

Policy and Pedagogy with Under-three Year Olds:
Cross-disciplinary Insights and Innovations 5

E. Jayne White · Helen Marwick ·
Niina Rutanen · Katia Souza Amorim ·
Laura K. M. Herold *Editors*

First Transitions to Early Childhood Education and Care

Intercultural Dialogues across the Globe

 Springer

Policy and Pedagogy with Under-three Year Olds: Cross-disciplinary Insights and Innovations

Volume 5

Series Editors

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The last two decades have witnessed an explosion of research that links traditional child development knowledge on optimal development of very young children to insights from a range of other disciplines, including neurological science, early childhood pedagogy, health studies and critical psychology. At the same time growing numbers of children in the Western world are spending significant periods of their earliest years beyond the traditional domain of the home, creating a new reality of shared education and care that draws across disciplines in expounding a pedagogical encounter with the very young. This series aims to bring together the range of contemporary theoretical, methodological, disciplinary and creative approaches to understanding this new reality for very young children in group-based infant and toddler settings. It will generate texts that incorporate comprehensive state of the art reviews of research to inform policy and pedagogy as well as promote and provoke innovative directions across disciplines. By bringing different disciplines to bear on the educational experience of the very young, this series will showcase new methodologies and theoretical approaches to understanding the very early years of life, pose theoretical challenges as well as opportunities, and assert the importance of multiple and dynamic perspectives.

E. Jayne White • Helen Marwick
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Laura K. M. Herold
Editors

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*This book is dedicated to Helen Marwick
(1956–2021)*

Foreword

When invited to write a foreword for a book that draws together new findings from research and leads the reader through a project that has found out so much about the social and emotional experiences of our youngest children during some of the earliest locational transitions they make, I thought about the youngest children I am privileged to have in my life: two little girls who live at other ends of the world. Reading the first chapter, I too remembered the lakeside meeting over a coffee at what was the other side of the world for Helen and me, when Helen and I met Jayne for the first time in 2014. Although I was there too, it was not my meeting, and I left them to talk as I had work to do with other colleagues also working on transitions, specifically the POET (Pedagogies of Educational Transitions) project, colleagues who, as Jayne says, were very focused on transitions to school and much less on the youngest children: a gap it was important to fill.

It's because of knowing Helen so well over many years, and being fortunate to count Jayne as a colleague as well, that I accepted the invitation to write this foreword with a mix of pleasure and great sadness. This book is dedicated to Helen. When I heard in early October 2021 that she had passed away at home with her five adult children around her, I knew I would never forget her kindness, her nurturing nature, her humor, her courage, and her bright, bright mind. The joyful part is that this book is finished, her name is on it, and her contribution is appreciated.

As more and more of our youngest attend forms of group day care and education, I am drawn to think about space, time, people, relationships, and materials: each present in the enactment of transitions. This book is not only the latest in infancy research but also a philosophical, psychological, and historic journey through early childhood – the importance of space, place, relationships, and culture: it gives us a complex story/dialogue/narrative of what these authors have found to matter at the very beginning of the life-course.

Perhaps all research in the end is narrative: whatever you do, there's a story to tell. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Heart* (1997, p. 92) tells us, "Dialogism is a requirement of human nature and also a sign of the educator's democratic stand. There is no communication without dialogism, and communication lies at the heart of this

vital phenomenon.” The research in this book rests on a dialogic framework. As such, it is naturalistic, respectful, relational, and contextualized.

Here, contextualized country statistics are presented in ways that raise some very significant questions about how families are able to organize their lives in the local country contexts of how policy is shaped, how parental leave is set up, how family composition varies, and whether jobs are held and return to work can be guaranteed. Support with childcare and education was also found to be uneven ... the guarantees for children may also fail to match the aspirations of a rights-based agenda.

So much work resonates with this richly researched book: what Trevarthen (1998) calls “society’s ‘way of life’,” which is gained, and contributed to, through intersubjective processes; Bruner’s thinking (1996) about the enactive, iconic, and symbolic nature of experience, meaning making, and creation of culture; and also work perhaps less known to early childhood research, such as that by Merleau-Ponty (2012) and Pallasmaa (2012). Drawing a correspondence between the phenomenology of perception and a phenomenology of architecture, the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty hold relevance for spatial sequence, texture, material, and light in children’s engagement with new settings and with one another (Pálmadóttir in press), while Pallasmaa (2012) refers to these and how they may be interpreted in architecture: it isn’t a big step to imagine an architecture of early childhood enabled by design-based research that affords children opportunities to develop and sustain their own meaning and culture. Pálmadóttir’s research stresses the crucial phenomenological dimensions of human experience. Understanding the ways in which our youngest meet and interpret the world is critical to later understandings of how they meet and engage with the structure of environments (including environments structured for them) and how they exert agency.

Steven Holl (2012) in his foreword to *The Architecture of Silence* (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 8) writes of the noisy background of contemporary life; we need, he contends, to adopt a silence, a reflection, and a resolve to “the depth of our being.” In pushing the boundaries of practice and policy, both of which have to be a response to what you will read in these pages, we can draw on the “rich variety and extraordinary multi-faceted nature of narrative” (Yorke, 2014, p. xv), yet it is all too tempting to reduce the detail. However, in this book it is detail that you will find – detail that goes such a long way in helping us understand how very young children, their families, and their educators are positioned in our societies across the world. The book’s content resonates with previous work that highlights youngest children’s capacity to engage with others, to share meaning and make sense of their worlds, and to join communities of others, through shared emotions in order to belong (Trevarthen et al., 2018). The Ancient Chinese proverb tells us, “You need the eye, the hands, and the heart,” all three. Taking the learning from *First Transitions to Early Education and Care* into practice and policy may present a challenge. However, armed with a new knowing, we will be better equipped.

The risk in policy making is over-simplification: infancy is complex, rich, about small children acting on the material environment and responding to what is offered and by whom. In this book, there is an opportunity to understand the out-of-home

experiences of the very young child and their place in society as a whole, to develop some mutual understanding with their parents and educators of how the demands of employment, family building, and joy in the child interact with the complex task of relating with others who care for that child. The book gives us both a series of provocations and the tools for action – practitioner educators are at the heart of creating welcoming, safe, and rich opportunities for children and families and must aspire always to be conscious of fixed, rigid, and limiting institutionalizing approaches. By creating space in which children can *be*, we also attend to *becoming*. The articulation and interweaving of agency, participation, reflection, collaboration, culture, and knowings visible in this book, centered on the first transitions made by young children beyond their home, makes it an essential pedagogical read. I am privileged to make such a recommendation.

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Aline-Wendy Dunlop

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The project would not have been possible without generous invitations from Professor Sally Peters (University of Waikato, NZ) and Aline-Wendy Dunlop (Strathclyde University, Scotland) for Jayne and Helen to be funded to participate in the Pedagogies of Educational Transitions (POET) project hosted by these Universities between 2013 and 2016. These experiences brought us together with a common purpose, providing the intellectual stimulus, time and space for us to conceptualise and design ISSEET.

The teams across each ISSEET country have been supported by their respective universities, but also external funding. Australia is grateful to the support of RMIT University in Melbourne's Enabling Capability Platform fund which enabled the testing of research translation resources for Australian ECEC teachers and families, with the support of the international ISSEET team. Brazil received resources from the University of São Paulo, Psychology Post Graduation Program of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters of Ribeirão Preto (USP); FAC – Support Foundation for Human, Exact and Natural Sciences; CAPES Brazil and FAPESP Grants for PhD researchers (2016/24466-7; 2016/10638-0); FAPESP Project grants (2016/24717-0; 2019/26228-4); and CNPq Brazil Research Foundation grant (304351/2016-4). New Zealand members were generously funded by Cognition Trust, NZ, and supported over the years and in various ways by the University of Waikato, NZ; the University of Canterbury, NZ; Te Rito Maioha, NZ; and Inspired Kindergartens. The team in Finland was supported by the University of Jyväskylä, Faculty of Education and Psychology, and the Department of Education, and funded by the Academy of Finland (*Trace in ECEC – Tracing children's socio-spatial relations and lived experiences in early childhood education transitions – project grant*,

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While only some of the team members from each country participated in writing the chapters in this volume, we also wish to acknowledge the considerable “behind-the-scenes” work that was completed over various phases of the project by teacher-researchers, staff in ECEC centres, our colleagues, team members, research assistants, students and colleagues. Special thanks to teacher-researchers John Gill (Australia), Kat Hansen and Nikita Perk (NZ); early years practitioner Emma Clarkson and senior early years practitioner Lian Higgins (Scotland); research assistants Kaira Neder, Solange Bezerra and Michelle Cristina Silva (Brazil); researchers Raija Raittila, Mari Vuorisalo and Jasemin Can; and research assistants Sari Toivonen, Milla Tuikka, Eveliina Varis, Juulia Ylikoski, Kati Laaksonen and Emilia Sviili (Finland). We have received valuable intellectual support from Professor Emeritas Maria Clotilde Rossetti-Ferreira (Brazil) and Maritta Hännikäinen (Finland) as well as colleagues Eleni Karagiannidou, Cara Blaisdell and Nicky Shaw (Scotland).

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In the final year of this project, we were deeply saddened by the loss of Maritta Hännikäinen in 2021, a dear friend and valued mentor, particularly to the Finnish team. After a long battle with illness, co-founder of the ISSEET project – Helen Marwick – also passed away in the final phases of the project. Helen’s detailed attention to infants’ emotional well-being, her expertise in developing the observation schedule and her leadership role in Scotland contribute greatly to our work. We dedicate this book to her and acknowledge with gratitude the legacy she leaves behind. We are indebted to the wonderful Lynn McNair for coming in at the last hour to provide important contextual detail concerning early transitions in Scotland.

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About the Editor and Contributors

About the Editors

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Dr. Helen Marwick was a Developmental Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education of the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. She researched extensively on social interactions, communicative development, and interpersonal understanding, and was involved in research on intersubjectivity, conceptual development, and relational identity. She developed the ‘Playboxes’ approach, which promotes and assesses active interpersonal engagement, communication, and imaginative pretense, and which is being used in educational settings both nationally and internationally. She was co-lead on the conceptualisation of the ISSEET project and led the Scottish data collection team.

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Contributors

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Kaisa Harju is a doctoral researcher in Early Childhood Education in the Faculty of Education and Psychology at the University of Jyväskylä. She participates as a project researcher and as a PhD candidate at the Finnish arm of the ISSEET study, *Trace in ECEC – Tracing children’s socio-spatial relations and lived experiences in early childhood education transitions – project* (2019–2023). Her own work concentrates particularly on children’s transitions within ECEC institution from a relational, socio-spatial perspective. Her research has been funded by Social Sustainability for Children and Families SOSUS-profiling area at the University of Jyväskylä (founded by Academy of Finland) and Otto A. Malm foundation.

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Waveney Lord

Ko Karioi me Moehau ngā maunga

Ko Oohautirame Hikutaia ngā awa

Ko Whāingaroa me Tikapa ngā moana

Ko Ngāti Tamainupo me Ngāti Pū ngā hapū
 Ko Tainui me Ngāti Maru ngā iwi
 Ko Tainui te waka
 Ko Ngā Tokotoru me Matai Whetu ngā whare tupuna
 Ko Waingaro te pā
 Ko Simon Lord rāua ko Sarndra Burne ōku mātua
 Ko Simon Lord rāua ko Rion Lord ōku tungāne
 Ko James Paul tāku tane
 Ko Waveney Alessa Lord tōku ingoa
 Tihei Mauri ora!

Waveney Lord is a teacher-researcher from Aotearoa New Zealand for the ISSEET project. When this project began, she came on board as a teacher from within an 80% immersion Māori Early Learning Centre. She supports the ISSEET project with her indigenous knowledges as an indigenous researcher. Alongside the interests of this project, she is a centre manager of an ECEC centre in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Lynn McNair is Head of Cowgate Under Fives Centre in Edinburgh, Scotland, and is a Senior Lecturer (teaching)/Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Lynn has more than 40 years' experience working in Early Years Education and was awarded an OBE for services to Early Education in 2009. Lynn is a trained Froebelian, attaining her certificate at the Froebel Institute, Roehampton University, London, UK. She is an award-winning author. Finally, Lynn would say her passion for egalitarianism, emancipation, democracy and a belief that children are rich, active, resourceful beings came from being a mother to Kurt and Mischa; and what she learned as she observed them playing freely as children. This way of being with children, trusting in them in their abilities and capabilities is where she puts her energy into her work with children today.

Andréa Tame Parreira is a research collaborator for ISSET in Brazil and a member of the Brazilian Center on Human Development and Early Childhood Education (CINDEDI). Master of Science from the University of São Paulo, Psychobiology concentration area. Member of the research group on guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents at Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho – UNESP, Franca-São Paulo campus. Develops research on language in infants in day care centres, has experience in working with children with atypical development and genetic syndromes, acting in Genetic Counselling. Psychologist in the Department of Neurosciences and Behavioral Sciences, Hospital das Clínicas de Ribeirão Preto (FMRP) -USP, division of Psychiatry.

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Chapter 1

Introducing ISSEET



E. Jayne White, Helen Marwick, Katia Souza Amorim ,
Laura K. M. Herold, and Niina Rutanen 

Introduction

This project began, as many good projects do, during a conversation between like-minded colleagues over coffee. Helen Marwick and Jayne White met in 2014 at a lakeside cafe on the University of Waikato campus, Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand (the bicultural name for this country, which we use throughout the book), where Jayne was teaching at the time. Helen was visiting Aotearoa New Zealand from Scotland as part of a larger international project focused largely on transitions to school (Ballam et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2014).

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During that discussion we identified a significant gap in the knowledge base concerning the transitions of younger learners. This realization prompted us to ponder the nature and impact of infants’ social and emotional experiences as they move in and through diverse settings outside the home. That questioning, in turn, led us to identify the urgent need to bring perspectives on infant transition to early childhood education and care (hereafter known as ECEC) into the research agenda. And so was born our International Study of Social Emotional Early Transitions (ISSEET).

We were fortunate to have existing relationships with colleagues who shared our interests across Brazil, Finland, and the United States of America. All joined us, without hesitation, in making the study a reality. The participation of these countries was therefore not a product of purposeful selection but rather of collegial networks and mutual interest. Jayne had met Niina Rutanen as part of an International Infant Network event hosted by Australia’s Charles Sturt University in 2013. Niina brought Katia Souza Amorim and her team into the project. Niina had got to know Katia during her time as a visiting PhD student in Brazil and their later collaboration in Ribeirão Preto (São Paulo). During the 2013 network event, Jayne and Niina also met Claire Vallotton, who then introduced them to colleagues at Arkansas University, where the project eventually landed in the lap of Laura Herold. In 2018 Jayne took up a position in Melbourne. There, colleagues joined her in getting the Australian arm of the project fully underway.

In 2016 we completed a pilot of our anticipated study with six-month-old Ally, who was transitioning to a community-based early childhood center in the Aotearoa New Zealand town of Cambridge. The purpose of the pilot was to test and, where necessary, amend the research methods proposed. This pilot work was conducted with the support of Cambridge Community Education and Care service and teacher-researcher Bridgette Redder. In simple terms (detailed accounts follow), the study that evolved out of the pilot, that is, ISSEET, had as its primary purpose exploring in depth, across time (up to school age), and within and across six countries, namely

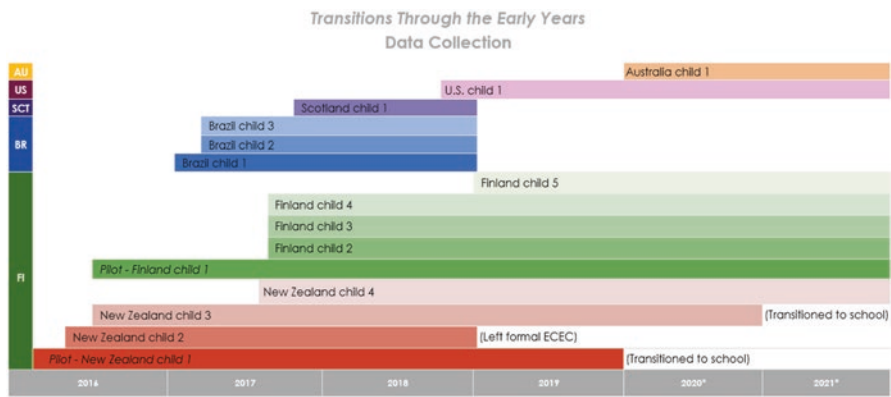


Fig. 1.1 Timeline of ISSEET data collection by country

Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, Finland, Scotland, and the United States, the experiences of infants transitioning from home into ECEC settings. As the project timeline in Fig. 1.1 shows, that evolution took time because the six countries joined the study at different times. At the time of writing this book, not every infant who came into the study had reached school age.

The design of the study brought with it many challenges. One of the key issue facing each country and the ECEC sites within them at the outset of the study was finding participant infants prior to their first transition. The next challenge was gaining consent from families and ECEC services not only at the time of the infant's first transition but also during subsequent transitions that took place before starting school. For a variety of reasons, some of the infants initially enrolled in the study did not remain throughout years (although all stayed for the first year of the study). We had not anticipated how *frequently* many of the infants featured in our study transitioned from one setting to another before reaching school age. Because of ECEC setting practices or families' changed circumstances, some infants experienced at least three transitions during their first year in ECEC. Nor, of course, could we have anticipated the significant disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic throughout 2020/21. As we will see later in this chapter, it affected our study in several ways.

Throughout the 6 years of the study, the members of our international research team met regularly. Initially, we met face to face, first in Jyväskylä, Finland in 2017, then Budapest in 2018, and Ribeirão Preto, Brazil in 2019 (Fig. 1.2). These were



Fig. 1.2 Members of the ISSEET research team in Brazil, University of São Paulo, in 2019, participating in a five-day international seminar on the project

rich occasion for context-specific exchange; data sharing, analysis, and clarification; presentation of work-in-progress; and, of course, lively debate.

The onset of Covid-19, however, meant we had to rely on Zoom for our meetings. We acknowledge the limitations this brought to our study. Our ability to sit together to analyze the cross-national data, as we had anticipated, was compromised because ethics agreements in several of the participating countries do not allow virtual data sharing (Rutanen et al., 2018). We therefore had to rely on analyses conducted by local teams, which meant their interpretations were locally constituted. Bringing this book together has thus been a challenging process requiring a series of cross-cultural virtual exchanges spanning several years. While we recognize the challenges faced, they provided opportunities for local (the country-based) teams to strengthen their own processes in accordance with their priorities while maintaining enough cross-national commonality to facilitate the illuminating discoveries documented and explored in this book.

Hosted by the Brazilian team, the event was led by Professor Katia Amorim (first on right). Other Brazilian team members present were Professor Emerita Clotilde Rossetti-Ferreira (fourth from the right) and researchers Kaira Neder, Natalia Costa, Lucia Tinós, and Marisa von Dentz. Also present were the ISSEET project leader Professor Jayne White (top center), and Aotearoa New Zealand researchers Kathryn Hawkes (third from left) and Waveney Lord (third from right). Participants from Finland included the Finnish team leader Professor Niina Rutanen (top center, right from Jayne White), Raija Raittila (center, in front of Jayne), and Yaiza Lucas Revilla (second from right). Zooming in on the screen behind are Dr. Helen Marwick and members of the Scottish ISSEET team, and Dr. Laura Herold (USA). This was the last time we met face-to-face before Covid-19 altered our plans forever.

Notwithstanding such challenges, the local and international discoveries arising out of our dialogues and debates across the years of ISSEET have greatly increased our understanding of infant transitions. We now realize that transitions are conceptualized very differently across, and sometimes even within, countries, and that they are influenced by the wider milieu in which they occur. We came to view these differences as opportunities for intercultural dialogue rather than comparison. Reference to diverse cases of transitioning infants within countries allowed us to reflect with one another on our assumptions and dearly held assertions about what should, or should not, take place during transitions.

Although we can no longer hold to the notion of a universal transition for all infants or all time, our cross-national encounters also identified for us the many transition-related features held in common by the participating countries. Those features that differed provided us with a particularly rich source of insight and (re)conceptualization that brought new theories, ideas, ideologies, and practices into our shared spaces for dialogue and debate. It is these developments that we seek to present in this book. For us, the book provides a venue from which we and you, the reader, can continue to (re)conceptualize early transitions as dialogues of difference and diversity mediated by the sociocultural, relational, and political features of our respective geographical, ideological, and pedagogical spaces.

Part 1: Setting the Scene for a Study of Infant Transitions

With attendance at out-of-home childcare settings for children under 3 years old increasing worldwide, it is clearly important that young children's experiences in early years settings optimally support their development and wellbeing. The OECD (2017) has persistently emphasized a "smooth transition" from ECEC to school as vital for children's long-term learning and development and expressed concern over lack of financial investment in transition processes. We consider that these concerns are just as relevant, perhaps even more relevant, for the growing numbers of infants now transitioning into ECEC settings or moving between them (Gradovski et al., 2019).

For infants who move from a home environment to the group environment of an out-of-home ECEC setting, sustained positive interactions and attuned engagement are vital. This is because a lack of these imperatives may adversely affect the infants' involvement, belonging, and overall wellbeing. In addition, individual infants, their families, and the educators who care for the infants bring an array of social, educational, and emotional expectations, understandings, and aspirations to the transition experience. The complexity and diversity of this array can disrupt the efficacy of the experience for everyone involved (Amorim et al., 2000; Marwick, 2017). Divergence within and across countries in terms of ECEC policy contexts, cultural practices, conceptions of infants' care and education, pedagogical models, patterns of interaction with children, the role of parents and collaboration with parents (Lucas Revilla et al., 2022; Singer et al., 2014) also mediate how smoothly infants transition from their homes to out-of-home care and the extent to which their engagement, belonging, and wellbeing is supported once they are in that environment.

It was these considerations, along with lack of research in this area, that persuaded us to gather empirical data on how the transition experience plays out not only for infants but also their families and ECEC educators. The study that grew out of this commitment, that is, ISSEET, sought to examine the interpersonal experiences and overall wellbeing of infants in group-based educational settings during their first transition and the eight months thereafter. However, three of the six participating countries extended the study to encompass transitions throughout the ECEC and preschool years and into school.

Our focus in this book, though, encompasses data from the time of the infants' *first transition through to their second year* only. There are three reasons for this. First, we deemed this period the one most in need of immediate inquiry and dissemination. Second, the work that extended through subsequent years and into school generated a far greater wealth of data than we felt we could usefully describe and interpret in just one book. Third, not all the infants who featured in the first 2 years of the project were followed through subsequent transitions, while others had yet to begin school.

Research Design

Our initial research design drew mainly on dialogic methodology (Amorim & Rossetti-Ferreira, 2008; White, 2022). It was further influenced by intersubjectivity theory (Trevarthen, 1998) and Beech's theory of dialogical liminality (Beech, 2011). Collectively, these methodological underpinnings provided us with a means of examining the beliefs, attitudes, and associated interactions that take place during the first months of transition and thereby gaining an understanding of the complex intersubjective experiences within and between individuals, contexts, and cultures. We accordingly targeted the following aspects of the experience:

1. The expectations, reflections, emotions, and attitudes of parents and ECEC educators before, during, and after the transition experience. Here, we were particularly interested in how each of these people saw (a) the roles of the ECEC setting, the educator, and the parent, and (b) the emotional and social experiences of the infant.
2. The aspects of early years settings that support or enhance this process both nationally and within the respective settings. These aspects include, amongst others, history, national criteria, policies, protocols, and curricula.
3. Intersubjective experiences (i.e., the sharing of subjective experience between two or more people) and how these manifested in social communicative and educational interactions in early years settings. Examples of these experiences include engagement in play, routines, and peer-group and teacher–infant interactions.

We were then tasked with determining the best way to examine the intersubjective experiences of the infants and the perspectives of their parents and educators. Intersubjectivity theory indicated that we needed to look in detail at the infants' respective experiences. We therefore decided that within each country we would seek the participation of five different ECEC settings and then closely follow the experiences of just one infant per setting. We also agreed that the settings in each country would include public and private ones within different socioeconomic areas as well as settings catering specifically for children from indigenous backgrounds.

Each of the universities with which we are affiliated secured approval from their respective ethics committees for us to proceed with the study (Rutanen et al., 2018). The process used to obtain informed participation consent from study participants followed robust localized and cross-cultural ethical procedures. Issues relating to data sharing, especially data in the form of video recordings, were resolved locally and in accordance with each university's storage and related requirements. Resolution of these issues was particularly important given our data-collection work included visual research methods. Visual research draws insight into and meaning about cultures and societies from artistic mediums such as film, videos, photos, paintings, and drawings. We were mindful of Pauwels' (2020) call for an integrated framework in visual research, and one that is ethically responsive and responsible. As a consequence, we included a range of visual methods that were at our disposal.

Analysis of the data we collected was informed by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) bioecological model, which views children's development within the context of the relationships they encounter within their environment; Rossetti-Ferreira et al.' (2007) Network of Meanings methodological tool; and various other theoretical paradigms that came to our attention as we worked across sites and countries. To develop, to the greatest extent possible, cross-setting, cross-national cohesive meaning from the encounters between home and the ECEC sites we observed, we needed to find a way of effectively engaging with (analyzing) the multiple (verbal and non-verbal) dialogue exchanges that occurred between parents, educators, and infants, especially as those encounters were imbued with values (e.g., cultural) particular to those people, settings, and countries.

Reference to the notion of chronotopic thresholds provided us with a way forward in this regard. Chronotopic thresholds refer to fusions of time, space, and experience where transition points bring different sets of values and practices together. As White (2022) explains, chronotopes are coordinates that we can use to understand the structures constituting certain discourses and how these affect the experience and its significance for those involved. This concept alerted us to intersecting and, sometimes, competing discourses at play in and across transitions.

In taking this route, we knew we could not determine what constitutes effective transitions for all infants, for all time, and across all contexts. Instead, and with reference to work by Rutanen and Hännikäinen (2019), we agreed to shift our gaze to specified series of encounters so we could begin to see transitions as fluid processes, interconnected events of being across moments, complex patterns of thought, subjective interpretations from insider and outsider vantage points and cultural landscapes, and acts of answerability for us as researchers.

We also saw that, somehow, we needed to see through the eyes of the infants themselves—a seemingly irreconcilable quest that we do not claim to have resolved. We used several lenses during our effort to see through the infants' eyes. These resulted in a mosaic approach (after Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2012) to this work that included drawing on our respective areas of expertise. We can count across our international team developmental psychologists, sociologists, educational researchers, and educational practitioners, and all with considerable ECEC experience.

In summary, our research rests on an interpretivist paradigm with a relativist ontology (the belief that reality is a subjective experience), leading to a dialogic methodology framework (White, 2022), using naturalistic non-participant direct observation, assessment records and other documents, enabling a quantitative analysis.

Data Collection Methods

These involved observations, by eye and by video, of each focus infant, the other people around that child, and the context/environment alongside. We also conducted pre- and post-transition semi-structured interviews with parents and ECEC

Table 1.1 ISSEET data-collection methods for each infant during the 8 months from the first transition

Fieldwork days	'By-eye' observations within ECEC setting (All day)	Video recordings within ECEC setting (Up to 2 h)	Pre-transition interview with educator (1 h)	Post-transition interview with educator (1 h)	Post-transition videoed interview with parents (1 h)
Day 1 of first transition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Week 2	✓	✓		✓	✓
Month 2	✓	✓		✓	✓
Month 3	✓	✓		✓	✓
Months 5–6	✓	✓		✓	✓
Month 7	✓	✓		✓	✓
Month 8	✓	✓		✓	✓

educators. Table 1.1. summarizes the data-collection methods followed for each infant across the 8 months of the study.

1. *By eye observations within the ECEC service:* These were non-participatory and were carried out by a research practitioner (whom we came to describe as a teacher-researcher) from the service setting or a member of the country's research team. Observations encompassed seven full-day visits to each ECEC setting. These were carried out over the course of a year and included the first day of transition when the parent left the infant for a full day or part day. During each visit, the by-eye observations continued right through the full day of the infant experience. Observers used a structured observation and coding scheme to record their observations (see Appendix A). The total number of observed and coded hours across the countries over the first 8 months of the early transitions were 450. Training was a prerequisite for any fieldwork undertaken and became a rich source of dialogue as research teams discussed the nuances of classifications such as "What constitutes a key teacher?" or "How should 'mood' be interpreted alongside 'engagement'?" This process often reminded us of our cultural locatedness and the importance of taking time to explore the nuances that inevitably arise when working across diverse contexts. Interobserver reliability checks took place across all countries. Due to the complex design of the project, reliability checks continued throughout all 4 years of the study because we required each country lead and their team to reach 80% reliability across all observations.
2. *Video recordings within the ECEC service:* Conducted with a hand-held camera, the recordings lasted a maximum of 2 h per day. Each recording session focused on the following events: arrivals and departures at each transition point (i.e., where the parent dropped off or picked up the infant); a play interaction with staff; a diaper/nappy-changing interaction; a feeding interaction; peer-group activities; non-structured solo activity for the infant; and collecting the infant at

the end of the day. All together, we recorded 250 h of video footage across our six countries during the first 8 months of the study.

3. *Interviews with families (in all cases, parents)*: Parents were invited to be interviewed, and all agreed to do so, on three occasions across the year: just before or at the beginning of their infant's transition into the ECEC setting; when their child had been in that setting for around 4 months; and when he or she had been in the setting for between 6 and 8 months. During the first interview, we asked parents to tell us about their infant, their personality, temperament, and preferences; and what expectations they had of the transition into the ECEC setting for him or her and themselves. During the second interview, which occurred at the end of the first phase of the study, we asked parents to reflect on the transition and to articulate their current expectations concerning the education experience for their infant. The above collection of interviews resulted in 96 h of audiotaped and transcribed data across the six participating countries.
4. *Interviews with the educator who welcomed the focus infant at the time of each transition*: These interviews took place on three occasions across the year. The first was just before or at the beginning of each infant's transition into the ECEC setting; the second when the child had been in the setting for around 4 months; and the third when he or she had been in the setting for between 6 and 8 months. During the first interview, we asked educators about the infant for whom they had responsibility and their expectations of the transition into the setting for that infant and themselves. We also asked the educators about their respective setting's policy procedures and assessment documents in relation to the transition process, as well as their practices concerning ongoing care of the child and support for the child's social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development. These interviews produced 96 h of audiotaped and transcribed data across the countries.
5. *Secondary sources*: These included, amongst other items, in-service policy documents, assessment records, and induction information collected at each transition entry point. We also sourced national policy documents on early years provision and direction.

Data Analysis

We used coding to analyze the by-eye and observation data. Five-point scale coding categories were adapted from Marwick et al., (2013) and trialed by Jayne White and Bridgette Redder during the Aotearoa New Zealand pilot in order to verify the categories' robustness and utility. These were then subjected to statistical analysis in an effort to identify causalities between variables, such as the relationship between key teacher presence and infant 'mood' and 'playfulness'. We also used additional contextual descriptive categories to capture activities, feelings, and interactions for each focus infant throughout the day, thus allowing us to carry out quantitative analyses and create narrative vignettes (see Appendix A).

We furthermore compiled descriptive narratives based on the video observations to describe emotions, interactions, and events experienced by the infant, educators, and parents throughout the day. These approaches were supplemented by analysis of ECEC service records (assessment, enrolment, communications) that took place during the transition periods. Here we looked for clues concerning the priorities that were placed on the various practices and policies orienting each transition point. The titles of each chapter of this book oriented our interpretations across sites and countries - with the support of video and interviews that, together, enabled us to explore the nuances of pedagogies and practices, emotions and expectations.

The number of ECEC contexts within and across the participating countries brought several pragmatic challenges to our analysis work. For example, not all the countries gained access to ECEC settings at the same time during the study. Some countries were ahead of others at any one time in the number of settings they had accessed and the number of focus infants they had observed, thus delaying cross-country analysis. Interpretations of what constituted the “first day” also differed across countries. Brazil’s first day for infants began with the parents’ first visit to the setting. Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Finland, and Scotland viewed the first day as the day when parents left the infant in the care of the ECEC service (often after several settling-in visits). Similarly, the policies and practices of the different countries in relation to admission procedures and the age of infants at admission meant the children were at different ages on the first day of transition. Entry ages ranged from 6 months to 18 months (Rutanen et al., 2021). Our analysis also had to accommodate the different roles that settings allocated to educators within and across countries. Some settings used a key teacher model whereby one educator was responsible for the infant’s transition. Others deployed several educators to oversee this process throughout the days, weeks, and months of the study (see Chap. 5 for a fuller discussion), further adding to the complexity of our task.

Participants

Because our initial intent for ISSEET was to focus on infants’ first transition from the home into ECEC and their experiences during the 8 months following that transition, we had to source infants who had not yet started ECEC. We therefore had to rely on identifying such children through our local ECEC networks. We also wanted, to the greatest extent possible, to work with ECEC services that exemplified the kinds of out-of-home educational experiences offered to infants in each country. Consequently, the ECEC settings that eventually participated in the study included publicly funded settings, services run by non-governmental organizations, community-based facilities, and privately owned settings. In Aotearoa New Zealand, we also included a government-funded home-based setting, sometimes referred to as family day care, as this type of formal ECE service was indicative of enrolment trends for Aotearoa New Zealand infants at the time. We had hoped to include language immersion sites within our cross-national sample of participating ECEC

settings. However, for reasons articulated in Chap. 2, realizing this aim was fraught with complexity. We were fortunate to have access to one Māori immersion ECEC service in Aotearoa New Zealand, which offered a cultural lens that would otherwise have evaded our reach.

All of the ECEC services we approached were keen to participate. Each articulated the view that there was a strong need for such a study. However, in order to participate, a service had to have not only an infant about to enter their service but also an infant whose family was willing for their child and themselves to participate, with that participation including close by-eye and videoed observations. In addition, parents of the other children in that setting had to give consent for their children to be a part of the study. Those services with a waiting list of parents wanting their infants to transition to care obviously knew well in advance when infants would first arrive at the service, which gave us time to ready ourselves for the data-collection work. Because some of the ECEC services that agreed to participate had infants due to transition about the time we first approached them, our research teams had to quickly prepare for preliminary interviews and the first day of observations.

Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Scotland worked with teacher-researchers to do the in-setting work. This approach had several benefits. First, it allowed the researcher to be not only “on the ground” but also to move in and out of the intimate spaces of the ECEC facility without disruption. Second, it brought insights to the research derived from “insider” perspectives. And third, it provided valuable professional insights for the teacher-researchers themselves, as this excerpt from an interview with a teacher from Aotearoa New Zealand indicates.

The data analysis allowed time for me to notice exchanges such as the numerous times the mother checked with the key teacher to ensure she understood how to prepare her baby’s bottle, the number of visits that occurred prior to the parent feeling comfortable to leave their infant, the tiny rituals that presented between all involved, the engagement of peers and siblings and their exhibited emotions as they too assisted with the transition of the new infant into their ECE environment. As a result, I have noticed my practice is now more finely tuned; I am more aware of the smallest of details within these transitions. I am more observant of the different layers of communication that are exhibited in this delicate and fragile process.

The teacher-researcher approach also brought with it additional challenges. Their intimate knowledge of the infants in our study meant that they sometimes found it difficult to focus on observable criteria in their coding - calling for a great deal more inter-observer training that might otherwise have been necessary. They also struggled at times to video in the ECEC contexts in which they were also called upon to participate in the running of the programme. Teacher-researchers did not interview parents and teachers from their own setting due to their potential to influence the nature of responses (for more insight concerning their engagement see White, 2021).

Although we had aimed to follow the transition experiences of five infants per country, only Finland, which received substantial funding for this approach, realized this aim. Aotearoa New Zealand, with smaller amounts of funding at their disposal, had four. Brazil had three. Australia, Scotland, and the United States had one each. There are many reasons for this situation, not least of which is that the project