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Researching infants' experiences of early childhood education and care

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Abstract (100-150 words)

This chapter reports on an Australian study that has set out to investigate and illuminate what life is like for infants in early childhood education and care settings, as far as possible from the perspective of the infants themselves. We begin by describing the project. We then identify some of the many methodological and technical challenges encountered in the early phases and ethical issues that have arisen in our efforts to address them. In particular, we reflect on our use of 'baby cam', a micro video camera system comprising a video camera and sound recording equipment worn by an infant. Drawing on an adaptation of Shier's (2001) pathways to participation model for conceptualising and enhancing children's participation in decision-making, we consider

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INTRODUCTION

In many industrialised countries, global competition, intensifying productivity agendas, labour market policies and feminism have led to increasing demand for formal non-parental care of children younger than two years of age (OECD, 2007). By age two, 48 percent of Australian children use some form of formal early childhood education and care (ECEC) services such as centre-based long day care, family day care or a combination of both (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Yet non-parental care for children aged less than two years, particularly the use of formal centre-based care, remains a contentious issue and the focus of considerable debate. Very rarely, however, are these debates, informed by the views of the young children who experience these ECEC settings. Indeed, there are few reports in the research literature about infants' views of their experience of early childhood services. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1989), however, establishes children's rights to have their perspectives considered in matters that affect them. A key premise underpinning the research project reported in this chapter is that an understanding of the perspectives of those who experience early childhood services – especially

the infants themselves – has much to offer policy debates and decision-making about non-parental care for infants, as well as professional practice with infants in ECEC settings.

The Infants' Lives in Childcare project, undertaken by the authors of this chapter, has two primary aims. First, we aim to address the paucity of attention to infants' experience of early childhood education and care from the perspectives of infants themselves. Second, through our focus on infants who have not yet acquired the language skills to readily communicate their experiences verbally, we are also seeking to contribute new insights to the corpus of literature about researching with young children in participatory and inclusive ways. As Clark, McQuail and Moss (2003) point out, participatory research can mean children actively engaging with research activities; but in a broader sense, it can also entail their involvement in decision-making about the research. In both interpretations, developing skills in listening respectfully and actively to children to better 'recognise the many ways in which children skilfully communicate their realities to us' (Pascal & Bertram, 2009, p. 254) is considered central. Yet with notable exceptions (e.g., Dalli, 2000; Degotardi, 2009; Elfer, 1996; Karlsson, 2007; Thyssen, 2000; White, 2009), there has been relatively little attention to theoretical, methodological and ethical issues associated with endeavouring to work in participatory ways with infants in research contexts to better understand

their perspectives. Participatory research with infants is a recent focus for our research group and the Infants' Lives in Childcare project requires our sustained attention to the complex issues involved.

The chapter comprises two sections. In the first section, we describe the project. In the second section, we identify and reflect on some of the many methodological and technical challenges we are encountering in the early phases of the project, and some of the ethical issues that have arisen in our efforts to address them.

THE INFANTS' LIVES IN CHILDCARE PROJECT

In setting out to investigate and illuminate infants' lived experience of early ECEC settings, our aim is to understand what life is like for infants in long day care and family day care in Australia, as far as possible from the perspectives of the infants themselves. By 'infants', we mean children aged from birth to 18 months, a time of life in which they are not usually able to articulate their experiences readily through words. By 'lived experience', we are referring to infants making meaning of 'what is going on around and 'within' them; a process that mixes memory, desire, anticipation, relations with others, cultural patterns, bodily feelings, sights, smells and sounds' (Bradley, 2005, pp. 7-8). Lived

experience is also an inter-personal phenomenon; it both shapes and is shaped by families, carers and other children. In an ontological sense, we are interested in infants' experiences as ways of being within the social, cultural and physical spaces of their ECEC environments.

In keeping with our intent of taking a participatory approach to researching with infants, we bring to the project 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. We are mindful, for example, of their capacities to communicate their emotional states and to regulate their emotional environment through vocalisations, gaze, facial expression, eye contact, body language and gesturing (Cole, Martin & Dennis, 2004). We are acutely aware, however, that if we are to be fully receptive to infants' communications, including their communications with us about their involvement in the research process, we need to further develop our capacities to become deeply attuned to infants. Attuning respectfully to infants requires us to acknowledge, with considerable humility, the impossibility of conclusively knowing their experiences and thus the need for tentative interpretations.

Humility entails for us, in part, relinquishing the certainty that can arise when working with a single theoretical perspective, or relying only on our accustomed and preferred theoretical perspectives. Humility also involves resisting our

habitual reliance on researcher-mediated frames and researcher-only interpretations, and creating spaces for collaborative exploration, dialogue, and multiple perspectives, including those of the infants with whom we are seeking to collaborate. It means, as well, recognising the inherent complexity of ECEC contexts, the value of multiple perspectives in generating new insights into the complex phenomena of infants' experiences in ECEC, and the limits of our abilities to fully comprehend and represent those experiences.

Accordingly, we are using mosaic methodology, derived from the mosaic approach (Clark, 2005; Clark & Moss, 2001) to piece together fine-grained details of infants' experiences, generated from multiple sources of data and interpreted from multiple perspectives, to form what we hope will be a comprehensive picture of their lives in ECEC settings. Like Pascal and Bertram (2009), we see the perspectives of parents, children, practitioners and researchers as 'not in competition but standing together in the construction of dialogues, in which there is mutual respect, active participation and the negotiation and co-construction of meaning' (p. 254). For this reason, our focus is on joint exploration with carers, parents, older children where feasible and, wherever possible, infants themselves to open up investigative spaces not otherwise available.

Our intent retains the strong philosophical and ethical commitment of the mosaic approach to recognising that infants have valuable perspectives to contribute about their lives. At the same time, we extend on the mosaic approach by drawing on a rich diversity of theoretical perspectives in recognition that, kaleidoscope-like, each perspective can enable different and valuable insights. To us, however, mosaic methodology involves far more than using an array of methods and analytical or interpretive frames; rather it involves actively fostering productive dialogue across theoretical traditions. We see this theoretical eclecticism and the dialogue that it generates as a distinguishing and exciting methodological feature of the Infants' Lives in Childcare project. Before expanding a little further on how this works in practice, we briefly outline the project design.

Project Design

The project involves a series of Australian case studies of infants in family day care homes across four family day care schemes and in four long day care centres operated by a large not-for-profit organisation. The aim of the case studies is to provide a rich picture of infants as social actors within a group. In each setting, three layers of data will be generated in consultation with carers, parents and, as far as possible, infants and older children in the setting.

The first layer of data consists of digital video footage, digital photography, observations and field notes, time use diaries and vocabulary records. Our emphasis is on data that can provide multiple perspectives on infants' sense of wellbeing, belonging and scope for agency; engagement in experiences that support their learning and development; interactions and relationships with carers, parents, peers, other children and with the environment. In each ECEC setting, we plan to invite carers, parents, older children and where possible, infants to share their perspectives on the data, particularly through their reflections on edited videos compiled by the researchers from key, illustrative moments in video footage.

The second layer of data encompasses contextual information relevant to the family day care schemes and the long day care centers, while the third layer pertains to the external childcare policy context that has potential to effect infants' experiences. **Figure 1** represents the mosaic that we anticipate being able to piece together about infants' experiences of ECEC from the data sources obtained from the three layers of data. At the time of writing this chapter, data generation has commenced in one family day care home with two participating infants: Charlie aged 14 months and Bianca aged 17 months (pseudonyms).

Please insert Figure 1 here

This chapter focuses on the methodology and methods pertaining to the first layer of data and more specifically, on issues related to the use of an innovative micro video camera system that we are colloquially terming ‘baby cam’.

Theoretical Eclecticism

We are actively seeking to promote dialogue between diverse theoretical approaches by making use of multiple interpretative frames from diverse knowledge bases to dislodge us from the certainties of our habitual reference points and enable greater analytic richness than would have been possible otherwise. Our eclectic set of lenses, drawn from our various theoretical and methodological expertise, includes but is not limited to those that have informed some of our research team’s previous work with infants. They include, for example, attachment and emotional regulation (Harrison & Ungerer, 2002), intersubjectivity and the babies-in-groups paradigm (Bradley, 2010; Selby & Bradley, 2003; 2005), policy (Press, 2006), and communication (McLeod, 2007). Each of these lenses is grounded in particular assumptions about infants, their experiences, and how their experiences might be understood. Bringing these lenses together requires us to articulate and at times question those assumptions. This process of destabilisation opens up new interpretive spaces in which we are hopeful of edging closer to the perspective of the infants themselves.

In conjunction with these lenses, we are using collaborative interpretative processes similar to those used by Dolby, Ungerer, Harrison, Cooper and Aarts (2006) with carers and parents. Dolby et al. refer to seeing and guessing (i.e., saying what you see; guessing what it might mean; seeking reactions to the guess; and then coming to an agreed understanding about the meaning). Seeing and guessing involves drawing on an array of sensitising concepts and heuristic tools to inform interpretations from multiple theoretical perspectives, and seeking feedback on those interpretations from informed stakeholders.

Our sensitising questions are drawn from different theoretical perspectives. From an interpretivist perspective, we ask: What is important to these infants? Why is this important? What do they enjoy, and what bothers them? How do they manage living a life in two places? (Moss, 2001). From a child development perspective, we ask: How do these infants manage their attachment needs when separating from the parent and connecting with the carer? (Harrison & Ungerer, 2002). From critical theory perspectives, we ask: How are these infants enculturated into the childcare setting? What strategies of resistance do they use / encounter? What power relations do they engage in / are they subjected to? (Leavitt, 1994). From phenomenological perspectives, we ask: What do these infants direct their (conscious) behaviour/actions towards? What do their bodily actions tell us about their intent? (Dalli, 2000; Lindahl & Pramling Samuelson, 2002). From

intersubjectivity perspectives, we ask: Are these infants affected by relationships between others in their group? What ‘conversations’ take place amongst them? (Selby & Bradley, 2003). From communication perspectives, we ask: What do their first words tell us about the experiences most significant to them? (Hart, 1991). From socio-cultural perspectives, we ask: How are these infants involved in co-constructing the culture in the setting? What culture is being constructed? (Rutanen, 2007).

Likewise, heuristic tools adopted from diverse theoretical perspectives are enabling us to scaffold and extend responses to sensitising questions (see **Table 1**), although we are mindful of the need for careful attention to theoretical consistency and ‘fit’ between sensitising question, heuristic tool, focus of analysis, and the data.

Please insert Table 1 here

The challenges involved in working in this theoretically eclectic way are substantial and will require ongoing and careful attention, and will become especially pertinent as the project progresses to the stage of requiring a sustained focus on analyses and interpretation of data. We anticipate reporting on these challenges in future publications.

Methodological Eclecticism

We are also aiming for methodological eclecticism that goes beyond the use of heuristic tools drawn from different theoretical perspectives. For example, to enable us to analyse the video data quantitatively, as well as qualitatively, we are using *Studiocode*® video analysis software. *Studiocode* offers sophisticated functions including Boolean data searches, chunking data, cross tabulation of codes, analysis of data relationships across multiple data sets that enable us to ‘count’, as well as interpret, data. With caregiver / infant interaction, for example, the frequency of carers’ interactions with infants, the circumstances in which they interrupt infants, and infants’ responses can be identified and ‘counted’ as one of the bases for our interpretations.

Co-constructing insights into infants’ experiences with carers, parents and where appropriate, older children and infants adds to the eclecticism. As we jointly view, reflect on, and discuss edited videos of key segments of data, we benefit from carers’ practical wisdom (Goodfellow, 2003), parents’ deep familiarity with their infant, and children’s perspectives on what life is like for infants.

Although we are optimistic about the possibilities of the project to inform policy and practice in relation to ECEC in ways that will benefit infants, we are more

tentative about the likelihood of developing participatory ways to research with infants that enable them to be genuinely co-researchers and co-constructors of new research knowledge. Indeed, we are conscious, that despite our best intentions, we could find ourselves undertaking the project in ways that revert to and perpetuate the long standing tendency in the research literature to see infants as the objects of research, rather than as research collaborators. In the commentary that follows, we identify and reflect on some of the many methodological and associated ethical challenges issues that have arisen for us in the early phases of data generation in the Infants' Lives in Childcare project. Although these issues are far from resolved, they may be of interest to others seeking to research in participatory ways with infants.

COMMENTARY

Our reflections are prompted by the observation by Clark et al. (2003) that 'there is an irony that the more imaginative the methods become for listening to young children, the greater the possibility of invading their private worlds' (p. 44). Invading infants' private worlds is the antithesis of our intent. Yet there are many potential ironies associated with our research design, especially in using baby cam in our endeavours to gain insight into infants' experiences, quite literally through the eyes of the infants. Because the use of baby cam is potentially controversial and because of the technical, methodological and ethical challenges it has

presented, especially in keeping to our intent of working in participatory ways with infants, we have made it the focus of this commentary.

We begin by explaining what we mean by baby cam and our reasons for using it. Using an adaptation of Shier's (2001) pathways to participation model as a scaffold, we reflect on ways in which baby cam is enabling and constraining in engaging with infants in ways that might be considered genuinely participatory. In illustration, we refer to some of the challenges that have arisen and our endeavours to address them.

Baby cam

By baby cam, we mean a micro video camera system, comprising a video camera and sound recording equipment attached to or worn by an infant. Our intent is to generate video images that enable us to see what the infant is seeing, in the hope of gaining some insights into the infant's experiences, from the perspective of the infant. Our interest in using baby cam stems from two quite separate lines of investigation.

The first is encapsulated by Clark et al., (2003) in their extensive review of methods for listening to and consulting with young children. The review confirms that observation remains a foundational method for listening to young children,

especially those who, like infants, cannot yet communicate their experiences in elaborated ways. Unlike in much traditional research on infants, however, within this line of investigation, observation is not for diagnostic purposes, but rather to develop an understanding of children's perspectives on their experiences and on 'the conditions for their endeavours' (Warming, 2003, p. 64). The focus is on 'what is important for the child: what does the child want, what does the child do and say, and how are these ideas met?' (Hedegaard, 1994,1996, cited in Warming, 2003, p. 64).

To paraphrase Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (1992), observation can only provide insights into infants' experiences in 'a very limited and restricted sense (p. 18) – that which observers, using their accustomed understandings of infants, say the infants are experiencing. Whilst we do not believe that experience is ever transparently revealed (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), this problem is especially acute in the study of infants, where observers' 'accounting vocabularies and working hypotheses' (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992, p. 18) may easily divert attempts to grapple with how infants experience their worlds. By providing a visual perspective that we can rarely access, baby cam potentially offers an innovative way to further destabilise our accustomed researcher frames of reference and elicit and learn from the perspectives of others who know the infants well (i.e. their carers, siblings and parents).

Data captured by the baby cam is entered into *Studiocode*. *Studiocode's* split screen function enables viewing of footage of the infant taken with a conventional video camera, alongside simultaneous footage from the baby cam. In other words, we can see the infant, as well as what the infant is seeing. Philosophically, we would like to be able to argue that, from a participatory perspective, baby cam potentially enables even very young infants who are not mobile to make an active contribution to the project by generating their own data that enables us to observe, as near as possible, what the infants observe. This is a contestable argument, however, and invokes issues of intention, agency, power and representation with which we continue to grapple.

The second line of investigation had a more technical focus on experimental studies of visual attention and gaze. As Aslin (2008) explains, the direction of one's gaze is a well-established measure of what one is attending to visually. Head direction is a less accurate measure because even when the head is stationary, the eyes can move through a 90 degree sweep. Measuring gaze direction through head mounted eye trackers is intrusive and impractical, especially with infants, because of the weight of the eye tracking devices, the need for the head to be held relatively immobile and / or the disconcerting use of

mirrors directly in front of one's eyes (Aslin, 2008; Yoshida & Smith, 2008).

These constraints limit the use of eye tracking devices in naturalistic settings.

The effort of maintaining eccentric gaze (i.e., when gaze direction is not aligned with head direction) is considerable, however. Experimental studies have shown that gaze tends to return to a central position following every eye movement greater than plus or minus 10 degrees (Aslin, 2008). In their study involving 18 – 24 month old children wearing a video camera mounted on a headband and placed centrally on their foreheads, Yoshida and Smith (2008) found sufficient alignment of head and eye movement to conclude that head direction provides a useful, although not definitive, proxy for gaze direction. When reviewing relevant literature, they identified reports of similarly close alignment of head and eye movements in two to four month old infants and nine to ten month old infants. Given that once the head band mounted cameras were in place, all the infants in their study appeared to forget about them, Yoshida and Smith concluded that the use of such devices hold considerable promise of offering unobtrusive new ways of viewing infants' visual experiences. Viewing infants' experiences in new ways, we speculated, potentially offers new ways to attempt to understand their experiences from their perspectives.

Pathways to participation as a tool for reflection

Bringing together two very different but possibly complementary lines of investigation presents technical, methodological and arguably ethical challenges. In the remainder of this commentary, we identify some of those challenges and discuss how we are attempting to address them. In reflecting on our progress in establishing ways to research with infants in participatory ways, we draw on an adaptation of Shier's (2001) pathways to participation model for conceptualising and enhancing children's participation in decision-making. Shier (2001) outlines five levels of participation in decision-making. The text in brackets constitutes our adaptation to the research context for infants:

Level 1: Children are listened to (as research participants and co-researchers).

Level 2: Children are supported in expressing their views (as research participants and co-researchers).

Level 3: Children's views (as research participants and co-researchers) are taken into account.

Level 4: Children are involved in decision-making processes (about the research project and their participation in it, ideally in ways that will be conducive to them having a voice in their own care).

Level 5: Children share power and responsibility for decision-making (as co-researchers).

According to Shier (2001), at each level of participation, individuals and organisations – and research teams – might have differing degrees of commitment. Shier identifies three stages of commitment: openings, opportunities and obligations. An intent to work in a particular way (in our case, in as a participatory way as possible with infants) constitutes an opening. An opening becomes an opportunity when whatever is needed to work in that way (e.g., in terms of knowledge, skills, resources, approaches, policies) is available. Opportunities become obligations when that particular way of working is required.

Shier's model has a number of limitations, including its seemingly linear, hierarchical and uni-directional stages. When Layland (2009) analysed the ways in which two home-based educators in Aotearoa/New Zealand afforded young children participation rights, she found that both educators operated across all the levels described by Shier. To address this limitation of Shier's model, Layland also drew on a typology developed by Kirby and Gibbs (2006), derived in turn from Klein (2001). The typology outlines a continuum of adult facilitation roles within participatory projects involving children and, in contrast to Shier's pathways, explicitly allows for flexibility in moving across those roles. The roles range from abstainer (leaving children alone to undertake activities, develop ideas

and produce materials with no adult intervention) to doer (taking action on children's behalf). Again, Layland (2009) found that both educators in her study took on a variety of facilitation roles in supporting children's participation. As we continue to reflect on and address the issues raised in this chapter, we anticipate that, like Layland, we too will turn to additional heuristic devices, such as Kirby and Gibb's (2006) typology. As we illustrate below, however, our adaptation of Shier's (2001) model is proving a useful starting point in scaffolding our thinking about the extent to which we can justifiably claim to be involving infants in participatory ways.

From the outset, our intent has been to listen in the sense of attuning as deeply as we can to infants and to what they are telling us (Moss, Clark, & KjØrholt, 2005), as research participants and co-researchers, about their experiences of their early childhood setting (Level 1). We bring knowledge, skills and resources to support us in doing so and see this commitment as a fundamental obligation. We are equally committed, in intent and in our stated obligations as a research team, to supporting infants in expressing their views as research participants and co-researchers and are developing approaches and strategies to enable us to meet our obligations (Level 2). We can fairly legitimately, albeit tentatively, make similar claims about taking infants' views into account in our decision-making (Level 3), at least with our two infant participants and co-researchers thus far. That is likely

to become more difficult, however, with younger infants. We also believe that our explicit intent to understand the experience of child care from the infant's perspective foregrounds the agency of the infant in a way that can inform policy and practice.

Technical and other challenges

To support our claims, we return to our use of baby cam and reflect on the issues that are arising and our endeavours to address them. Our reflections are informed by discussions in our team meetings and from a meeting involving one of the authors of this chapter, a research assistant and a parent of a six-month-old infant to discuss issues that might concern parents (and infants) about the use of video data and especially baby cam. The parent had a professional background in video and documentary work. She was invited in her own right, because of her professional expertise and her ability to provide a parent's perspective, but also in another sense, as her infant's proxy, to convey, based on her deep familiarity with her infant, her interpretation of her infant's likely response to using baby cam, had she been a participant in the research project. In informal ways such as these, we have tried to consult with infants and to gain their perspectives about our plans before entering research sites.

Getting to the point where we can begin to explore with our infant co-researchers the potential of baby cam has involved considerable investigative work and much trial and error. To date, we have been able to locate little relevant research literature to which can turn for guidance. By outlining the nature of the difficulties we have encountered, we hope to prompt further reports of ways in which have other researchers have grappled with similar challenges.

The first technical challenge was sourcing a suitable camera. We experimented initially with buttonhole cameras sold by suppliers to personal investigation agencies. These cameras look like a small black button slightly larger than the size of a shirt button. They come with a separate but quite small microphone that can be placed in a sweatband-style headband or on a small fitted cap so that the camera can be positioned on the infants' forehead. They are attached to a cord that transfers the video images to a receiver, which can be placed in an apron-style vest worn by the infant.

The advantage of buttonhole cameras is that they can be easily disguised. To this end, we envisaged making headbands and caps with a number of flowers with each having a matching button (which was supplied with the camera) at the centre of the flower. Only the flower positioned on the forehead when the infant was wearing the cap would contain the camera. Our intent in disguising the camera

was not to deceive, but to minimise the likelihood that adults interacting with the infant wearing the camera would be psychologically intimidated by the camera and that other children's interactions with the infant would be distorted. On methodological and ethical grounds, we considered it crucial to avoid as far as we possibly could, the presence of camera interrupting natural and spontaneous interactions that are essential to fostering relationships and trust between carer and infant, and between the infant and other children. An infant and a toddler, who were not participants in the project but who acted as our consultants and who were accustomed to wearing hats and headbands, did not seem to object to wearing the headband containing the camera. The camera became quite hot after being worn by our consultants for approximately 10 minutes and left a red mark on their skin; hence we were unable to continue using it. Additionally, the quality of sound was relatively poor.

Please insert Figure 2 here

We then trialled a number of small, directional lipstick size cameras, typically worn on the side of the head, and frequently used by sportspeople to assist in analysing technique and performance, as well as security personnel and police. Like the buttonhole cameras, lipstick cameras are attached by a cord to a recording device. We have mounted the lipstick camera we are currently using to

a headband that is adjustable with velcro so that it can be used without a hat or over the hat if the infant is outside. Wide elastic sewn into the side of the headband enables the camera head to fit in firmly and be angled down slightly so that it points generally in the right direction. It also has a built-in conduit to direct the cord from the camera head inside the headband around to the back of the head where it comes back out of the headband and goes down into the recording device. This keeps the cord away from the side of the head and also helps to support the weight of the camera and cord. The two infants participating in the study to date seem to prefer having the camera attached permanently to an adjustable headband to an earlier system we devised that involved using velcro to fasten the camera to a non adjustable elastic headband. The earlier system enabled the angle of the camera head to be adjusted after the headband was on the infant's head; however, this made fitting the headband to the infant more time-consuming and therefore unnecessarily distracting for the infant. Nor did the infants seem to like the sound of the velcro being adjusted close to their ear or the sensation of the tight elastic headband being pulled down over their heads.

While we are getting closer to resolving, with the assistance of the participating infants, some of the technical issues associated with the use of baby cam, we have not yet made much headway with some of the bigger, and we anticipate, more enduring methodological and ethical issues, particularly arising from participatory research perspectives. For example, how do we weigh up the possible benefits,

opportunities and ‘voice’ that baby cam potentially offers infants by enabling them to generate data, and in that sense arguably participate as co-researchers, with the ethical implications of involving infants, especially younger infants, who are likely to have little or no awareness of understandings of their contribution or role? Do the potential advantages associated with possibly learning more about infants’ worlds outweigh the possibility that we might be indeed invading their worlds? Other than trying to be as attuned as possible to the infants’ responses, should we be doing more to safeguard their right to be silent and their right to privacy?

CONCLUSION

As Barker and Weller (2003) point out, that ‘there is no universal truth of children’s experiences to be uncovered. Rather, through child centred research methods, we can offer partial glimpses that reflect in one form the complexity and diversity of children’s lives’ (p. 8). The implication is that the best we can hope for is a partial, tentative and imperfect understanding of children’s, and especially infants’, experiences. Perhaps we will find, as the Infants’ Lives in Childcare project progresses, that we will only manage to engage with infants in participatory research in partial, tentative and imperfect ways. Given the potential benefits to infants that seem likely to arise if researchers, policy makers, practitioners and families can gain deeper insights into infants’ experiences and

perspectives of ECEC, we believe the challenges associated with gaining these insights must be taken up.

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Figure 1. Mosaic for understanding infants' experiences: Sources, contexts and perspectives

Key: sources (marbled triangles), perspectives (grey rectangles) and contexts (dotted octagons)

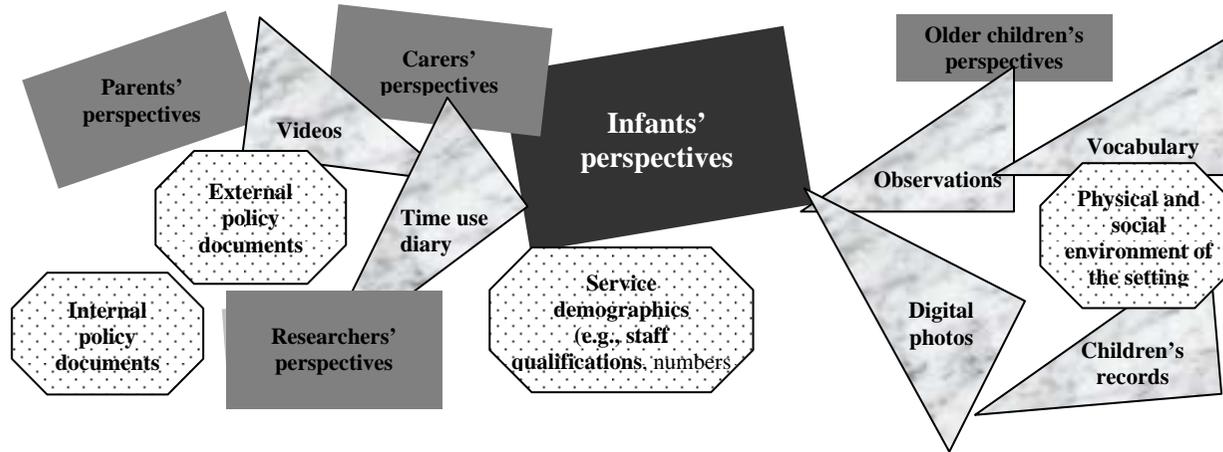


Figure 2. A toddler consultant trialling and providing feedback on a 'lipstick' camera style baby cam



Table 1. Heuristic tools for guiding data analysis (examples are indicative only)

Focus	Heuristic tools
infant-carer interactions / relationships	circle of security (Dolby & Swan, 2002; carer sensitivity, cooperation, responsiveness [Rating scales developed by Ainsworth et al (1978) and Biringen et al (1998) cited in (Albers, Riksen-Walraven, & de Weerth, 2007)]; improvisation (Lobman, 2006)
agency	pathways to participation (Shier, 2001); negotiations (Rutanen, 2007)
peer-peer interactions and relationships	dimensions of supradydadic linking (i.e. 2 or more infants) (Selby & Bradley, 2003); style (Løkken, 2000)
engagement / learning	enculturation, imitation & variation (Lindahl & Pramling Samuelson, 2002)