

Ecologies of Touch

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Ecologies of Touch

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Thesis assemblage

abdomen, pencil, paper, grandma, greggs, midwife christine potter, copper coins, grandad, pen, ink, lead, bath, laptop, window, bed, fingers, stairs, holly, glass, skin, isolation, sunshine, wafcol, nails, dust, kitten, dublin, hunger, thirst, flag, wind, orange jumper, leggings, mobile phone, lies, birds, playing cards, painkillers, thirst, teapot, teacup, chiming of the doorbell, entonox, smartphone, calagran, laughter, tears, danielle, monopoly, gravity, breeze, gold, relaxing music, ice, worry, fear, tea, artificial christmas tree, mist, kite, books, jean, anxiety, panic, henna, birds, hair dye, england, island, benetton, pressure, rain, deadlines, kane, memories, sanitary towels, eyelids, icy cold, llandudno, bladder, toes, self-doubt, hair, fitton, domestic violence, hailstone, socks, mason, heart, beetle, breast, middleton, samsara, feet, fragility, coffee, lust, jumper, toast, highlighters, fire, kryshia, smoke, bees, umbilical cord, poppies, italy, steroids, procrastination, plastic keyboard, greyhounds, mother, candles, loss, scotland, separation, graffiti, glasses, boxes, spiders, granada, gibraltar, flies, castle, roughness, scrabble, coconut, christina, labia, antihistamines, blood, stevie-jean, dog, emptiness, lights, lucas, catheter lines, beach, butterflies, lamps, spain, cars, darkness, jack, roses, street lights, catholicism, howling, father, shouting, sonicaiaad, banging, drilling, death smell, confusion, marshmallows, lumps, guinea pigs, princess diana, wooden floor boards, mash, leaking breastmilk, leaking roof, plaster, paint, oil filled radiator, rectum, washing, carpet, glass, lees, turkey, paranoia, window, splinter, dry skin, guilt, fat, water, cancer, steroids, fizzy pop, in-laws, needles, sookie, bruises, dog poo, sheep, mirror, tweezers, apollonia, bread, lilies, blackpool, ice-cream, mold, wales, metal spoon, buzzing, moth, pumped breastmilk, breast pump, midwife anne hill, petals, atlantis, boxers, placenta, ferguson, air-conditioning, saucers, islam, wedding, red, white, sausage rolls, stripy sofa, kelly, passport, bonfire, hard-drive, kyle, green tea, fog, vegas, love, mince pies, sun-cream, kisses, mint-tea, stethoscope, commotion, danielle, deveny, dyslexia, imposter, thailand, doughnuts, oliver, metal water cup, caroline, middle east, plastic straw, lake district, leaves, paint fumes, soup, lesson plans, jackie, sandals, bleach, excitement, oman, sand, rucksack, dusk, glitter, pine needles, cat fur, dog hair, depression, death, hugs, hay, snap, straw, corn, cabbage, carrots, disney world, paper cups, mark, brownies, rachel, budapest, soil, snails, sunflowers, snow-white, karen, gall stones, brian, erin, jane, abaya, donna, tim, perfume, eeriness, sarah, alain, muddle, sinead, turkish tea, gilles, karin, kohn, rose, hillevi, camels, janet, sterile gloves, maggie, richard & judy, community center, church, loose change, handkerchief, wine gums, aaron, cheesy wotsits, worms, grit, radio, woodlice, june, pain, niamh, tendons, o'brien, swimming, snow, ocean, train, motorway, bridge, ras-al-kamiah, head lice, vinegar, cigarette smoke, tony, betrayal, trauma, corfu, prawn cocktail crisp, pleasure, wrist, heat packs, tension, pantomimes, sleep, hate, norton, jealousy, overwhelmed, rochdale, instagram, facebook, email, josie, drained, alive, friends, waste, chill, nervous, uneasy, hiking, calahonda, mosquitos, lonely, tiredness, greece, not worthy, social services, proudness, hijab, softness, breathe, kickers, oil, stones, heartburn, sham, misperception, gloom, talcum powder, razor, loft, blazer, articles, desk, palm trees, helicopter, dunes, truck, prosecco, rebecca, ireland, walking-boots, italy, hungry, jo, teeth, rewind, carboots, fresh grass cuttings, curfew, covid-19, lockdown, face masks, latex gloves, kidney's, gall bladder, red tea, malls, sand dunes, shadows, lisa, dancing, broken, scars, bulgaria, lilies, slugs, ants, emma, hematoma, social media, NMC, midwifery registration, alice in wonderland, rhyll, coroners, plastic kitchen, hamster, burning skin, agitation, amniotic fluid, thread, plastic mouth-piece, entonox tubing, CTG monitors, spina-bifida, bowel cancer, coldplay, holts estate, rugby, spring, hope, kevin, feminism, stutters, vimto, dubai, birth, christianity, veins, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, tangle-teezer, friendship, hans zimmer, acne, littleford, lyndsey guest house.....

Dedications

For Holly Jade, Kane Allan, Mason Steven, Stevie Jean, Apollonia Anne and Oliver Mark.

Love you all to infinity and beyond!

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Terminologies

Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education	CACHE
Childhood, Youth and Education Studies	CYES
Disclosure and Barring Service	DBS
Department of Education	DfE
Director of Studies	DoS
Doctorate of Education	EdD
Early Childhood	EC
Early Childhood Education	ECE
Early Childhood Education and Care	ECEC
Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies	ECGPC
Early Childhood Practitioner	ECP
Early Childhood Studies	ECS
Early Childhood Studies Degree Competencies	ECSDC
Early Childhood Studies Degree Network	ECSDN
Early Years Foundation Stage	EYFS
Feminist New Materialism	FNM
Further Education	FE
Higher Education	HE
Higher Education Institutions	HEI
National Health Service	NHS
Posthumanism	PH
Quality Assurance Agency	QAA
Quantum Field Theory	QFT
Senior Lecturer	SL
Undergraduate	UG
United Kingdom	UK

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore how literal notions of touching as well as being touched figuratively can be put to work through thinking-with-touch in education and midwifery contexts. Specifically, it examines the stains of developmental psychology and Early Childhood (EC) trajectories that haunt such contexts. In order to explore how students' bodies flow through their studies of early childhood, it also considers how babies and students become-with the HE classroom, baby-room and worldly materiality; the visible and invisible boundaries that maternal deprivation and attachment theories produce; how developmental theories of psychology are anchored in the policies and practices of EC; and how all that is the discursive, *affects*. This thesis goes on to propose that these explorations have the potential to open bodies towards the precarious landscapes pedagogues navigate with ECS students and the possibility of new ways of being.

Traditionally, cartesian abstractions and humanistic framings of EC – based on fixed ways of seeing and knowing, results in some students, babies, children and families being viewed from deficit perspectives with futures foreclosed. In recent years, however, the theoretical lens of new materialism(s) has opened up new ways of understanding the complexities and intra-activity of EC, and childhood learning and teaching encounters, reconceptualizing the 'human' as a more-than-human ensemble. There has also been a surge in feminism towards the troubling of dominant EC abstractions and norms, as well as resistance to humancentric perspectives in EC research that assume it is able to represent and act knowingly on an inert world, with some theorists pointing to new possibilities which offer different approaches to engage both ethically and politically in an affirmative exploration of EC. This thesis builds on and addresses gaps in the existing literature, by troubling the 'conventional conceptions for how we understand and research' the 'human child in early childhood contexts' (Osgood and Robinson, 2019:122) through a deep immersion in feminist thinking and the neologisms of spacetime-mattering (Barad, 2017), mothersick, Bowlb(arbar)ian and (gh)host(ile)(ly).

A (post)qualitative study was conducted in two physical spaces. The first of these spaces was the baby-room in an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) setting in South Manchester,

and the second was Higher Education (HE) Undergraduate (UG) Early Childhood Studies (ECS) teaching and learning environments, in Greater Manchester (GM), in the North West of England. There were also a number of virtual, past and present, material, ephemeral and ethereal research sites that seem disparate, yet connected – the hospital, my own memories, motherhood, midwifery, HE lecturer and research diaries, bodily sensations, imprints.

Through the thesis, it is argued, powerful psychological developmental theories that reverberate through human and nonhuman bodies haunt student and pedagogue bodily knowledges and histories. Finally, it is suggested that ethically, HE pedagogues have a duty of care to think beyond the immediate teaching and learning classroom and consider how we touch the lives of UG ECS students, in unknown but often imperceptible and sensed ways.

Crossing the threshold: introducing the thesis

When did you begin to put the pieces together? Perhaps when you put the pieces together, you are putting yourself back together. We assemble something (Ahmed, 2017:27).

The unofficial start of this thesis commenced in my late teens and, to be more specific, on the confirmation of pregnancy with my first child. Following St. Pierre's thoughts about her own ethnographic inquiry, this research 'began before it began, and I had always been in the middle of it' (2017a:689). Drawing on mothering and midwifery encounters not only informs my teaching practice but leads my continuing preoccupation with the materiality of pregnancy, childbearing, babyhood and EC, and anchors this thesis firmly within feminist studies.

The work of Sara Ahmed is incredibly important for me in terms of assembling this thesis. Ahmed's sharing of life experiences and narratives resonates with my body; I am drawn to the histories, memories and stories of bodies being out of place, classed, gendered and racialised. Fragments of (her)stories, histories and bodily knowledges as a working-class mother, pedagogue, midwife, ECP, teenage mother in the UK and first-generation HE student runs through the capillaries of this thesis, coagulating and haemorrhaging with student stories and other bodily knowledges. Ahmed's work helps me to 'put the pieces together' (2017:27), and the way she describes the bodily affects of reading Audre Lorde, bell hooks and Gloria Anzaldúa as life-changing, produces similar bodily affects for me as I make my way through this thesis with her work. Thinking with Ahmed and as a way to introduce myself (selves) and the data, the introduction to this thesis commences with a commitment towards 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016:1) before moving on to introducing the (re)assembling of the fibrous, slippery and friable fragments of this thesis through the context of the research, research aim, research 'sites', research data and use of touch.

Staying with the trouble

The term *trouble*, derived from a French verb, unsettles, provokes (Haraway, 2016:1), it exists and consumes, and ‘inhabits everything and nothing’ (Barad, 2012:211). As a way of remaining ethically immersed in this research and committed to problematising the politics of knowledge, mobilising touch in human and more-than-human worlds entails a staying with the trouble. Staying with the trouble demands a bodily immersion into the messiness and stickiness of the middleness, ‘a future that must always be folded back into its past’ (Rajan, 2002:32 cited in Lather, 2016:129), trouble that holds different temporalities. The worlds which hold vertical hierarchies, such as anthropocentrism, dominant normative developmental abstractions, reflection, hindsight, chronological time and progress, as a thing that has had its time and passed is re-imagined. In the middle of the mess, the provoking, and the getting lost, the context and research aim outlined below provide an overarching frame and background to this research.

Context

ECS degrees can be studied in a variety of ways at a range of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Further Education (FE) Colleges with HE provision, across the United Kingdom (UK). Some ECS degrees include a placement (assessed and non-assessed) element within the provision, some have an academic purpose only and some may be employment-based. Combining an ECEC placement element into the UG ECS degree allows some students who are not sure of the EC practice or professional vocation they want to pursue. UG students enrol onto an ECS degree at different ages and stages in their life. Students will have different entry qualifications, life experiences, work experience and needs, however, the passion for working with children and families is what unites them.

Although I have worked within both UK HE and FE educational institutions, the experience that moves this thesis along draws on my time as an UG ECS Senior Lecturer (SL) within the context of a UK HEI. As an SL I was responsible for the design, coordination and facilitation of an array of UG ECS units at level 4, level 5 and level 6. This degree includes an ECEC non-assessed

placement and part of my role is to supervise students undertaking these placements. Guided by the ECS subject benchmark statements (Quality Assurance Agency for HE [QAA], 2019), all curricula of UK-based ECS degree programmes have to incorporate knowledge and understanding of child development and the implications for practice. In relation to professional practice, Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies (Early Childhood Studies Degree Network [ECSDN], 2020) also require students to have knowledge, be able to justify, and apply understandings of neurological and brain development, cognition, communication and language, physical, personal, emotional and social development.

In addition to this HE UG ECS teaching within the UK context, this thesis draws on research fieldwork within the ECEC setting, ECS teaching – outside of the UK context (I am currently lecturing for the United Arab Emirates University), my earlier midwifery practice, my work as an Early Childhood Practitioner (ECP) in ECEC settings and my experience as a mother to explore the multiplicities, complexities and fragilities held precariously within aspects of knowledge and understanding of child development trajectories and the implications for pedagogy.

Research aim

This transversal inquiry aims to reconceptualise the intricacies and relational activities, assemblages and commotions, micro-politics and intimate events of human, nonhuman and more-than-human touching, towards re-thinking my own practice experiences in the HE UG ECS classroom and ECEC practices. To do this, this research explores the intra-active relations of bodies, places and spaces of touch and its associated practices in ECS, with students who will go on to work with babies from birth to eighteen months of age. Engaging with FNM, PH and (post)qualitative research methodologies, the research attends to the affective force of what is not usually regarded as valid knowledge (bodily knowing, memory, senses) as well as more conventional wisdom and knowledge lodged in the cognitive realm when working in the HE classroom and ECEC setting. FNM allows for an appreciation of the intensities and complexities of touch as affective forces, from fetal and neonatal encounters of touch to the

sedentary culture of defensive practice, fear and safeguarding that attach themselves to touch in EC.

This research worked with four key research questions:

- What can Feminist New Materialist-oriented research into ECEC contribute to understandings of touch?
- How do the interstices of health and education practices haunt and produce particular understandings of touch in EC and ECS?
- How can a transversal methodology support the re-searching of touch in new ways?
- What are the professional challenges associated with future more-than-human touching practices when working with students and babies' birth to 18 months of age?

There is a wealth of literature documenting the terrors associated with traumatic consequences of unwanted and abusive or violent touch. However, few studies explore the spontaneity and unpredictable notions of touch that the formalities of practice-policy cannot account for, with none-to-date grappling with the differential and complex touching practices advocated and constrained in ECS. Towards a feminist new materialist understanding of EC and ECS encounters, and similar to the work of Todd (2020:online), accentuating 'the vitality of touch and the aesthetics of educational encounters', I work with the subtleties and dynamics of touch in the literal and figurative sense – to be touched, touched upon, in-touch and out-of-touch. In light of the global pandemic and the effects on togetherness, intimacy, connection and closeness, this research is timely.

At this point of writing, the pandemic is ongoing, as such I cannot write and produce this thesis about touch without acknowledging the possible changes to the usual health and education practices that involve intimacy and touch in the literal sense since the coronavirus and 'lockdown', and the implications of these changes for pregnant women and babies birthed after March 2020. For example, the changes to midwifery care services and provision (see NHS, 2021:online) in relation to how and where women receive antenatal, intrapartum and

postnatal care (Edwards, 2021:online) and the changes in ECEC practice to include, social distancing guidelines and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) (see DFE, 2021:online). In addition, reports and literature, albeit very typical and developmentally positioned, highlight the negative outcomes for a child's language, cognitive and emotional development associated with family isolation, parental stress and mental health problems (Bhopal and Fearon, 2021:online; Reed and Parish, 2021), as a direct result of disrupted professional support systems (community midwifery services, health visiting, social care, family support services, early care and childcare) and social networks, economic changes and financial pressures.

This research feeds into the 'post-pandemic' worlds of EC and ECS where things like bodily fluids, social relations, intimacy and touch may be scrutinised even more and in new and different ways. With a commitment towards staying with the trouble and firmly anchored in the middle of this research, I try to find a way through by addressing the failure of human-centred policies, developmental discourse, routines and practices to break out of binary understandings of touch (nature vs culture) that render practices either good (innocent, nurturing, healthy, romanticised) or bad (harmful, violating, demonised). Such binaries prevail within EC; for example, the development of a child is measured in relation to either nature or culture; genetics, biology, hormones or education, upbringing and social relations, and leaves practices of touch at best impoverished, and at worst, prohibited. In developing a sense of touch (provocative, violent, slow, ghostly, messy, controversial) that examines and innovatively draws together midwifery and education practices, I attempt to resist anthropocentric, corporeal notions of touch to re-imagine and re-develop new re-conceptualisations of more-than-human touching practices in ECS.

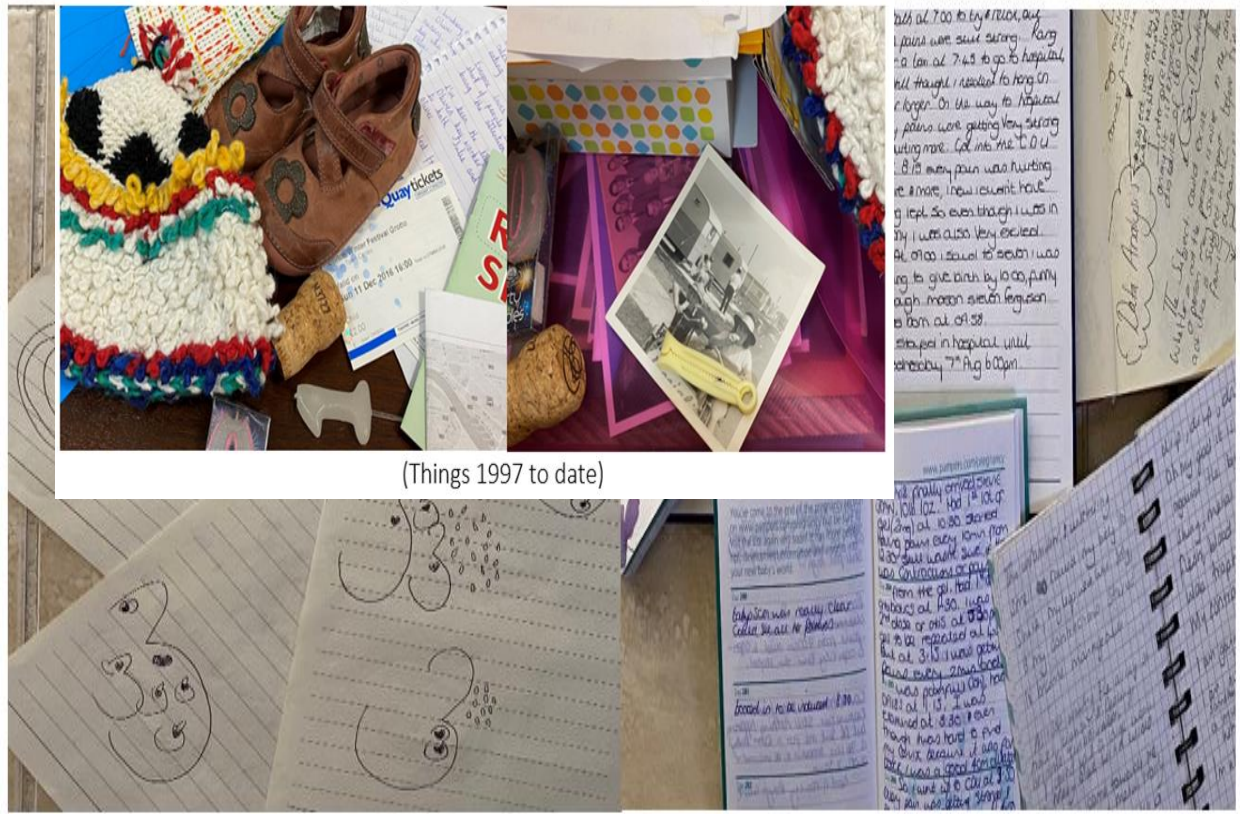
[The umbilical cord](#)

Pulling and tugging at the theoretical sinews, as a way of producing EC re-imaginings, takes me to the umbilical cord and the third stage of labour (delivery of placenta and control of bleeding). The materiality of the umbilical cord as a metaphor for what Osgood (2019:86)

describes as thinkingfeelingdoing research, helps me to pull through the complexities of theory and student, researcher and baby stories. Similar to the pulling through of the fleshy, rubbery, cold, friable, fragile, pulsating and fibrous umbilical cord, in this writing, researcher, babies and student stories are touched-upon through the holding, wrapping, pulling, clamping and cutting encounters. The slipperiness of the umbilical cord in my hand, as the urgency to deliver the placenta is heightened, augments the work of this thesis, the pulling through of the arteries and veins of the work, the fragility, possibility of breakage, the retaining of fibrous theory which can haemorrhage within ECS, and likened to the clamping and cutting of the umbilical cord - nothing is ever detached and separated; thinking lives on, birthed, cascades, evolves, the (re)imaginings of EC and ECS in unexpected and often broken and fragmented ways. After all, the past, memories, histories and (her)stories cannot be understood as one solo independent complete piece but should rather be thought of as severed encounters shared and assembled to help understand the present and future encounters (Korsgaard, 2018:180).

Thinking further about severing in relation to the umbilical cord and in particular the cutting of the cord at birth, although something may be cut, nothing is ever fully detached nor separated. Although the cord connecting the mother-baby body is physically severed, their physiological, biological, neurological, nutritional, emotional, affective relationship can remain attached in many different, sometimes difficult and painful ways. As such, this research draws on multiple 'real' and virtual, past and present, material, ephemeral and ethereal research sites that seem disparate, yet connected – the hospital, the HE UG ECS classroom, the baby-room in an ECEC setting, my own memories, motherhood, midwifery, HE lecturer and research diaries, bodily sensations, imprints. These multiple sites, each and together, contribute to the process of connecting, assembling, constantly folding into and out of one another in peristaltic kind of movements. However, as an intentional site of empirical research, the sensorial events of the baby-room move this research along through the making and unmaking of bodies, a different dynamic in relation to the unfolding thesis, allowing the stretching and pulling of ideas in terms of real-world(ly) research in EC.

The range of artefacts and materials that I share as data relate to each other not only in the moment but across and through this thesis. In the following section, the sensuous moments of touching, smelling and tasting the data from the research sites take hold of me and sweep me up in these assemblages. I am assembling and folding *with* the research data.



(Things 1997 to date)

(Mothering diaries and journals, 1997 to date)

Figure 3 things and figure 4 life diaries

The above photographs of things are presented here to demonstrate how over time, as a mother, wife, daughter and granddaughter, I hoard stuff – inscribed as keepsakes; umbilical cord clamps, hospital name bands, birthing notes, lockets of hair, ticket stubs, pressed flowers, feathers, flight tickets, shells, rocks, photographs. The storage boxes hold a life-time of objects and things including mothering journal entries in the form of writing, scribbles and poems. Although the process of narrating and writing feels different to the gathering of objects and

things, together (journals and things), the storage boxes themselves act as a way of materialising events as they pass through time, holding on to significant things, storing memories, and offering a place to re-remember, and something I refer to as my mothering diaries. Similar to preserving stories inside paper diaries, the objects and things are preserved and stored within the cardboard box, only to resurface through the removal of the box lid or the opening of the outer material of the diary. The physicality of touching the objects within the boxes (mothering diaries) pull me close; I can smell and taste the old, the new, the fleshy and tired things I have hoarded over the years. The mothering diaries are not saved and added to necessarily for nostalgic reasons, but in the way of recording the intensities, twist-turns, feelings, emotions, instincts and jolts, as a means of mobilising the sensing past 'to transform the present' (Marks, 2000:201). Over the decades of gathering objects and narrating, the mothering journal entries, in particular, have progressively extended and evolved further into midwifery and teaching inscriptions. As such, they collectively act as a place to express grief, fear, loss, guilt, violence, pain, joy, excitement and love.

The sharing of empirical materials, including journal extracts, objects, things and photographs throughout this thesis is auratic; the textures, smells, taste, noise, material presences, tensions, intimacies, movements are, as Smylie (2020:online) describes, 'a materialisation of the flows of data' made present here through their connections with one another over my lifetime. Physically and metaphorically the umbilical cord is a lifeline, pumping fluids and things through the entire thesis, connecting my body to these different flows of data across 'research sites', connecting theory-with-stories to feed and nourish the thinking, affected by an agentic and enigmatic mixture of oxygen, red and white blood cells, toxins, pollution, temperatures, radiation and atmospheres.

Aura is a 'strange' connective 'tissue of space and time' (Benjamin, 2008:23): as one breathes aura and absorbs it into one's body, body and environment invisibly and intangibly entwine (Takamura, 2011:143). As self and world diffuse, sight and touch intersect; a perceptibility arises that corresponds to an other's attentiveness (cited in Böhme, 2013:2).

Drawing on this particular combination of Benjamin, Takamura and Böhme's words and ideas, the aura permeating the mothering, midwifery and teaching diaries, for example, fling me, and, to some degree, define key moments within the entangled atmospheric space and times, shifting from the visual and optic, to a metaphorical experience of touch.

The sharing and articulation of the different kinds of data is challenging. Staying in the middle of things and trying to extend beyond the visual borders of the text and photographic images towards articulating the images and words as 'auratic objects' (Dorrian in Böhme, 2013:xii), sometimes as jolts and sometimes to augment, becomes somewhat disappointing and insufficient, to say the least. A disappointing troubling of troubled things. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987:23) say, being in the middle of things, the *middleness*, is not always a comfortable place to be; it can feel dense and messy, as opposed to 'looking down....from above or up....from below, or from left to right or right to left'. Thinking with the umbilical cord and the pumping of the same but different fluids through the veins of bodies, the use of the same teaching journal entry (2017) is continuously engaged with throughout the thesis towards nourishing ideas in different ways. Methodologically I think and play with the data threads. The data sometimes appears as a juxtaposition of text and images and assembled written data fragments are often presented in different colours; data and literature text touch each other side-by-side. Sometimes I indent and integrate snippets of fuller data into the prose and the data threads may at times occupy much bigger spaces on the page.

I struggle with the use of language, trying to find ways to express the bodily affects of reaching out, touching and feeling the empirical materials. For example, the plastic yellow cord clamp and the remnants of the dried-up fleshy tissue and blood of the umbilical cord and what this means for me as a mother, midwife, pedagogue and researcher. With the cord clamp between my fingers, the objects and things prod at my body profoundly. My mouth dries up, my heart beats faster, oxytocin floods my veins, my breasts ache, I taste entonox, fear, pain and joy. The left-over bits of maternal-fetal tissue trapped between the plastic teeth of the bright yellow

cord clamp moves me; the hard-plastic material of the clamp becomes swallowed up by these tiny fragments of dried-up tissue. It remains dominant in the photographic image of figure 3.

Resisting an anthropocentric assembling of research data, my body leans in on Ahmed's quote in the opening of the chapter. Moving through the chapters of this thesis, I draw on data threads of the baby-room and HE UG ECS classroom and pour over some of the hoards shared in the above photographs (in particular the cord clamp), more slowly and intensely to stir-up how the research and I are in-touch with, touched by and affectively assembled through the prisms of different threads of data.

When considering the complexities of being touched by EC theories and practices, such as Bowlby's attachment theory and associated processes of 'normal development' in the HE UG ECS classroom, my use of touch is both literal and figurative – the idea of being touched and touching an Other and thinking-with-touch. Mobilising 'touch' allows for thinking outside of the discursive frames of EC, towards an unsettling of what is known or taken-for-granted in ECS. Chapter two of this thesis delves further into the rationale and context for thinking-working-with-touch and foregrounds the idea of thinking-with-touch, as it grapples with stories of complexity around touch(ing) often faced by ECS students and ECP's when joining the EC workforce, and more specifically working with babies' birth to eighteen months of age.

[In brief.....](#)

Ahead of chapter one, where I let myself be touched by the histories and memories of the doctoral assemblages, *introducing the thesis* has opened up a space to share the research aims, research sites, research data, context of the research, and use of touch with the reader. Returning and re-thinking with Ahmed's (2017:27) opening quote, through putting the bits and pieces of this thesis together, I am putting myself back together, and in doing so, something is assembled. Staying with the materiality of the umbilical cord as a connective tissue, a conduit for data flows and threads, in the following chapter I share some of these assembling's as the FNM theories move me as part of their assemblages into different thinkingdoingfeeling spaces.

Chapter one: assembling

The challenges posed to how we today construe marginality when outsiders are also on the inside of organisations, invites us to consider the messy lines of ontological complicity. Complicity is not used here as a moral baton but rather as an analytical tool which does not shy away from taking a close up view of how marginality and privileges so often co-exist in an entangled web of relations, bodies and space (Puwar, no date:online).

As a way of sharing the conception of this research through to the delivery of this thesis, chapter one begins with the idea of bodies-out-of-place, matter-out-of-place and thinking-out-of-place before moving on to the idea of becoming as I think-with-touch as imminent life finds new ways of thinking-feeling-being in the world of ECS and ECEC. The idea of bodies-out-of-place, matter-out-of-place, thinking-out-of-place and ultimately invading space resonates with me; becoming-(teenage)mother, FNM researcher, as well as the way the students navigate emotive EC theories. As I move from bodies-in-the-middle and the idea of space-invaders to becoming, ideas assemble me, moving from pre-conditioned ways of thinking of/about myself and others to what Deleuze (1995:171) describes as an immanent space of becoming. Open to new relations and trajectories 'becoming', is not a part of history or feelings of being a space-invader; 'History amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become,' that is, to create something new' (Deleuze, 1995:171).

Bodies-in-the-middle

As a predominately female-orientated disciplinary area, ECS attracts students with diverse motherhood, babyhood and childhood experiences. It is not unusual for ECS cohorts to have students and pedagogues who identify as mothers, care leavers, single parents, teenage parents, adopted, fostered, carer for a family member. Bodies in the middle of things, things creeping in, being-in-touch with memories and histories, endings that are not over; hauntings (Gordon, 2008:200). The hauntings of the entangled knowledges students and pedagogues hold in their bodies brings different bodily knowledges into the HE UG ECS classroom,

intensified and brought-to-attention through being touched by EC theory and the possible wranglings with feelings of being a space-invader when exploring emotive concepts, for example in relation to Bowlby's theory of attachment.

Sociological and feminist researchers describe Bowlby's attachment theory as politically conservative, a diagnostic tool (and attendant intervention programmes) to pathologize mothers, police caregiving and families (Duschinsky et al., 2015:173). As an ECS pedagogue for over a decade, I can recall countless moments where the classroom walls start closing in, and the air is thick, making it hard to breathe. However, the bodily affects of one specific teaching encounter circulates my body, haunts my thinking, skews my vision (Figure 8). It places my body in the middle of this research through (re)turning over and over again to the encounter as a way of staying with the trouble. Emotive concepts such as Bowlby's attachment theory are tricky and troublesome to linger over, manoeuvre and navigate within the HE UG ECS pedagogical spaces. Over a decade of midwifery and teaching practice, the theoretical regurgitations and unravelling of attachment theory, as a dry scientific discourse that precisely parses emotion out, can open-up uncomfortable perplexed spaces for pedagogues and students, a haunting and vulnerable space. As an ECS pedagogue, some of these fragments ricochet through the unravelling of emotive concepts such as attachment theory, and in doing so get lodged in the back of my throat; sharp and spiky fragments I am unable to swallow, an irritation I am unable to cough up and spit out, (sk)etched onto the skin; I reside in them and they reside in me. Emotive concepts, that demand an attentive and care(full) pedagogy.

An ethical response-ability, responsive towards the possible intra-ruptions ECS curriculum may have on the (in)human and more-than-human bodies.

She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, hitting the table. The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson and asked me if she would 'be forever broken' (Figure 8 teaching journal entry, 2017).

As a personal tutor to the majority of the students in this particular ECS cohort, aware of one particular student's complex histories, to facilitate a discussion around Bowlby's attachment theory, maternal separation and deprivation felt somewhat violent, contributing further to bodily trauma and violation. Within minutes of discussing Bowlby's theorising of *secure* attachment and the relationship to emotional and social development, the atmosphere in the room changed ever so subtly, but at the same time dramatically, tension and anxiety filled the air, the energy temperamental and volatile, nervous whispers and sighs travelled through the classroom in waves: an intensity, a vulnerability, movements and moments of (re)thinking babyhood, childhood and mothering encounters.

Fetal enactments include the iterative intra-activity between the pregnant woman and the object that gets called the fetus. This formulation exposes the recently intensified discourse of hypermaternal responsibility as a displacement of the real questions of accountability onto the pregnant woman, who is actively constructed as a mother bearing full responsibility, and the full burden of accountability, for fetal well-being, including biological and social factors that may be beyond her control (Barad, 2007:218).

(Re)turning to my pregnant eighteen-year-old body and thinking with Barad (2007) I certainly felt that the body of me as a child, bearing a child, a teenage statistic was a burden and out-of-place. The bodily sensations of shame and fear evoked by child protection initiatives and discourses of vulnerability and inequality policies in the UK reduce and frame teenage pregnancy as a *risk*. Teenage pregnancy reports frame parents as failing, precarious, irresponsible and shameful. For example, the Children's Commissioner (2017) report on vulnerable children in England describe 'teenage mothers aged 19 and under living with their children in 2016' as 'children and young people whose actions put their lives at risk' (cited in Morriss, 2018:820). As such, teenage parents continue to be 'depicted as individually responsible, through their actions, for their own precarity and vulnerability' (*Ibid*), which perpetuates the framing and stigmatising of teenage pregnant bodies and teenage parenting. Precarious bodies harbouring unwanted bodies and shameful bodies.

The teaching moment of the student asking me if she would '*be forever broken*' moves me into an uneasy time and space, painful and shameful wounds oozing with frustration and anger, a sense of bodily brokenness connect and contort, her words held an emptiness that filled our bodies; I began to cry. We held each other with our eyes—no exchange of words. The affective flurries of such teaching moments not only swallow me up but cut deep. It is these bodily sensuous cuts, puncturing of the skin and exposing wounds, that allows a way in, student-pedagogue and student-student; unfamiliar, vulnerable, raw and exposed bodies occupying ambiguous, angry and frightening political spaces, 'where bodies and worlds meet and leak into each other' (Ahmed, 2014:69). A (re)remembering of the histories, the histories as stories 'which had many beginnings and no endings' (Arendt, 1994:320 cited in Boycott-Garnett et al., 2020:758), and 'the histories that bring us to feminism [and] leave us fragile' (Ahmed, 2017:22).

In relation to commencing the doctorate in education, academic politics and processes returned my body to feeling vulnerable, not-good-enough, inadequate, fragile feelings of being out-of-place and invading space; a space-invader traversing spaces not intended for me. Reflecting on the work of Puwar (2004), Ahmed (2017:9) writes:

How some become "space invaders" when they enter spaces that are not intended for them. We can be space invaders in the academy; we can be space invaders in theory too; just by referring to the wrong texts or by asking the wrong questions.

The initial phase of thinking through what this research might look-feel like brought excitement and curiosity. Returning to the UK, having presented a collaborative paper (*space for compassionate space*) at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Annual International Conference August 2016, I was bursting with anticipation to talk babies and things after spending the weekend with like-minded people and a brief introduction to PH and Hillevi Lenz Taguchi's work. I had become curious, filled with wonder, re-charged and eager to share research ideas with my initial supervisory team.

Exploration of touch within early childhood (0-2 years).

Following attendance at The EECERA conference, the decision to explore an area within early childhood was made to bring together both a health and social sciences perspective and exploration through having a dual professional role (Midwife and CYES lecturer). A brief insight into Lenz Taguchi's work and a posthumanist methodological approach provided a platform to explore the proposed research. Exploring the notion of touch and attachment fits into the broader context of my personal and professional interests (Supervisory meeting record (RD9) 07.09.16)

The curiosity of PH opened up new spaces for me in my pedagogical practice, exciting possibilities consisting of different and alternative ways of *knowing* EC. Following the EECERA conference and the first supervisory meeting's action points, albeit naive, I began to construct a research proposal (RD1).

Urgency to complete RD 1 form.

Complete further reading to support research design and literature base.

Methodology - Careful consideration needed to identify an appropriate methodological framework.

Methods of collating data - The need to consider collating the empirical evidence within a qualitative framework.

To carefully consider collecting empirical data and the approach to gaining this knowledge/data (RD9, 07.09.16.).

Amid creating a research *problem*, a timeline of research, research questions, data collection methods, and literature review, I felt stuck and awkward. To appease my supervisors (ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically), I grappled with *making it fit*. Following Lather and St. Pierre (2013:630):

Categories....invented to organise and structure humanist qualitative methodology (e.g. the chapter headings in introductory textbooks) – research problem, research questions, literature review, methods of data collection, data analysis, and representation – assume depth in which the human is superior to and separate from the material – Self/Other, subject/object, and human/nonhuman.

I am not a trained researcher; I am a mother-student-daughter-pedagogue-wife-midwife-ECP... so the *stuckness* was not that I found it '....difficult to think outside...training, which, despite... best efforts, normalises our thinking and doing' (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013:630). It was more than this. One of the things Sara Ahmed talks about in *Living a Feminist Life* is how

difficult it is to articulate what is difficult (2017:163). I felt messy and un-pinned, and I began to feel incredibly de-motivated in these unfamiliar academic spaces, almost anticipating my own failure, so to speak.

A sentence about the duplicity of method is pursuing a rigorous abstract promising to demonstrate the fabrications of powerful claims to knowledge, promising to give *evidence* of the factual's always encroaching other and its claims on truthful knowledge (Gordon, 2008:40).

Following Gordon's discussion on academic unruliness, the second phase of the doctoral process left me feeling disconnected and failing. How do I, the re-searcher, write a research proposal that proposes what I the re-searcher is going to do (methods) before I do it, when I do not know, an 'assumption is that there is actually a beginning, an origin, that she is not always already becoming in entanglement' (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013:630).

In the midst of creating an RD1, I was thinking through aspects of ontology and epistemology. The biological, physiological, sociobiological, genetics, and psychobiological of midwifery training, alongside the philosophical, sociological and psychological approaches of teacher training and post-graduate studies provided the tools to *do* quantitative and conventional qualitative interpretive research, but no space to *think* differently about the histories of social science and science. Feeling like a space-invader came from the bodily affects of moving away from 'an epistemology of human consciousness to a relational ontology' (Lather, 2016:125) and attempting to articulate the onto-epistemological (knowing in being) becomings within the humanist framework and supervision.

In a continuous loop of reconsidering and re-evaluating the area of interest, so that it aligned with the supervisory discussions and feedback, research methods and processes, my sense of inadequacy was augmented, something my female body knew all too well. As Ahmed (2017:163) writes metaphorically, walls can be used 'as a way of describing that which we come up against, those hardenings of history into physical barriers in the present'. I

understood the need for academic rigour, such as ethical approval and the need to produce a well-thought-of proposal; however, the need to defend the importance of such feminist research in shaping the future possibilities of ECS was relentless, and as Ahmed (*Ibid*) writes, it is when 'we come up against walls, easily things shatter'. Skin pores excreting sweat, heart racing, and waves of nausea often cascaded through my body, as I anticipated the supervisory meetings and research proposal (RD1) feedback. As Ahmed (2014:14) discusses, such emotions are the affects of bodily change. 'The immediacy of the 'is' suggests that emotions do not involve processes of thought, attribution or evaluation: we feel fear *because* our heart is racing, our skin is sweating'. Such supervisory encounters (re)reminded me of the bodily affects, ethics and affective intensities of teaching encounters with ECS students; the body language, energetic forces, the furniture, intuition, how I hold and fidget with my pen, tone of voice, bodily odour, breath, and the necessity to care, demonstrate patience and generosity, have confidence, and encourage experimentation within academic work. Experimentation towards making a difference, not towards determining the truth, where creativity and risk can be fostered (Haraway, 1997).

One of the supervisory meetings that took place just before the winter holidays in 2016 felt immensely violent. The white and grey walls of the meeting room were closing in, the white table separating the human bodies in the room felt enormous, the glances, the coldness of the air, the hard, uncomfortable plastic chairs covered with itchy grey fabric, the mixture of perfume, bodily odour, tobacco, aftershave and coffee. As the sunbeams flooded the room through the enormous panes of glass, my body flooded with emotion as I attempted to navigate the suffocation of academia. I was called out – outing of my vulnerable body. For my thesis to be more focused I was asked to choose between being a midwife and EdD student or a senior lecturer and EdD student. Being asked to cut parts of my life off from the present and sever any connections my body holds to the research. The language was derogative, disparaging, sexist and paralysing; the stresses of such encounter came from a place of self-despair, not the supervisors' despair. At a loss with myself and confused with how my body could move forward with the research proposal within the theoretical and methodological

frame my initial director of studies (DoS) wanted. Twenty minutes into the meeting, I had distorted vision. I was peering through a kaleidoscope, unable to make out the shapes in the room. For the remainder of the supervisory meeting, the supervisors' faces and research papers were fragmented, broken up and blurred. Such violence and violations move bodies into awkward and agitated spaces, and as Ahmed (2017:24) points out, 'you learn to inhabit your body differently through this expectation' of violence and violation. It turned out (physiologically) that I developed a visual ocular migraine due to a rise in blood pressure, something I had never experienced in my life before. These bodily expectations produced bodily changes; I adopted a timid, nervous, anxious, unconfident, bewildered and cautious body, unable to stand up for myself.

If willfulness is an electric current, it can pass through each of us, switching us on. Willfulness can be a spark. We can be lit up (Ahmed, 2017:82).

As I move through bodies-in-the-middle I pick up Ahmed's willful spirit as a counterweight to my navigations of the rugged terrain of academic politics that brought despair and frustration. For Ahmed (2017) 'the word willfulness surrounds us when we become feminists' (71), and '[to] claim to be willful or to describe oneself or one's stance as willful is to claim the very word that has historically been used as a technique for dismissal' (*Ibid*:77). Despite coming up against these cold, bland, concrete walls head-on, and as Ahmed discusses the shattering of my body, my female body would not give up; it is tenacious, full of fight and wilful.

The academic caution of the initial supervisory team, the academic processes and legalities of formulating a research proposal around the notion of touching babies, babies touching me, could not be conceptualised beyond its literal sense and, as a result, was deemed too risky and precarious and brought the research to a halt. As a midwife, I know too well the highly perplexed and challenging areas of working with babies and bodies viewed as vulnerable and at risk. For example, midwives are involved in cases where child neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse, reports and investigations are taking place. Despite being well versed in *risky* practice, an inventive and creative methodology through performative entanglements (Koro-

Ljungberg 2016; MacLure 2011), to accept the unknown, as opposed to knowing what will come, as 'the world kicks back' (Barad, 1999:2), felt impossible to articulate, naive and academically unpopular. As Minh-ha (2019:online) articulates so eloquently:

The female body that is seen in public constitutes a danger in its very nature, for a woman moving around freely, making herself vulnerable to abuse by exposing herself.... to survive, they must learn, in one way or another, the art of veiling themselves, whether literally or figuratively.

Ultimately, I did not possess the 'orientation tools to navigate 'my way' around a new landscape' (Ahmed, 2017:9). The efforts of trying to convince the initial supervisory team of how mobilising 'touch' allows for thinking outside of the discursive frames of EC and how the visceral experience of being with the babies allows for further insight into theory-practice remained unrelenting. However, I persisted. Through my passion and love for EC, I persevered, 'willful' and hopeful the research could be undertaken the way I intended it to be.

Unfortunately, almost a year went by, and the research remained halted. The dynamics of the supervisory team brought uncertainty and vulnerability. Sensing a break-up was inevitable and something I had to face head-on to move the thinking and research on. Accepting I had to face these feelings brought a fear of offending and being cast aside, but something I needed to address in order to survive the Doctorate of Education (EdD). As Ahmed (*Ibid*:260) writes, '[e]ven if speaking out is not possible, it is necessary'. 'For isn't it the method, the path to knowledge, that has always also led us away, led us astray, by fraud and artifice' (Irigaray, 1985:150, cited in Gordon, 2008:39). I was not prepared to compromise what is important to me and *do* the research in the way the supervisory team felt I should *do it*. Following the histories of Luce Irigaray's doctoral thesis defence, Gordon (2008:41) infers, '[p]erhaps the key methodological question is not what method have you adopted for this research, but what paths have been disavowed, left behind, covered over and remain unseen? In what fields does fieldwork occur?'.

The supervisory team and I arrived at these meetings with different ideas, theoretical thoughts, expectations, and no matter how much we all tried, it was not working. With a heavy heart, it was evident the proposed research, and I, would not emerge under the appointed supervisory team.

I requested a change.

With each step forward, the world comes to us.
With each step forward, a flower blooms under our feet.
With each step forward, one receives wide open and deep into oneself,
the gifts of the universe. *Learning how to walk anew.*

(Minh-ha, 2019:online)

Becomings

Becomings are the sustainable shifts or changes undergone by nomadic subjects in their active resistance against being subsumed in the commodification of their own diversity. Becomings are un-programmed as mutations, disruptions, and points of resistance. Their time frame is always the future anterior, that is to say, a linkage across present and past in the act of constructing and actualising possible futures (Braidotti, 2006:online).

This thesis intends to move towards 'a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it' (Barad, 2007:88), the touching affects of EC and the teaching of normative constructs; constructs that straighten up students, families and babies bodies, a body that is inline, aligned, parallel, on a level with other bodies. Thinking transversally, this thesis does not locate space and time vertically; there are no straight lines, just lines of flow and a queering – bent, crooked, oblique (Ahmed, 2006:161).

She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, hitting the table. The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson and asked me if she would 'be forever broken' (Figure 8 teaching journal entry, 2017).

While entangled in my past professional iterations and intermittently as I produce this thesis and this thesis (re)produces/assembles me, I am inspired by how 'the past and the future are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through one another' (Barad, 2007:383); bodily implications of teaching psychological developmental abstractions of attachment, maternal

separation and deprivation; student stories of touch; student stories of no-touch policies during placement; and ultimately as an ECS pedagogue how attuned I am in supporting UG ECS students. As such, the philosophical notion of becoming takes hold of the writing to allow for the collective stories to be shared.

Following Braidotti (2006:online) and thinking with Deleuze and Guattari (1987:273), *becoming* is 'to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity', moving me from space-invading to how 'all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations' (Bennett, 2010:13) towards kin-making becomings; becoming-researcher, and becoming-feminist, a 'state of being in-between' (Jackson, 2010:581), the fluidity, intra-actions and transformations, all becoming different in itself, becoming different from the norm (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), with the power to transform societal and material realities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994:109, cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2016:220).

During the first meeting with my newly appointed Director of Studies (DoS), we talked about pregnant bodies, fetuses, babies, early childhood, childbirth, breastfeeding, skin, flesh, placenta, inside-outside and much more, as opposed to talking about methodology, methods, time-line, ethical applications and theory. In an attempt to articulate some of the feelings and how I envisioned the research to unfold, I shared snippets of the following journal entry as an example of *data* I wanted to work with:

The cries and screams are loud and invasive, almost torturing sounds with intense groans and moans intensity of the bodies coming together, the loss of bodily fluids, wrapping of and constant touch, the bright lights and bright noises, the clattering of the heavy old silver trollies, delivering instruments, the loud metal bins opening and shutting with the occasional smell of poo wafting around the delivery room...' I've pooped haven't I... I can smell it I've pooped, the constant scooping up and removal of waste!, the nakedness and vulnerability of the woman, flesh, skin, bones, blood, urine, faeces, vomit, hair, sweat, spit, and water coming together to form this beautiful process we call childbirth (Midwifery diary entry, May 2008).

As a result of sharing my midwifery diary entry, the suffocation I experienced of the dominant anthropocentric ways of 'doing' research began to lift. Instead, I found myself lingering and wandering in the entangled moments of education-midwifery-mothering-ECEC. In relation to (re)thinking how babies are viewed in the material world, I was/am not seeking the meaning of the researcher, student and babies becomings, but to work with the continually reconfiguring materialdiscursive entanglements of touch, to open up the possibilities of new ways of (re)conceptualising how babies and students emerge in a relational field. As such, it felt necessary for the site of research to take place in an ECEC setting to enable a space to think-feel-sense babies material worlds and present new ways of thinking *with* things as an alternative to thinking *in* things (Taylor and Giugni, 2012). I could only experience being-with the babies, the noise, the intensities, the temperatures, the atmospheres, the smells, and the unknown of the affective entanglements, by committing to being present within an ECEC setting. Researching with babies involves all of one's senses; touching, hearing, seeing, smelling and tasting, and offers emerging and new ways of *knowing* EC theory-practice and a reconceptualising of what 'matters' within ECEC spaces (Merewether, 2019:115). As Tim Ingold (2007:64) notes, '[r]eanimating the western tradition of thought means recovering the sense of astonishment banished from official science'.

theoretical vein(s)

As I move to the impetus behind FNM it is important to acknowledge from the outset of this thesis Sara Ahmed's relationship with this theory; more specifically her critique of the 'new' in FNM. Ahmed, along with more recent scholars of indigeneity (Diener, 2020:46), proposes that agency, the vibrancy of matter and citational politics existed long before the 'new' in FNM began to consider them. This thesis does not pretend to exhaustively review the critique of the 'new' but accepts that staying with the openings produced by theoretical jarring's or 'trouble' can be generative. As previously highlighted, the work of Ahmed is incredibly important for me and this thesis, and as such I wanted to foreground the possibility of her

work not sitting as comfortably with other contemporary FNM writers-thinkers such as Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti and Jane Bennett.

Many feminisms means many movements. A collective is what does not stand still but creates and is created by movement...each movement making another possible, another ripple, outward, reaching...the dynamism of making connections (Ahmed, 2017:3).

As Ahmed (2017) infers, 'becoming feminist puts us in touch with a world through alienation of the world' (44) an arousal towards the world; intense, an impression, a sensation, 'an impression that is not clear or distinct' (22) a sensation felt by the skin. Feminist thinking allows for a troubling of dominant EC abstractions and norms, a probing of 'what it is we are against, what it is we are for, knowing full well that this we is not a foundation but what we are working toward' (Smith cited in Bolt et al., 2007:2). When reading Ahmed's work, and in her words, 'I began to appreciate that theory can do more the closer it gets to the skin' (Ahmed, 2017:10); bodies entangled in classism, heterosexism, ageism, racism, sexism, ableism. As such, I moved carefully and slowly through this research, drawn to exploring the feeling of being touched in the absence of touch and how the lack of touch affects; a reminder of the powers and hauntings of touch - ambivalent, precarious and susceptible to human control.

The face-to-face and online supervisory meetings act(ed) as a safe space, a diffractive space in relation to the commitment and desire for thinkingfeelingdoing in EC. As I embarked on a discovery of all thing's material, the curiosity towards FNM cultivated my scholarly thinking, reading, sensing, feeling and being-with. Such curiosities and cultivations evolved the teaching and discussions undertaken with students and practitioners in relation to babies-theory-practice-care-touch-ethics and profoundly changed my understandings of education. For example, in response to being 'open to the world's aliveness' (Barad, 2012:207), I began to consider touch more of a movement (free, unbound, untamed, wild) than an act (rehearsed, routine, habit), encouraged and birthed, between 'materials of all sorts, energised by cosmic forces....meld[ing] with one another in the generation of things' (Ingold, 2010:92). The new supervisory team resuscitated my lifeless body, encouraged me to mingle, fold and create, and

in doing so, I 'stay even closer to the everyday than I had before. [This thesis is personal]. The personal is theoretical' (Ahmed, 2017:10).

The mingling, lingering and entangling of bodies within this thesis map the vibrancy of matter in relation to *all* entities, forces, intensities and things, 'some human, some not' (Bennett, 2010:xiv). FNM theories sweep me up as part of their assemblages into different thinking/doing/feeling spaces. When considering the complexities of being touched by EC theories and practices, such as Bowlby's attachment theory or notions of normal in the HE UG ECS classroom, I turn to Bennett's description of assemblages to re-orient the focus away from the individual to consider what Saldanha (2010:2419) expresses as the 'manyhood of bodies in emergent togetherness'. Bennett puts the term *assemblage* to work as the coming-together of lively and vibrant bodies; an *assemblage* that owes its 'agentic capacity to the vitality of the materialities that constitute it' (2010:34). In the commitment to go beyond a discursive critique of EC theory greater attention is explicitly paid to materialdiscursive affective spaces. Such movements shift the focus of observation and analysis in the research from an individual's thoughts, reflections, feelings and emotions to the impersonal flows of affect through touching assemblages (Fox and Alldred 2014; Youdell and Armstrong 2011).

Thinking with affect and posthuman performative understandings of the dimensions associated with touching and being touched draws me into the possible (intra)(e)ruptions of ECS within the HE classroom and baby-room. Affect theory opens up a thinking-feeling (Massumi, 2015) space of potentialities that circulates through and connects the bodies of students, aspiring ECE practitioners, HE pedagogues and babies at pre-conscious and pre-individual levels, intra-rupts the notion of subjectivity and embraces 'the death of the masterful humanist subject' (Lather, 2016:127); calling for attentive care(full) pedagogies.

In relation to UG ECS students, affect theory attends to the limitations of the theoretical, practical, political and ethical notions of touching encounters when engaging with what is demarcated as knowledge (cartesian *cogito, ergo sum*) within ECS. Affect moves beyond the

subjects of rational and irrational ideas, feelings and actions (Youdell and Armstrong, 2011:145) towards a lively ontology.

We know nothing about the body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can and cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:300).

In an ongoing generative movement and to mobilise the intensities of touch through this thesis, theories of affect and affectivities are drawn from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as a way to attend to the multitude of disparate encounters, the visceral forces that have not yet settled in any body, have not been, nor cannot yet be sensed or expressed as feelings or emotion, and in doing so, extend thinking into emerging and new EC becomings.

Overview of the chapters

The chapters of this thesis are organised to provoke and share the complexities of the research focus; 'ecologies of touch'. As 'linear time collapses' (St. Pierre, 2017a:690), '[o]r at least less distinct' (Holmes, 2020:500), the lively forces, intensities, twists and threads do not suddenly appear within prescribed 'methodology' and 'data analysis' chapters, acting as postludes to hold up this research. As a way to explore the multiplicities and ambiguities of touch, the snippets of diary and journal entries, images, memoirs, the HE classroom, the baby-room, things and objects, 'themselves are works of theory....they are not waiting to have theory 'done to' them; they are not illustrations of theory but theoretical essays in their own right' (Marks, 2000:xiv); data-theory. As such, the chapters contain entanglements of affects, memoirs, memories, matter, emotions, narratives and data-theory that work together to explore the significance of materialdiscursive knowledge practice in HE and EC pedagogy. Although the chapters can sit independently from each other, they come-together as a thesis in a research assemblage of all entities. The following section will offer an outline of the chapters to offer the reader an insight into the intentions of this research and contributions to ECS.

chapter two: touch

Building on from chapter one this chapter delves deeper into how I think-with-touch, both literally and figuratively throughout the entire thesis. Touching-upon data threads, memories, pedagogical spaces and the politics of education and research, chapter two works with the ideas of spacetime-matterings and reversibility to help me pull through, and at, the HE UG ECS and EC touching encounters.

chapter three: methodology-methods-ethics

Chapter three provides the reader with a rationale for the theoretical and methodological approaches worked throughout this research. It introduces the methodology, methods and ethical processes, in the middle of this ethico-onto-epistemological thesis, with a sense of the contingency of relations, material-discursive knowledge and sensing practices that connect, fold and hold everything in movement. In chapter three, I foreground the methodology-methods-ethics to extend beyond the more familiar methodologies of traditional qualitative research and attend to the evolving (re)thinking of ontology, epistemology and ethics within HE and EC research.

chapter four: resisting historical norms and repetitions

Chapter four begins with the resisting of historical norms and repetitions of EC and EC research by outlining the EC abstractions and framings of childhood, which influence intimate ECS and EC touching encounters. Picking up threads from chapter two, an unravelling of normative constructs of the developing child is then brought to the fore (discursive affects, statutory frameworks, early childhood trajectories, sameness versus difference, dislodging unwanted remnants, troubling troubled motherhood, babyhood and childhood time/s) through the idea of spacetime-mattering. Spacetime-mattering pushes me to trouble the weight and persistence of chronological time and powerful linear trajectories that pervasively entrench the workings and fixities of EC theory, policy and practices.

chapter five: data threads

chapter five consists of four parts examining: how mothers are framed in the understanding of theory-practice; how babies' bodies are framed in the understanding of theory-practice; how notions of secure attachment, maternal separation and deprivation, are insidious in framing parents and families; how bodies are positioned when dominant psychological developmental theories lead the way; to move the thinking of EC beyond the grand narratives and discourses of EC development, to consider an attachment to the world; and the importance of empathetic spaces within ECS.

Chapter five introduces key terms for the reader such as mothersick and haunted motherhoods, (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes, radioactive Bowlb(arbar)ian theory, conforming and performing bodies.

chapter six: so what?

By lingering over the research questions to explore some of the implications for researching with students and babies, feminist methodology and posthuman theorising in the human, nonhuman and more-than-human worlds, chapter six discusses how the doctoral research is inspiring my EC and HE pedagogical understandings, motherhood and academic futures.

To sum up the wanderings.....

Although I refer to this research as troubled, unpredictable and messy, I am not suggesting the research is erratic. This thesis does wander into different FNM realms; however, these wanderings are more theoretical experiments in in/determinacies, 'the idea [is] to do collaborative research, to be in touch, in ways that enable response-ability' (Barad, 2012:208). This is not to say that lingering in the trouble is *trouble-free*; it remains messy, unpredictable and volatile, but leaping into the *void* rather than *avoidance* (*Ibid*) puts touch in the middle of the mess.

Chapter two: touch

The premise of this chapter is to not only examine how I might think-with-touch, both literally and figuratively, but also how consuming this constant state of touch is. It is filled with the data threads, with the babies, with the students, with the pedagogical spaces, with memories, and with the politics of education and research; data that traverses not only chapter two but the entire thesis.

To think with touch has a potential to inspire a sense of connectedness that can further problematise abstractions and disengagements of (epistemological) distances, the bifurcations between subjects and objects, knowledge and the world, affects and facts, politics and science (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017:97).

Thinking with Puig de la Bellacasa, touch can be spiritual, magical, prosaic, omnipresent, violent and haunting. Thinking of touch as being more than the physical contact of bodies, allows a thinking-with-touch to become an interference, where past and future EC iterations are enmeshed, imbricated, and very much alive and at work within the HE UG ECS classroom. As I move to take a closer look at troubling touch and notions of how touch interferes and disrupts through professional tensions, fragilities, violence and vulnerabilities, the sharing of data show how both literal and figurative ways to touch, be touched, touched upon, in-touch, and out-of-touch affects most of us in one way or another.

Furthermore, this chapter commits to a speculative exploration of thinking-with-touch and the performativity of knowledge in ECS and ECEC, through a deep entanglement of a leaky sense-of-self, using what Puig de la Bellacasa describes as *reversibility* (2009/2017) and what Barad (2017) refers to as *spacetime mattering* (both explored in more detail in chapters 4 and 5). Moving with these theoretical threads, I examine EC touching encounters as a way of inviting an engagement with ethico-political obligations for reciprocity and care as I work with the messy and provocative touching encounters amongst data threads in chapter five.

Quite 'literally' DON'T TOUCH!

Staff cannot apply sun lotion to the bodies of children.
Staff should never use any form of restraint.
Staff cannot permit children to sit in-between their legs.
Staff cannot rub a child's stomach.
Staff cannot comfort the child through the patting of the buttocks.
Staff cannot inspect a child's hair.
The child should initiate physical contact.
A child must attend to their own toilet needs.
Staff should never inspect a child's genitals.
Only staff with CRB clearance can be left alone with a child or attend to toilet duties (extracts from a policy document (2018) in relation to student placements)

Straddled across the ECP's back the child had a small car in their hand and was moving it swiftly up and down the practitioners spine. The child then began stroking the hair of the practitioner and went on to press her face against the ECP's face, holding the ECP'S hair to her nose.... (vignette: child-car-practitioner-carpet-researcher, December 2018).

Touch in ECEC settings may be viewed as 'a concrete work of maintenance' (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017:5), where caring for babies and young children involves systematic caring routines that mostly depend upon a multitude of daily physical touching encounters with all things. Thinking-with-touch in the literal sense, the first extract from an ECEC policy document (above) physically situates the act of touching a child throughout the day in the ECEC setting as a 'don't touch' discourse. Whereas the child-car-practitioner-carpet-researcher vignette opens-up the unruly disobedience of EC touching encounters. Encounters that pay no attention to the disciplinary rules, practices and policies.

These assemblages produce deeply entangled touching moments for me, with midwifery, EC, ECS and mothering, evoking an affective charge – 'a sensuality of the flesh' (Barad, 2012:206). The intimate and intricate energetic forces of the assemblages ripple through the air and send vibrations through my body, a sense of tranquillity, shame, comfort and playfulness. Child-car-practitioner-carpet-researcher - the assemblage of carpet fibres, absence of loud noises, hair

follicles, plastic car, hands, skin, spines, nose, eyes, legs, food smells wafting through the room from the kitchen, nursery doorbell chiming, safeguarding policies, and the echoes of children's voices radiating through the glass from the outside—bodies are intimately connected. 'An exchange of warmth, a feeling of pressure, of presence, a proximity of otherness that brings the other nearly as close as oneself' (Barad, 2012:206). *We*, the EC and ECS pedagogues remain deeply 'entangled, embedded, and embodied' (Holmes, 2020:498). The data threads reach beyond this page – across time and spaces, beyond the ECEC setting or HE UG ECS classroom, touching materialdiscursive stories and being touched by policy rhetoric.

Within the child-car-practitioner-carpet-researcher, neither the ECP nor the child made any apologies, or try to hide or disguise the touching encounter. Unremarkable. This touching encounter becomes, however, remarkable when considered in relation to the *no-touch* rules that somewhat govern ECEC settings. Despite restrictive policies on touch, a vignette such as this could suggest how rules and policies governing ECEC practice also co-exist with taken for granted physical contact and touching relationships between ECPs, babies and young children. How these play out in practice are intricately responsive to specific situations and contexts:

We are not allowed to pat the babies' bottoms to help them get to sleep. But this is how the nursery staff get babies to sleep in the baby-room. So I really struggle in the nursery at sleep time. It looks like I can't settle the babies (vignette: Student Placement Feedback, April 2019).

Thinking further with the data threads, in relation to EC physical touching encounters, research conducted over a decade ago highlighted the professional tensions of no-touch education policy-practice discourse. Piper and Smith, (2003:891) and Piper et al., (2006:151) report how the culture of fear and risk (fears that stem from discourses of violence and sex) motivates and shapes pedagogical times and spaces, e.g. child-car-practitioner-carpet-researcher and student placement feedback. Fear and risks that possibly eradicate close connections, care and attunement. Leaving ECP's and pedagogues vulnerable. Such fears are an 'affective politics' (Ahmed, 2014:73) and remain resolutely rooted within the fabric of EC and ECS programmes.

In turn these fears invite a multitude of surveillance and intrusion, anxiety and caution, creating a widespread 'moral panic' (Piper and Stronach, 2008) through dictating what appropriate touch is and what it is not in EC. These adult-child negotiations within the modern-day need for 'safety' (Jones, 2003) is something, as an ECS pedagogue, I encounter daily. Are my eyes enough to hold you? can I hug you, can you hug me, if you kiss me, do I kiss you back, do I reach out or merely nod? As I wrestle with the ambivalences of these in-between-touching spaces, I remain embroiled in reversibility; continually touching and being touched by these worlds that touch each other – data threads or threads of data that produce pulsations, cuts and coagulations:

Straddled across the practitioners back..... Staff cannot permit children to sit in-between their legs.....the child had a small car in their hand and was moving it swiftly up and down the practitioners spine.....The child should initiate physical contact..... We are not allowed to pat the babies' bottoms to help them get to sleep.....went to press her face against the ECP's face.....Staff cannot rub a child's stomach.....But this is how the nursery staff get babies to sleep in the baby-room.....Child then began stroking the hair of the practitioner....So I really struggle in the nursery at sleep time.....Staff cannot inspect a child's hair.....holding the ECP's hair to her nose.....I can't settle the babies

The above data threads could be described 'literally' as three different ECS touching encounters. Encounters that actually traverse bodily boundaries and entangle bodies with the world (Woudstra, 2014:31) - in their mutual entanglement, they do not even exist as individual elements' (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012:156). Rather than working with the pieces of data as singular entities, separated by page space, white space and margins, I have attempted to amplify how the touching encounters are what Lather and St. Pierre refer to as, 'mixed together..... and completely imbricated' (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013:629-630). Intimate and intricate touching encounters that blur the boundaries of self and other, were the porosity of such allows the data threads to bleed through, move and touch each other. In the middle of these entangled bodies and touching encounters, touch touches me in the baby-room and HE pedagogical spaces, rendering the good/bad touch binary insufficient, producing intensities

and curiosities around the intra-relationality of touch. However, the intensities of the *no-touch* discourse continues to insidiously infiltrate ECS and ECEC.

Inspired by Tobin (1997), Jones (2003) uses the metaphor 'the monster in the room' to explore and negotiate adult-child relationships when risk is at the forefront of ECEC and teaching practice. As (re)searcher and ECS pedagogue implicated within such discourse and working from the middle of these provocative in-between-touching spaces, the urge and desire to confront the monster, poses potential threats - the monster may or may not be there in the flesh but is 'always present as a spectre' (*Ibid*:236). The monster, the spectra - ECEC rules, researcher position, fragility, human bodies, surveillance cameras, social media, news reporting's - positioning and demonising the literal act of physical touch within ECEC environments, where moral panic, policies, and surveillance render the EC workforce vulnerable and precarious.

Staying with the data threads, and how these touching moments reach across and wrap themselves through and around each other, work to bring the tensions and challenges of EC caring relationships to the forefront of this thesis. They are complex and desire-driven (Piper and Smith, 2003) and being *at risk* presents itself at the very core of such relations. Adult-child closeness within EC practice can be seen as somewhat dangerous, messy and unsettling (Jones, 2003). The ECP could take advantage for their sexual pleasure, and any touch between adult-child could be misconstrued. Stroking a child's body for comfort, playing hairdressers for fun, applying sun cream to protect, assisting with personal hygiene, providing a child with a resting ground or a reassuring hug could invite allegations. As such, HE UG ECS pedagogues spend a considerable amount of time preparing students for their placement experience – the completion of disclosure and barring service (DBS) check certificate, encouraging students to be attuned to the nuances within ECEC practice, as these spectra's bring very real traces of fear, anxiety, suspicion, safeguarding procedures and surveillance. The same processes and anxieties I, as researcher in this project, discussed in chapter one.

In relation to the rippling effects of serious and scandalous issues, of these very real affects, Lather (2012), when researching the Penn State University sex scandal, describes having to 'feel her way 'into' a different analytic space that was not particularly comfortable'. Lather details having to resist her own interpretations, a process that created 'a fraught space where I became a fragile thinker'; and as a fragile thinker, she had to take risks imposed by 'a new relationality' (Lather 2012:126). As I (Lindsay) think-with-touch, more specifically the ambiguity and precariousness of touch explored further in chapter five, I too become a *fragile thinker*, I move into unfamiliar spaces, 'pulled and contorted as I enter into new intrarelations with the data' (Holmes, 2020:499).

We are vulnerable to those we are too young to know and to judge and, hence, vulnerable to violence; but also vulnerable to another range of touch, a range that includes the eradication of our being at the one end, and the physical support for our lives at the other (Butler, 2006:31).

Thinking-with-touch and the notions of vulnerability and violence that can present in the moments of touching encounters helps me to think with Butler's 'discourse of vulnerability' above (Burman, 2017a:49). Expanding on the quote above, Butler describes human vulnerability as 'being given over to the touch of the other, even if there is no other there' (Butler, 2006:32); a helplessness that emerges with conception and life itself, an empty but crammed space full of emotion, memory and hauntings. Such helplessness includes both violence and abandonment and amongst other things a lens through which oppression can be studied. In relation to ECS, I re-read Butler's accounts (with the support of Burman 2017a) of vulnerability and the work this produces in underscoring how babies and children's bodies are conceptualised and associated within 'modern European thought' (Burman, 2017a:44); non-conforming, conforming (something I explore further in chapter five), lacking, vulnerable, innocent, pure, developing, untouched, at-risk and incomplete (Burman, 2017a; Murris, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Without offering a discursive critique of developmentalism, concepts of the developing child go on to dictate touching discourses within ECS, for example, the notion of *good* touch in relation to being *good* and essential for *good* child development. As Baroness Tyler, (cited in Burman, 2017b:113) infers:

Promoting good child development has to start at home. Research shows that parenting is the single strongest factor in shaping children's development. We also know that good parenting has a particularly large impact on character and resilience. Good parenting practices can be taught and promoted through relatively simple interventions.

Within neoliberalism, the notion of 'the child', 'good child development', 'good mothering' and 'good parenting', grounded in developmental psychology, is highly political, social, and controversial (Morelli et al., 2018; Burman, 2017b:113; Murriss, 2016:3). These ideas remain firmly rooted in ECS, UK EC curriculum (Early Childhood Foundation Stage [EYFS], Department for Education [DfE], 2021), and the shaping and guiding of local, national and international educational and social policies (Murriss, 2016; Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Ideas which have material consequences for their subjects (McCarty, 2015:70, cited in Burnett et al., 2020:112) through complexity reduction, social inclusion and exclusion, categorising, family intervention programmes and access to EC provision.

The domination of EC psychological developmental research by westernised academic institutions continues to saturate ECS discourse, in-turn inducing the potential of violent bias through perpetuating the idea of normal (Morelli et al., 2018) - the healthy and good developmental trajectories. Continuing this thread of thinking calls for a response-ability about how to study, (re)search and (re)present touch in EC. As Donna Haraway (2016:12) reminds us 'it matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with'. How as EC re-searchers and ECS lecturers we articulate modern European thought is political and materially important. A regurgitation of dominant psychological theories around the vulnerable, fragile, innocent, developing child within ECS mirrors and reiterates the patterns of how a baby and child development is somehow severed from the world (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010). As I go on to discuss in chapter four in more detail, rather than the search for the ideal child (fantasy child), through child developmental abstractions, the data threads produce alternative ways of knowing EC.

Thinking-with-touch and visceral ways of knowing affects every iota of this thesis. Thinking-with-touch matters in feminist knowledge politics and theory, towards a resistance of normativity, a refusal to privilege mind/body dualisms, the collapse of knowledge and ontology (Haraway, 2000, cited in Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017:71), and a response-ability about what matters in EC and ECS.

Dissolving time and space: figurative use of touch

In an important sense, in a breathtakingly intimate sense, touching, sensing, is what matter does, or rather, what matter is: matter is condensations or response-ability: Touching is a matter of response. Each of “us” is constituted in response-ability: Each of “us” is constituted as responsible for the other, as the other (Barad, 2012:215).

Thinking with Barad above, touch is posited as the fundamental relation of the world – holding bodies, all bodies, matter, material – together. We think with, through touch. Not as a separate entity to the body but is indeed 'implicated in the passions, emotions and materiality' (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001:3). Barad's 'response-ability' not only attends to the always already touching of the Other, but attends to exposure, vulnerability and an openness to the world, and in doing so, ties the threads of data within this thesis. As touched-upon in the previous chapter, this commitment towards being attentive to some of the professional challenges and tensions of future more-than-human touching practices, demands a 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016:1):

She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, hitting the table. The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson and asked me if she would 'be forever broken' (Figure 8 teaching journal entry, 2017).

My heart is broken a million times over and over. I could still hear the laughter, the giggles the voices of my children around the house, I could smell them, and at times even feel them. As I lay on the bedroom floor the emptiness, takes you to the darkest of places, having no hope of return. Empty heart, empty uterus and empty breasts..... (Mothering diary entry, September 2000).

The act of caring is a 'thick, impure, involvement with the world' (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017:10) – were an ethics of care questions responses, accountabilities and implications within the HE UG ECS classroom and ECEC setting. Although touch sits comfortably and decisively within the caring professions, it is important to articulate that to touch the other is not necessarily care(full) per se. Touch deprivation, yearning for touch and for being-in-touch, reminds me of a finitude; like care, 'touch is not a harmless affection' (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017:107), touch can exhibit as much 'ascendancy as it exposes vulnerability' (*Ibid*:99). As such, I do not situate ethics as responding to another, the separated other, the severed other that is outside the self. Instead, the precarious terrains of uncertainty, the professional iterations and ricochets of data-fragments hold affective touching-ethical-caring-practice at the core of this thesis.

The assemblages of both the touching events of others (Teaching journal entry, 2017), my touch memories (Mothering diary entry, September 2000), and my bodily touching moments with babies and students troubles the intricacies of touch and its tensions for adult bodies entering the babies' space and the invasion of student spaces with ECS pedagogy. Following Bennett (2010:36), 'the ethical responsibility of an individual human now resides in one's response to the assemblages in which one finds oneself participating'. I am not a mere bystander; on the edge peering in at the child, ECP, student, memories - my body registers the encounters. The hair on my body stands to attention, and my heart feels heavy, warm and full. Returning to Jones's (2003:236) 'the monster in the room' and Barad's (2007:383) spacetimematterings where 'neither space nor time exist as determinate givens outside of phenomena', the spectra, the ghost, the invisible, yet felt, lively affective forces of haptic sensibilities; we are each and all touched by everything and nothing. The spacetimematterings of touching encounters, dissolving time and space, and open to the nuances of touch within EC.

Thinking about the performativity of knowledge, Sedgwick (2003:124) asks, what does knowledge *do*.....the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows? *How*, in short, is knowledge performative and how best does one move among

its causes and effects? Following Barad (2007:49), 'knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing something, but rather from a direct material engagement with the world'. The knowledge emerging, as this thesis is produced, is rooted in the material world. Attending to the affective and energetic flows of touch opens up space to trouble the politics of knowledge, where thinking-knowing are relational processes that require touch to (re)inform and (re)shape educational spaces. As Puig de la Bellacasa (2017:20) states, '[t]ouch becomes a metaphor of transformative knowledge at the same time as it intensifies awareness of the importance of speculative thinking'.

Thinking-with-touch as a speculative exploration, a method in itself, an idea that sets things in motion, a motif, and a provocative and controversial practice, touch(ing)(ed) encounters work to shift the paradigms of EC abstractions; reinstating the messy, awkwardness, troubled provocations and tensions in ECS - lives-touching-lives, lives that go on to (re)tell, (re)live and (re)direct future EC touching encounters:

I could still hear the laughter, the giggles the voices of my children around the house, I could smell them, and at times even feel them..... She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks..... As I lay on the bedroom floor the emptiness..... hitting the table..... takes you to the darkest of places, having no hope of return.....The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson..... Empty heart, empty uterus and empty breasts..... asked me if she would be forever broken..... My heart is broken a million times over and over (Figure 8 teaching journal entry, 2017; Mothering diary entry, September 2000)

Thinking with the data threads and touching-encounters, I suggest care(full) touching practices demand a new ethical logics (Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2017), where pedagogues are responsible in attending to awkwardness, messy, perplexed and fraught entangled affects (*Ibid*:132) and researchers enact and amplify practices of response-ability. These threads of data are the beating heart of this thesis and not only allow me to stay with the (un)remarkable touching encounters, but, as I wrestle with the complexities and ambivalences of touch and the reversibility and vulnerabilities of bodies, the discomforts are embraced as a creative space to work; a response-ability towards the future human and nonhuman touching encounters.

In touch.....

Thinking-with-touch and the collapse of time, the calmness of the baby-room, the chaos in the classroom, the smells of comfort food (homemade cheese and onion pie), body odour, a child's fingers running through the hair stimulating the scalp, flesh touching flesh, an object being used to travel the spine, histories travelling the spine, being comforted, held and made to feel safe, whether physically touched by the baby, ECP and student or not, I am touched by the encounters. Bodily exchanges, between the child and ECP, becoming-I (explored fully in chapter three) and student, put my desiring body and my own children at the forefront of this thesis, eager to get home, smell, stroke, kiss and hold them, but also the desire for touch and for being in-touch with those I cannot. Working and researching EC, I can never escape being-in-touch with memories and histories. Such entangled knowledge(s) take hold, my body (re)membering, inducing bodily sensations.

Finding different ways to share the EC touching encounters opens up a (re)thinking of the literal and figural meanings of touch. HE pedagogies and research practices that bleed through each other, have the potential to (re)adjust what matters in EC and how ECS might be experienced in the HE classroom. Methodologically the way I share this data, as I am assembling and imbricated with-and-in the data threads, is often frustrating. I wrestle with the presentation, as they continuously reach out and touch me – my hope, is, the reader, the body that touches, is also touched and embroiled, a double sensation entangled through touch (Shildrick, 2001:165).

The following chapter outlines my approach to research through the lively affective touching encounters with the babies and students, before expanding further in chapters four and five into how such encounters, policies and practice, arrange bodies (babies, mother, child and students) accordingly, and within western ways of 'knowing' EC.

Chapter three: methodology-methods-ethics

This chapter examines the rationale behind the theoretical, methodological and ethical approaches and processes at work throughout this thesis, as well as elaborating on the research design and delineating the EC and HE UG ECS spaces in which the inquiry is situated. By (re)thinking research methodologies within EC, in encounter with FNM and posthumanist ways of thinkingfeelingdoing research, this chapter responds to the methodological issues that have arisen throughout this research process and thesis: the ambiguity of FNM research and the writing of this thesis; ethico-onto-epistem-ology; transversality, becoming-I and disciplinary boundaries; sensorium, diffraction; and ethics of entanglement.

FNM Methodologies

Engaging with post-representational thought and methods, the research attended to the re-conceptualisations of being, knowing and thinking, including the human 'I'. This way of thinkingfeelingdoing, where theory, data, research participants and researchers share equal capacities in the knowledge production process, is often referred to as a flat-ontology (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010); a flattening within heterogenous entangled assemblages (van der Tuin and Dolphijn, 2010). Thinking with flat ontologies 'neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior' (Barad, 2007:152). Privileged discourses such as mind and culture over matter and body were rejected. As such, this thesis is committed to the meaning-making and co-constitutive power of matter.

When thinking-with-touch, flat-ontologies opened-up a space to revise the relationality of the body-reality-socially-constructed-discourse, beyond the binary divides of nature/culture, discourse/matter, human/nonhuman, material/discursive theory/practice, subject/object, reality/discourse, meaning/matter and knower/known (MacLure, 2015:5; Fenwick, 2011: vii). Within my FNM theorising, nothing was detached; every *thing* took its place in an intricately woven web, a '*meshwork* of entangled lines of life, growth and movement' (Ingold, 2011:63). Working with Baradian theorising of agential cuts, stories unfolded and unravelled, I unfolded

and unravelled, data unfolded and unravelled – ‘material enactments of differentiating/entangling’ (Barad, 2014:176).

Thinking with Barad, this materially-oriented research attended to the nature of matter (human, nonhuman, things) within the material world and offered a distinct space when exploring the intricacies and intimacies of touch within EC and ECS. In the pursuit of touch as a material engagement with the world and the significance of matter in EC, thinking-working with feminist theorists, including quantum physicist Karen Barad became increasingly essential to the production of this work. I thought-with Barad's philosophising as a way of contributing towards alternative kinds of empiricism within EC, ECS and the broader field of social sciences; which involves an overarching desire to reclaim 'the creative and speculative force of experimentation, as a way of reconfiguring our concept-matter mixture' (de Freitas, 2017:741).

ambiguity and writing of this thesis

It may be helpful at this point in my writing to address some of the linguistic movements adopted in this thesis - as a way to share how I navigated the ambiguity of FNM research, new, and emerging, theoretical and philosophical language as I started to think-with-touch.

While Barad cautions us that 'language has been given too much power' (2003:801, cited in Holmes and Jones, 2016:114), it is *in* the writing, in putting the words together (or not), that connections came into being; ideas bled, haemorrhaged and coagulated. Likened to Serres (2008:xii) 'the text is, after all, a highly personal one'. Likened to that of bodies, terminologies, words, and other things became leaky and porous, as I attempted to articulate how theory and I emerged through and with the data threads.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) oppose ‘scientific linguistics in which language is idealized and disembodied’ (St. Pierre, 2017b:1085). It is interesting that for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), ‘the separation between subject and object, thought and matter,

words and things, is an illusion of language' (Lecerclé, 2002:27, cited in St. Pierre, 2017b:1085), a language that saturates ECS – again the spectra hiding amongst the expected linguistic structures of western thought. Thinking with Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of the privileged signifier and the interpretation and representation in language, St. Pierre (2017b:1085) asserts:

States of affairs (bodies and things) and expressions meet so there can be no pre-existent, intentional individual—the speaking subject of humanist qualitative methodology who exists ahead of language—nor a pre-existent meaning the individual statement (expression, proposition) represents, because the utterance comes from the mixture.

Towards the (re)reproducing of EC touching knowledges, picking up on St. Pierre's assertion above, and thinking further with Deleuze (1990) and Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theorising of language, this thesis acknowledges how writing and other forms of narratives, stories and texts can be used in creative and experimental ways towards the dislocating and rupturing of the associated power relations of language within ECS. For example, I put to work Kuby and Rucker articulations about the need for EC scholars to '(re)etymologize' as an explorative practice to unearth the origins and meanings in EC, 'not in an effort to know the words, find their true meaning(s), or to nail-down the definitions, but rather in an effort to unmake the words and think differently'(2020:13). For example, the word baby and babies were adopted in this thesis to refer to the human bodies within the baby-room spaces. I avoided the use of *infant* or *infancy* for the purpose of this research as an intentional move to situate this thesis in EC spaces that are less defined by time, language and reason. As Peters et al. (2020:5) note, the term 'infant' bears an etymological relationship with more traditional developmental trajectories:

Infancy (from *infans*, Latin, 'unspeaking') is literally that age at which a human being – or, by analogy, any other entity that is 'in its infancy' – has not yet entered the world of speech, the world of the human being as *fōm kócom ēvxm* (zoon logon echon), or animal that has speech (or reason) (Peters et al., 2020:16).

Engaging with the term infancy and infant throughout this thesis would have perpetuated and instilled the very societal ideals, futures, and expectations, this thesis was avoiding. This is not to say the term baby and babies was a home-run; neoliberal ontologies also construct the baby as 'an object of trade' within educational spaces and places that claimed to have their 'best interest at heart' (*Ibid*:14). Interestingly, and likened to this thesis, in the commitment towards unsettling traditional and dominant developmental studies in EC, Peters et al. (*Ibid*:5) coined the term 'infantologies' to generate a different conceptual space within EC and ECS, and cites Arndt (2020:5) who points out that such move from the study of individual infants to the broader discipline of study of infantology opens up space for otherwise marginalised voices.

Particular words, phrases and terminologies were put to work in the thesis in an attempt to unpack the 'knowledge-making processes' (Barad, 2007:381), provoke heterogeneous possibilities, and recognise other forces and materials that came to matter in this thesis. In this sense, 'I become in language' (St. Pierre, 2017b:1081) as my use of pronouns were considered carefully, and the array of neologisms (e.g. thinkingfeelingdoing, Bowlb(arbar)ian, mothersick) and terms linked with (), - or /, not only got put to work as FNM techniques, but more specifically moved my way of 'thinking differently [and] Being different' (*Ibid*:1082). As such, the use of brackets '()' worked throughout this thesis induces a different way to think about the use of language that often 'ground[s] conventional humanist qualitative methodology' (*Ibid*). Yet ungrounding my thinking and writing habits was not always a straightforward process; it necessitated deliberation full of care rather than an unthinking application of techniques. As one of my supervisors pushed me to consider, 'What's the point of using (re)search, re-search and re/search?' (MacRae, 2020 supervision feedback). In response, I turned to Erin Manning who discusses the hyphen (-) as an opportunity to explore 'interstitial modes of existence' (2016:11). Throughout the writing, I took this forward as a means of exploration, more than the language-ness of language, meaning and sense-making, which feed into anthropocentric research inquiry. For the purpose of clarity throughout this thesis, terms such as spacetimemattering(s), materialdiscursive and bodymind were not hyphenated as a way to indicate a simultaneous production. Whereas the hyphen (-) was worked to indicate, 'a

joining of', 'co-constructive nature', 'entanglements', an onto-epistemology (Barad, 2017), and being-with for example. This 'with' draws attention to my body being open; it is 'the fleshiness of the world which inhabits us and is inhabited by us' (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001:5). Using the hyphen when 'thinking-with-touch' pried open my body to a multiplicity of bodies within this research; 'through touch, the separation of self and other [non-I] is undermined in the very intimacy or proximity of the encounter' (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001:6). A forward slash (/) within this thesis, for example, in/determinacy or concepts/humans/non-humans – is not to be read as binary through indicating an 'and', or an, 'and or', but rather a *cutting together-apart* of the terms (Barad, 2012), by this I mean the terms are part of relational entanglements.

porosity, plasticity and participation of the body

Barad's (2007:170) theorising of phenomena produced through 'specific causal intra-actions involving multiple apparatuses of bodily production' was examined as shared assemblages, entanglements and encounters. As previously touched-upon in chapter two, thinking with Barad's intra-action, ontologically everything is inseparable, and ethics is about being response-able to the way worlds are made; 'entanglements are relations of obligation' (*Ibid*, 2012:217). When considering different ways of knowing and thinking-with-touch in EC and ECS, I wanted to acknowledge that 'there is a politics to how we distribute our attention' (Ahmed, 2008:30, cited in Holmes and Jones, 2016:109). Attending to the ways in which *all* matter intra-act and affect one another distributes politics in that there is 'no privileged position from which knowledges can be produced' (Sauzet, 2018:online). With this in mind, my methodological research practice was ethico-onto-epistemological; continuously questioning the effects of my (re)searching and being attuned to the consequences of such knowledge-making processes on and in the worlds of EC and ECS as well as on the knowledge(s) being produced (Barad, 2007:381). Working within a realm where ethics are not produced by knowledge but *with* knowledge offered alternate sensing methods; sense-driven ways of doing research within EC. Moving transversally across education and health in this thesis, opened up the disciplinary mechanisms that otherwise might obscure how knowledge gets 'acquired and expressed' (Barrett and Bolt, 2010:xi). The transversal movement of the

senses opened up liminal spaces of inquiry where usual disciplinary processes, habits, theories, discourses became more fragile, severed and enmeshed in a complex sense driven approach to researching with babies and students.

The theorising generated through the de-centring of the human student and child, allowed me to create a space where I could embark on an ethical response-ability, and where I could be responsive towards the possible intra-ruptions my research may have had on the (in)human and more-than-human bodies.

She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, hitting the table..... (Figure 8 teaching journal entry, 2017).

The above teaching diary snippet was worked as a catalyst in different ways throughout the thesis towards a 'staying with the trouble', something that troubled me deeply, moved me into different ways in relation to ECS and the ethics of teaching EC, amplifying how ethics is not a separate body. The porosity, plasticity and participation of the body being open to the outside, is something Bennett (2020:68) proposes as a process of continual influx and efflux - like the sea, as it breathes itself in and out as waves, we are all partaking in that process. As researcher in this inquiry, I felt continually touch(ed) by the fragility, vulnerability and the porosity of the 'I'; the vulnerability and fragility of the UG students, babies, ECEC practitioners and research process. Dilated bodies, porous, perforated, oozing and precarious. Thinking with influx-and-efflux ethics is continuous, ongoing, relational and dynamic. At the moment where the student dropped her head, a bodily registering was augmented as I was intra-rupted; aching, painful, desperate, awkward, both severed and attached bodies. Dilated vulnerable bodies, encouraging what Bennett (2020:36) describes as 'more of the outside to seep in-even as more of its insides ooze out....an existence that goes beyond human being experiencing it'. Such examples of touching data threads scattered throughout this thesis are not to be read as 'big moments, grand realizations or epiphanies' (Baraitser, 2009:11), but rather as twisted bits of material that held me in the trouble - dislodged by unprecedented touching encounters. As

such, the responsiveness necessitated a willingness to be affected by the world that I also affect (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016:158).

Although diverse in their ways, thinking with key theorists such as Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway and Jane Bennett, as well as significant others such as Patti Lather, Elizabeth St. Pierre, Sara Ahmed and Laura Marks reinforced the porosity, plasticity and participation of the body, through the honouring of the significance of matter in ECS. These feminist scholars draw on various theoretical traditions to (re)conceptualise the (in)human and non-human. By working-with them my thinking-with-touch, realities, intimacies, knowledge, ethics, subjectivity, truths, care, child development abstractions and trajectories were pushed into previously unthought-of matrices.

[transversality, becoming-I and disciplinary boundaries](#)

In this thesis, I was interested in transversality as a way of not only crossing and cutting-through disciplinary boundaries (Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2011:93-115), but to destabilize the use of language and the representation of a fixed and bounded, self-contained, knowing, agentive, coherent, human, individual 'I' (St. Pierre, 2000). Working with midwifery and health, ECS pedagogy and andragogy, babyhood, childhood and motherhood memories and knowledge, and the production of EC knowledge, this transversal inquiry challenged the complexities surrounding intradisciplinary knowledge within discursive boundary-making practices and 'all that we have come to understand as knowledge, including our account of interdisciplinarity' (Manning, 2020:4). In the writing of the thesis I am not suggesting the diluting of EC knowledge and specialisation through the transversal cuts, but to bring attention to the relational aspect of attaining EC knowledge through a thinking-with-touch.

The use of 'I', as in the first-person pronoun (my, me and I) has not been applied as a way to represent a singular concern or the speaking subject of truths (Jackson, 2010:384) throughout this thesis. Instead, I used 'I' as a way to locate 'I' (doubting), 'I' (thinking), and 'I' (being) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994:25, cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2016:215). Entangled within the

assemblages, the use of 'I' is to be read as becoming-I, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987:33) note, 'you can't be one wolf, you're always eight or nine, six or seven'. For Deleuze, thinking is more of an 'act' rather than an 'I' does (cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2013:708-709), creating a move away from the anthropocentric gazes of EC. A gaze that determines a pre-existence, individualism and boundaries that become instilled through aspects of EC practice-theory as opposed to a philosophy of intra-activity. Becoming-I is not suggesting this thesis was fully-acquainted with such philosophical complexities. However, orientating the becoming-I onto-epistemologically, this thesis did not aspire to privilege knowing over being. Becoming-I required a leaning-in (hard); as such, there were always risks involved as boundaries haemorrhage, perforate, bleed and leak - the 'inherent ambiguity of bodily boundaries' (Barad, 2007:155).

Becoming-I took from the matter and materialdiscursive entanglements I find myself amongst, moving across and within disciplinary thresholds, in and out of health and educational contexts and practices, across different personal-professional spaces and times in encounters with 'touch'. The transversality of this research strove to be as Palmer and Panayotov describe, 'non-categorical and non-judgemental. It defies disciplinary categories and resists hierarchies. A transversal line cuts diagonally through previously separated parallel lines' (2016:online). Moreover, touch was interrogated as emergent in a relational field, an interwoven web of entanglements which '...do not stay at a distance, but entangle with bodies' (Parrika, 2011:37), in unpredictable and unprecedented ways.

Helping to work the notion of transversality further, Ingold (2011:63) asserts, 'what is commonly known as the 'web of life' is precisely that: not a network of connected points, but a meshwork of interwoven lines'. Following on from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:306) philosophy of assemblage haecceities and interassemblage haecceities, where 'gradients are crossed, thresholds are surpassed or retreated from' (Smith, 2007, cited in Bolt et al., 2007:vii), Ingold's contention refers to the world we inhabit, as an unbounded entanglement of interweaving lines, strands, and threads in a fluid space. In adopting such ways of thinking, the EC assemblages became 'defined by a relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, by

a combination of atoms, an emission of particles: haecceity' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:322). The term haecceity was used in relation to the uniqueness of entities; haecceity is 'the 'thisness' of a thing' (DeLanda, 2016:141), which in this thesis, demanded attention being paid to the 'commotion of relational activity' (Holmes and Jones, 2016:117) within the images and text of empirical materials; carpet, cotton, politics, water, bodily fluids, straps, skin(s), carpet fibres, control, atmosphere, panic, fear, wooden doors. Such commotion, in which the becoming-I of the researcher was caught up as a relational part, called into question how attention could ever be paid to any one thing. Under such complex conditions, Lather and St Pierre (2013:630) press us to think about how we might 'determine the 'object of our knowledge' – the 'problem' we want to study in assemblage?' whilst disconnecting it from ourselves 'long enough to study it?... How do we think a research problem in the imbrication of an agentic assemblage of diverse elements that are constantly intra-acting, never stable, never the same?'.

Such useful provocations gestured at the troublesomeness of working within assemblages, but also forced me to ask, 'what ontology has enabled us to believe the world is stable so that we can do all that individuating? And at what price?' (Lather and St. Pierre, 2020:630). In response, and as Serres articulates so well, I needed to reconcile that 'no measuring device can detect it.....the complex cannot be observed: neither seen nor known' (1997:21). Within the tangle and mangle of threads imbricated with other threads and other threads becoming tangled with other tangles, continually unravelling and ravelling, an endless weaving of motherhood, babyhood, and childhood, midwifery, pedagogy and andragogy encouraged alternative textures within EC. Staying with St. Pierre (2017b:1087), 'like assemblage and haecceity.....in the folding of the Outside that makes the new, the new we will create'.

[\(Multi\)sensory methods](#)

Sarah Pink's (2011;2015) sensory ethnographical studies is an approach to research, which foregrounds multisensorial nature of one's experience, perception and knowledge; as an 'interdisciplinary critical methodology which – unlike a classic observational approach –

situates ethnography as a reflexive and experiential process in which the researcher closely attends to the senses throughout the research process' (Morriss, 2017:291).

St. Pierre articulates the complexities of engaging with concepts such as ethnography and autoethnography ('I' after 'I' after 'I'), methods of collating and analysing data, and as previously highlighted, the *concept* of data itself, in the move away from the 'old ontology.....the old methodologies of the old empiricisms' (2017b:1087). Although Pink's earlier visual ethnographic work remained embedded in these 'old ontologies', her more recent openness to the anthropology of the senses is attuned more closely with the approach taken in this thesis. Exploring the data threads in this research, I moved towards experimenting with multi-sensory methodologies. Thinking with Stoller (1997:xvii, cited in Paterson, 2009:772):

To accept sensuousness in scholarship is to eject the conceit of control in which mind and body, self and other are considered separate.....To accept sensuousness is....to lend one's body the world and accept its complexities, tastes, structures, and smells.

Picking up on the senses, where the numerous ways that touch, smell, taste, vision and so on are active in this research, is something Michel Serres (2008:viii) talks about at length in *The Five Senses: A philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. He states, 'the five or six senses are entwined and attached, above and below the fabric that they form by weaving or splicing, plaits, balls, joints, planes, loops and bindings, slip or fixed knots'.



(Appendix 4: mothering moments)

Returning to the fore-mentioned cord clamp and the dried-up umbilical cord tissue trapped between its teeth, bodies are entwined, attached and severed. Holding the clamp between my fingers, not only am I touched by the memories the clamp holds, but the hardness of the plastic against my skin, the smell of hospital (sterile, blood, entonox), the trapping of the delicate and friable tissue. This entwinement of spacetime-mattering demonstrates how my senses are mingled into the words that I write or at times cannot write. Connor (1999:online) writes:

The skin and touch signify, finally, for Serres, a way of being amidst rather than standing before the world, that is necessary for knowledge.....the effort to separate the senses out, displaying them adjacent to each other, like countries on a map, plan or table of correspondences, will be gently and repeatedly precluded by the requirement to knot them together. It will emerge that each sense is, in fact, a nodal cluster, a clump, confection or bouquet of all the other senses, a mingling of the modalities of mingling.

Serres's (2008) description of the body suggests we need to experience senses as a hybrid topology, confusion, imbricated and full of pleats, a lovingly embraced and deeply tangled inside out body. Although the use of photographs such as the cord clamp and umbilical tissue, diaries and field notes could be identified as belonging to the 'old ontologies', it is my senses that were the apparatus of capture; as I smell, see, hear, touch, feel, taste and so on, my way through the memoirs, baby-room and HE UG ECS pedagogical spaces. The entwined spacetime-matterings (affect, senses, time, space, place....) can almost be described as a 'multi-sensory assemblage' (Renold and Mellor, 2013:26), as I have tried to incorporate the noisy silences, smells, gestures, movements, sounds, objects, politics, tastes, bodies, feelings and affective relations, in the array of different places and spaces. These multi-sensory assemblages and sensational touching encounters tuned-me-in, helped me traverse comfort, discomfort, curiosity, awe and wonder and possibly developed a more prosperous entwined understanding of the experiences the students, babies, parents and practitioners shared.

Throughout the research I was attentive to how the affective and energetic forces and flows, and the messy and vibrant entanglements between human and nonhuman bodies at work

made themselves intelligible to, and assembled the research - producing moments or what might be understood as data threads. Student, baby, and researcher navigated, traversed, steered and stumbled 'beyond the individual and towards a collective and connected affective assemblage of other bodies and things' (Braidotti, 2013:25); intelligible over the sensible and sensations over the representations (Paterson, 2009).

Haptic knowledges, touching knowledges, thinking-with-touch, touchy-feely methods, whatever phraseology or terminology employed, works to reaffirm bodily and sensorial knowledge production within this research. Embracing the sensorium, the HE UG ECS classroom and baby-room, is 'fundamentally material and sensorial, where the relational field is not just constituted by corporeal subjects, but objects and a multiplicity of senses' (Braidotti, 2013:26). The site(s) of research produced a flurry of sensations, the smells, noise, sounds, touching encounters and so forth, inducing visceral bodily sensations as a mum; anxiety, comfort, exhaustion, joy, uncertainty, fear, love, aching breasts, aching womb. Thinking with my past (memories), present (observations), future (speculations), my body was responsive to the influx-and-efflux; it overflowed. Following Bennett (2020:105), finding a language apposite to influx-and-efflux was daunting and 'fledgling', but it is attempted throughout this thesis.

Beyond self-vision

The 'knowledge-making process' of this thesis is understood as diffraction (Sauzet, 2018:online), an alternative methodology to reflection (Haraway, 1997; Barad, 2007:2014; Lenz Taguchi, 2012:2013; Moxnes and Osgood, 2018). For example, as a midwife and pedagogue, criticality, reflexivity and reflective practice have been fundamental requirements to maintain professional status: a licence to practice is necessary to remain on the Nursing and Midwifery Council and an associate of the Society of Education and Training, and reflexivity is encouraged within ECEC practice. However, as Haraway (1997) argues, such insistence on reflexive/reflective practice as a mode for critical practice encourages displacement, rigidity and disables the move to go 'beyond self-vision' (33-34), as Rose (1995:779) proposes, 'the singular reflection of the same' (cited in Hollin et al., 2017:936).

In 'the effort to make a difference in the world' (Haraway, 1997:16), Barad (2007:71) infers, 'whereas the metaphor of reflection reflects the themes of mirroring and sameness, diffraction is marked by patterns of difference'. Barad's (2007:74) notion of diffraction, is based on 'the way waves combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading of waves that occurs when waves encounter an obstruction'. Thinking about human and non-human encounters within this research, diffraction pulled me towards 'reading insights through one another' (*Ibid*:71), by 're-turning (to) the past' (Barad, 2014:169) and things mingled and entwined. In doing so, I felt-thought-wrote-sensed something different with the data-threads, with touch, with babies, with students and with theory. While working with a variety of entities that appeared to be present when considering touch within EC and ECS, my intention was to explore the density and complexity of touch, what this might look-feel-smell-sound like in the HE UG ECS classroom and baby-room. Not through the process of taking theories and reading them *against* each other, but rather transversally; taking EC theories and 'different (inter)disciplinary practices' (Barad, 2007:92-93) and performing cuts through the threads of data. As such, new and different things were allowed to emerge.

As discussed so far, becoming-I attempted to push back against anthropocentric tendencies that somewhat limits the sense-making process (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:viii); including 'some of the taken-for-granted notions of data and analysis' (Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure, 2013:219), interpretivism, coding, thematic analysis, sorting, sifting and categorising, in EC and HE research. However, despite not using coding and forms of thematic analysis, interestingly, MacLure (2013) invites researchers to consider how different forms of more traditional analysis are always open to untamed elements, despite their seemingly closed and static histories and habits. Despite the thoughtful articulations of MacLure, 'to think of coding as the ongoing construction of a cabinet of curiosities or *wunderkammer* (wonder cabinet)....attuned *both* to classification and to wonder, system and secret (2013:182)', for the purpose of this research, coding and thematic analysis of the research *data* was too far removed from this ethico-onto-epistem-ological (Barad, 2007:185) inquiry. Working with Barad's theorising of

diffraction, I was able to (re)consider what is meant by *data* within the context of EC and ECS, and how such can be 'analysed' within non-or post-representational research. Thus, shifting the focus from linguistic representations, including that of analysing observations, reflections, feelings and emotions, to a materialdiscursive *working-with-data* from the impersonal flows of affect, through touch assemblages.

Diffraction methodologies allow me to move through chapter five responding, 'to the details and specificities of relations of difference and how they matter' (Barad, 2007:71). The bodily encounters with politics, touch, babies, students, midwifery, teaching.....are in a constant state of movement; folding, pleating and rupturing into non-exhaustive forms of *knowing* and *not knowing*; 'not knowing as seasoned knowledge where we do the work of embracing our discomforts, and mourning our losses, including the sublime of our certainties in all their exhaustions and tired repetitions' (Lather, 2016:127). It is worth noting how Deleuze asserts 'that repetition produces difference' (cited in Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:13). Difference is birthed throughout the thesis as I thought and worked with the (re)turning of the data threads – this is not a process of merely repeating the same. Moving to the following chapters, the (re)turning of touching data - touching me, is a mode of intra-acting with diffraction in the making of new temporalities (Barad, 2014:168) and 'holds greater potential to explore unforeseen, not-yet-known possibilities' (Moxnes and Osgood, 2018:298) within EC.

[Research site\(s\)](#)

The physical research site(s) were set within an ECEC setting in South Manchester in the North West of England accessed by a diverse community of families and multiple HE UG ECS classroom environments. ECS students studying at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) are a diverse body of students, commencing a programme of study for an array of personal and professional reasons. ECS cohorts consist of predominately female students including non-traditional learners, mature learners, learners as carers – all entering UG ECS programmes with different educational attainments and achievements, such as BTEC Level 3 National Diploma's, A levels and Level 3 CACHE Diploma awards. My EC experiences as an ECP,

midwife, college teacher, HE lecturer, and clinical educator all play a significant role within my HE UG ECS teaching, research, personal tutoring, academic supervision, placement supervision and thesis.

As a SL and head of year for the UG ECS programme, I first introduced myself to the ECEC setting late 2017, where the manager and Early Years Teacher (EYT) attended an open day at the University for local businesses. Securing EC placements for UG students is an essential component of the ECS programme. ECS students embark on placement experience very early in their UG degree (level 4) and continue with placements as they move into their second year of studies (level 5). Although the placement is not assessed (except for level 5 students completing a level 3 practice placement unit), student safety, commitment, attendance, attitude, compliance and conduct, is something, as a SL within the department and the role of head of year, I monitored closely. As such, building positive relationships with local businesses is something I felt would benefit the Department of Childhood, Youth and Education Studies (CYES) to open up the possibilities of guest speaker visits, volunteering opportunities for students, employed work and future collaborative working groups. Attending an open day at the University for local businesses acted as a networking opportunity in attending to the above.

Following the first meet, the EYT, the manager and I, exchanged several emails to organise EC student placements. Over the following weeks and months, the EYT volunteered to attend a series of lectures as a guest speaker for a unit I was leading at level 5 – birth to three matters'. From there, the EYT and manager invited me to visit the nursery. We shared the same passions and enthusiasm for EC, the EYT was, at the time, considering undertaking a Masters in EC, and we had a long conversation about the ecologies of touch research. The nursery manager and EYT showed a keen interest in participating in this research and invited me to talk about it with the nursery ECPs. After several visits to the nursery, which involved introducing myself to the staff, children and parents, it was agreed, following the completion and receipt of a disclosure and barring service (DBS) check certificate, I could gain staff and parental consent to undertake this research.

Situated in a baby-room, I spent one day a week for a total of twelve weeks, alongside three ECPs and eight babies under eighteen months of age.

Ethics at work

In the following section I address the pragmatic, traditional and entangled ethics within this thesis. For most disciplines, traditionally, research ethics is related to a guided 'code of conduct', which has evolved over decades, and remains firmly rooted around human values, needs and expectations (Kumar, 2014:282). In an attempt to establish how research participants are being treated, terminology, such as 'informed consent', 'subjectivity', 'harm', 'right to withdraw' and 'bias', continue to be at the forefront of social and educational research. This FNM-oriented research with all its challenges and affordances, necessitated an adherence to institutional ethical protocols. Interestingly, it was amongst, in between, and through these protocols that the intra-ruptions and disruptions of touch in EC and ECS augmented a more ethico-onto-epistemological approach - ethics was not only inseparable to the work of this thesis but completely relational.

It is important to say that at an institutional level ethical protocols not only grounded this research, but as discussed in the introduction, are an integral element of this thesis assemblage; all necessary ethical formalities and procedures were fully adhered to in line with MMU research ethics, integrity and governance (<https://www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/ethics-and-governance>) systems and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018). As such, the requirements around the ethical considerations for this research, in line with seeking ethical approval through MMU's EthOS system, were submitted as part of the 'seeking ethical approval' to commence this research (Appendix 13). This includes the research proposal and ethics checklist, a checklist that requires the researcher to attend to safety and risk, passing through the MMU's ethics committee for approval to commence research. As such, I ensured all human participants were provided information about this research (Appendices 8-9) (information forms, consent forms, and on-site discussion before commencing the research), including what this research would entail and how identities would

be protected via confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, to ensure the non-exposure of human-participants, students' identity, the ECEC setting, families, babies, and practitioners remained anonymised throughout the thesis (BERA, 2018); this included confidential data and the storage of both hard and soft copies of documents, photographs and videos.

All ethical formalities and procedures were carefully planned for and exercised; however, the main aim of this thesis is that of de-centring the human, and more specifically, the ethical relevance of human affect, as such the 'ecologies of touch' transversal inquiry demanded more. Thinking with Barad, 'ethics grounds human experience (not the other way around)' (2007:391). As this research involved researching with babies the pragmatic notion of consent and informed consent in relation to undertaking research with babies is integral and could be understood as relatively straight forward - Article No. 12 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 2009) asserts children's rights to express themselves over things that affect them. I ensured parent and practitioner informed consent and photographic reproduction rights for participants, was obtained before commencing this research and throughout the research process (Appendices 11-12). However, it is also worth noting the troublesomeness around the research terms of consent and informed consent especially when researching with babies. As a qualified midwife and ECEC practitioner, I was fully aware of the pragmatics of informed consent, and in relation to research, the problematic notion of the term 'informed'. As Flewitt (2005:556) states, a more fitting description to use when researching with babies and children would be 'provisional consent' as the research is 'ongoing and dependent on the network of researcher/researched relationships built upon sensitivity, reciprocal trust and collaboration'. Babies do not adhere to touching guidelines within the baby-room and students and pedagogues alike do not consult the teachers code of conduct when faced with emotionally charged ECS concepts within the UG ECS classroom. As discussed, the porosity, plasticity and participation of bodies feels ethically messy, unravelled, and imperfect. In the words of Barad (2007:185), 'becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter'.

Returning briefly to the pragmatics of researching with babies - the term assent is often used instead of consent as children under the age of 16 are considered unable to give legal consent. As a way of addressing assent further with babies, and in addition to gaining parental permission, adaptations of the research practices and protocols by Nutbrown and Hannon (2003) were used as a guide:

- Parental permission to seek the children's views and take photographs was obtained (responsive to the babies engagement or refusal)
- No data were collected until the researcher became familiar with the babies
- Researcher commitment to being sensitive and responsive to any adverse reactions the babies might have to being observed and recorded
- Babies were always in familiar surroundings
- Data remained anonymous – names of the babies and practitioners have been changed
- Practitioners remained sensitive to the babies needs at all times, and the comfort and well-being of the children was prioritised above data collection and researcher presence

Throughout this research, I often recorded notes in a research journal; sometimes, this would include text, pictures, scribbles and doodles. Following visits to the ECEC setting, I transcribed the notes taken into a word document and saved these onto the research hard drive. As the research journal also included notes in non-text format, these were kept locked in a draw at home, which only I accessed with a key.

[Signalling the end of chapter three](#)

Barad's (2011:150) model of an 'ethics of entanglement' helped me wrestle with the ethical challenges and demands of this research, where past and future iterations are enmeshed and alive. Moving across the thesis the ethico-onto-epistemological matters are entangled throughout all chapters but more prevalent in chapter five as I engage more intensely with the data threads.

The following chapter of this thesis moves to consider EC deficit models and dominant discourses that saturate ECS, and what these worlds feel like when touching data threads. As I begin to unravel the what matters, I acknowledge this research can only touch-upon few coagulations, unable to attend to the increasing finite number of changes as EC multiplicities connect and evolve other EC multiplicities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:8); the insidious albeit violent EC repetitions that induce discriminatory practice, inequalities and injustices that go on to shape the lives of children and families and underpins EC figurations; western, *and* euro, centric child developmentalism.

Chapter four: resisting historical norms and repetitions of EC and EC research

A norm is something that can be inhabited. I think of a norm as rather like a room or a dwelling: as giving residence to bodies.....Not to inhabit a norm (or not quite to inhabit a norm) can be experienced as not dwelling so easily where you reside. You might be asked questions; you might be made to feel questionable, so that you can come to feel that you do not belong in the places you live, the places you experience as home; you might turn up and not be allowed in or find it too uncomfortable to stay (Ahmed, 2017:115).

To further understand the affective role of heterogenous entities that reach out and touch EC and ECS, this chapter presents the nuances of historical norms, research traditions and repetitions, that reinforce normativity in EC and ECS. This writing picks up threads from chapters one, two, three and four - ahead of chapter five where the data with students and babies emerges more intensely. This chapter begins with the historical political work on families with a specific focus on Bowlbian child developmental psychology and psychological theories of attachment, as the dominance and influence of such theories inform curricula approaches to the education and socialisation of children and families in the UK (Murriss, 2016; Burman, 2017a;2017b). I then go on to examine how an unquestioned pursuit of chronological time that is deeply embedded in so much of developmental psychology's theorising can be set in motion with spacetimematterings to rethink how such development trajectories and abstractions can be troubled.

Historical political work on families

It is not surprising that during infancy and early childhood these functions are either not operating at all or are doing so most imperfectly. During this phase of life, the child is therefore dependent on his mother performing them for him. She orients him in space and time, provides his environment, permits the satisfaction of some impulses, restricts others. She is his ego and his super-ego. Gradually he learns these arts himself, and as he does, the skilled parent transfers the roles to him. This is a slow, subtle and continuous process, beginning when he first learns to walk and feed himself, and not ending completely until maturity is reached. . . . Ego and super-ego development are thus inextricably bound up with the child's primary human relationships (Bowlby, 1951:53).

As discussed in chapter two, theorisations like the one above underscores how babies and children's bodies are conceptualised and associated within 'modern European thought' (Burman, 2017a:44); notions of 'the child', 'good child development', 'good mothering' and 'good parenting' (Morelli et al., 2018; Burman, 2017b:113; Murris, 2016:3). Although I am reluctant to dedicate a serious amount of time and space to Bowlby's theorisations it is extremely important to acknowledge them as well as the historical and political context of his work, including psychoanalytical influences on the theorisation of the problem child, child and adult delinquency and maladjusted. Theorisations that remain firmly rooted in ECS and have material consequences for babies, children and families (McCarty, 2015:70, cited in Burnett et al., 2020:112).

During the 1920s, psychoanalytically informed approaches to the education and socialisation of children began to infiltrate the educational system within the UK. Following Freudian theory of personality development (conflicts among the id, ego and superego of the human mind) international influences (Bernfeld's Kinderheim Baumgarten in Vienna by Anna Freud and Vera Schmidt and Sabina Spielrein's Hermine Hug-Helmuth in Moscow), psychoanalytically oriented schools then termed 'progressive' schools were founded in the UK, e.g. the Malting House School in Cambridge, founded by Susan Isaacs, Summerhill School founded by Alexander Sutherland Neill, and the Priory Gate School (van Dijken et al., 1998). At the end of 1928 and early 1929, Bowlby spent some time within Priory Gate School, a school for children labelled maladjusted or a problem, in response to what Bowlby described as deprived parenting. As Riley (1979:96) asserts, at this particular time in history 'the theoretical stress was firmly on the mother as psychic agent. This tendency in psychoanalysis readily joined the similar tendency in developmental psychology'. Adding weight to this argument, in 1944 Bowlby published *Forty-four juvenile thieves: Their characters and home-life*, claiming 'delinquency' as a product of early separation from the mother (Riley, 1979:95). As an historical pioneer of maternal deprivation and separation, despite Bowlby's research being 'notoriously methodologically weak' (*Ibid*), he went on to hypothesize the early anxiety situations

experienced amongst the children (male) were a direct result of maternal deprivation and how such deprivation contributes to anti-social behaviour in adolescence (Bowlby, 1953:15).

Bowlby (1953) defined and conceptualised the term 'deprived' and 'the deprived child' by formulating the categorisation of various white heteronormative western family scenarios. These family groups include the non-established natural home including illegitimacy; natural home established, but not functioning effectively (resulting in neglect, destitution, lack of parental control or maladjustment); unemployment of the father; illness or incapacity of a parent; and the mental health instabilities of a parent as contributing conditions. The third group includes the broken home and single-parent families; within this group, Bowlby includes war, famine, separation or divorce, father working away from home, full-time employment of the mother, hospitalisation of a parent, imprisonment of a parent, and the child being abandoned by one or both parents (Bowlby, 1953:86). As a result of Bowlby's political work on families, in 1950, he was appointed consultant in Mental Health for the World Health Organisation (WHO), for whom he published *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, where he continued to concentrate his political efforts in secure attachments and the 'dangers of mother-child separation' (Riley, 1979:96). Bowlby's attachment theory infiltrated ECS and ECEC with the notions of normal, healthy and secure child development at international and global levels.

As discussed within the opening chapter of this thesis - *crossing the threshold*, guided by the ECS subject benchmark statements (QAA, 2019), all curricula of UK-based ECS degree programmes must incorporate knowledge and understanding of child development and the implications for practice; neurological and brain development, cognitive, communication and language, physical, personal, emotional and social development. HE UG ECS students coming from NNEB, CACHE and BTEC programmes, most often refer to core texts such as Mary Sheridan (birth to five textbooks) that present knowledge and understanding of child development as abstract, including attachment theory, maternal deprivation and separation; 'go-to' and 'how to' guides, for anyone working or studying in health, social care and

education, that include how to document and record delay and abnormality (Sharma and Cockerill, 2014). Despite the well-documented critique (e.g. Denise Riley in particular), Bowlby's theorising of attachment theory is one of the most frequently worked perspectives within ECS (Murriss, 2016). Amongst the many provocations attachment theory makes, the strange-situation presupposes how well attuned the mother is to her child's needs and the presence of a *natural* or *instinctive* emotional bond between the mother and child and one that needs normal development to achieve healthy psychological wellbeing.

Within these 'long standing assumptions regarding universal characteristics of good care and healthy development that are implicit in developmental science based on western cultural views' (Morelli et al., 2018:6), the search for certainty and normative constructs, often consisting of unchallenged and overlooked 'widely held truths about children's learning and development' (Lenz Taguchi, 2010:7) (normal, healthy, over-achieving, and good, versus, abnormal, unhealthy, underachieving and bad), induces a violence as a way to frame and straighten-up bodies.

In a living room in 1975, I spend an evening with a group of women poets, some of whom had children....We talked poetry, and also of infanticide....a local woman....Joanne Michulski, thirty-eight, the mother of eight children....took a butchers knife, decapitated and chopped up the bodies of her two youngest on the neatly kept lawn of the suburban house (Rich, 1976). So cruelly disorganized (cited in Gallop, 1988:1).

When I think of violence within EC and the straightening-up of bodies the above text reaches out and takes hold of me, touches me in so many ways and places I do not know where to begin exactly. I am flung to the data threads of the teaching journal entry (2017: figure 8) and student feelings of 'forever broken'; student placement feedback (April 2019) vignette; extracts from the ECEC policy document (2018); the mothering diary entry, September 2000, the EYFS (DfE, 2021); the UG ECS subject benchmark statements (QAA, 2019) and the materialdiscursive affects. Thinking with Gallops (re)iterations of Rich (1976), the violent, tangled, messy and un-predictableness not only sets the scene for this chapter but the entire work of this thesis.

The cruelly (dis)organized bodies of babies, young children and families through the theoretical lens of attachment theory augments a touching violence. The 'forever broken' event produced during the teachings of attachment theory takes *time* as the identifiable marker of all time. No matter how much butchering of the past the student did she could not sever these feelings or separate herself out from the decapitations that attached themselves to her body. Bits of bodies carried around like lesions on the skin, mottled, flared, itchy and painful. The ideas of how attachment development and notions of secure base can provide a narrative to 'fix' the broken child and the broken adult - who in turn will not form secure attachments with their own children is a hard pill to swallow for some students. This need to 'fix' and straighten-up is both about the shaping of the future child, but also the shaping of the future mother and the future EC educator. When women and families feel evaluated, governed and explicitly remediated through the use of reductionist educational policies and practice, which remain dangerously simplistic (Burman, 2017b:118) it is no surprise bodies feel forever broken.

I am not suggesting HE UG ECS programmes do not unsettle this sense of normativity enough, on the contrary. Within the department of Childhood, Youth and Education Studies (CYES), at MMU, level four ECS students would commence on the constructing child development unit, followed by deconstructing child development at level five, through to queering child development at level six. As SL teaching across all three years and all three units, the work of each of these units is remarkable. Some ECS students will go on to push boundaries, become advocates, and grow in confidence. However, the students face monolithic structures, processes, practices in settings on placement and when employed. They also 'go through' an emotional journey at level four, where developmental theories are taught. Resisting EC norms, that are usually set in stone through policies, benchmarking, guidelines and frameworks, can seem a somewhat impossible task for some ECP's when ECEC practice is predominantly shaped by cartesian views of child development, including but not exhaustive of child development psychological theories.

What bodies become

Contemporary theorising of affect and thinking-with-touch revitalises Bowlby's theories of attachment. Giving up the concepts of the ideal, normal, perfect and the search for, and, 'fantasy of finding the 'true' child' (Dahlberg and Moss, in Lenz Taguchi, 2010:xiv), to move towards what bodies become, requires a desire, a speculative and imaginative thinking, extending through and puncturing of dominant child developmental trajectories, which perpetuate norms and repetition through what Burman (2007) describes as 'portraying white European middle class men as their pinnacle' (cited in Burman, 2017a:51), thus placing knowledge in the hands of a selective few.

The re-imagining of how babies emerge in a relational field through the folding and pleating of child development abstractions, the visceral bodily experiences of being with the babies, and the implications of ECS and EC student placements, remains a political endeavour. MacLure et al (2012:467) point out how difficult it is, 'to see children outside the frames provided by normal development, professional practice and liberal humanist views of the proper person'. This political endeavour requires persistence, academic resilience and a creative and experimental ECS programme of study that at the same time adheres to, and challenges ECS subject benchmark statements (QAA, 2019) that currently govern the standard, delivery and facilitation of UK EC knowledge attainment.

Following Marks (2000:31), '[j]ust as we can only speak in the language that surrounds uswe can only feel in the ways we have learned it is possible to feel' and to facilitate the alternative, sometimes, new ways of thinking, feeling and doing EC with ECS students, 'means turning away from learning as a technical process of representation, reproduction, categorisation and normalisation....which offer no certainties and predetermined outcomes' (Dahlberg and Moss, in Lenz Taguchi, 2010:xviii).

This sense of ambiguity, speculation and uncertainty is complex to negotiate in the current neoliberal education system saturated with assumptions regarding what counts as knowledge,

how knowledge should be attained, and the impact of the attained knowledge on future endeavours. The work of this research does not claim to fix and reify a different kind of EC knowledge, for example by crudely pointing out the ECS and ECEC assemblage components (St. Pierre, 2016). Instead, it explores the intra-relations that form such complex, moving assemblages. The data threads – photographs and image assemblages encapsulate an arrangement of sorts, students, babies, food, rugs, milk, tears, rest, play, curriculum, politics, and not only evoke 'memories encoded in senses' (Marks, 2000:26) but the 'influx-and-efflux' (Bennett, 2020) of energetic forces, of becoming.

Developmental abstractions and spacetime mattering

A dominant and recurring concept in the routine practices of health, education (structures and practices associated with the EYFS) and EC is a chronological understanding of time that situates bodies within the creation of routines, habits, punishments, guidelines, policies, a sense of control and order of bodies (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012) in such spaces. What 'Heidegger (1962) called a 'vulgar notion of time' is the argument that, no matter what tense is added to time, it can still be measured with mechanisms such as clocks' (cited in Tesar, 2016:406). Abstractions that situate notions of 'childhood, time and temporality' as the time of childhood is thought of as both a 'duration' and an 'occasion'; childhood is measured, tweaked, adjusted and timed' (Tesar, 2016:400). Early childhood developmental trajectories put a distance between the present and the temporal location of being touched by memories, histories, traumas and pleasures. This is problematic within the HE UG ECS classroom as time does not pass and marks are not just left behind. Instead, through the reiterations of EC dominant abstractions, such as attachment theory, mutilating, monstrous and fleshy scarrings are made and unmade.

As discussed in chapter two, Barad's QFT promises a queer(y)ing that destabilizes the fixed coordinates of time, place and space through an emergent 'of intra-activity, of agential separability – differentiating that cut together/apart' (2010:244). Spacetime mattering is not just a neologism that helps me to trouble the powerfulness of linear trajectories and

theoretical abstractions that pervasively entrench the workings and fixities of EC theory, policy and practices. Spacetime-mattering locks me in as I write and think with the motherhood, babyhood and childhood data threads. Concoctions of the old and new gets pumped through the thesis, things mix, bodies sometimes reject one another, things conjoin and congeal. For me spacetime-matterings help me to move the trajectories of ECS away from EC developmental abstractions such as attachment theory, that continue to mobilise notions of childhood (Burman, 2017a:44), towards seeing how attachment theory, for example, is itself a spacetime-mattering of sorts. Thinking-with Barad's spacetime-mattering troubles how motherhood, babyhood, and childhood experiences (including perspectives of what 'good' and 'bad' childhoods and mothering looks like) unsettles EC temporalities and the adult/child binary. For example, motherhood is particularly troubled by time; a time in which mothering, 'in all its forms, biological and social, is constructed by default' (Lavelle, 2020:2). With spacetime-matterings I am able to work with the concoctions, the ripples and waves, waves creating waves, new ripples producing new ripples and tides, all constituting different patterns and disturbances that extend across time and space. What takes hold of me in these moments of thinking is, it is not just that child development and attachment 'knowledge practices have material consequences', but that the 'practices we enact matter – in both senses of the word', and such practices of knowing are 'part of the world's differential becoming' (Barad, 2007:91). Time and temporality stir-up EC sediments to disturb ECS further towards the (re)imaginings of EC entangled in HE pedagogy, keeping me attentive and attuned in the HE UG ECS classroom. Following Tesar (2016:402), '[t]ime and temporality' is a formula to designate time in its circumstances; 'time and eternity', 'time and motion', 'time and duration', and 'time and space'. Making knowledge is not about the production of facts but about the moments in making worlds (Murris, 2016:40). Moments of disorientation, reorientation, excitement and pain.

As I try to cut-through the students' account of 'brokenness' (Teaching journal entry, 2017) throughout the thesis, I too find myself broken and contorted as I linger and procrastinate the entering into different and new intra-relations with the data. Somewhat resistant to ploughing

through the rough and broken terrain of motherhood; the reversibility of bodies touching bodies with other bodies. In particular, attachment theory and the teachings of maternal deprivation and separation through a Bowlb(arbar)ian lens suggests a direct comparison of the devoted, attuned, attentive and good mother, to the non-attentive, absent and bad mother. Child psychological developmental theory is used as a stick to beat, blame and shame women.

Burman (2017b:140) suggests although feminists challenge the assumption that childrearing, caregiving and childcaring responsibilities fall entirely on the mother, access to free and available childcare is something the feminist movement has pursued a prerequisite towards women's liberation. As a result, it is no surprise that psychological theories, such as maternal deprivation and attachment, maternal as opposed to mother (limiting the caring relations to that of the biological mother) (Segal, 2016:59), attracted huge criticisms within ECS (Burman, 2017b:140). Within ECS, representations of the child(ren) work in direct relation to the representations of those adults who take care of them and live with them, and as such, children's development is 'synonymous with the mother' (Burman, 2017b:113).

Through troubling troubled motherhood, babyhood and childhood time/s, I think-with-touch, specifically in chapter five, as resistance towards dominant early child development trajectories and the significance of materialdiscursive knowledge practices entangled in ECS pedagogies.

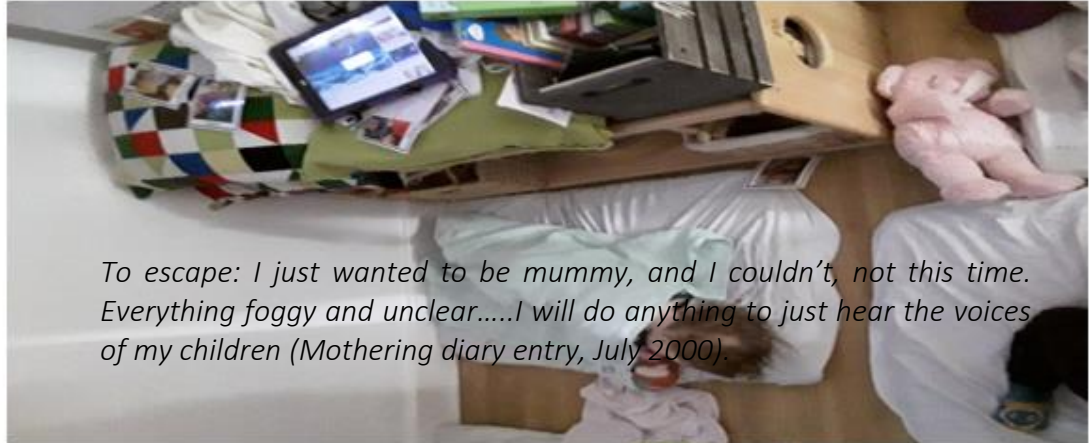
[Coming up in chapter five](#)

Thinking with Barad (2017) towards unsettling the relations of production, the following chapter engages more intensely with data threads alongside developmentalism as a way to think more-than what has gone before in ECS. This move is not a way of contrasting good and bad EC literature for students to think with, it is more about appreciating the influence of powerful and dominant ECS narratives, and how 'plugging the tracings back into the map' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) contributes to the troubling' of ECS and alternative ways of knowing pedagogical practice and EC. As such, the emergence of psychological developmental

theory with data threads moves away from (re)producing 'a critical genealogy or discourse analysis' (Lenz Taguchi, 2016:214), towards resisting the 'normalizing practices' (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer, 2014, cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2016:214) and allows for ECS to be disrupted further through notions of mothersick, (Gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes, teaching and leaking, conforming and performing bodies.

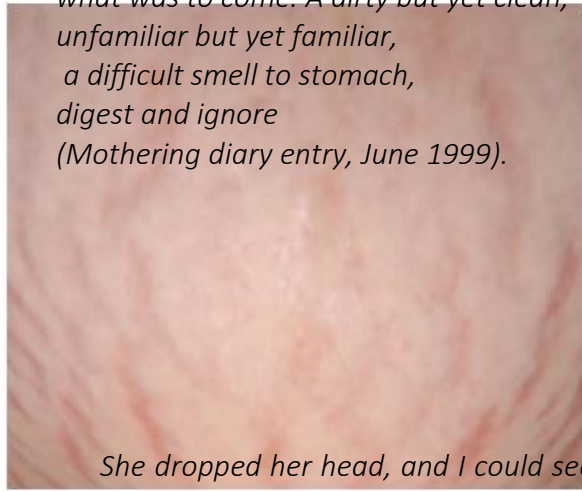
The HE UG ECS precarious landscapes that pedagogues navigate with students need to be attentive and open to uncertainty and ambiguity, as the entangled knowledges students hold in their bodies are intensified and brought-to-attention through ECS and preparing students for EC practice. As such, with a desire to unsettle western logics of EC, I move throughout all four parts of chapter five to unsettle the multiplicity and particularities of pedagogical spaces; the stains and hauntings of developmental psychology and EC trajectories; and the materiality of students' bodies within ECS.

Chapter five: data threads



To escape: I just wanted to be mummy, and I couldn't, not this time. Everything foggy and unclear.....I will do anything to just hear the voices of my children (Mothering diary entry, July 2000).

the smell of bodies... old, new, not yet here, was overwhelming, and made me panic about what was to come. A dirty but yet clean, unfamiliar but yet familiar, a difficult smell to stomach, digest and ignore (Mothering diary entry, June 1999).



She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, hitting the table. The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson and asked me if she would 'be forever broken' (Figure 8 teaching diary entry, 2017)



This chapter works with affects flowing through data threads, putting to work literal and figurative thinking-with-touch via Barad, Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari's writing on how bodies can be understood as assemblages of engagements, entanglements, encounters, and the continuous process of transformation.

The introduction of this thesis (crossing the threshold) initiated a discussion about bodies being out of place, classed, gendered, racialised and Othered; somehow severed and cut out from the world. Theorising bodies with Deleuze (1988), and through conditions of what Barad (2012) articulates as the human coming-together-apart, offers alternative understandings of bodies within EC and ECS, where no matter how much burrowing and re-turning of the soil is undertaken, no definitive meanings nor singular, linear cause and effect explanations for EC encounters will be fixed and remediated. FNM offers a space to appreciate the subtleties, nuances, intensities and complexities of touch as affective forces, spontaneity and unpredictableness. FNM theorising moves me as part of multiple assemblages into different and unexpected thinkingfeelingdoing EC and ECS spaces. Spaces that are uncomfortable, demanding and bodily.

As I proceed to experiment more with thinkingfeelingdoing the data threads, chapter five consists of four threads: mothersick; (Gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes; teaching and leaking; and conforming and performing bodies. Each thread twists, swirls, twirls and whirls with other threads in a delicate and intimate dance; all relating to ideas of literal and/or figurative reconfigurations of touch with potentialities folded into thinking-with-touch. As such, curiosity and wonder race through my veins as I 'become with' the data (Haraway, 2008:4). Memories opening-up the traces of bodily enfoldings, emptiness, fullness and broken. Thread one: *mothersickness*, is how bodies impact on each other - both severed whilst still connected; thread two: *(gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes*, is about how radioactive theory impacts bodies - both corrosive whilst vital. Scrambling sequential past-present-future; thread three: *teaching and leaking* is violations on skin - both scarring whilst opening up; thread four: conforming and

performing bodies is how objects and things affect bodies - both disciplining whilst remaining productively unruly.

Threads one, two and three are produced as a way to encourage the coagulation and haemorrhaging of students, babies, ECP and researcher stories and other bodily knowledges, at particular moments and how thinking-with-touch re-turns the data threads over and over again. Like the umbilical cord being cut following birth – difference emerges; becoming-I with the photographs, things and diary entries. Thinking with the twists of threads one, two and three that sever and connect, corrode, but remain vital, are ghastly and violent, thread four makes a different move, as I pry open what constitutes the boundaries of EC notions of behavioural expectations and norms through the idea of restrained and fidgeting bodies, exploring the human within touching encounters.

Thread one: mothersick and haunted motherhoods

the smell of bodies... old, new, not yet here, was overwhelming, and made me panic about what was to come. A dirty but yet clean, unfamiliar but yet familiar, a difficult smell to stomach, digest and ignore (Mothering diary entry, June 1999).

Thread one of chapter five draws on Manning (2007) and Ahmed (2006;2010) to consider how bodies impact on each other. Becoming contorted through metastable configurations between microcellular, multicellular, and the intercorporeal. Creating new mutating configurations, through the moving towards each other, connecting through intensities of composition that in turn produce new bodies (Manning, 2007:xvi), orientating bodies in some ways rather than others (Ahmed, 2010:247). As such, the exploratory process of this entire thesis attends to bodies touching bodies, bodies out of place, and distorted bodies, (re)calling bodily memory and where alternative EC knowledges can emerge.

The knowledge my body holds, mutates, coagulates, snags and stutters through my sensing-body-as-fieldwork; 'all of us hold knowledge in our bodies and memory in our senses' (Marks, 2000:xiii), and as such, 'the memory of the senses, a nontransparent and differentially available body of information, is important....as a source of....knowledge' (*Ibid*:199). The attentiveness towards one's own body when theorising about the body and bodies of others is something I passionately articulate throughout this thesis; bodily sensations, reversibility, vulnerability and messiness. Becoming-feminist and likened to Lather's (2012) concept of the fragile thinker, *touching* my way into different analytical spaces is fraught with tension, the harbouring of memories and mothering memoirs creating and producing uncomfortable writing spaces on the page, bodies folding, mutilating and contorting simultaneously as the writing is somewhat produced. It is through these moments of unease a brokenness and mothersickness is sensed as my body prepares to conform and perform in the production of this thesis.



(Resting child, baby-room, November 2018)

Figure 2 resting child

Thinkingfeelingdoing (Osgood, 2019) with the above photograph, it is the cotton sheets, sour milk, stillness, atmosphere, the fetal position of the babies, fabric conditioner, teardrops, hands, dribble, cotton threads, soft fluffy fabric, shiny stretched cheek skin, soft lighting, baby wipes, mashed banana, soothing whispers and singing that grabs hold of me as mutually performative intra-active agents (Barad, 2007). Thinking-with-touch my visceral, fleshy bodily

responses are called into action in complex ways. Each touch, smell, taste, instinct and so on, augments my body, it (re)turns me, I am being flung. I cannot articulate where it is I am being flung to, but it is somewhere other than here – here being the place of writing and producing this thesis.

Sleep time for the babies.

The library is transformed. The wooden carry holders for the books wheeled to one side. The baskets of toys removed. Child mattresses filled the carpet area, the library room transformed into a giant cot for the babies to sleep.

Each baby had their own sleeping space. This included personal blankets, from home, and sleeping aids. The smell of the babies' blankets is overpowering. A mixture of different washing powder and fabric conditioners. At the end of each day, the blankets go home with families to be washed and returned for the following day.

As sleep time immediately follows lunchtime. Babies are stripped down to their vests. Some of the babies have food stains and bits of food on their vest where the juices and fluids have seeped through the clothing. Some babies have food in their hair and in-between the creases of their fingers.

Some of the babies are teething. Their rosy red cheeks, shiny and glowing. Dribbling excessively. Biting down on plastic pacifiers, creating squeaking sounds as their teeth bite the rubber teat of the pacifier.

As babies take their positions in the room the ECP lowers the lights, plays some music from an iPad, and whispers gently to the babies to settle down.

The ECP sits down in the room with the babies. The baby-room atmosphere(s) moved from busy and erratic to calm and peaceful (Research diary entry, 12.12.18).

Speculatively and viscerally, the auratic human and nonhuman things within the baby-room photograph (Figure 2) and research diary entry above transport my body through the queering of space and time, becoming-I and 'world infusing and diffusing' as 'sight and touch intersect' (Böhme, 2013:2). As Hickey-Moody and Malins (2007:6) imply, becoming consists of 'both human and nonhuman affective entities that create opportunities to perceive, move, think,

and feel in new ways'. Although research suggests that it is 'impossible' to remember a smell unless the smell is presented (Engen, 1991:80, cited in Marks, 2000:148), the baby-room photograph and research diary entry evoke and awaken my senses and bodily knowledges of EC, ECEC, midwifery and mothering:

*The smell of sour breastmilk augments the smell of fresh lilies,
the taste of the damp night air,
and the thick vernix covering the fine strands of hair.
The pungent aroma of the umbilical cord as it decays, and the
regurgitation of warm breastmilk on my flesh,
as the non-feeding breast aches and lactates.
Cotton wool balls, cats meowing, postnatal lochia flowing,
and street lamps glowing (Research diary, evoking mothering memories,
2020).*

The (re)turn to the somewhere is provoking, sometimes my body welcomes the move, sometimes it does not. The bodily affects of the re-turning invites different memories, struggles, complexities, and tensions. I am (re)(dis)orientated and fascinated in such moments. Following Serres (2008:3) work 'the senses are nothing but the mixing of the body, the principal means whereby the body mingles with the world and with itself, overflows its borders'. Interestingly, through the sharing of memories and memoirs, (her)stories, histories, violence's and vulnerabilities, my body is put into words (Ahmed, 2017:23). My body is in a continuous process of 'intra-acting', unsure of entering the fraught spaces and unsettling the sediments which have been anchored for a number of years. Sediments that often rise to the surface through teaching UG ECS units such Child Development – including attachment theory at level four or Birth to Three Matters that consist of topics such as becoming-mother, becoming-father, becoming-parent. Topics that can cut-deep, and touch-upon bodies in ways that can often stop-us-in-our-tracks.

When interaction between a couple runs smoothly, each party manifests intense pleasure in the other's company and especially in the other's expression of affection. Conversely, whenever interaction results in persistent conflict each party is likely on occasion to exhibit intense anxiety or unhappiness, especially when the other is rejecting. Proximity and affectionate interchange are appraised and felt as pleasurable by

both, whereas distance and expressions of rejection are appraised as disagreeable or painful by both (Bowlby, 1969:242).

Thinking-with-touch in ECS and the above Bowlby quotation one 'slowly burrows one's way through the fissures of history' (Minh-ha, 2019:online), exposes one's senses, 'not by eyes only, but by ear, nose, tongue, and body contortions' (*Ibid*). Bodies are beckoned 'in a worlding that re-organizes conceptions of space and time' (Manning, 2007:xiii) and emerge through 'everyday acts of resistance' (Minh-ha, 2019:online) alongside, with and through other bodies. To talk about rejection with UG ECS is difficult. Some students feel that sense of rejection and simultaneously rejected. Through Bowlby's theorisations it is the mother who is centre of such painful torment. As a midwife I know too well mothers that cannot stroke, caress, hold, and nurse their babies. This can be as a result of trauma, mental health illnesses, and sometimes the unknown, and, it is the same in the ECS classroom. Students will sometimes leave the classroom, become animated, cry, or sit in silence, holding onto the fact that to proximate unravels them.

Sat on the edge of my bed, I looked over to see my babies sleeping, so helpless, innocent, and fragile. I cried so hard. The sense of failure, I couldn't breathe (Mothering diary entry, May 2000).

Staying with the above diary entry and following Frank (1995:31), 'the body is not mute.....it is inarticulate; it does not use speech, yet begets it', the materiality of bodies holding 'the memories of the traces of its enfoldings' (Barad, 2007:383). The speech that bodies beget, includes mothering stories, mothering stories shared through intimate and intricate bodily touching encounters, 'what is harder to hear in the story is the body creating the person' (Frank, 1995:31), and as Frank asserts, '[h]earing the body in the speech it begets is never an easy task' (*Ibid*).

The romantic tradition figures love as a disease, a cantankerous tumour, making us sick, disturbing our thoughts from within, driving us crazy. The loved object gets into us (Baraitser, 2009:89).

Following on from Baraitser, my body is filled with mothering emotions. It has birthed, cried, laughed and pained. Absence fills me with nausea. Nausea through the repeated horror of the world (Deutscher, 2001:143). Words like rejection, abandonment, deprived, anxiety and unhappiness pumps round my body; it is Bowlb(arbar)ian. The absence of my children and loss of babyhoods and childhoods is painful. My body is *mothersick*. Loving being a mother and being mothered is not a fixed entity, but rather an extension of my body creating folds. Mothering as a capacity of 'overflowing and flowing over' joy, excitement, pain and discomfort, memories; mothersick - 'estranged from your present location and long for a space that you once inhabited' (Ahmed, 2006:11). The silent nights, breastfeeding, nappy changing, stroking, kissing, bedtime stories, giggles, burps, plastic teats, dummies, baby noises, gurgles, cries, bath time.....

It is worth noting, my body is attuned to the fledgling attempt of putting bodies into words, as I continue to stutter and stammer through the writing. Mothersick is a term employed to try and encapsulate the multiplicities, wanderings, tensions and contortions of bodies within ECS. It is not a term employed as a way of defining the pining of the (m)other, but rather the imaginings and fantasies of 'motherhood, mothering and the maternal' (Baraitser, 2009:3). This inhabited place as described by Ahmed (2006) may have only been experienced at a distance, yet to be touched, unfilled empty spaces occupied by imaginings, desires and needs for mothering.

She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, hitting the table. The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson and asked me if she would 'be forever broken' (Teaching diary entry, 2017).

Statutory guidance

Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework



My heart is broken a million times over and over. I could still hear the laughter, the giggles the voices of my children around the house, I could smell them, and at times even feel them. As I lay on the bedroom floor the emptiness, takes you to the darkest of places, having no hope of return.

Empty heart, empty uterus and empty breasts.....aching from within a place I cannot explain, I am broken.....cut in half by the world (Mothering diary entry, September 2000)

Figure 10 broken bodies assemblage

Fraught entanglements of emptiness and brokenness can harbour caution within the HE classroom and baby-room. As Ahmed (2017:23) suggests, 'a body in touch with a world can become a body that fears the touch of the world', and when in fear, an anticipation of pain and infliction, bodies retreat and shrink back from the world. The following section references the affordances and traumas of the broken bodies assemblage above (Figure 10), my aching

body feeling broken and cut in half as a place once inhabited and occupied by anOther, the student holding onto Bowlbian theorising and wondering if she will be forever broken, and the fracturing of policies based on westernised child development abstractions. Feelings of brokenness and emptiness from the broken bodies assemblage (Figure 10) sends reverberations through my body. What does it mean to feel empty and have a broken heart and feel forever broken in relation to ECS.

Feeling broken can work to dismantle the self-contained, the knowing, agentic, coherent, human, individual (St. Pierre, 2000). Broken, perforated, haemorrhaging, oozing, dilated, leaking and porous bodies 'beginning to resemble, not to resemble anything, but just to *resemble*' (Caillois, 1990:106, cited in Bennett, 2020:78), contorting bodies into different ways of being-with-the-world. Making cuts through the void, the living, breathing, mutating, indeterminacy of non/being (Barad, 2012:210), exposes feelings of emptiness. An emptiness occupied by grief, fear, loss, violence, shame, isolation, pain, love and the 'yearning and the imagining of what might yet have been, and thus also the infinitely rich ground of imagining possibilities' (Barad, 2017:56). Babies not yet conceived, children not yet materialised, families yet to be made, haunted past-present-future encounters.

The concept of *haunting* animates the repressed and unresolved social violence, and is helpful when working the idea of *mothersick* to demonstrate how society,

To greater and lesser degrees, shape the way bodies [break] look, feel, and are expected to act.....since early human history all bodies have been subject to powerful discourses and knowledges, both in formal institutional settings or within the familiar landscapes of everyday life (Kosut and Moore, 2010:10).

Gordon (2008:201) talks about haunting as 'the sociality of living with ghosts, a sociality both tangible and tactile as well as ephemeral and imaginary', opening-up a space for (re)imaginable possibilities and EC futures, and a way to think about stigma, shame, trauma and loss within ECS, the ghost as a 'real presence and demands its due, demands.....attention' (Gordon,

2011:2). As such the stigma, shame, isolation and trauma 'caused by individualising and pathologising mothers' (Morriss, 2018:835) and families is disrupted.

*To escape: I just wanted to be mummy, and I couldn't, not this time.
Everything foggy and unclear.....I will do anything to just hear the voices
of my children (Mothering diary entry, July 2000).*

Following on from the above diary entry, the emptiness which surrounds living apart from a child, the absence, the demands and the loss can be traumatic. The child can feel like a ghost. The mothering of a ghostly phantom child, a child here but not here (Gordon, 2008:6). Ghostly matters problematize social life, 'it is neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis' (*Ibid*:7), 'mothers exist in a state of *haunted motherhood*, living for an imagined future when their child reaches adulthood' (Morriss, 2018:822). As a mother the hoarding of stuff, inscribed as keepsakes - umbilical cord clamps, hospital name bands, birthing notes, lockets of hair, ticket stubs, pressed flowers, feathers, flight tickets, shells, rocks, photographs, holds the ghostly encounters close. Other mothers 'have tattoos of their child's name inscribed on their skin, buy presents, and write letters to their child in preparation for reunification' (Morriss, 2018:821). Mothers holding onto an imagined future, a future that may or may not happen.

Thread two: (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes

She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, hitting the table. The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson and asked me if she would 'be forever broken' (Figure 8 teaching journal entry, 2017).

The very nature of matter entails an exposure to the Other. Responsibility is not an obligation that the subject chooses but rather an incarnate relation that precedes the intentionality of consciousness. Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming. It is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling of responsiveness. Not through the realisation of some existing possibility, but through the iterative reworking of im/possibility, an ongoing rupturing, a cross-cutting of topological reconfiguring of the space of responsi-bility (Barad, 2010:265).

Pulling at thread one where my mothersick writing evoked hauntings and affective assemblages of transformational loss, emptiness and absence that coagulate and ooze across my HE ECS teachings, thread two tugs at the Otherness, discomfort, unease, awkwardness and fragility that ECS students hold in their bodies. This move demands a (re)turn to Barad along with the teaching diary entry above, not a temporal regression but a way of staying in the threshold. As Barad infers, 'a way of thinking with and through dis/continuity—a dis/orientating experience of dis/jointedness of time and space, entanglements of here and now, that is a ghostly scene of dis/continuity, a quantum dis/continuity' (2010:240). As Manning (2007:87) infers,

When I reach to touch you, I touch you not the you who is fixed in space as pre-orchestrated matter/form. I touch the you that you will become in response to my reaching toward.

As discussed across thread one, within ECS classrooms, entangled bodily knowledges are intensified, bodies connect with other bodies, bodies move by the proximity of other bodies, there is an overwhelming sense of unease and vulnerability, as emotive concepts, scenarios and case studies are explored within the context of EC. For example, in addition to the teaching

and learning of western psychological developmental child centeredness, ECS curricula can cover pregnancy, assisted pregnancies, domestic violence, rape, long-term debilitating illnesses, social, intellectual and behavioural problems, mothering presence and absence, safeguarding, abuse and signs of abuse, good parenting, family intervention programmes, and so forth. Tethered fraught relationships, a visceral dis/jointedness of time and space animated through EC theory and practice, pulsations of the 'living present as an inert past tense' (Barad, 2007:198) and 'haunted by worldly contacts' (*Ibid*:197). In bell hooks' words, the task is 'not to forget the past but to break its hold' (hooks, 1989:155, cited in Ahmed, 2014:33). ECS can be a difficult subject to navigate with students as different concepts, topics and curricula take hold within the classroom; fragility and friability swirl round the room.

Through entangled bodies and collapse of time with all other times (Tsing, 2015), as a pedagogue, thinking-with-touch, and the state of constant touch, demands an ethical immersion; attentiveness, responsiveness and response-ability, within HE UG ECS intimate and fragile learning spaces. Students and pedagogues touched 'through a mode of wonderment that is antecedent to consciousness' (Barad, 2007:391) and apprehended by 'the living effects, seething and lingering, of what seems over and done with, the endings that are not over' (Gordon, 2008:195). Feelings bubble up inside and overflow in seemingly unexpected ways.

...therein lies the frightening aspect of haunting: you can be grasped and hurtled into the maelstrom of the powerful and material forces that lay claim to you whether you claim then as yours or not (Gordon, 2008:166).

Staying with Gordon and Bowlbian attachment theory my body treads and navigates in careful strides, diverting the sensory intrusion and violent reverberations, sense-making movements, 'learning to not be affected or to be less affected' (Ahmed, 2017:24). Student bodies withdraw from proximity, noisy silent, awkward bodies fill the classroom, burdened bodies, attentive to the possibility of feeling forever broken and *mothersick*; a collectively animated worldly memory (Gordon, 2008:166). Invisible histories illuminated and the 'present seamlessly becoming 'the future' gets entirely jammed up' (Gordon, 2011:2).

In *After the End of the World: Entangled Nuclear Colonialisms, Matters of Force, and the Material Force of Justice*, Barad (2019:533), in relation to colonialism and the Marshall Islands histories, problematises the very nature of hospitality in its materiality and proposes that an 'ongoing violence....condenses around questions of hospitality'. Thinking-with the term hospitality, guest, host and hosting, opens-up the implications for EC theory-practice in relation to the palpable injustices and inequalities within EC, 'Attachment... smuggling social norms under the cover of claims to scientific objectivity' (Duschinsky et al., 2015:174).

Following on from Duschinsky et al, the Othering of children based on fixed ways of seeing and knowing children, results in some students, children and families being viewed from deficit perspectives with 'futures foreclosed' (Burman, 2017a:49); futures foreclosed due to systemic injustices that continue to be disseminated through 'the pursuit of beautiful moral ideals, such as "universal" human rights (still imbricated in white racism)'(Bennett, 2020:125).

As discussed in chapter four Bowlbian attachment theory is a feminist political endeavour, 'the attribution to women of responsibility for both juvenile delinquency ('from conservatives') and for child psychosis ('from radicals') was not a series of sequential veerings-around' (Riley, 1979:99). Thinking-with Bennett's notions of 'the violent conceit of a developmental superiority of European peoples and civilizations' (2020:40), fixed biological inheritance and violence, radioactive EC psychological developmental theories, such as attachment, maternal separation and deprivation, create questions around the role HE ECS pedagogues play in the *hosting* of ECS:

....the performative nature of the ghastly repetitions of incalculable violence that constitute the "host" as such. Hence, the notion of "playing" at "hosting" harkens to the multiple and compounding injustices, or rather, a superposition of injustices that result from this so-called hospitality....(Barad, 2019:534)

Following Barad (2019:533), the notions of 'playing host' (not attuned to other bodies at work in the classroom), opposed to 'being a host' (attentive and attuned to all bodies at work),

radioactive, violent developmental condensations, awaken my senses and are worked to trouble the facilitation of ECS content as a HE pedagogue. As such, these ghastly and violent Bowlb(arbar)ian theories touch bodies in unpredictable ways; as pedagogues, if we stay in the perplexed moments, uncomfortable and often alarming, 'such moments may be the source of vitality' (Ahmed, 2006:4) and transformation. In relation to the HE UG ECS classroom and in the teaching of 'dry scientific discourse' the significance of, in Barad's words, 'playing host' can be earth shattering. 'It is not simply about leaving marks, but also about the possibility of their erasure' (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001:10).

Using Barad's notion of radioactive colonialism to build on the idea of futures foreclosed, Bowlby's theorising of maternal deprivation,

is not of a past that is passed, or even decays with time, but rather, an ongoingness that is present; and at the same time, as it were, the particularity of its nuclear nature is such that it has already colonized the future as well, making evident that nuclearity in its specificity radically scrambles, if not disassembles, the imperialist universalizing sequentiality of past-present-future' (Barad, 2019:524); [e]very level of touch, then, is itself touched by all possible others (*Ibid*:531).

The nuclearity or cellular energy of Bowlby's attachment theory has the potential to disassemble past-present-future sequentialities and as an ECS pedagogue the tracings of the radical scramblings are both evident and transformational. Through entrenching HE classrooms with EC trajectories, politics and theory 'the influx of the world is felt by us' (Bennett, 2020:41). The radioactive reverberations produced from Bowlby's nuclear energy touches and leaves impressions - the coming and going and pressing-up of other bodies, producing both familiar and unfamiliar textures. As an ECS pedagogue how I host Bowlb(arbar)ian theory is politically important. The influx and efflux can leave students feeling exposed, raw and illuminated, 'sensitive body's [responding] to influx and its irritations [experiencing] hostility, fear, anger, disgust, anxiety' (*Ibid*:71). Painful sensuous past, present and futures linger, 'pain might very well pass over into a reflective form and become a

sentiment of guilt, remorse, or self-exculpation, but not unless the influx has first left its mark' (*Ibid*:48).

In the hosting of radioactive ECS theory, the way individual students experience and are in-touch with their memories and histories calls for attentive ECS teaching practices in relation to how such time reaches forward to touch, trouble, haunt and linger. As Gordon (2008:208) infers, 'ultimately haunting is about how to transform a shadow of a life into an undiminished life whose shadows touch softly in the spirit of a peaceful reconciliation'.

For students and myself, individual and collective visceral bodily memories, histories, traumas and pleasures are not abandoned at the threshold of the HE classroom door. I am not severed. I am attached and connected. Like the ECS students, I am touched in often unprecedented ways, becoming ignited through assemblages that fling and jolt me back in-touch, touched by everything and nothing at the same time. The poignant moments in this research reverberates through my body, I am, and will be continuously touched through student-pedagogue intimate and intricate encounters. Affective, awkward, uncomfortable, vulnerable and messy encounters that extend far beyond an ethics of care, where skins are perforated, calling for a relational ethics, where, as an ECS pedagogue, I am prompted by response-ability.

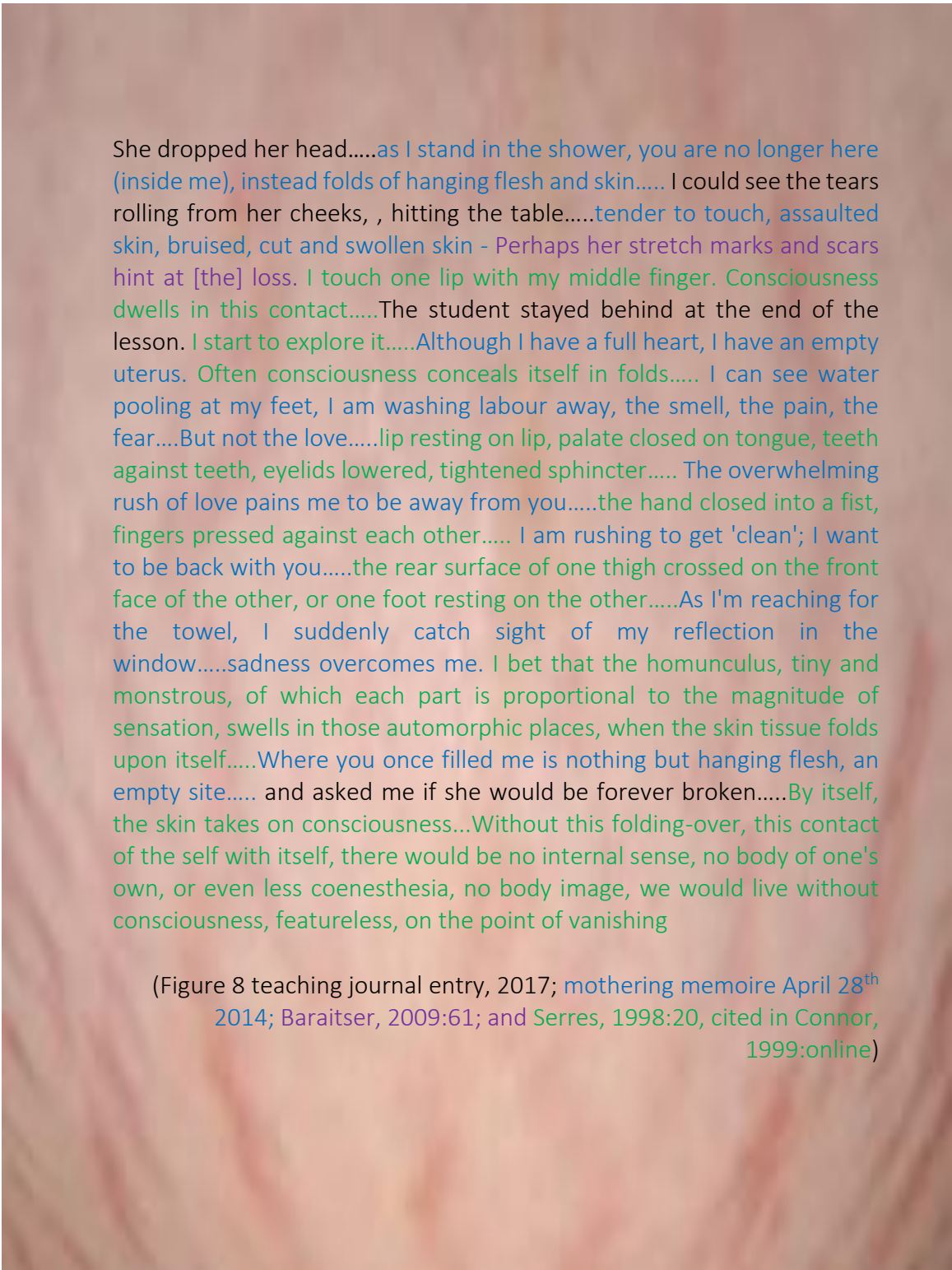
Thread three imagines touch differently in relation to human and nonhuman skins to help me think more about the perforation of skins and unsettling boundaries within ECS. Re-thinking skin theoretically attends to transformative and impressionable touching HE UG ECS landscapes. Thread three examines the exposing of radioactive EC theory, inequalities, textures, leaking and oozing bodies.

Thread three: teaching-and-leaking

'why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?'
(Haraway, 1991:178)

Following on from the above quote, Haraway (1991) in *Cyborg Manifesto* asserts that the insistence of 'bodily boundaries that ends at the skin fails to recognize the body's specific situatedness in the world' (cited in Barad, 2007:159). Thinking with Haraway is a stark reminder that 'in general terms our skins end at our histories of racism, violence and indifference' (Probyn, 2001:88). Philosophically, skins could be a site where difference is intensified, the exfoliation of boundaries, where it ingests 'structured inequality' (Barad, 2007:159) and necrosis eradicates the building of such worlds. 'To imagine skin as a site of possible embodied encounters is not only to imagine the inequality and potential violence of such encounters' (Castaneda, 2001:234), but how the textured landscapes of skin evokes a thinking-with-touch.

Skin as a companion arouses and provokes my writing in thread three - teaching and leaking, as I move to think more about the hauntings and (Gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes that thread through HE UG ECS, and the wider ECS subjects/modules/units and curricula, not just psychological development trajectories.



She dropped her head.....as I stand in the shower, you are no longer here (inside me), instead folds of hanging flesh and skin..... I could see the tears rolling from her cheeks, , hitting the table.....tender to touch, assaulted skin, bruised, cut and swollen skin - Perhaps her stretch marks and scars hint at [the] loss. I touch one lip with my middle finger. Consciousness dwells in this contact.....The student stayed behind at the end of the lesson. I start to explore it.....Although I have a full heart, I have an empty uterus. Often consciousness conceals itself in folds..... I can see water pooling at my feet, I am washing labour away, the smell, the pain, the fear....But not the love.....lip resting on lip, palate closed on tongue, teeth against teeth, eyelids lowered, tightened sphincter..... The overwhelming rush of love pains me to be away from you.....the hand closed into a fist, fingers pressed against each other..... I am rushing to get 'clean'; I want to be back with you.....the rear surface of one thigh crossed on the front face of the other, or one foot resting on the other.....As I'm reaching for the towel, I suddenly catch sight of my reflection in the window.....sadness overcomes me. I bet that the homunculus, tiny and monstrous, of which each part is proportional to the magnitude of sensation, swells in those automorphic places, when the skin tissue folds upon itself.....Where you once filled me is nothing but hanging flesh, an empty site..... and asked me if she would be forever broken.....By itself, the skin takes on consciousness...Without this folding-over, this contact of the self with itself, there would be no internal sense, no body of one's own, or even less coenesthesia, no body image, we would live without consciousness, featureless, on the point of vanishing

(Figure 8 teaching journal entry, 2017; mothering memoir April 28th 2014; Baraitser, 2009:61; and Serres, 1998:20, cited in Connor, 1999:online)

Figure 7 skin assemblage

Mobilising touch throughout this thesis, skin matters, ‘matters viscerally, and in different ways’ (Probyn, 2001:87). Picking up on threads one and two, the mingling touching bodies in ECS produce a fraught space and time; ‘skin is impressionable and conductive’ (Marks, 2000:xii). Skin allows us to touch and be touched simultaneously, being-with and being-for, where one touches and is touched by others (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001:1). As discussed as part of mothersick and (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes - bodily transformational encounters with loss, emptiness, fear, and brokenness presses up against my skin. I am touched by both the impressions and the erasure of marks as Ahmed and Stacey write about.

Thinking with Haraway, Ahmed and Stacey, Manning, and the skin assemblage (Figure 7) invites new ways of thinking boundaries within EC, ECS and research; skin(s), how skin ends (Probyn, 2001:88), how borders and limits exist (Castaneda, 2001:224), and things encapsulated by skin. In re-thinking skin philosophically, boundary-crossing occurs, perforations, time collapses, and breaches in and through human-nonhuman skins are encountered (Haraway, 1991); impressionable, becoming-I, conductive, exposing, broken, vulnerable skins. As Serres (2008:3) articulates so beautifully, skin is the mutable milieu of ‘the changing, shimmering, fleeting soul, the blazing, striated, tinted, streaked, striped, many-coloured, mottled, cloudy, starstudded, bedizened, variegated, torrential, swirling soul’. Through which the skins of bodies protect us as well as render us vulnerable (Manning, 2007:9) – leaking, broken and mothersick bodies. Oozing bodies that become transformational in intra-action with one another. Yes they leak, pulsate, and congeal, but it is through this process of exposing, cutting, decapitating and severing, bodies are transformed. Like the finger on lips, tears rolling down cheeks and pregnancy, ECS presses up against skins, is exposing and leaves indentations, scarrings and marks. ‘While the nearness of others is always ‘felt’ on the skin, that nearness also involves distance, or the impossibility of getting inside the other’s skin’ (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001:10). Even at a distance bodies can proximate, affect, shape the contours of space, and impressions are made and unmade:

Perhaps her stretch marks and scars hint at [the] loss.....You are no longer here (inside me).....She dropped her head, and I could see the tears rolling

from her cheeks hitting the table.....instead folds of hanging flesh and skin. The student stayed behind..... tender to touch, assaulted skin, bruised, cut and swollen.... and asked me if she would 'be forever broken' (mothering memoire April 28th 2014; Baraitser, 2009:61; Serres, 1998:20, cited in Connor, 1999:online; and Teaching diary entry, 2017).

The skin assemblage (Figure 7) creates, permeates and violates my sensing thinking body. This idea of feeling empty and full of void, crammed full of her(stories) can be tormenting. Within HE ECS classrooms, the closeness or distance of bodies with other bodies, mingling, touching, sometimes insidiously violent, sometimes quick and violent, produce unpredictable moments. Moments that go on to linger and as Scarry writes 'even gets inside me' (1985:15 cited in Ahmed, 2014:27). Moments in time that break boundaries of here and there.

The teachings of ECS can puncture, permeate and violate skin(s), bodies already marked with domestic violence, alcohol and drug dependency, infertility, abandonment, child abuse, poverty, anxiety, rape, pregnancies, termination of pregnancy, loss of a child, loneliness. ECS students becoming different in themselves, an atemporal (dis)orientation, enmeshed with babyhood, childhood and motherhood histories and memories, moves pedagogues and students alike, into 'an immense abstract machine compromising an infinite number of assemblages' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:299), filled with complex molecular ambiguous touching encounters, crossing thresholds, dismantling the organism, significance and subjectification (*Ibid*:186). As ECS pedagogue, '[m]y body, without any intentional or conscious instruction, leak[s]' (Moore, 2007:305), it becomes a modality for discussion around pregnancy, breastfeeding, midwifery, social class, gender, feminism.... despite the detailed resources, lesson plans and curricula. Students become enthralled in anecdotal mothering and midwifery storytelling. Losing control over the lesson content is not problematic (providing teaching observations are not taking place), what is felt as problematic is the 'outing' of my body, the leakiness as it 'contaminates rational and bounded spaces.....distinctions between self and other, to contaminate and engulf' (Moore, 2007:306).

With the close tracking of my skin's marked surface with a tear and the descent of the movement (as skin gives in to gravity), I am bringing my

past body into my present text which is, as Grosz notes, 'almost as if the skin itself served as a notebook, a reminder of what was not allowed to be forgotten' (Grosz 1995:132, cited in Reid, 2010:61).

Within the HE UG ECS classroom the intimacy and proximity of bodies, human and non-human, allows skin to be recited and traced, the body hair, veins, hair pores, hormonal imbalances, nails, scars, pimples, diet, disease, wrinkles, trauma, and its odour; a *'tool with which the human and corporeal can be magnified and revealed'* (Bromberg, 2000:27, cited in Reid, 2010:60. Emphasis authors own). My skin is exposing and well written, tiredness, embarrassment, age, suffering, enjoyment and its superficialities and health. For me, this means working through 'the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present' (Ahmed, 2014:33), the friable scar tissue, bruised and necrotized skin, the (her)stories and the ghostly (s)kin(s), marked by the sociological and biological. As Probyn (2001:90-91) infers, '[s]kin is the most obvious social marker.....Despite being a touchy subject best avoided in certain contexts, we must none the less learn to grapple with it, get our hands sticky'.

Skins are permeated through student-pedagogue touching encounters within the classroom, outside the classroom, one to one tutorials, office hours and dissertation supervision. Despite the professional expectations and pressures of HE to maintain myself as a knowing subject and bounded body, my leaky body is a site of exposure, a site to be read and re-read in the classroom; it creates and disrupts. Scars, marks and lines carved in the flesh, laughter lines, frown lines, stretch marks, 'become the external trace of the world, as signs of who we are on the flesh that folds and unfolds before others', signs of the past-present-future, 'the lines of rebellion and resistance that gather over time to create new impressions on the skin' (Ahmed, 2006:18), the changes in skin texture, body hair, head hair, liver spots and pigmentation of the mature and mothering body.

The following thread - conforming and performing bodies - builds on the growing field of resistance to humancentric EC research that assumes it is able to represent and act knowingly on an inert world. Across the fields of children's geographies (Hackett et al., 2018; Taylor and

Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2017), teacher education (Lenz Taguchi, 2010), professionalism (Moxnes and Osgood, 2018), ECEC practice (Taylor and Fairchild, 2020) and gender (Osgood, 2014; Taylor and Fairchild, 2020), scholars vary in their explicit endeavours to dismantle humancentric perspectives in early childhood research, yet they are all committed to reconceptualizing the 'human' in human-beings towards a more-than-human ensemble. Such new possibilities offer different approaches to engage both ethically and politically in an affirmative exploration of EC. By doing so, FNM and PH push back on anthropocentric legacies and tendencies that work to deny and refute the lively and energetic relations among the human, animal, machine and atmospheres. In-turn challenging the more traditional research methodologies and methods that focus on anthropocentric ways of seeing, doing, collecting and analysing *data*. PH works to smudge the boundaries between humans and machines, and in this context is useful when thinking about conforming and performing bodies - when you don't fit, you fidget within ECS and ECEC spaces.

Thread four: conforming and performing bodies - when you don't fit, you fidget

'How quickly the fidgeting body appears to be not residing in the right place' (Ahmed, 2017:132)

In the context of UK ECEC nursery and schooling practices, carpet time for example is a well-rehearsed routine. It is often referred to as the time in the day, where children and practitioner gather together on the floor, a book may be read, a song may be sung, a story may be told, bubbles may be blown, hugs may be offered, and for older children, this is a time for the register and where the pedagogue details how the day will unfold.

During the setting up of snack time, the baby-room hosts carpet time. During which babies are not allowed to move around the room, and cannot move off the black and white rug onto the green rug (both rugs are touching, connected, almost one giant rug). Some of the older babies (12 – 15 month) begin to arrange themselves on the black and white rug located in the corner of the baby-room, the remainder of the babies some mobile some not yet mobile are positioned/placed into an upright position onto the same rug by the practitioners.

I can feel a shift in the atmosphere. The babies appear hungry, excited for their snacks, but remain very quiet; almost docile. Reminds me of the couple of minutes before taking my dog for a walk when he can see the lead in my hand (Research diary entry, 12.12.2018).



Figure 5 sit down nicely

In an attempt to play with the fixity of nursery and schooling regulatory practices, the assemblages are understood as being co-constituted by friable and slippery data threads. Gesturing to their fibrous composition, the photographs and research diary entries on the page move around, are fluid, bleeding, touching, caressing and provoking each other, the writing, the researcher, the keyboard, the screen and time; the data threads fidget, are unruly, and become a frustrating task to hold in one place for the sake of the production of this thesis. As

they move around on the page, the narrative of the research diary entry touches the photographs and the photographs touch-upon the narrative – reaching across and through the HE UG ECS classroom. Within these entangled data threads, somewhere between my body, the baby-room, the baby, the ECP, the rug, the atmosphere(s), the bodily affects, bodies move from docility to restrained. Somewhere in the middle, bodies are expected to conform and perform. Not just the babies bodies, the rugs, the ECP's, the researchers, the atmospheres, the snacks, the furniture. The ECP's set the tone in the room, but what pulled me, and something I discussed in teaching and leaking, is the refusal to be bounded - producing fidgeting bodies bursting with energy and curiosity:

I am drawn to one particular baby. The baby moves ever so slowly over to the green rug but is asked to move back and sit down nicely, after several times of being asked, and a change in the tone of practitioner voice, the baby moves back and positions her bottom on the edge of the black and white rug, whilst the foot and leg remained touching the green rug (Research diary entry, 12.12.2018).



Figure 6 lively rugs

The body language, silences, haughty sounds, urgency, willingness and unwillingness to conform is deafening – calling my body to take note and register the affects. I did not know where to place myself in the baby-room. Was I a distraction for the babies and ECP's – my presence, my absence (something I often feel in the ECS classroom). I obeyed the rules. Eventually I removed myself from the green rug and squeezed my adult size body onto the black and white rug, facing the ECP with the babies. Almost mimicking the ECP - sitting with

my legs crossed, fingers in a clasped position, back upright, my body conforming. The traces of the green woollen rug touching all other bodies, atmosphere, voices, temper, bits of dried mud stuck to the bottom of my socks, babies wet giggles and snot plastered up the arm of my sleeve, speckles of glitter stuck to the palm of my hands, which in-turn made its way to my face, up my nose, in my gut, in my socks and in my bra. The touching events of the day visible on my body.

The baby not wanting to sit down on the black and white rug is viewed as unruly, a disobeyer, stubborn, a child that never listens. Cold stares and glances ricochet around the room, like the wind entering the windows from the outside whirling with the blinds, firmly taken by the arm to be seated, the ECP enacts an unforgiving attitude – reminding the baby of the need to listen and sit down ‘nicely’. This word ‘nice’, is a running theme, often used in the baby-room by the ECP’s when reminding babies of appropriate conduct during snack-time, play-time, meal-time, sleep-time and carpet-time. It makes me think about ‘nice’ as a verb in the context of managing behaviour expectations within andragogical and pedagogical spaces, the ECEC setting and more specifically in the baby-room; nice piece of writing, be nice to each other, sit down nicely. Nice – the doing word.

These carpet-time data threads, where the uprightness of the babies’ bodies is an expectation, is a place my body is created through curiosity and a taste of displeasure. The ECP is a physical reminder of UK national nursery and schooling practice and policy. Policies demarcated as ECS knowledge; when attending to the personal, emotional and social development of a child within the teachings of ECS. These cartesian educational concepts that feed into the discourse of ‘school readiness’ in the UK, contextualise the powerful and somewhat silent bodies that students, babies and children’s bodies bump up against. In relation to the babies, students and researcher in this research, the fidgeting, the touching, restless and curious bodies pose a potential threat of unruliness. As MacLure et al. (2012) state, discursive practices consider the idea of problem behaviour being ‘associated with poor impulse control, motivation and concentration; the inability to cooperate and anticipate consequences; low empathy and self-

esteem; 'language delay'; and deficiencies in 'emotional literacy' (448). Although I will not linger around school readiness for too long, for the purpose of conforming and performing bodies, it is important to add a richer context in relation to the babies and ECP's in the baby-room.

Stop moving, stop fidgeting, keep still, pay attention, quiet now, sit quietly, sit up straight, fold your legs, stop talking, eat nicely, drink nicely, sit nicely... obey nicely; a standardised control over babies and young children's bodies, to ensure their bodies are, 'operating within 'normal' tolerances of behaviour' (MacLure et al., 2012:447), serves the purpose for key performance indicators towards the readiness of the UK schooling discourse. Schooling discourses which are dominated by child development psychology and 'privilege a particular model of normality' (Walkerdine, 1999:2, cited in MacLure et al., 2012:449), and as such, some bodies are Othered. As discussed, one of the key terms within the schooling discourse includes the notion of 'school readiness'. A concept widely supported and reviewed within the UK. Although educational reviews such as The Tickell Report (Tickell, 2011) and The Allen Report (Allen, 2011), do not provide a nationally agreed definition of 'school readiness', the term refers to a measuring tool, used to assess how well prepared a child is to succeed in school cognitively, socially and emotionally; supporting notions of 'pro-social behaviour' and 'emotional self-regulation' (Holmes, 2020:501). As such, any child attending a children's centre, private nursery, childminder, pre-school, primary and infant school providing EYFS provision, will be evaluated against early learning goals as stated in the EYFS (DfE, 2021). Discourse-based perspectives that position a baby and young child's demeanour against the idea(l) of 'normal', acceptable, appropriate, responsive, abiding, orderly and proper; the notion of a 'good' child as opposed to 'problem' child (MacLure et al., 2012:448); sameness versus difference.

Staying with the data threads, the babies in figure 5 were rewarded for their good behaviour leading up to snack-time and being 'nice'. The body of the ECP, arms open wide, warm glance, inviting hands for the obeying and complying bodies – reminds me of the days of training my dog to sit, lie down, roll over and stay. The ECPs' needed the babies to stay on the rug and not

move. Setting-up at snack and meal times is a serious business. I am touched by the need for babies to sit still, stay put and obey. Bodies becoming irritable, agitated, uneasy, uncomfortable and curious; these fidgeting bodies are anything but in line with normative connotations, fidgeting bodies are restless and provoking:

Feminism can begin with a body, a body in touch with a world, a body that is not at ease in a world; a body that fidgets and moves around. Things don't seem right (Ahmed, 2017:22).

Thinking with Ahmed above, bodies not inline, that do not follow the lines, for example, developmentalism trajectories, will be ceased, straightened out and restrained both literally and metaphorically. The carpet is one of a number of routines and processes in the nursery that straighten out babies' bodies. Another mechanism is the high chair that regulates how they sit, how long they are held in captivity, steering their culturally diverse eating practices into something done at a table, on a chair, above the floor, occurring somewhere between the intra-action of chair, table, smells, utensils, noise, body, fluids and food.



Figure 1 fidgeting bodies assemblage

Reminding me of the Houdini's straight jacket, the lithotomy chair in medicine, high chairs for feeding babies, and practices of restraint within mental health institutions, although the babies did not have anything physically restraining their bodies during carpet-time, through the silence, gestures, adult gaze, atmospheres, fibrous rug, EC politics and policy, the EYFS (DfE, 2021), the babies were restricted and submissive.

The restraining of the babies bodies flings me to the obstetric room, reverberations of the restrained maternal and fetal body. A medicalised model of childbirth; 'couplings between organism and machine' (Haraway, 1991:150). A model that bounds bodies to medicine, genetics, politics, time, room, bed, national and local birthing outcomes, statistics and practitioner competencies:

Annie laboured throughout the morning, supported by her family and I, and progressed to full dilation of the cervix, with involuntary and intermittent urges to bear down. Annie was in full control of her birthing environment, listening and responding to her body. The baby continued to descend through the maternal pelvis. I encouraged Annie to breathe through the urges to push, to allow her baby to descend and avoid maternal and fetal exhaustion and perineal oedema.

With the change in shift coordination the band 7 midwife took over - Annie's space changed - lights turned up, metal stool dragged from one side of the room to another. In amongst the screeching sound of metal against the floor, and the shifting of objects (personal bags, food, drinks, trays), the midwife invited Annie into a conversation about 'is she sure she wants to stay in the pool to birth her baby' (Midwifery diary entry, December 2008).

These subtle (or not so subtle) changes in atmosphere move me to the changes in the HE classroom and baby-room. Babies free to roam and play, to the restraining of babies during carpet-time, snack-time and dinner-time. Similar to student bodies in the HE classroom as they navigate and somewhat negotiate their experiences of motherhood, babyhood and childhoods that get bounded up by radioactive Bowlb(arbar)ian theorising within ECS – broken bodies, bodies in need of fixing and remediating.

Despite the movements in the baby-room, the processes in the delivery room and the curriculum content in the HE UG ECS classroom involving something of a well-rehearsed routine, the assemblages and intra-active events of bodies, environments, equipment, resources, materials and matter also produce an excess, something unpredictable and unknown. As discussed throughout thread three, far from being self-contained, bounded, pre-determined identities in themselves, the students', babies' and Annie 'encounter a world in which nonhuman materialities have power, a power that the "bourgeois I," with its pretensions to autonomy, denies' (Bennett, 2010:16). Thinking with Bennett, when teaching powerful emotive EC concepts discussed in thread two, being with babies in the baby-room, and caring for women during childbirth, things in the HE classroom, baby-room and birthing room take hold of me and drag me into the imaginary possibilities where EC and ECS pedagogical spaces

become enmeshed; entwined, complex, over-powering, breath-taking, I am overwhelmed with the precarious affects of all things material. The capacity of the bodies within the HE classroom, baby-room and the birthing room are 'not restricted to a passive "intractability" but also.... the ability to make things happen, to produce effects' (Bennett, 2010:5). In Barad's (2012:208) words, '[t]ouch moves and affects what it effects'.

Annie got out of the pool - lifted and carried by four midwives, onto the bed. Piezoelectric transducers materialize (and are iteratively rematerialized) in intra-action with a multitude of practices..... *The midwife in-charge did not feel comfortable in overseeing the care of a 'pool birth' and expressed the relief now Annie was out of the pool and on to the bed.* In obstetric ultrasonography, the piezoelectric transducer is the interference between the objectification of the fetus and the subjectivation of the technician physician, engineer, and scientist - *monitored by the machines as opposed to the hands of the midwife.* Obstetric ultrasonography is not a singular practice but a range of different local practices involving a myriad of material configurations and discursive formations (*Midwifery diary entry, December 2008* Barad, 2007:203-204).

Childbirth is intra-active as things are contingent and immanent with a million possibilities and potentialities. Machines in a constant state of touch with Annie - chimaeras, becoming-prostheses; 'theorised and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism' a cyborg incarnation and replication 'uncoupled from organic reproduction' (Haraway, 1991:150). During the intimate moments of touch in the HE ECS classroom, being with the babies in the ECEC setting and caring for a woman in the birthing room 'there is a sensuality of the flesh, an exchange of warmth, a feeling of pressure, of presence, a proximity of otherness that brings the other nearly as close as oneself' (Barad, 2012:206).

In Haraway's (1991) words 'the cyborg woman' emerges, a 'creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction' (149), 'hybrid entities made of first, ourselves and other organic creatures in our unchosen 'high-technological' guise as information systems, texts, and ergonomically controlled labouring, desiring, and reproducing systems' (1), troubles what counts as women's experience and is committed to 'partially, irony, intimacy, and perversity' (151).

A rejection of rigid boundaries between bodies (Annie's and the foetus; Annie's and the hospital protocols; Annie's and the midwives'; Annie's and the machines; machines and the foetus....) a 'condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation' (Haraway, 1991:150). Bodies dealt with as a whole but also in parts and broken pieces – a physical thing, physiological and biological entity in transition, in process. Bodies being positioned, manoeuvred and handled by visible and sometimes invisible forces – conforming and performing; carpet-time bodies, mothering bodies, maternal bodies, ECS.

[To summarise: 'sticky' and 'contingent attachment\[s\]'](#)

Student, baby, ECP, pregnant women, birthing women and researcher bodies that fidget are not 'upright, straight, and in line' (Ahmed, 2006:159), they are awkward, odd, twisted, bent and queer; worldly and sticky. I experience the data threads as ongoing explorations of the significance of materials and matter in EC. This allows me to undo something of the distinctions or distinctiveness often made between things and humans, and instead, examine the idea of 'sticky' and 'contingent attachment[s] in or to the world' (Ahmed, 2004:27).

Staying in the threshold towards disavowing the paths of neoliberalism notions of motherhood, babyhood and childhood produces ghostly, haunted, (dis)orientated, odd and queer potentialities. Although ambitious in the attempts and somewhat possibly naïve, the entangled, thinking, restrained and fidgeting bodies, mothersickness and broken bodies, and student temporalities that shape and attempt to straighten-out bodies become contorted, towards an 'avowing the force of questions that have too readily foreclosed by more familiar fetishizations: the fetishization of the subject, the image, the word' (Brown cited in Bennett, 2010:19). The lively assemblages of chapter five disrupts the notion of agency in the traditional sense, towards a distributed notion across the assemblages at play, 'rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts' (Bennett, 2010:23). The affects generated by the assemblages enables fissures within EC

human-centred policies, practice and theory to erupt, demanding an ethical response-ability that crosses the human-nonhuman-morethanhuman.

Haraway (2008) infers, it is the actual encounters that make beings and through the pattern they enact, all actors are undone; a becoming, becoming with, becoming worldly and worlding. Lenz Taguchi (2010:5) might propose the ECS child development curriculum content, Annie being manoeuvred into the hospital bed, the green and black and white rug, utterances of brokenness, high chairs, cyborg women and emptiness 'can be understood to actively work' (Lenz Taguchi, 2010:5) towards babies and students bodies complying politically.

The radioactive Bowlb(arbar)ian EC abstractions, hauntings, feeling forever broken, mothersick, lithotomy poles and rug(s) are lively. Energetic political forces pulling babies to sit, stand, sprawl, move and socialize with other bodies in certain ways. The same energetic forces at play within the HE UG ECS classroom and birthing-room. The powerful psychological developmental theories that reverberate through human and nonhuman bodies haunting student and pedagogue bodily knowledges and histories, similar to the medicalised model of childbirth materialised through the hospital bed, restraining the bodies of women through national key performance indicators, protocols, guidelines and policies. As such, unruly fidgeting bodies disobey the expectations of other bodies and become a problem within 'westernised values which dominate policy and practice' (Peters et al., 2020:9). The hard, shiny, noisy metallic tasting bed and green scratchy dryness of the woollen rug, plastic covers and durable piles of knotted threads, enticing, attracting, and locking-in all sorts of *things*; bits of blood, body tissue, food-crumbs, stones, liquids, bodily fluids, soil, sand, smells, babies bodies, insects, bacteria, dust, glitter, glue, national health and education policies, attitudes, giggles, cries, sleep, perceptions, noise, silences and provocations, whilst simultaneously bringing to the forefront the mothersick body, non-conforming, out-of-line, problematic, troubling and fidgeting bodies 'off' the hospital bed, HE ECS classroom and baby-room rug.

(Re)imagining what these movements feel like for students and the babies, not in preparation for school, but affective forces that pull the body, something other than dominant childhood abstractions feels possible. Given my iterations with midwifery, motherhood and ECS, it is also important to recognize the pulling of my body towards working the data threads inside of EC discursive frames. I am very aware of repetition and falling into the familiar trap of chronologically age distinction and ableism; ages of the babies being asked to conform and perform, wider context of physiology of sensory modulation and sensory processing – vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (brain) systems, in-turn reinstalling developmentalism within ECS. As Ahmed (2017:9) states, ‘it is not the difficulty that can be resolved by familiarity or repetition; in fact, familiarity and repetition are the source of difficulty’.

Chapter five has explored ECS as a commitment and process, which lay bare the feminist engagements and, at times, the stutters, stumbles and troubles along the way. The transversal moves attended in the materialisation of this thesis produces wonderment of thought in the troubling of 'conventional conceptions for how we understand and research' the 'human child in early childhood contexts' through the deep immersion of feminist thinking, ‘epistemologies, philosophies and activisms’ (Osgood and Robinson, 2019:122).

In the following and final chapter, I will discuss the stories produced by this research, the key challenges, and the contributions to knowledge.

Chapter six: so what?

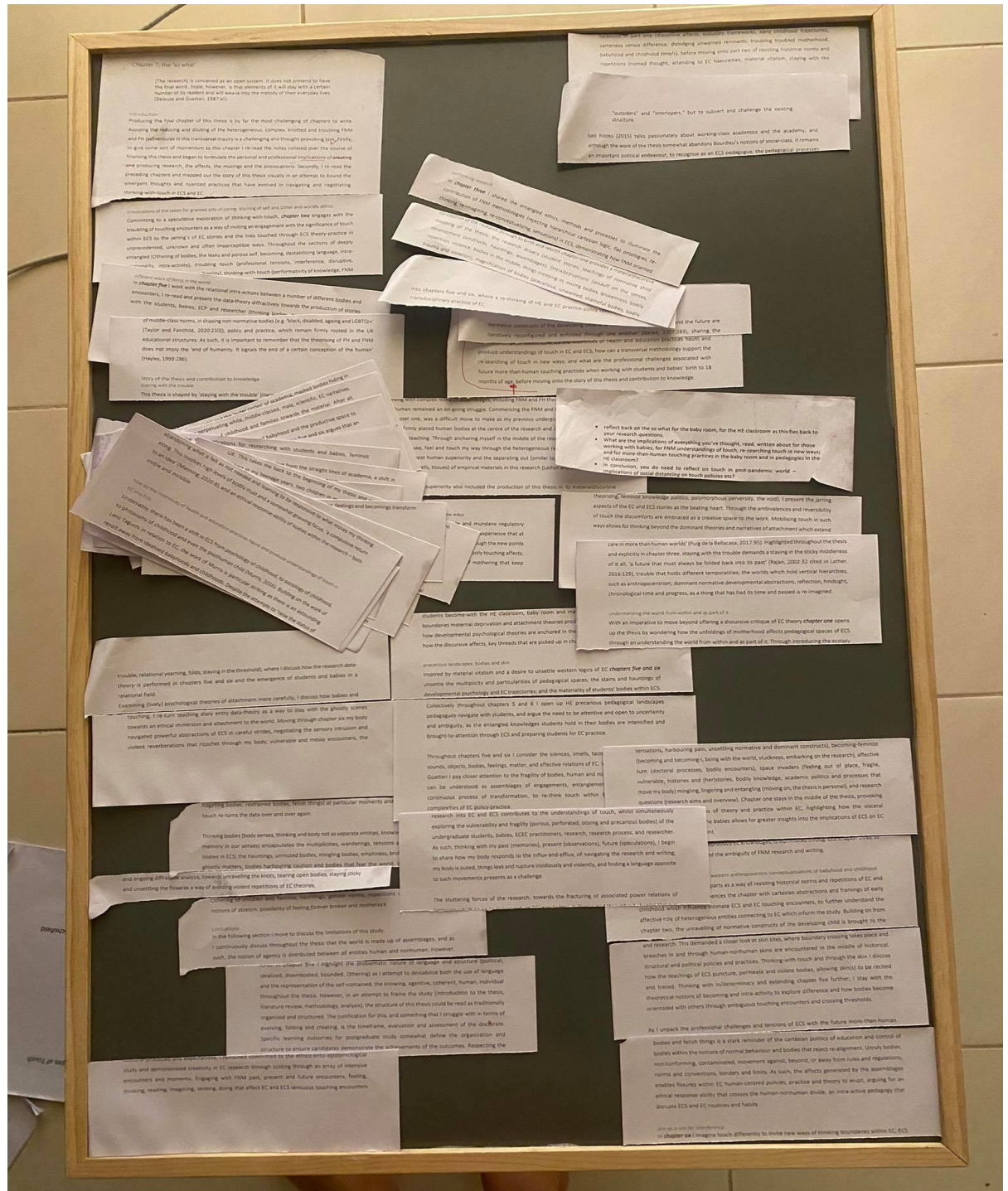


Figure 9 tearing it up

[The research] is conceived as an open system. It does not pretend to have the final word...hope, however, is that elements of it will stay with a certain number of its readers and will weave into the melody of their everyday lives (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:xii).

Producing the final chapter of this thesis is by far the most challenging of chapters to write. Avoiding the reducing and diluting of the heterogeneous, complex, knotted and troubling FNM and PH (ad)ventures in this transversal inquiry is a thought-provoking task. Firstly, to give some sort of momentum to this chapter I re-read the notes collated over the course of finalising this thesis and began to formulate the personal and professional implications of producing research, the affects, the musings and the provocations. Secondly, I re-read the preceding chapters and mapped out the story of this thesis visually in an attempt to fold in the emergent thoughts and nuanced practices that have evolved in navigating and negotiating thinking-with-touch in ECS and EC. After re-reading over and over again and writing-up chapter six several times I needed to think through the sentences and paragraphs of the text – I needed to tear it up (Figure 9).

I begin here by re-turning the four key research questions;

- What can Feminist New Materialist-oriented research into ECEC contribute to understandings of touch?
- How do the interstices of health and education practices haunt and produce particular understandings of touch in EC and ECS?
- How can a transversal methodology support the re-searching of touch in new ways?
- What are the professional challenges associated with future more-than-human touching practices when working with students and babies' birth to 18 months of age?

Thinking with some of the troublesomeness of this thesis I commence chapter six with *unravelling* before moving onto research *departures* and the *story of the thesis* where I attend to the contribution of EC and ECS knowledge.

Unravelling

I continuously discuss throughout the thesis that the world is made up of assemblages, and as such, the notion of agency is distributed between *all* entities human and nonhuman. However, working with complex research assemblages, including FNM and PH theorising, the de-centring of the human remained an on-going struggle. Commencing the FNM and PH research, as discussed in chapter one, was a difficult move to make as my previous UG and postgraduate studies firmly placed human bodies at the centre of the research and care provision; midwifery, ECEC and teaching. Through anchoring myself in the middle of the research I was able to smell, taste, hear, see, feel and touch my way through the heterogeneous research assemblages, and attempt to resist human superiority and the separating out (similar to the fetus and maternal fluids, organs, cells, tissues) of empirical materials in this research (Lather and St Pierre, 2013).

Resisting human superiority also included the production of this thesis in its materialdiscursive form. In chapter one I highlight the problematic nature of language and structure (political, idealized, disembodied, bounded, Othering) as I attempt to destabilize both the use of language and the representation of the self-contained, the knowing, agentic, coherent, human, individual throughout the thesis but more specifically in thread three. However, in an attempt to frame the study, the structure of this thesis could be read as traditionally organized and structured. The justification for this, and something that I struggle with in terms of evolving, folding and creating, is the timeframe, evaluation and assessment of the doctorate. Specific learning outcomes for postgraduate study somewhat define the organization and structure to ensure candidates demonstrate the achievements of the learning outcomes. Respecting the doctoral processes and expectations, I remained committed to the ethico-onto-epistemological study by cutting through an array of intensive encounters and moments. Engaging with FNM past, present and future encounters, feeling, thinking, reading, imagining, sensing, doing that affect EC and ECS sensuous touching encounters and ongoing diffractive

analysis, towards unravelling the knots, tearing open bodies, staying sticky and unsettling the flows as a way of avoiding violent repetitions of EC theories.

Departures

how can a transversal methodology support the re-searching of touch in new ways?

The transversal inquiry demonstrates the capacity of the miniscule and mundane regulatory teaching, learning and caring practices to disrupt, 'producing a small 'blank' in experience that at once arrests and provides new points of departure' (Baraitser, 2009:11). Although the new points of departure can be fragile, precarious and provoking, in-turn inviting ghostly touching affects, this thesis cuts through the EC twist and turns, and 'the intelligences of mothering that keep bubbling up in my thoughts' (Bartlett, 2000:175).

In chapter one – *assembling*, I shared how the research departed from the straight lines of academia, a shift in direction, which involves breaking-up, moving-on, getting lost, going AWOL, pulled and stretched, all in an attempt to think new possibilities within EC and ECS. The extension of bodies into unfamiliar spaces created new folds and threads, taking my body into other dimensions and new worlds, folding this way, folding that way and completely imbricated; in which the surfaces of bodies mingled, evolved and touched in unprecedented ways. Manoeuvring in such ways throughout the thesis, the normative bodily repetitions of EC became unbounded and let loose. As such, the research produced a series of moments shared as data threads which continued to twist, fold and unfold in mysterious and unanticipated transversal moves, that challenged the traditional and conventional methods of EC research and heteronormative theorising of human and non-human bodies.

The transversal methodology across multiple research sites held bodies in the middle of this research, allowing things to creep in and creep out. A mobilisation of motherhood, babyhood, childhood sensing pasts produced neologisms, such as mothersick, Bowlb(arbar)ian and (gh)host(ile)(ly) which conjure transversality and spacetime-mattering in all that I do in the HE ECS classroom and ECEC environments. Memories, histories and (her)stories - severed

encounters shared and assembled. Cuts that brought pain to the surface(s) and bodies become ambiguous, unnerving, raw and exposed.

The work of this thesis has been a way to re-invent through some of these raw, painful, heart wrenching, soul shifting and fleshy affects of 'non-normative' constructs, and the nursing of anger, violence, frustration, loneliness and anxiety, which scar, puncture, break and bruise bodies. My hope is that something 'truly generative, surprising, and unexpected may have broken through' the discursive boundary making practices of EC, 'with another sensibility; precisely a sensibility that I cannot anticipate' (Baraitser, 2009:3). For example, in the commotion of the process of assembling, or putting my body into words, tingling's, reverberations, intensities, complexities, mutilations, I have asked many bodily questions throughout this final phase of writing e.g. why as a white British female and non-Muslim body do I feel liberated living and working in a country, which could be judged as less liberal than the UK? This takes me back to the beginning of this thesis and confirmation of my first child – bodies out of place. Two children in my teenage years, two children in my twenties, and two children in my thirties, has been the focus of many discussions. I am often defined by the midwife or lecturer with six children. Questions around, how do you do it? Are all six children yours? Are all six children alive? Do all six children live with you? Are you married? Same father? Such questions are launched over and over again. They can gnaw away at your bones, bodies become fragile and wounds get bigger and bigger. It is through these raw moments of undoing, that this thesis suggests new coagulations take form; mothering constellations haemorrhage unexceptional encounters, and intimate and intricate EC sensations, emotions, feelings and becomings transform EC trajectories.

As alluded to throughout chapter five, the stigma and shame of being judged as a politically, culturally, and socially flawed mother is truly haunting. In my twenties and thirties such questions and the answers I gave would lodge in my throat. Cultural politics of living in the UK, as an ECP, midwife and ECS pedagogue rendered my body awkward and uncomfortable. The repetitive overtones of EC psychological developmental theories augment bodily affects of

inadequacy, fraud, exhaustion, embarrassment, frustration, oddness and queerness. As Baraitser (2009:4) infers, it is through such encounters the 'mother emerges....not only as a subject of interruption, encumbered, viscous, impeded, but also re-sensitized to sound, smell, emotions, sentient awareness, language, love'. Living and working (teaching ECS) in a non-western context feels somewhat liberating. My body fits in, and I am not quite sure why - except the space to no longer excuse and explain my female body and the bodies of my children.

Leaving a familiar life in the UK and (re)positioning myself, allows my body to heal and the writing to flourish. In the words of Sara Ahmed (2006:12), 'you dance with joy at the anonymity of bare walls, untouched by the faces of loved ones that throw the body into another time and place'.

[how FNM oriented research into ECEC contributes to understandings of touch](#)

This thesis contributes to the theoretical field of post-qualitative research, including the researching of affective practices and sensory stimulation. It proposes babies as 'resourceful and resilient through relationships' (Murriss, 2016:i) with all bodies, human, non-human and more-than-human and the implications of this for EC research-practice. My EC sensing emerges in the movement of FNM and PH theories throughout this thesis, thinking and working with diffraction to explore alternative ways of thinkingfeelingdoingknowing data-theory-practice to (re)conceptualise the complexities of touch within ECS, and 'holds greater potential to explore unforeseen, not-yet-known possibilities' (Moxnes and Osgood, 2018:298). The difficulty has been abandoning what is not needed and learning to be responsive to what moves my thinking along. This involves high levels of bodily trust and a somewhat gnawing focus, 'a compulsive return to an idea' (Manning, 2020:8), and an ethical response-ability of bodies within the research – both visible and invisible.

how do the interstices of health and education practices haunt and produce particular understandings of touch in EC and ECS

Undeniably, there has been a shift in ECS from psychology of childhood, to sociology of childhood, to philosophy of childhood, including the figure of the posthuman child (Murris, 2016). Building on the work of Lenz Taguchi in relation to EC, the work of Murris is particularly striking as there is an astounding revolt away from idealised babyhoods and childhoods. Despite the attempts to 'raise the status of childhood, and re-position the child in relation to the adult to produce child-led pedagogies that contrast with adult-directed learning' (MacRae, 2019:3), psychology remains the dominant discipline in EC policy, practice and curriculum design globally (Moss, in Murris, 2016:xiv). However, thinkingfeelingdoing EC reading with Karin Murris and Lenz Taguchi, and philosophising with Barad, Manning, and Deleuze and Guattari, stretched the possibilities of pushing back the discursive boundary-making practices that give form to 'normal' development, and what I described as mothersick, radioactive theories and Bowlb(arbar)ian theorising of motherhood, babyhood and childhood within ECS.

This thesis offers alternative readings of motherhood, babyhood and childhood, and the productive space to think other than EC and ECS policy-driven outcomes. As such, chapter five argues that a leaky sense of self and transformative landscapes disrupt ECS and EC routines and habits, towards a resilient, resourceful and unbounded materialdiscursive childhood(s). The political endeavours discussed in chapter five, require academic bravery, and the emergence of like-minded, non-conforming, thinking, broken and fidgeting bodies towards the creation and experimentation of EC programmes of study. Programmes that discontinue perpetuating white, middle-classed, male, dry scientific, EC narratives. Abandoning the (de)conceptualising of childhood and families towards the material. After all, '[s]ingle vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters' (Haraway, 1991:154).

the professional challenges associated with future more-than-human touching practices

Working within the realms of PH and FNM creates tensions within the writing, and has certainly challenged my abilities to create a thesis in which I fold and unfold the affects of motherhood,

babyhood and childhood throughout the writing. The process of this doctorate, has called my body into question over and over again. An exposure of oneself to the world, producing vulnerabilities and unsettling sediments which have sunk to the bottom of my body for many years. Awakening and disturbing such sediments, is both taunting and haunting - moments filled with trauma, anxiety and stress 'about the loss of an imagined future' (Ahmed, 2006:19). The production of this thesis has been cathartic, allowing moments to flow in and flow out; (re)visited and (re)lived. The path or even life course I am expected to follow and pursue as a woman and mother, got unmade, kicked-up, disturbed- erasing the marks left by the everyday comings and goings of bodies, in which the hauntings and taunting's generate alternative paths. After all, 'haunting is one of the most important places where meaning – comprehension – and force intersect' (Gordon, 2008:194).

(vulern)abilities

Classism, heterosexism, ageism, racism, sexism, ableism, and so forth, continue to orientate bodies in profound and indescribable ways, often portraying beyond space, place and time. However, the feminist work of Osgood and Robinson (2019), stays committed to the 'isms' firmly rooted within ECS, and produces exciting and speculative methodological approaches to stay sticky to the issues of 'gender, class, race and disability' (8). As Haraway (1991:139) notes, 'if capitalism and patriarchy are a single system, called capitalist patriarchy, then the struggle against class and gender oppressions must be unified. The struggle is the obligation of men and women'.

Such forms of orientations are responsible for the regulation of bodies and things, what is inside and what is outside, the 'inner circle' and the 'outer circles' of academia, masked bodies hiding in the shadows.

The "structural" dimension of class can be thought of as the ways in which workers are positioned on the factory floor, through recruitment practices and a particular division of labor. This positioning of workers is contingent on the politics of gender and community, since such identities are instrumental in decisions regarding the positioning of workers; thus,

gender and community are integral to the class “structure.” Meanwhile, the gendering of space signifies particular kinds of class hierarchies between workers and managers and between male and female workers (Fernandes, 1997:59 cited in Barad, 2007:228).

As a working-class body navigating middle-class institutions it is nothing less than daunting and destabilising, and something I often write about. Within previous postgraduate studies and phase A for the EdD, I worked with social theorist Bourdieu, as a way of exploring the feelings of not fitting-in (not attending the preferred red brick University, not talking with the right accent, not living in the right area). His theorising of ‘habitus’, as ‘systems of durable, transposable, dispositions’ (1977:72), helped me to unsettle the feeling of insidiously bleeding-out; violence and trauma that both restricts and empowers me. As hooks (2015:183) states:

Class antagonism can be constructively used, not made to reinforce the notion that students and professors from working-class backgrounds are “outsiders” and “interlopers,” but to subvert and challenge the existing structure.

bell hooks (2015) talks passionately about working-class academics and the academy, and although the work of the thesis somewhat abandons Bourdieu’s notions of social-class, it remains an important political endeavour, to recognise as an ECS pedagogue, the pedagogical processes of middle-class norms, in shaping non-normative bodies (e.g. ‘black, disabled, ageing and LGBTQI+’ [Taylor and Fairchild, 2020:210]), policy and practice, which remain firmly rooted in the UK educational structures. As such, it is important to remember that the theorising of PH and FNM does not imply the ‘end of humanity. It signals the end of a certain conception of the human’ (Hayles, 1999:286).

[Story of the thesis and contribution to knowledge](#) [methodological / theoretical contributions to knowledge](#)

Throughout this thesis I have carefully (re)thought the conceptualisations of being, knowing and thinking. I was not seeking the meaning of touch within ECS and EC, but to continually reconfigure materialdiscursive entanglements of touch, to open up the possibilities of new ways of (re)conceptualising how babies, students, HE pedagogue and researcher emerge in a

relational field. Sharing the entangled ethics, methods and processes enabled me to discuss the contribution of FNM methodologies to ECS and more specifically, to understandings of touch, whilst simultaneously exploring the vulnerability and fragility of the HE UG ECS students, babies, ECEC practitioners, research, research process, and researcher. As such, thinking with my past (memories), present (observations), future (speculations), I shared how my body responded to the influx-and-efflux of navigating the research and writing; my body was (and is) outed, things leaked and ruptured insidiously and violently, and finding a language apposite to such movements presented as a challenge.

FNM theorising moved me as part of the assemblages into different and unexpected thinkingfeelingdoing EC and ECS spaces. Spaces that were uncomfortable, demanding and bodily. The stuttering forces of the research, towards the fracturing of associated power relations of language which go on to (re)reproduce EC knowledges, was explored. Navigating the ambiguity of FNM research and writing, ungrounded my thinking and writing habits, which was not always a straightforward process; thinking and writing in linear ways often created an unease. To move pass this stuckness, and to continually emerge, I tore up the pages (Figure 9) to re-think *through* the text, sentences, paragraphs and pages. Writing particular words, phrases and terminologies were put to work in an attempt to unpack the 'knowledge-making processes' (Barad, 2007:381) and provoke heterogeneous possibilities, in particular the array of neologisms e.g. spacetimeattering, thinkingfeelingdoing, Bowlb(arbar)ian, mothersick and (gh)host(ile)(ly); 'I become in language' (St. Pierre, 2017b:1081). While this thesis does not claim to have the answers or resolve the notions of politics and power, it does work to pry open the intimacies and intricacies of ECS within a concept of becoming in the relations with the world (Peters et al., 2020:12).

This thesis moves towards 'a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it' (Barad, 2007:88), inspired by how 'the past and the future are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through one another' (Barad, 2007:383). As such, the philosophical notion of becoming, steered the writing to allow for the collective motherhood, babyhood and

childhood stories to be shared; towards kin-making becomings. The fluidity, intra-actions and transformations, all becoming difference in itself, becoming different from the norm (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Through introducing the ecstasy of mothering objects, things and stuff, sensuous moments of touch begin to decant towards implicating motherhood and babyhood into the thesis; the materiality of pregnancy, mothering, childbearing, babyhood and EC. Shaped by a 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016:1) the thesis demanded a staying with the sticky middleness of it all -trouble that agitates and holds different temporalities; the hauntings of touch, absence of touch, lack of touch, no touch..... bodies mingle, linger and entangle throughout the thesis.

The multiplicities and ambiguities of touch, the snippets of diary and journal entries, images, memoirs, the HE classroom, the baby-room, things and objects, produced the data threads: mothersickness; (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes; teaching and leaking; and conforming and performing bodies. Experimenting with thinkingfeelingdoing the data threads opened up HE precarious pedagogical landscapes and argue the need to be attentive and open to uncertainty and ambiguity, as the entangled knowledges students hold in their bodies are intensified and brought-to-attention through ECS and preparing students for EC practice. The threads encouraged twists and coagulations of students, babies, ECP and researcher stories and other bodily knowledges - as such, difference emerged. Within the threads, locked within the twists, severed and attached connections, corrosive, vital, ghastly, fragile and violent, radioactive lesions developed, spread and infected. The thesis encapsulated the multiplicities, wanderings, tensions and contortions of bodies in ECS; the hauntings, unmuted bodies, mingling bodies, emptiness, brokenness, ghostly matters, bodies harbouring caution and bodies that fear the world.

[substantive contribution to knowledge around rethinking touch in ECS and ECEC](#)

Committing to a speculative exploration of thinking-with-touch, I continually engaged with the troubling of touching encounters, more intensely in chapter five, as a way of inviting an engagement with the significance of touch within ECS to the jarring's of EC stories and the lives

touched through ECS theory-practice in unprecedented, unknown and often imperceptible ways. Thinking-with-touch, is a resistance of normativity, a refusal to privilege mind/body dualisms, and a response-ability about what matters in EC and ECS. Re-thinking touch in ECS and EC as more than the physical contact of bodies, allows a thinking-with-touch to become an interference, where past and future EC iterations are enmeshed and imbricated. To think-with-touch, both literally and figuratively is consuming when considering the complexities of being touched by EC theories and practices, such as Bowlby's attachment theory or notions of 'normal development' in the HE UG ECS classroom and ECEC setting. Through the ambivalences and reversibility of touch the discomforts are embraced as a creative space to the work - my body is open, leaking and haemorrhaging.

Thinking with *teaching and leaking* I imagined touch differently to invite new ways of thinking boundaries within EC, ECS and research. This demanded a closer look at the possibility of brokenness and boundary crossing - breaches in and through human-nonhuman skins. Thinking-with-touch and through the skin I suggested how the teachings of ECS puncture, permeate and violate bodies, allowing skin(s) to be recited and traced. Thinking with in/determinacy notions of becoming allowed me as an ECS pedagogue to explore difference and how bodies become orientated with others through ambiguous touching encounters. Unpacking the professional challenges and tensions of ECS with the future more-than-human touching, I worked with the teaching journal (Figure 8) as a way to stay with the (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes. These teaching-and-leaking and (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes required an ethical immersion and attachment to the world. Moving with the data threads my body navigated powerful abstractions of ECS in careful strides, negotiating the sensory intrusion and violent reverberations that ricochet through my body; vulnerable and messy encounters, and the Othering of children and families through radioactive Bowlb(arbar)ian EC abstractions, hauntings, feeling *forever broken* and *mothersick*.

implications for my practice in the HE UG ECS classroom and for 'touching practices' in ECEC settings – the teachings of child development to UG students

Conforming and performing bodies - when you don't fit, you fidget, is a stark reminder of the cartesian politics of education and control of bodies within the notions of 'normal' behaviour and bodies that reject re-alignment. EC developmental trajectories, such as Bowlbian child developmental psychology and psychological theories of attachment, continue to dominate and influence curricula approaches to the education and socialisation of children and families in the UK (Murris, 2016; Burman, 2017a;2017b). Following MacLure et al. (2012), Holmes (2020) discusses, '[a]dopting complicit behavior on the carpet enables survival in terms of how he would be "read" psychologically; docility becomes a default way to behave' (501). Being flung back to Annie, babies and ECS students' and the idea of adopting complicit behaviour, limiting potentialities, the educational, political and historical bodies steer student, baby and childbearing women to be re-aligned with familiarity and sameness. The wilfulness of the babies to stay mobile, avoid carpet-time, refusal to sit on the designated rug, sweeps-me-up, the affective forces of the green rug within the assemblage were anything but docile, instead they make the rug lively and spectacular. Unruly bodies, non-conforming, contaminated, movement against, beyond, or away from rules and regulations, norms and conventions, borders and limits. As such, the affects generated by the assemblages enables fissures within EC human-centred policies, practice and theory to erupt, arguing for an ethical response-ability that crosses the human-nonhuman divide that disrupts ECS and EC routines and habits.

As suggested throughout the thesis, EC developmental trajectories put a distance between the present and the temporal location of being touched by memories, histories, traumas and pleasures. This thesis suggests the problematic nature of such teachings within the HE UG ECS classroom, as time does not pass and marks are not just left behind. Instead, through the reiterations of EC dominant abstractions, such as attachment theory, I argue the significance of *mothersickness, (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes, teaching and leaking, and conforming and performing bodies - when you don't fit, you fidget*. Bodies that become contorted through metastable configurations - creating new mutating configurations and connecting through

intensities of composition. Bodies touching bodies, bodies out of place, and distorted bodies, (re)calling bodily memory and where alternative EC knowledges can emerge. Materialdiscursive knowledge practices entangled in ECS pedagogies; bodies folding, mutilating and contorting simultaneously. It is through these moments of unease a brokenness and mothersickness is sensed as my body prepares to conform and perform within the ECS classroom and ECEC setting. A queering of space and time - spacetime-matterings will continue to push my ECS teachings towards troubling the persistence of chronological time and powerful linear trajectories that are entwined within the workings and fixities of EC theory, policy and practices.

The jarring aspects of EC and ECS stories are the beating heart of this thesis. The data threads shared throughout the thesis reach beyond the pages – across time and spaces, beyond the ECEC setting or HE UG ECS classroom, touching materialdiscursive stories and being touched by policy rhetoric. Rather than the search for the ideal child (fantasy child), through child developmental abstractions, the data threads produced alternative ways of knowing EC. Giving up the concepts of the ideal, normal and perfect child, to move towards what bodies become, requires a desire, a speculative and imaginative thinking. In doing so, provocations of the taken for granted acts of caring needs attention through the blurring of self and Other.

I propose in this thesis that we think with, through touch. Not as a separate entity to the body but as implicated. Ethics of caring should not consist of responding to another, the separated other, the severed other that is outside the self. Instead, the precarious terrains of uncertainty, the professional iterations hold affective touching-ethical-caring-practice at the core of pedagogical and andragogical teaching, learning and caring practices. Working within a realm where ethics are not produced by knowledge but *with* knowledge offers alternate sensing methods - sense-driven ways of teaching. The porosity, plasticity and participation of bodies feels ethically messy, unravelled, and imperfect. In the words of Barad (2007:185), 'becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter'.

As discussed in chapter three *ethics at work* - babies do not adhere to touching guidelines within the baby-room and students and pedagogues alike do not consult the teachers code of conduct when faced with emotionally charged ECS concepts within the UG ECS classroom. It is not just that the discursive cannot be adhered to - it is more than this. It is something far more complex, intricate, messy, oozing and full of fleshy matters than we might imagine. ECS can be a troublesome to navigate with students as different concepts, topics and curricula take hold within the classroom; fragility and friability swirl round the room. Some babies and students demand something different from the baby-room, HE classroom, theory and practice. The 'one size fits all' method – well, it does not fit. Theorising with (gh)host(ile)(ly) scenes brings the notions of 'playing host' as opposed to 'being a host' into question to trouble the facilitation of ECS content as a HE pedagogue. Fragile and fraught relationships, a visceral dis/jointedness of time and space animated through EC theory and practice and invisible histories – how I host Bowlb(arbar)ian theory is politically important. With this in mind my HE teachings and researching practices will continuously question the affects of EC theory, attentive to the intra-ruptions, and attuned to the consequences of such knowledge-making processes on and in the worlds of EC and ECS as well as on the knowledge(s) being produced (Barad, 2007:381). As such, I start to imagine how I would deploy a thinking-with-touch within the ECS classroom- a desire towards welcoming mothersickness and Bowlb(arbar)ianism into HE UG ECS teaching and learning spaces through the sensibilities of teaching-and-leaking.

[what next for the thesis?](#)

The 'data' collated for this research is immense and although not included (due to word count and EdD restrictions) in its entirety within this thesis remains embroiled and entangled. As such, and as I have demonstrated in chapter six, the work remains wide-open. The what follows the EdD will continue to pull at me but as I encounter these pulls I will always be emerged in the production of this work. Conceptually the work around mothersickness and Bowlb(arbar)ianism is something I would want 'out there' as the work of chapter five in particular thread one is missing from ECS curriculum, ECS professional development, student undergraduate and postgraduate text books and journal articles.

Final thoughts - touch in post-pandemic world

As I discussed in *crossing the threshold* at the point of writing this thesis the pandemic is ongoing. Social distancing rules, policed social gatherings and travelling restrictions, all remain in place. Thinking-with-touch - for many people this is nothing but traumatic. The need to reach out and touch literally and feeling the absence of touch - when not touched for seventeen months, is something that cannot be ignored as part of this work. The distance between myself and loved ones is too much to bear – a longing to hold my children, family and friends.

Physical separations created through the global pandemic really brought home a 'mothersickness' both for me as a mother but also for my children. This pandemic brings around lived separations and re-lived separations at the same time – re-introducing my mothersickness over and over again. Being infected at the time of submission with COVID-19, being physically separated from my youngest child and husband (infected with COVID-19 and having to remain in the UK for the time being), being a mother to my other children, whilst entangled with the birthing of this thesis brings fraught and anxious writing spaces. Spaces that will be forever touched.

These touching encounters, working within a pandemic, although it has been disastrous so say the least, gave momentum to this work. To not embrace one another face to face, not being able to travel to visit loved ones, unable to go inside hospital and hospice settings to comfort sick relatives and isolating away from family and friends whilst thinking-with-touch permeates this thesis in its entirety.

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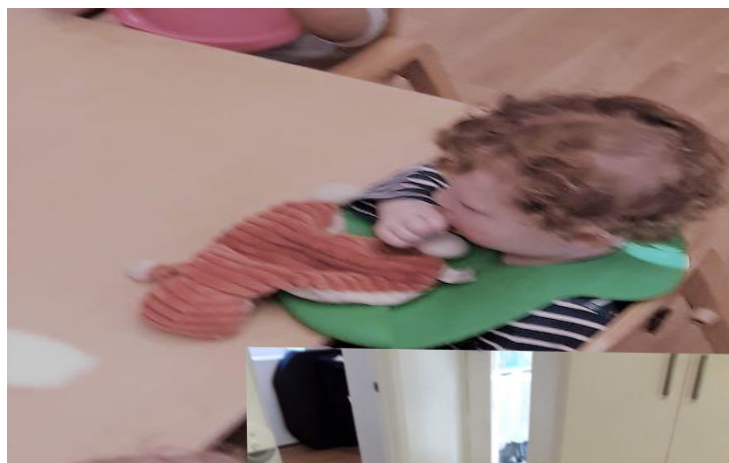
Images

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Appendices

Appendices 1-4	Photographs
Appendices 5-7	Extracts from diaries
Appendices 8-9	Participant Information Forms
Appendix 10	Photo Reproduction Rights Form for Participants
Appendices 11-12	Consent Forms
Appendix 13	Ethics Approval

Photographs
appendix 1: snack Time



appendix 2: play time/ carpet time



appendix 3: nap-time

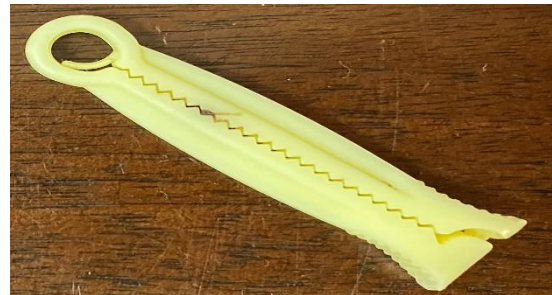




appendix 4: mothering moments



(My Pregnant abdomen 20.04.2014)



(Oliver's Cord Clamp 20.05.2014)

Extracts from diaries
appendix 5: doctoral utterances

03.07.2017: 1st meeting with Rachel

Conceptualising: New materialism/post-qualitative

Traditional Ethnography: not using the method of collating data from the human perspective but rather exploring bodily emersion, Affect, feelings, emotions of the intra-actions.

Me: Collecting live data... mother/midwife/nursery practitioner

Methodological – multi modal/sensory ethnography

What are the important bits of touch?

Story of touch - almost like the thesis conclusion – the so what? Why would it be important to midwives, parents and nursery settings?

Who is beginning to use these theories? Beginning to emerge within health related disciplines? Early years and ~Education – gap!

Instincts

Human and non-human – de centralising the human but not making the human extinct!

When does the baby become the baby?

From intra and inter baby.... The process of the pregnant baby to the outside baby?

Touching of the breast.... From breastfeeding relationships to 'no touch': having a relationship with the breast, breast tissue, skin, hair, and pleasure to the removing of And beyond.

Diary entry: **21.07.2017**

Doctoral Process: A stormy process of being 'transported' by the thinking alongside a sense of strangulation. Completing the RD1 and research proposal'linear....rigid.... motionless'

The urgency of the dominant educational STRUCTURES in articulating the application (methodology) gave the ontology the boot, a good kicking, a leathering, a battering. Through the very heart of what we encourage our students within education, the nurturing of, coaching of, and facilitating of; the process did not allow space to think, connect and evolve my theoretical happenings. Again giving presidency to the 'doing' to 'practice', as if practice is not always normed by theories of knowing and being (St. Pierre, 2004).

Trying hard to think how to write in such a way when I cannot feel..... opposing methods as prescriptive, and therefore motionless in time.

Feeling a sense of failure for not understanding why I could not write and think in such ways to complete necessary educational documentation resulting in the 'not progressing satisfactory'. When in fact I was making an ontological turn, 'breaking up' with humanistic qualitative methodology, and embracing a new love affair with posthumansim, and new materialism. Unfortunately, it was too late, I felt polluted by the hierarchical systems of HE, the masculinity of educational discourse, and disheartened of the thought of completing a piece of work that could not consider the non-human, more-than-human, inhuman, and post-human. Over the course of the first 10 months of my doctoral studies, I became motionless 'stuckness' to the possibilities. Then it happened....

MOVEMENT INTO THE POSSIBILITIES..... The love affair was no longer dirty, shameful, ignored, instead it flourished through the entanglements of exchange and participation of bodies (RACHEL?SIQR?DANCE?MOVEMENT?ART)

Refusing the concepts of method and methodology – unabling such inquiry. Ontological turn demands a different empiricism that is not saturated in the human subject (St. Pierre, 2016).

Transcendental empiricism is not concerned with ‘knowledge’ rather making connections, trusting that something may come out of it, though not being completely sure what that will be (Rajchman, 2000:7). Education does not function on the grounds of the ‘might be’s’... it is outcome led and associated with financial implications of such research (Ref’able). How can one practice in such ways when HE environments do not support theoretical ‘new’ thinking.

Concluding thoughts.... I am no longer polluted by the messiness of the break-up. I have not studied philosophy therefore how could I have known what I know at the beginning. Using the language within my writing resonated within post-qualitative research, however the dependability upon the educational structures rendered me unable to articulate the messiness of the becoming. If the teachings of methodology commence with the teachings of ontology and epistemology without insight into histories of social and scientific research and philosophy, then the consequences is the perpetuation of conventional empirical scientific methods, denying the speculative (St. Pierre, 2016).

It’s not Karen its Betty

~~Methodology~~ ‘Stuckness’

Unable to think posthuman research practices as long as conventional empirical research is dominant discourse within postgraduate studies, with the purpose to produce new knowledge rather than allowing the creativity of encountering events (Deleuze, 1990:54).

Deleuze, G. (1990) *The Logic of Sense*. London: Bloomsbury.

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Diary entry, **09.10.2018**: Food for thought.....

Hormonal responses to breastfeeding and how does this link into Bowlby

Can men breastfeed?

When Bowlby talks about biological mother, was he referring to the natural mother, the one who the egg belonged too?

How did Bowlby establish the second trimester in terms of attachment behaviours

Systems??? Is this referred to the systems of what causes children to display attachment behaviours

Research; Fetus womb life; Maxine sheets Johnson (movement) (books ordered); Daniel Stern; Suzie Albeck; Tavistock lectures: Touch, shame..... might be good to get to see some of these?

Tasks following meeting; Read Duschinsky paper....Maxine sheets Johnson (movement) - books ordered. Started to listen to lecture – notes; We come into the world moving – (my thoughts ‘still born’) being a body; Without touch an animal would not be; DH Lawrence: dance with rupture cosmos....nature and living? Cosmos.....

Participant information Sheet

appendix 8: parent participant information sheet

Study Title: 'Ecologies of touch'

Invitation paragraph

I would like to invite your baby/child to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand, why the research is being done and what it would involve for you and your child. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information, and take time to decide whether you wish your child to take part or not.

The study aims to explore/investigate how practitioners, babies, objects and other 'things' such as toys, soothers, clothing, food or furniture interact with one another, with a specific focus on how, and when 'touch' occurs. The study will explore the possible challenges negotiated in the nursery setting when caring for babies.

What is the purpose of the study?

Touch and the importance of touch from birth to adulthood is recognised as significant within many disciplines such as psychology, health and neuroscience, however there is a limited amount of research available related to the importance of touch in early childhood education settings and practice.

The research is being carried out as part of my doctoral studies. If you have questions or concerns relating to the research, you are welcomed to contact my director of studies Professor Rachel Holmes r.holmes@mmu.ac.uk at any point.

Why have I been invited to take part?

The Elmscot Group is a well-established group of day nurseries in the South of Manchester, with 'outstanding' status judged by Ofsted across three of the day nurseries. In particular, the setting your baby/child attends offers fulltime provision for babies 0 – 2 years of age. Ofsted reported how babies in the care of The Elmscot Group of day nurseries, have a rich experience, which leaves the babies curious and eager to explore their environment. This includes experiencing the sensation of touch through food and textured play.

Do I have to consent to my baby/child taking part?

I will describe the study in detail and be available to go through any of the information which you need a discussion around. Once any questions have been answered, and if you consent to your baby/child to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form to indicate you have agreed to participate. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me or my baby/child if I consent to participation?

The aim of the study is to observe practice with and alongside practitioners and babies, with an attempt to collate data from field notes, photographs and recordings with a focus on 'touch'. I will not be actively seeking interactions with babies and children, and not intentionally provoking or generating affect, but simply being present, and acting as a guest within shared spaces. I will be under the supervision of the nursery staff at all times, as I am not there acting as a carer for your baby/child. Data collected will be used for the purpose of the study, with some data maybe contributing in the future, to conference presentations, academic or professional publications. Additional consent will be sought if it is deemed that any material collected, which is appropriate for analysis or intended for conference or publication purposes, identifies babies and children.

Gaining consent, prior to commencing any fieldwork is a priority. Prior to commencing the research, if possible and at a convenient time, I would like to familiarise myself with the setting, and in turn with the staff, children and families so that we are able to begin to get to know each other.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

I am currently a senior lecturer on the Early Years and Childhood Studies undergraduate programme at Manchester Metropolitan University, and a midwife. However, my career began working within a day nursery, caring for babies 6 months to 2 years of age. When thinking about creating a compassionate, caring, and nurturing environment for babies it is essential, we consider the information produced by both health-related and educational research.

As the purpose of the research is to consider what health practices around touch can bring to early childhood settings, you may want to be involved in discussing the possible challenges this may evoke when considering the holistic needs of your baby/child. Considering the future of early childhood education, the research will consider the daily activities, routines and lives of both the early childhood practitioner and babies in their care, with an attempt to contribute to the practice-theory of working with babies. Being present within the setting will allow for practice-professional discussions, and the sharing of knowledge in a timely way.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do my best to answer your questions (01612472106 & 07908479724). If the concern is regarding the conduct of the research, please do not hesitate in contacting my supervisor Professor Rachel Holmes r.holmes@mmu.ac.uk at any point.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information collected about your baby/child during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Your confidentiality throughout the study will be a priority and safeguarded during and after the study. The data collected will adhere to research ethical and data protection guidelines and procedures.

What will happen if I do not carry on with the study?

If you withdraw your consent from the study, I will destroy all your identifiable observations, field notes, diary entries and photographs, but I would like to be able to use the data collected up to your withdrawal.

Contact details

Lindsay Michelle Schofield
Manchester Metropolitan University, Faculty of Education, Department of Childhood, Youth and Education Studies, 1.43 Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX, UK.
Contact number: 01612472106
Email: lindsay.schofield@mmu.ac.uk

appendix 9: practitioner participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title

'Ecologies of touch'

Invitation paragraph

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand, why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information, and take time to decide whether to take part or not.

The study will explore/investigate how practitioners, babies, objects and other 'things' such as toys, soothers, clothing, food or furniture interact with one another, with a specific focus on how, and when 'touch' occurs. The study will explore the possible challenges negotiated in the nursery setting when caring for babies.

What is the purpose of the study?

Touch and the importance of touch from birth to adulthood is recognised as significant within many disciplines such as psychology, health and neuroscience, however there is a limited amount of research available related to the importance of touch in early childhood education.

This research will use theories that focus on the importance of connections and interactions between objects, humans, feelings etc to more fully appreciate the complexities of touch as a form of movement with the world, including how touch is understood as an act of care, but is also full of tension in relation to safeguarding and child protection discourses that attach themselves to touch in the early childhood setting.

The research is being carried out as part of my doctoral studies. If you have questions or concerns relating to the research, you are welcomed to contact my director of studies Professor Rachel Holmes r.holmes@mmu.ac.uk at any point.

Why have I been invited to take part?

The Elmscot Group is a well-established group of day nurseries in the South of Manchester, with 'outstanding' status judged by Ofsted across three of the day nurseries. In particular, Broussa Nursery school offers fulltime provision for babies 0 – 2 years of age. Ofsted reported how babies in the care of The Elmscot Group of day nurseries, have a rich experience, which leaves the babies curious and eager to explore their environment. This includes experiencing the sensation of touch through food and textured play.

Do I have to take part?

I will describe the study in detail and go through the information sheet in order to clarify the processes and participation. I will then ask you and the team if you have any questions about the study or the nature or extent of your participation. Once any questions have been answered, and if you are willing to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form to indicate you have agreed to participate. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The aim of the study is to observe practice with and alongside practitioners and babies, with an attempt to collate data from field notes, photographs and recordings with a focus on 'touch'. Data collected will be used for the purpose of the study, with some data maybe contributing in the future, to conference presentations, academic or professional publications. Additional consent will be sought if it is deemed that any material collected, which is appropriate for analysis or intended for conference or publication purposes, identifies practitioners/babies.

Gaining consent, prior to commencing any fieldwork is a priority. Prior to commencing the research, if possible and at a convenient time, I would like to familiarise myself with the setting, and in turn with the staff and children so that we are able to begin to get to know each other.

What will I have to do?

Observations of the daily activities and routines within the baby-room, is essential to the study. All the study asks of you is to continue to care for the babies/children the way you are doing and be willing to discuss relevant moments, events and activities when they might arise.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

I am currently a senior lecturer on the Early Years and Childhood Studies undergraduate programme at Manchester Metropolitan University, and a practising midwife. However, my career began working within a day nursery, caring for babies 6 months to 2 years of age. When thinking about creating a compassionate, caring, and nurturing environment for babies it is essential, we consider the information produced by both health-related and educational research.

By taking part in this study, you will be central to fieldwork and fully involved in the discussion of emerging ideas and issues. As the purpose of the research is to consider what health practices around touch can bring to early childhood settings, you will be involved in discussing the possible challenges this may evoke when considering the holistic needs of babies, parents / carers and yourself as a practitioner. Considering the future of early childhood education, the research will consider the daily activities, routines and lives of both the early childhood practitioner and babies in their care, with an attempt to contribute to the practice-theory of working with babies. Being present within the setting will allow for practice-professional discussions, and the sharing of knowledge in a timely way.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do my best to answer your questions (01612472106 & 07908479724). If the concern is regarding the conduct of the research, please do not hesitate in contacting my supervisor Professor Rachel Holmes r.holmes@mmu.ac.uk at any point.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, and any information about you that leaves the university, will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised. Your confidentiality throughout the study will be a priority and safeguarded during and after the study. The data collected will adhere to research ethical and data protection guidelines and procedures.

What will happen if I do not carry on with the study?

If you withdraw from the study, I will destroy all your identifiable observations, field notes, diary entries and photographs, but I would like to be able to use the data collected up to your withdrawal.

Contact details

Lindsay Michelle Schofield

Manchester Metropolitan University, Faculty of Education, Department of Childhood, Youth and Education Studies, 1.43 Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX, UK.

Contact number: 01612472106
Email: lindsay.schofield@mmu.ac.uk

Photo Reproduction Rights Form for Participants

appendix 10: photographic reproduction rights

Photo Reproduction Rights Form 'ecologies of touch'

This form refers to photographs that you gave consent to, as part of the research 'ecologies of touch'. All photographs will be securely stored, and as discussed, photographs may be shared within the supervisory team to support the analysis of the research. I would like to use some photographs (in electronic or print form), in future presentations, and publications arising from the study. Please could you sign one of the boxes below to indicate whether or not you are happy for me to do this. I have attached numbered prints of your photographs to

assist you, and for your records. Know photographs will be used outside the research project without your permission.

Please sign either 1, 2, or 3 below:

1. I give my consent for these photographs to be reproduced for educational and/or non-commercial purposes, in reports, presentations, publications, websites and exhibitions connected to the 'ecologies of touch' research. I understand that real names will NOT be used with the photographs.

signed.....date.....

OR

If you would like to give permission for us to publish some, but not all, of the photos please list the numbers of the photos you will allow us to use:

2. I give my consent for photo
numbers.....(please specify)
to be reproduced (in electronic or print form), for educational and/or non commercial purposes, in reports, presentations, publications, websites and exhibitions connected to the 'ecologies of touch' research. I understand that real names will NOT be used with the photographs.

signed.....date.....

OR

3. I do not wish any of these photographs to be reproduced in connection with the 'ecologies of touch' research.

signed.....date.....

Thank you for participating in the study. If you have any queries about this form or about the study or your participation in it, please do not hesitate to contact:

Lindsay Schofield: 0161 247 2106, email: lindsay.schofield@mmu.ac.uk

Consent Forms
appendix 11: parent consent form



Lindsay Schofield
Doctorate of Education
Faculty of Education

Manchester Metropolitan University
Tel: 0161 247 2106
Lindsay.Schofield@mmu.ac.uk

Consent Form

Title of Project:

Ecologies of Touch

Name of Researcher:

Lindsay Schofield

Participant Identification Code for this project: Parent

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above project and have opportunity to ask questions about the research procedures with the researcher.
2. I understand that my consent for my child to participate is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.
3. I understand that photographic images, videos and observational notes will be used for analysis for this research project.
4. I give/do not give permission for the data collated to be archived as part of this research project, making it available to future researchers.
5. I understand that the identity of my child and my family will remain anonymous.
6. I agree to take part in the above research project.
7. I understand that at my request collated data can be made available to me.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form and information sheet by post.

appendix 12: practitioner consent form



Lindsay Schofield
Doctorate of Education
Faculty of Education

Manchester Metropolitan University
Tel: 0161 247 2106
Lindsay.Schofield@mmu.ac.uk

Consent Form

Title of Project:

Ecologies of Touch

Name of Researcher:

Lindsay Schofield

Participant Identification Code for this project: Early Childhood Education Practitioner

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and have had opportunity to ask questions about the research procedures. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher. ☐
3. I understand that photographic images, videos and observational notes will be used for analysis for this research project. ☐
4. I give/do not give permission for the data collated to be archived as part of this research project, making it available to future researchers. ☐
5. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous. ☐
6. I agree to take part in the above research project. ☐
7. I understand that at my request collated data can be made available to me. ☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form and information sheet by post.

Ethical Approval

appendix 13: application for ethical approval

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

Introduction

All university activity must be reviewed for ethical approval. In particular, all undergraduate, postgraduate and staff research work, projects and taught programmes must obtain approval from the Academic Ethics committee.

Application Procedure

The form should be completed legibly (preferably typed) and, so far as possible, in a way which would enable a layperson to understand the aims and methods of the research. Every relevant section should be completed. Applicants should also include a copy of any proposed advert, information sheet, consent form and, if relevant, any questionnaire being used. The Principal Investigator should sign the application form. Supporting documents, together with one copy of the full protocol should be sent to the Faculty/Campus Research Group Officer.

Your application will require external ethical approval by an NHS Research Ethics Committee if your research involves staff, patients or premises of the NHS (see guidance notes)

Work with children and vulnerable adults

You will be required to have an Enhanced CRB Disclosure, if your work involves children or vulnerable adults.

The Academic Ethics Committee will respond as soon as possible, and where appropriate, will operate a process of expedited review.

Applications that require approval by an NHS Research Ethics Committee or a Criminal Disclosure will take longer.

1. Details of Applicants	
1.1. Name of applicant (Principal Investigator): <i>Lindsay Schofield</i>	
Telephone Number: <i>0161 247 2106</i>	
Email address: <i>lindsay.schofield@mmu.ac.uk</i>	
Status: <i>Senior Lecturer</i> <i>EdD Student</i>	Postgraduate Student (Taught or Research) <i>EdD Student & Senior Lecturer</i>
Department/School/Other Unit: <i>Education</i>	
Programme of study (if applicable): <i>EdD</i>	
Name of supervisor/Line manager: <i>Rachel Holmes</i>	
1.2. Co-Workers and their role in the project: (e.g. students, external collaborators, etc)	
Name: <i>xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx</i>	Name:
Telephone Number: <i>0161 xxxxxxx</i>	Telephone Number:

Role: Early Years Education Manager	Role:
Email Address: xxxxxxx.co.uk	Email Address:
2. Details of the Project	
2.1. Title: Ecologies of Touch	
2.2. Description of the Project: (please outline the background and the purpose of the research project, 250 words max) <p><i>During human pregnancy and the intrapartum period, touch is one of the most intense and immediate sensations experienced through the complexities of relational bodies and materials. This study seeks to explore the intra-active relationships between bodies, places and spaces of touch and its associated practices in early childhood practice's, with practitioner's working with babies from birth to 18 months of age. The research will engage with Feminist New Materialist theory and post-qualitative research methodologies to appreciate the intensities and complexities of touch as movement, from foetal and neonatal encounters of touch, to the sedentary culture of defensive practice, fear, and child protection that attach themselves to touch in early childhood education and social care settings. The aim of this transdisciplinary study is to re-conceptualise the intricacies and relational activities, assemblages and commotions, micro-politics and intimate events of more-than-human touching in order to better inform future practices in early childhood education.</i></p> <p><i>The study will be organised around four key research questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• How do the interstices of health and education practices unsettle understandings of touch in nursery settings, taking into account the discourses, histories, policy contexts, feelings, instinctiveness, emotions and affects of those working with babies?</i> <i>• What can Feminist New Materialist-oriented research into early childhood practices contribute to understandings of touch?</i> <i>• How can a transversal methodology support the re-searching of touch in new ways?</i> <i>• What are the professional challenges associated with future more-than-human touching practices when working with babies' birth to 18 months of age?</i> 	
2.3. Describe what type of study this is (e.g. qualitative or quantitative; also indicate how the data will be collected and analysed). Please see attached research proposal and Gantt chart.	
2.4. Are you going to use a questionnaire? NO	
2.5. Start Date / Duration of project: September 2017 – August 2019	
2.6. Location of where the project and data collection will take place: [REDACTED]	
2.7. Nature/Source of funding: Faculty-funding of doctoral studies	
2.8. Are there any regulatory requirements? NO	
3. Details of Participants	
3.1. How many? Early childhood Practitioners (3) within the early childhood setting working with/alongside babies (8).	
3.2. Age:	

<p align="center">Adults 18+ and babies up to 18 month of age</p>
<p>3.3. Sex: <i>Early childhood Practitioners: female</i> <i>Babies: male and female</i></p>
<p>3.4. How will they be recruited? (Attach a copy of any proposed advertisement)</p> <p><i>During a Manchester Metropolitan University visit day, a Director from a local nursery group approached myself, as a member of the Early Years and Childhood Studies team, to discuss the possible placement opportunities. During the conversation, a mutual professional interest around health-education needs for babies from birth to two years of age became apparent. The Director offered me her contact details to discuss the possibility of possible partnership working in the future.</i></p> <p><i>Following on from this initial meeting, we had contact via email, and began to build professional working relationships. The Director of the nursery group invited me to the nursery for an informal meeting with the Early Years Teacher in order to share my research interests and the possibility for one of the nursery settings to participate. As I shared my research proposal, we discussed the importance of consent from parent/carer and practitioners, data protection, storing of data, confidentiality, and the timescale of studies. The teacher escorted me around the nursery setting in which I visited the baby-room, and met the practitioners, babies and children.</i></p> <p><i>Following the meeting, I forwarded information via email, and discussed the proposed research further. Both the Director and teacher, discussed how following a staff meeting the management team felt the proposed research would contribute to practice, future practice and relationships with the babies in their care.</i></p> <p><i>Within a further email, the teacher sent through the setting policies, to become familiar with the setting's expectations around touching practices, and HR details in order to obtain an enhanced DBS in time for the following academic year.</i></p>
<p>3.5. Status of participants: (e.g. students, public, colleagues, children, hospital patients, prisoners, including young offenders, participants with mental illness or learning difficulties.)</p> <p><i>Early Childhood Practitioners</i> <i>Babies (up to 18 months of age)</i></p>
<p>3.6. Inclusion and exclusion from the project: (indicate the criteria to be applied).</p> <p><i>The setting provides opportunities for all babies/children to come together at different points within the day. For the purpose of the study older Children above will be excluded as part of the research.</i></p> <p><i>Parents/carers: Will be excluded from the research study as the research questions pivot around early childhood practices and the professional challenges associated with touching practices when 'working' with babies.</i></p>
<p>3.7. Payment to volunteers: (indicate any sums to be paid to volunteers).</p>
<p>3.8. Study information: Have you provided a study information sheet for the participants? <i>YES: Please see attached document</i></p>
<p>3.9. Consent: (A written consent form for the study participants MUST be provided in all cases, unless the research is a questionnaire.) Have you produced a written consent form for the participants to sign for your records?</p> <p><i>YES: Please see attached document and H&S form.</i></p>

<p><i>As indicated the research revolves around ‘being’ with and alongside babies as part of the research. An ethical dilemma is seeking informed consent from this particularly young and vulnerable age group. Although I will ensure parent/carers are fully informed about the study and have an opportunity to ask any questions (on an ongoing basis), before informed consent is obtained from them, I will also make every effort to be tuned into each baby’s responses to my presence. In the context of a baby’s physical environment and space, it is essential to identify the appropriateness of my presence and act both accordingly and sensitive to minimise impact. If I sense any of the babies are uncomfortable at any point during the research, or clearly do not to be observed, I will ensure I make all necessary adjustments to rectify the situation.</i></p>	
4. Risks and Hazards	
4.1.	<p>Are there any risks to the researcher and/or participants? (Give details of the procedures and processes to be undertaken, e.g., if the researcher is a lone-worker.) Yes – Please see risk assessment document</p>
4.2.	<p>State precautions to minimise the risks and possible adverse events: Please see risk assessment document</p>
4.3.	<p>What discomfort (physical or psychological) danger or interference with normal activities might be suffered by the researcher and/or participant(s)? State precautions which will be taken to minimise them: Please see risk assessment document</p>
3.6	
5. Ethical Issues	
<p>5.1. Please describe any ethical issues raised and how you intend to address these:</p> <p><i>An Enhanced CRB Disclosure - will be obtained due to the nature of the research (working alongside and with children).</i></p> <p><i>It is important to develop relationships of mutual trust with the early childhood practitioners, babies/children and parents. This is so the still and moving images that may be taken emerge from collaborations and are jointly owned.</i></p> <p><i>Dealing with personal data: Taking Photographs and videos – consent will be obtained prior to commencing research, which will include the purpose of the photograph(s) and videos (the image consent form will be retained with the photographs/videos), from parent/guardian of the children and the early childhood practitioners. It will be stated clearly that the data will be used for purposes of this doctoral study and may be used (but no baby or practitioner will be identifiable / traceable) at academic or professional conferences or in publications.</i></p> <p><i>Photographs and videos of the babies: consent will be sought from parents/carers and the appropriate gatekeeper. All photographs / videos of specific babies will be made available to their parents / carers. In cases where a number of babies are visible or identifiable in the images, these will not be made available to parents/carers.</i></p> <p><i>NHS ethical procedures: The study will lean on the midwifery experiences of the researcher, journals of practice, memories and practices documented in long term diary entries. No families, babies, mothers, health practitioners or health settings will be identifiable in this data. Therefore, NHS ethical procedures do not apply.</i></p>	
3.7	
6. Safeguards/Procedural Compliance	
6.1.	Confidentiality:
6.1.1.	<p>Indicate what steps will be taken to safeguard the confidentiality of participant records. If the data is to be computerised, it will be necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.</p> <p><i>Data protection: all data will be kept securely and will not lead to any breach of the agreed confidentiality and anonymity (BERA, 2018). Storing the data securely will include, physical measures e.g. the use of locked cabinets; digital data security e.g. password protection, encryption, virus protection, and back-up processes for electronic devices; and the transfer of data between the setting and university which will comply with the DPA standards.</i></p>

<p>6.1.2. If you are intending to make any kind of audio or visual recordings of the participants, please answer the following questions:</p> <p>6.1.2.1. How long will the recordings be retained and how will they be stored?</p> <p>6.1.2.2. How will they be destroyed at the end of the project?</p> <p>6.1.2.3. What further use, if any, do you intend to make of the recordings?</p>	<p><i>The data will be stored for 5 years and then destroyed. They will be deleted from all digital storage facilities.</i></p> <p><i>The data might be used in future presentations at academic and professional conferences and in publications.</i></p>
<p>6.2. The Human Tissue Act</p> <p>The Human Tissue Act came into force in November 2004, and requires appropriate consent for, and regulates the removal, storage and use of all human tissue.</p> <p>6.2.1. Does your project involve taking tissue samples, e.g., blood, urine, hair etc., from human subjects?</p> <p>NO</p> <p>6.2.2. Will this be discarded when the project is terminated?</p> <p>YES</p> <p>NO</p> <p>If NO – Explain how the samples will be placed into a tissue bank under the Human Tissue Act regulations:</p>	
<p>6.3. Notification of Adverse Events (e.g., negative reaction, counsellor, etc):</p> <p>(Indicate precautions taken to avoid adverse reactions.)</p> <p>Please state the processes/procedures in place to respond to possible adverse reactions.</p> <p>In the case of clinical research, you will need to abide by specific guidance. This may include notification to GP and ethics committee. Please seek guidance for up to date advice, e.g., see the NRES website at http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/</p>	
<p>SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>SIGNATURE OF FACULTY'S HEAD OF ETHICS:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

Checklist of attachments needed:

1. Participant consent form
2. Participant information sheet
3. Full protocol
4. Advertising details
5. NHS Approval Letter (where appropriate)
6. Other evidence of ethical approval (e.g., another University Ethics Committee approval)