants) in the Infants’ Lives in Childcare project. In particular, we consider the extent to which baby cam, as an example of an innovative technology for visual research, might be considered a participatory approach to researching with infants. We focus, too, on the insights it enables and/or constrains and the ethical dilemmas it can create.

The chapter proceeds in three moves. First, we contextualise our discussion by briefly outlining the Infants’ Lives in Childcare project. Next, we introduce Rose’s (2012) framework for critically examining visual methods and, inspired by Rose’s framework, the heuristic device which we subsequently developed to scaffold our reflections about our use of baby cam. We then use this device to discuss some of the challenges generated by baby cam in each of Roses’ three ‘sites’: the production of the image, the image itself and ‘audience’ reaction to the image. To convey a sense of the wide-ranging and complex issues that perplex and trouble us and continue to exercise our conceptual, methodological and ethical imaginations, we present our discussion in the form of a readers’ theatre script.

The Infants’ Lives in Childcare Project

The Infants’ Lives in Childcare project set out to investigate infants’ experiences in Australian centre-based and home-based early childhood education and care settings, with the hopeful and ambitious intent of developing ways of gaining insights into the ‘perspectives’ of the infants. A total of 14 settings (11 family day-care homes and 3 long day-care centres) in regional and rural New South Wales and Victoria1 have participated in the project. As explained in more detail elsewhere (Goodfellow et al. 2011; Press et al. 2011; Sumision et al. 2011), the project design has been

---

1 Australian States.
informed by Clark and Moss’s (2001) Mosaic approach that involves ‘the bringing together of different pieces or perspectives in order to create an image of children’s worlds’ (Clark 2005, p. 31). We are crafting our mosaic from data from various combinations of written observational records, conversational interviews eliciting educators’ and parents’ perspectives, standardised measures and visual records (Goodfellow et al. 2011) for 36 ‘focus’ infants to date, within the group context of their early childhood setting, and interpreted through multiple, diverse and continually shifting theoretical perspectives (Sumison in press). Our visual records consist primarily of digital video data, mostly generated through tripod-mounted and hand-held cameras, but with a small amount of footage from a baby cam mounted on an infant’s hat or headband. Although baby cam constitutes a very minor part of the project, it has attracted a disproportionate amount of attention. For that reason, we have made it the focus of this case study. As a scaffold for our reflections, we now turn to the framework proposed by Rose for exploring visual methods.

**Rose’s Framework for Exploring Visual Methods**

As Rose (2012) notes, visual images can be seductive and powerful. Therefore, along with the methods used to produce them, they warrant careful and critical examination. Indeed, our experience suggests that even the prospect of seeing the world through infants’ eyes via baby cam has wide, and possibly a kind of voyeuristic\(^2\) or vicarious appeal, perhaps even reflecting a nostalgic desire to recapture lost memories of infancy. Such seductiveness reinforces the need for critical reflexivity on the part of researchers seeking to seize opportunities arising from advances in visual technologies. To support critical reflexivity, Rose (p. 19) proposes an analytical framework based around three ‘sites’ where meanings of images are constructed. She refers to ‘the site of production, which is where an image is made; the site of the image itself, which is its visual content; and the site where the image encounters its spectators or users … or its audiencing (original emphases). These sites, Rose emphasises, are interconnected, not discrete.

Moreover, within and across each site, Rose (2012) suggests, it is useful to think of three intersecting aspects or ‘modalities’: the technological, the compositional and the social. By technological, Rose means ‘any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision’ (Mirzoeff 1999, p. 1, cited in Rose 2012, p. 20). By compositional, she means the material qualities of an image, such as its content and spatial organisation, while ‘social’ is her shorthand way of referring to broader social, political and/or economic ‘relations, institutions and practices’ surrounding an image and mediating how it is ‘seen and used’ (p. 20). Rose contends that many of the theoretical, methodological and ethical tensions

\(^2\)Here, we draw on the sixteenth-century origins of voyeuristic as ‘having a mental itching’ (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2003), in this case an insatiable (non-sexual) desire ‘to look in on’ infants’ private worlds), and Mulvey’s (1975) reference to the ‘looked upon’ being subject to, and objectified, by curious and ultimately controlling gazes.
about visual research methods reflect disputes about the relative importance of these sites and modalities – and, we would add, their consequent implications.

We have adapted Rose’s framework for use in the Infants’ Lives in Childcare project by adding to and refining questions that she suggests may offer a useful starting point for researchers using visual methods. In the remainder of this chapter, we use our adaptation (see Table 10.1) as a heuristic device for critically reflecting on our use of baby cam as a part of our suite of devices and approaches in our admittedly contestable goal of trying to ‘access’ infants’ perspectives and on the conceptual, methodological and ethical issues and implications that have arisen (Bradley et al. 2012; Elwick et al. in press-b). Influenced also by Pink (2007), we have tried to be alert to the interconnectivity between researchers and research participants, the visual research practices and technologies taken up and the images produced and their positioning in the specific socio-political-cultural contexts in which they are embedded. In the following section, we discuss some of the challenges we are encountering.

We link part of our discussion to a sequence of photographic ‘stills’ taken from synchronised video footage from a hand-held camera and baby cam footage taken by Tina (3rd author) in a family day-care home (Table 10.2) and shown simultaneously on a split screen using Studiocode™ software.³

The sequence features Peter who, at the time of filming, attended family day care 3 days a week and had been with Cheryl, his educator, since he was 8 weeks old. He was 9 months old when this footage was taken and on that particular day there were four other children at FDC aged between 2.9 and 4.1 years. This footage was captured by Tina on her ninth visit to the home over a period of 5 weeks. Her field notes indicate that:

The children had been playing outside for much of the morning on this pleasant late winter day before coming inside at 12.00 for lunch. Peter sat in a high chair, slightly removed from the older children who sat at a low children’s table and chairs, to Peter’s left. The kitchen area from which the educator retrieved the children’s lunch things was to Peter’s right. During the session Peter fed himself finger food and attempted to drink water from a cup independently. Cheryl also spoon-fed Peter and helped him to drink from the cup. Peter had worn baby cam on two previous visits. On this occasion, he wore the baby cam for around 5 minutes before he reached up and tugged at it, at which point I immediately helped him to remove the camera. (24/08/10: VSS240810-9-TS)

We have selected this footage because of its ‘ordinariness’; it captures an uneventful interaction between Peter and Cheryl in the daily routine of life in the family day-care setting, an interaction of the kind they would have shared many times previously. It is because of this ordinariness that the juxtaposed stills from synchronised baby cam footage and hand-held camera footage are able to render this familiar interaction strange.

In the next section we draw on our reflections on our use of baby cam, scaffolded by questions from our adaptation of Rose’s (2012) framework, to construct a script for a readers’ theatre. By readers’ theatre, we mean a staged presentation of thematically

³Details available at http://www.studiocodegroup.com
Table 10.1 A scaffold for reflections about visual images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site of production</th>
<th>Technological</th>
<th>Compositional</th>
<th>Socio-political-ethical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site of image</td>
<td>What technologies were used? What were the technical reasons for using them? How were they used?</td>
<td>What kinds of images did these technologies make possible/impossible?</td>
<td>Were these technologies used for reasons other than technical? How do these technologies position the researchers and the subjects/objects of the research? Who stands to be advantaged/disadvantaged by the use of these technologies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site of ‘audiencing’ (where images encounter their spectators and users)</td>
<td>What effects have these technologies had on the images produced?</td>
<td>Where are viewers’ eyes drawn to and why? What is the vantage point? What visual effects do these images convey? What conventions do they adhere to/disrupt? Are any contradictions/juxtapositions evident?</td>
<td>What purposes do the images themselves perform? What other (than visual) effects do they achieve? Whose knowledges are deployed/excluded?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What technologies are required to view these images?</td>
<td>How actively do audiences engage with these images?</td>
<td>What do differently positioned audiences indicate that they intend to ‘do’ with these images? What politics might these images play to?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Rose (2012)
### Table 10.2  Contrasting views: of the infant/researcher/camera/educator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>The baby’s view via babycam</th>
<th>The adult’s view via handycam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Here comes the carer</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reproduced with permission from the participants. © 2011 by Infants’ Lives in Childcare project research team.
linked segments of text derived from several sources. Staging is simple, involving minimal props, with the performers reading from the script (Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer 1995; Slade 2012).

Baby Cam: A Readers’ Theatre (Script) in Three Acts

We decided to use readers’ theatre – for us, an experimental form of presentation – because it evokes the inherently dialogic nature of our critical reflexivity. Accordingly, we focus on issues that have been, and continue to be, especially salient for us throughout the 4 years (at the time of writing) that we have been engaged in this project. We want to emphasise, however, that our intent is not confessional. Rather, like Johansson and White (2011), we seek to provoke discussion about ethical and efficacious ways in which researchers might gain insight into infants’ experiences over and beyond what has generally been possible through more traditional methods.

The readers’ theatre script that follows is constructed primarily from excerpts from email discussions in which we reflect on our use of baby cam and the opportunities for participatory research that it has opened up and constrained. We have also drawn on lines of thinking prompted by our experience of baby cam that we are pursuing in other writing about the project, as well as our responses to earlier drafts of the script. The excerpts selected portray key themes that continually resurface for us. They are arranged into three Acts, each loosely focused on one of Rose’s three ‘sites’ and containing several scenes. We have cast ourselves as the readers and assumed our ‘real life’ roles in the Infants’ Lives in Childcare project:

Jennifer: Project leader
Ben: Chief investigator
Tina: Doctoral researcher (formerly a research assistant and, in that role, charged with locating a camera suitable for use as a baby cam)
Sheena: Doctoral researcher

The script begins with a prologue that explains the genesis of baby cam.

Prologue

Mid-November and an Antipodean early summer day. Struggling desperately to shape our ideas into a competitive research proposal. Summer holidays loom, but so does the Australian Research Council’s submission deadline. Concentration flags. Summer … cricket … the drone of cricket⁴ commentators … gripping action replays from a camera secured to the wicket – a so-called stump-cam that provides close up views of action that would otherwise be missed. A stump-cam? How about a baby cam?⁵ That could be just the ‘wow factor’ we need!

⁴Often considered Australia’s national sport.
⁵The idea came from our colleague Sharynne McLeod.
Appendices

10 ‘Baby Cam’ and Participatory Research with Infants…

Act 1: The Site of Production of Baby Cam Images

Author’s Notes

Rose (2012) reminds us that the technologies we use in producing images determine the form of those images and also, to a large extent, contribute to their meanings and effects. As we have explained elsewhere (Sumsion et al. 2011), locating appropriate technology from which to fashion a workable baby cam required significant and time-consuming detective work and problem solving. So why did we persevere? Was it worth it? Who has gained and who, or what, might have been compromised? Such questions invite many responses. We begin by focusing on technical aspects (Scene 1) but slide quickly into ethical issues of assent, dissent and participation (Scenes 2 and 3).

Scene 1: Technical Logistics

Tina: The technology is not quite right yet. It is still too cumbersome. Our choice of camera has been constrained by so many factors: safety for the infant (no wireless cameras as they may emit dangerous radio frequencies in close proximity to the infants’ head); durability (in case it ended up being dropped on the ground or in water), quality of image produced, reliability of camera; what size camera we could reasonably hope an infant might be able to wear …

Sheena: Baby cam WAS technically difficult to use at times, particularly early on. I am thinking of all the times Sandi wore the camera, only to find that the footage hadn’t worked for some reason or other.

Tina: Finding a way for the infant to wear the camera so that we got the best approximation of their vision was tricky, particularly as we ended up using a camera that was worn on the side of the head – was the camera pointing in the right direction? Was it angled too high/too low/was it upside down? Sometimes it would slip down if the infant was moving around a lot, such as on the see-saw. In the end, it was a compromise between something that was reasonably comfortable for the infant to wear, that was quick and easy to put on and that would give us a reasonably accurate representation of the infants’ visual perspective.

I think it may have greater potential in the future as smaller devices become available that are easier to fit and less noticeable for the infant who is wearing it and for the people around the infants. I didn’t use it as much as I could have because it often seemed like an imposition, particularly if the infant appeared to be tired or just not having a good day.

Scene 2: Assent/Dissent

Jennifer: That’s the crux isn’t it … the issue of assent/dissent.

Tina: The infants were quite capable of tugging at or removing the camera if they didn’t want to wear it and often did so. That enabled them some control over the situation and an opportunity to dissent.
There were varying responses to baby cam from different infants and on different days. When infants didn’t respond well to baby cam I think it was just that it was a strange sensation for them wearing the headband, much as very young children will often pull off sun hats.

Stage Direction

A long pause

Tina: I know I have suggested that because they could pull the camera off they had an opportunity for dissent. But is this really meaningful dissent if, presumably, it is based purely upon the physical sensation of wearing the camera and not upon any understanding of what the camera is, what it does, or why it is there?

We tried to maximise the likelihood of infants giving assent. Only using baby cam for up to 10 minutes at a time was important. And also, allowing them an opportunity to hold and explore the camera if they wanted to, to try and build some level of familiarity with it. The highchair seemed to be a good place to use it – I think because they were busy concentrating on the task of eating which distracted them away from the sensation of wearing it.

Jennifer: That shows consideration for infants – but it also invites discussion about the ethics of distraction as a strategy for gaining assent.

Sheena: It’s like opening a can of worms isn’t it? Every point we make raises another one!

But some infants actively seemed to like wearing the baby cam and became quite involved with the camera. Sandi is a good example. She appeared excited when she saw it, jumped up and down, reached for it and became upset when I put it away. Even on the days when she didn’t appear to want to wear it, she often seemed interested in looking at it.

Tina: I’m curious about why Sandi appeared to like the camera – what concept did she have of what it was and what it did? I wonder whether she might have enjoyed the direct interaction with Sheena or perhaps the way others treated her when she was wearing it, or just that it was something new and different that only SHE was allowed to wear?

Sheena: If only we could ask!

Scene 3: Participation

Tina: I’m going to play the devil’s advocate: Why is it that we think that baby cam might be more participatory than the researcher sitting quietly in a corner of the room with a hand-held video camera? Are we kidding ourselves that it is participatory because the infant is wearing the camera, that they are responsible for recording the footage? It’s not participatory in the sense that the infants presumably have no idea why the camera is on their head!
Sheena: *Are we arguing that it is participatory because they wear it? I agree that Sandi quite possibly had no idea of why the camera was on her head, or the images it might produce – let alone how we might use these images, for instance at conferences. Although it is interesting to note that she did watch some of the baby cam footage with us (me and the educator) and appeared to recognise the images. I can’t say though if she actually MADE the connection between the camera being on her head and the images she was watching – but I can’t say that she DIDN’T, either. Perhaps the participatory possibilities existed more in the relations that unfolded between me and Sandi in the moments when we were using, or going to use, the camera.*

This seems quite different to locating the participatory possibilities in a piece of technology attached to an infant’s hat or headband. I’m not saying that the camera offered NO participatory possibilities; perhaps it did … by producing images that give the viewer a technologically mediated approximation of the infants’ bodily view of the world – a view that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.

Tina: If it is only participatory in that it puts us in a situation where we must interact with the infant, then I’ve had many situations where infants initiated interactions with me as I was using the hand-held camera.

Sheena: *I think baby cam does perhaps offer more participatory possibilities than ‘sitting quietly in a corner of the room with a hand-held video camera’ because at least it REQUIRES some form of interaction between researcher and infant. Encounters between researcher and infant are important regardless of whether the camera is baby cam, hand held or tripod mounted. Like Tina, I have lots of examples where infants initiated interactions with me as I was using the tripod or hand-held camera. It is these interactions that I think are important because they have the potential to take the research into unexpected territory.*

For example, Sandi didn’t always use the camera or respond to me using a camera in ways that I expected. She put her head under water while wearing the baby cam; and, sometimes when I was filming her, she came and looked through the viewfinder with me – rather than staying on the other side of the camera as I expected her to. It is almost as if she was appropriating the technology for her own purposes. It is how we respond to these moments that is important. For me, participation is about creating space in our thoughts and actions for these moments to matter to our research. In other words, enabling a space through which something new emerges between researcher and infant; something that might differ from our own planned mode of interaction or our own planned usage of particular research techniques.

I would have some ethical concerns about using smaller cameras even if we could have found them. The smaller, more hidden and more discrete the camera, the more we’d seem to be deciding HOW infants can participate in the research. It seems to discount the value of what infants can bring to the encounter – their agencies and capacities to affect what
unfolds. Is it possible that requiring them to participate by wearing a discrete camera that they have little, or no, control over might actually constrain possibilities for them to act? Would Gallagher (2005) say that it’s another form of surveillance?

It also raises questions about our willingness to engage with the harder-to-recognise forms of participation that might be playing out in our research encounters. For example, the ways in which infants might participate by affecting particular embodied responses in us. It is difficult, for instance, not to react bodily to infants’ expressions, their murmurs, their situations. Merleau-Ponty (1968) and Dillon (2012) say that it is not possible to halt the impact and intermingling of self and other in our human encounters. I am thinking mainly of Harry here, and the way he made me feel when he turned and looked at me when I was filming him. Although not specific to baby cam, in that one look I suddenly changed from being the ‘seer’ to the ‘seen’ and I find it very hard to discount his participation or involvement in that moment. Even though it was a subtle and perhaps not widely recognised, or easily recognisable, mode of participation, his look made me feel something; at the very least his look made me stop and question my own actions of continuing to film him. It also evoked feelings of sympathy, confusion, uncertainty, etc….. All of these things occur through difference and suggest some form of reversible relation is at play. Perhaps this could also be understood as an awakening of our ethical consciousness about our own ways of being with infants in practice. Almost as if the infants’ agencies and desires decree our own sense of self: a moment where we find ourselves confronting the need to make more deliberate choices about our actions because of the demand of the Other.⁶

Tina: What Sheena is saying is really interesting, but, as she has pointed out, baby cam was not required for these moments to occur; they can also occur through the use of other research methods. Baby cam, however, FORCED us into having a direct encounter with the infants as we fitted it. I have to say, though, that sometimes I felt that the infants might not be comfortable with me putting the headband and t-shirt on them, particularly in the earlier visits, as this was not a role they were used to me taking. In some cases I actually asked the educator to put the t-shirt on the child for me to help alleviate any potential discomfort on the infants’ part. The interactions that occurred while using the hand-held camera were generally spontaneous interactions initiated by the infant, for instance, crawling towards me and offering me a toy or reaching up to the camera. Perhaps these are more genuine participatory opportunities for the infant as they were initiated by the infant, not by me.

Ben: I wonder how much the idea that baby cam is more participatory is because it gives babies greater power over our actions – because a baby

⁶Elwick et al. (in press-a).
can ‘agree’ or ‘refuse’ to wear it? This has less to do with the role of baby cam itself in our research and more to do with how much it has to do with giving the infant something that is very valuable to us because it can block what we want to do. For example, we could give the infant a portable light switch which could plunge the house (assuming no daylight!) into darkness whenever they pressed it. Presumably we would have to negotiate with the baby about this switch in order to do our research, as we do with baby cam. In fact, I think it’s quite a good idea! Why stop at assent? Why not go for dissent? Whenever an infant didn’t like something, they could plunge the room into darkness. But they would ‘not like’ lots of things that were not to do with research. And the same goes for their reaction to baby cam. They might throw it away/pull it off just because they were annoyed with the educator or a peer – nothing to do with the researcher or the research. AND they might just press the switch for fun.

Stage Direction

A momentary stunned silence as we digest this possibility. Some of us begin to imagine how we might incorporate such a light switch in our future research. The room then plunges into darkness!

Authors’ Notes

After our ‘Aha’ baby cam moment described in the prologue, we searched the literature for references to research involving infants wearing cameras on their heads. Our initial investigations led us to a laboratory study conducted by Yoshida and Smith (2008) to ascertain the relationship between the camera view and the direction of the infants’ gaze. Two years into our project, we became aware of the parallel development of a similar methodology to baby cam in New Zealand, where Jayne White, like us, was using split-screen technology to watch synchronised footage captured in a naturalistic early childhood setting. In White’s (2011) case, footage was captured from three cameras simultaneously, including via a camera mounted on an infant’s hat. Yoshida and Smith (2008) and White (2011) both used cameras operated by wireless transmitters, but, as explained more fully elsewhere (Sumison et al. 2011), we were wary of the potential effects of radio waves in such close proximity to infants’ heads and settled for the more cumbersome and larger ‘lipstick style’ cameras attached by a cord to a small recording device. White’s study involved only one child, an 18-month-old toddler, who like 11-month-old Sandi in our project, made it clear that she wished to participate. In both cases, participation provided at least some scope for infant agency. We are less certain about what benefits, if any, infants like Peter (Table 10.2), who showed little interest in baby cam, gained from wearing it. We could find no instances in the literature of infants having access to the equivalent of the ‘light switch’ mooted by Ben as a means of making their consent to participate unequivocally clear!
Appendices

182

Act 2: The Site of the Images

Authors’ Notes

Here we are concerned with the visual content of the image, including its framing and composition, its vantage point and spatial perspectives, its narrative potential, and other effects that command or divert the viewer’s attention (Rose 2012; Schirato and Webb 2004). Guided by the questions in Table 10.1, we are interested in the contradictions and/or juxtapositions that are evident and the purposes they perform.

Scene 1: Utility

Tina: *Although it’s not so evident in this footage (Table 10.2), we still couldn’t capture the infants’ full range of vision even with a wide-angle lens. Baby cam can tell us about the infants’ bodily perspective and where they are interested in focusing their attention but because of the technical challenges and limitations of the equipment, we can’t even be sure that these were captured accurately.*

Could we have got the same (or indeed better) information and insights from having another hand-held camera positioned behind Peter (the infant in Table 10.2) instead of him wearing baby cam? *Looking at the series of matched images (Table 10.2), what do we get from the two images together that we couldn’t have got from the handy cam images alone?*

Jennifer: *Watching the dual footage from both cameras simultaneously on the split screen makes me feel quite queasy. I feel much less able to make sense of what I am seeing than if I’d seen the footage sequentially – but maybe I have a neurological processing problem!*

Sheena: *I prefer to watch the footage sequentially, first the tripod camera and then the baby cam. Watching them together might be helpful though when we start some fine-detailed analysis.*

Scene 2: ‘Authenticity’, Performance, Positioning, and Power Relations

Tina: *Is the baby cam footage a bit contrived? The adults and older children have shown a lot of interest in it. Does its highly visible nature change the way people around the infant ‘perform’? Do the images reflect an element of ‘Here is another camera being pointed at us! Let’s give the infant something interesting to look at’? Or even, ‘Let’s entertain the infant in an effort to distract attention away from the sensation of wearing baby cam’?*

Sheena: *I agree. I think it might invite ‘performance’. But it’s not something I’ve particularly noticed. Often it was hard to know where the infant was even looking (often our feet or the ceiling!) or going to look next, which probably made ‘performance’ less likely than with tripod cameras. Polly [an educator] and I had NO idea that Sandi was going to put her face in the water bowl. There was no performance happening under the water – except perhaps by the toys in the water bowl if we use Lenz-Taguchi’s (2010) ideas about non-human entities having agency! We (and I include*
Appendices

10 ‘Baby Cam’ and Participatory Research with Infants…

all the educators here) were often more concerned that the technology was even working than concerned with what it was filming!

Jennifer: The footage of Peter and Cheryl (Table 10.2) has a naturalistic feel – I suppose because it’s captured such a familiar, everyday context and event. In terms of visual organisation, though, it’s a challenge to read. Are we meant to move from left to right, from Cheryl to Peter and back to Cheryl, zigzagging down the image? It seems to invite lots of questions and narratives about what is happening. In that sense it’s quite powerful. Why did we place the baby cam sequence on the left-hand side? Does it position Peter as object (of Cheryl’s attention) and target (of the spoon)? And Cheryl looms so large, especially in the frame she almost fills. That image really grabs viewers’ attention, but what are we meant to make of that? And what did Cheryl make of it?

Tina: I certainly found it a bit of a shock when I saw myself on the baby cam footage. Suddenly the baby was researching ME?! I was used to being the one behind the camera, not in front of it!

Authors’ Notes

We are still developing our visual literacy capacities to read the baby cam images through the analytical frames of visual theorists such as Rose (2012). We accept that ‘every act of looking and seeing is also an act of not seeing’ (Schirato and Webb 2004, p. 14). Therefore, ‘deciding where to look is highly political because it involves deciding where not to look, what to exclude from sight…’ Thomas (2001, p. 4, original emphasis). Yet we have much to learn about recognising and articulating our political, as well as compositional decisions, in framing our baby cam images, and conversely in deciding what to omit (at the time of capturing the original video footage; in reducing it to manageable ‘units of analysis’; and in selecting inevitably brief excerpts for presentation and representation). We also have much to learn about technical aspects, such as perspective, in baby cam image production. To what extent, for example, should we discount distortions produced by the baby cam following infants’ head, rather than eye, movements and, especially with younger infants, the ‘wobbliness’ of their heads?

Act 3: Audience Encounters with Baby Cam Images

Authors’ Notes

Initial audience reaction to baby cam footage is invariably one of shock. Some appear shocked by the radical disturbance to their accustomed spatial perspectives and the subsequent defamiliarising of the familiar (Schirato and Webb 2004); others by the effects and potential consequences and possibilities of the infant’s gaze. For viewers who have been captured on baby cam footage, the shock can come from being the object of that gaze. Guided by the questions in Table 10.1, we are interested in how differently positioned audiences interpret baby cam images, the new meanings those images make possible and the shocks they engender, the new intentions they inspire and the politics surrounding the use of baby cam images.
Scene 1: On Voyeurism/Shock/Devereux

Ben: So why DO we researchers find it a shock to see ourselves from the baby cam’s viewpoint?

One possibility is that baby cam invites us into a space which is ethically shocking. For example, the shock of being seen from the baby’s point of view is not particularly about the shock of being seen by the baby. This ‘being seen’ just dramatises the fact that baby cam invites us into a form of ‘voyeurism’ — whatever the baby is looking at (as we suggested at the start of this chapter). Yet how can a camera on a baby’s headband equate to voyeurism when a voyeur is usually defined as a person who gets gratification from spying on the naked flesh, pain or sexual antics of others?

One answer comes from film theory. In a famous article, Laura Mulvey argues that film has traditionally structured the movie camera’s ‘look’ as active and male, while the object of the look is passive and female. For Mulvey (1975, p. 2), the narrative conventions of film create a voyeurism in which a curious and aroused (male, controlling) subject is remote from the ‘undercover world of the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim’.

This could be taken up in a number of ways. We could gloss the ‘private world’ that we are prying into as the infant’s world. The infant is, after all, ‘unknowing’ of what we are doing when we put that headband on his/her head. Or we could widen our field of view to recognise that, here, the ‘male’ gaze of our tiny camera is spying on a quintessentially female world of caring for small children (all the educators in this study to date have been women). Hence perhaps the feeling that there is something voyeuristic about the vision we get through baby cam. Or we could, somewhat ingenuously, position ourselves as the ‘unknowing and unwilling victim’ — perhaps on the grounds that we didn’t realise how much directorial power we were giving the babies when we gave them baby cam!

Sheena: I’m not at all keen on the word voyeurism in relation to researching with infants. And I don’t see a connection between voyeurism and the ethical shock that we’ve discussed at length in earlier conversations.

Jennifer: It’s a confronting idea. But remember that Mulvey was writing in the 1970s, at a particular feminist moment. Rose (2012, p. 167) argues that Mulvey’s work has been incredibly important in demanding that we think about ‘the gendering of who sees and who is seen’ but that, in many ways, it’s quite dated because it assumes a patriarchal, heterosexual narrative and a binary distinction between the male bearer of the gaze and the female object of that gaze. But the notion of gaze itself, and of its power, seems potentially very productive for our project, especially as we could explore it from diverse theoretical perspectives.

Ben: Erm ... ‘dated’, .... OK. Well, if we don’t like voyeurism as a concept, how about this as an explanation for the ‘shock’ Tina describes when seeing ourselves through the ‘eyes’ of the baby cam ... According to
Georges Devereux (1968), a fundamental anxiety structures behavioural research, surrounding observers’ wish to ward off the awareness that they are themselves observed by the subjects of their research. Unconsciously the observer knows they cannot subordinate the subject’s mental life to the researcher’s scheme of things. But, methodologically, researchers deny this and experimental artefacts result (Bradley 2005). Devereux (1968) called his book From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioural Sciences because he believed that most of the science-like methods used in disciplines such as psychology are defences, attempts to deny or repress the anxiety of being observed and interpreted by others when one is ostensibly being a detached and invisible observer.

In Devereux’s account, this anxiety can be glossed as the researcher refusing to experience the subjective uncertainty of not knowing about others, anxiety about not having the same kind of epistemic authority that biologists have over microbes. Instead of experiencing this uncertainty, the social researcher acts out a controlling role that highlights ‘those moments of research when you feel like a disinterested scientist, secure in the knowledge that by following agreed-upon methods you are a part of discovering the world in an unbiased and objective way’ (Selby 1999, p. 173). Devereux challenges us to ask what would happen if behavioural scientists became more aware of the fluidity of their own often unsettling experiences of others while doing research.

In this light, the shock of seeing footage from baby cam is the shock of having our bluff called, our defences breached, by empowering the vision of the Other, in this case, the previously objectified baby. This vision is traditionally repressed by the science-like methods of behavioural research. We are shocked by baby cam because we are being forced to acknowledge that the research situation is far more symmetrical than we have been trained to imagine:

Time and again it becomes evident that many difficulties in behavioural science are due to the warding off and ignoring of such interactions [between observed and observer] and especially of the fact that the observation of the subject by the observer is complemented by the counter-observation of the observer by the subject. This insight forces us to abandon -- at least in a naive sense -- the notion that the basic operation in behavioural science is the observation of a subject by an observer. We must substitute for it the notion that it is the analysis of the interaction between the two, in a situation where both are at once observers to themselves and subjects to the other. (Devereux 1968, p. 275)

Stage Direction

Ben pauses for breath …

Sheena: My understanding of ethics and thoughts about how we might talk about the shock of seeing oneself on film come more from Dillon (2012) who extends Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) ideas about reversibility/écart. It’s to do with the idea that seeing ourselves on film may bring with it a sort of
ethical decentering because we suddenly find ourselves looking at ourselves. And also, possibly and more indirectly, looking at ourselves from something akin to the baby’s ‘standpoint’ since they were the one with the camera.

Using Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about reversibility and Dillon’s related work on ethics, it’s possible to think about the experience of seeing oneself through the eyes of the Other. But not necessarily a human Other. Baby cam footage can function as Other because it renders visible for the viewer their own presence in the world. Merleau-Ponty (1968) uses the term ‘reversibility’ (p. 147) to point to an overlapping or reflexive relation through ‘écart’ (or a moment of differentiation) (p. 124) that is present in our living experience: to see the thing is to feel the thing seeing me; to touch the thing is to feel the thing touching me... although this is a simplistic explanation.

According to Dillon (2012), this reversible relation through difference can provoke ethical reflection: do I see myself as I want to see myself; do I see myself as I would want you to see me etc...? I could go on!!

Ben: Can I draw out a nuance from that, Sheena? If Merleau-Ponty and Dillon are right, then whenever we look at the baby, reversibility ensures that we feel the baby looking at us. What baby cam does is starkly confront us with a point which both Merleau-Ponty and Dillon make: that ‘I see the Other and the Other sees me; but I do not experience my being seen as he does’ (Dillon 1997, p.174; my emphasis). ...Under normal conditions we do not question what we assume about the baby’s view of us. But baby cam thrusts it in our face: baby cam challenges the veridicality of reversibility. Normally, when we look at someone else, baby or not, we feel as if we see them seeing us. But baby cam proves such reversibility to be largely imaginary ... our assumptions about the baby’s viewpoint are shown to be what Lacan would call a misrecognition. In his terms, baby cam is a shock because it shows the shallowness of our fantasised relationship to the baby, moving us towards the more decentred ‘thirdness’ of the symbolic order, the order in which what we have been calling ‘ethical reflexivity’ can arise

Tina: For my part, seeing myself on the baby cam footage really did make me think more about what we are asking of the infant and the other children and adults around the infant, when they participate in this kind of visual research. It can be easy to lose sight of this when you have been in the field for quite some time. In the footage that I recorded [by tripod or hand-held camera], it is as if I was never there. The baby cam has allowed my presence to be recorded, it has put me in the picture both literally and figuratively.

But I also wonder how much of the shock is simply about suddenly and unexpectedly seeing yourself in the footage and the experience of seeing yourself from the outside – What was I wearing that day? Look at my hair!

7 On Lacan, the imaginary baby and Peirce’s concept of thirdness, see Bradley (1989, 2010a, b).
Appendices

10 ‘Baby Cam’ and Participatory Research with Infants…

Similar to how we wonder, ‘Is that what I really sound like?’ when we hear an audio recording of ourselves.

Sheena: So maybe some form of decentering was happening? You didn’t see what you expected to see and perhaps you were vulnerable to this difference? That’s where ethics as reflexivity comes in...

Scene 3: Other Audiences and Spectators

Tina: Family Day Care Australia was quite open about wanting to get a ‘good news story’ about family day care into the press. They saw baby cam as the vehicle for that. If not for baby cam, there would have been no publicity.

EVERYTIME I have presented on this study I have been asked to show baby cam footage! I find that a bit frustrating because there is a lot more to the study than baby cam. Sometimes I’d rather show other footage that better helps me make my point.

Sheena: It probably wouldn’t have the same sort of audience impact.

Tina: I think that a lot of the reaction that we have to baby cam is about the size of objects and spaces from their bodily perspective – it is a novel experience for us. It’s interesting, but what insight does it give us to the infants’ experiences? I think it can give us an idea of WHAT they are interested in looking at, but we can’t know WHY that might be or what that might MEAN.

Tina: At conferences where I have shown baby cam footage people have wondered what it means for the infant to be in spaces – such as outside play spaces – that seem so big on the baby cam footage or to have objects, including people’s faces, appear so large (Table 10.2). One person wondered whether infants might find this frightening. But this is the infant’s daily experience, and there is nothing in their behaviour that would seem to indicate they are bothered by this. How are we to interpret these kinds of images?

So I guess I’m wondering to what extent the baby cam helps us to achieve the aims of the research, both in terms of understanding what life is like for infants and responding to the methodological challenges of attempting participatory research with infants. I’m not sure what the answer is but I think we need to think about the question.

Having said all that, after using baby cam footage at the Family Day Care Australia workshop, I think that baby cam IS an engaging means of encouraging discussion about infants’ experiences with educators and reminding educators about the importance of thinking about infants’ physical perspectives in their practice.

Family Day Care Australia and KU Children’s Services were our Industry Partners. We deeply appreciate their support.
Sheena: *Maybe viewing the baby cam footage can decenet the viewer in ways that awaken their ethical consciousness and perhaps invoke questions, reflections and discussions about their own ways of being with infants in practice (including research practice). Put another way, perhaps it baby cam can foster reflexivity through difference.*

*I am not convinced that viewing baby cam footage can tell us an awful lot about infants’ own experiences, and I think we need to be careful about this point in relation to participatory research. Ultimately, WE construct what we call the infants’ experience.*

Authors’ Notes

In various theoretical and everyday connotations, ‘gaze’ has been a powerful theme throughout Act 3. Conventionally, ‘gaze’ refers to ‘a fixed or intent observation performed and controlled by the viewer through the eyes’ (Thomas 2001, p. 2). In contrast, from psychoanalytic perspectives (e.g. Lacan 1977) tangentially touched on by Ben (2nd author) and phenomenological perspectives (e.g. Dillon 2012; Merleau-Ponty 1968) as described by Sheena (3rd author), gaze has a strong element of reciprocity. In other words, as Thomas (2001, p. 2) argues, rather than implying ‘a powerful and controlling spectator’, there is ‘no simple dichotomy between seeing and being seen but unstable roles that conflict and overlap’. Other theoretical and practice-based understandings and perspectives offer different conceptualisations of gaze. In our view, the diversity of ways of conceptualising gaze opens up an array of potentially productive methodological and interpretive possibilities that are yet to be fully explored by researchers, practitioners and others with an interest in infants’ experiences.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we heed Bourdieu and Wacquant’s (1992) exhortation to reveal the endemic uncertainties, tensions and challenges of research that so often go unacknowledged. While we have focused on our use of baby cam in the *Infants’ Lives in Childcare* project, the chapter contributes to broader discussions about ethical tensions in methodological innovation (Nind et al. 2012). These tensions are likely to be accentuated, we believe, by the seductiveness and affordances of emerging visual technologies such as baby cam. Our experience of baby cam leads us to strongly endorse warnings about the dangers of ‘uncritical romanticisation’ (Phillips and Shaw 2011, p. 610) of innovatory methodologies and technologies. We would like to think that this chapter might serve as reminder of the importance of attending to, and retaining a degree of scepticism towards, the rhetoric and promises.

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9For elaboration, see Elwick et al. (*in press-b*).
that so often accompany innovative research technologies, and especially, it seems, visual technologies.

Accordingly, we conclude with the general observation that the use of technological apparatus has a rhetorical force in science and research which is independent of its practical utility. To most people, the cultural impact of sending men to the moon far outweighed the geological discoveries the trip has afforded. It was a paramount coup de theatre for modern science. As Buzz Aldrin (1969) said in a broadcast during the historic voyage of Apollo XI, ‘We feel this [first moon-landing] stands as a symbol of the insatiable curiosity of all mankind to explore the unknown’. Likewise, the age of ‘brass instruments’ in psychology is widely seen to have had more to do with showing that psychology had found a way to conform to the ‘techno-scientific’ ideal of the physical sciences than in producing earth-shattering research findings (Coon 1993).

We are not equating our baby cam innovation with major scientific breakthroughs! Rather, we are suggesting that one way of understanding others’ responses to baby cam is that it too has a certain rhetorical force: it neatly dramatizes the key motivation underpinning our research project, that is, to understand how infants and toddlers experience early childhood settings. The practical utility of baby cam as a research methodology has turned out to be something quite different from what rhetorically it appears to offer: direct line of sight into the baby’s world. It is its ethical utility, we believe, that warrants continuing consideration.

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Appendices


10 ‘Baby Cam’ and Participatory Research with Infants…


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Appendix H Image Consent Forms

Parent Consent Form - Images

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the 'lived experience' of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

I, ___________________________ consent/do not consent to images of myself and my child, ___________________________ that were collected as data for the above research project being published in journal articles, reports or conference papers that report the findings of the research.

I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about myself and my child are confidential and that neither my name, nor my child’s name will be used in conjunction with these images.

The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and supported by our Industry Partners, KU Children’s Services and Family Day Care Australia. The study has been approved by the Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee. I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about this research I can contact:

Executive Officer,
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Participant ___________________________ Researcher ___________________________
Signature ___________________________ Signature ___________________________
Date ___________________________ Date ___________________________
Carer Consent Form - Images

Research project: What is life like for babies and toddlers in childcare? Understanding the ‘lived experience’ of infants through innovative mosaic methodology.

I, ___________________________ consent/do not consent to images of myself that were collected as data for the above research project being published in journal articles, reports or conference papers that report the findings of the research.

I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about myself are confidential and that my name will not be used in conjunction with these images.

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Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Participant __________________________ Researcher __________________________
Signature __________________________ Signature __________________________
Date __________________________ Date __________________________